

In Memoriam: Jacqueline Englert-Marchal

23 September 1922–21 April 2012

Ann Labounsky

Jacqueline Marchal was born in Paris on September 23, 1922, daughter of the illustrious blind organist, André Marchal, and Suzanne Greuet-Marchal. She passed away quietly on April 21, 2012 at the Georges Pompidou Hospital in Paris, just short of turning 90, after suffering for several months with congestive heart failure. Her long and influential life was devoted to furthering and maintaining the legacy of her father, André Marchal (1894–1980); to the Institut des Jeunes Aveugles (the School for the Young Blind), where he taught; to her husband, composer Giuseppe Englert; and to providing amazing hospitality to organ students, particularly Americans, who studied in Paris.

Jacqueline's childhood memories of her parents' home, 22 rue Duroc in Paris's Seventh *Arrondissement*, included frequent encounters with famous leaders of the musical world. Her father André Marchal was already a highly regarded concert organist and teacher, and her mother, Suzanne Greuet-Marchal, was a singer of note who also taught at the Institut des Jeunes Aveugles. Their home became a center of hospitality and lively conversation, reminiscent of the famous Paris *salons*, where artists and musicians, young and old, gathered to discuss their passionate views while enjoying aperitifs. Among the frequent guests in this salon were famous French and international musicians and artists: organist/composers Louis Vierne, Jean Langlais, Jehan and Marie-Claire Alain, and Maurice Duruflé; musicologist Norbert Dufourcq, founder of *Les Amis de l'Orgue*; and the English critic Felix Aprahamian. She remembered that it was Louis Vierne who was like a grandfather to her, who taught her to tie her shoes! Jean Langlais, who lived only two doors away on the same street, likewise was a special friend. At one Christmas, she proudly showed Langlais the crèche given to her by her grandparents by guiding his hands over the scene. Inspired, Langlais composed his famous *La Nativité* from *Poèmes Evangéliques*. For Jacqueline, rue Duroc was affectionately called "organists' row."

Early on and throughout her life, Jacqueline also became involved in helping the blind students at the Institut nearby the "organists' row" on Boulevard des Invalides and the graduates of the school at the Association Valentin Haüy at 5 rue Duroc. It was a great source of pride to her when the main hall at the Institut was renamed Salle André Marchal after her father.

From 1930, beginning with Lee Irwin, American students came to Paris to study with André Marchal in his home. Many of them were Fulbright Grant recipients who were required to state on their applications which school they wished to attend. Marchal was soon declared to be a school, and for many years that followed, it was Jacqueline who welcomed them, found housing and places



Jacqueline Englert-Marchal

for them to practice, and translated for them at lessons.

Her love for America and Americans began early and remained an important part of her life to the end. As a teenager, she learned to speak English by living for a time with an English family in England. In 1938, at age sixteen, Jacqueline accompanied her father on his second American recital tour, handling all the details of taking care of him, translating for him, and managing his travel schedule. She received her baccalaureate degree in 1940 from the Lycée Victor-Duruflé on Boulevard des Invalides. English was her *forte*. Subsequently, in 1944, she earned an undergraduate degree from the Sorbonne in English literature called "Licence d'anglais." Later, she worked in Cleveland, Ohio, in the library of the Cleveland Museum, and earned a master's degree in English Literature at the Cleveland Institute of Art.

For the first part of the Second World War, the Marchal family lived in Hendaye, in the Basque country of France, which had not yet been occupied by the Germans. Jacqueline secretly made an American flag in anticipation of American troops landing on the Basque coast. When the troops marched in front of their home "Guéréza," she proudly displayed her flag and invited them in for tea, coffee, and *gateaux*.

In 1954, Jacqueline married Giuseppe Englert, a composer, organist, and pupil of her father. The religious wedding ceremony took place in Hendaye, at St. Anne's Church, with her father as organist, and Norbert Dufourcq acting as his stand-in to give her away. As a wedding present, Jean Langlais composed his suite of pieces known as the *Organ Book* for the couple. The final piece, *Pasticcio*, was built on two themes derived from their names in Braille notation. Shortly thereafter, Jacqueline and Giuseppe took up residence in a beautiful fourth-

floor Paris apartment on the Boulevard de La Tour-Maubourg, facing the dome of Les Invalides. There they continued the salon tradition, entertaining students and friends from around the world.

Among Giuseppe and Jacqueline's close friends was organ builder Victor Gonzalez. It was Gonzalez who had enlarged the house organ for Marchal at 22 rue Duroc, where he taught for so many years. Likewise, in 1952, he built and installed a similar two-manual instrument with 16 stops and 1,147 pipes for their apartment on Boulevard de La Tour-Maubourg. This became a favorite place for students to practice, and it so impressed their friends that Maurice Duruflé used it as a model for his own Gonzalez instrument.

Jacqueline continued to serve as Marchal's guide for most of his subsequent nineteen tours to America, sometimes accompanied by Giuseppe after their marriage. Among the high points of these years were Marchal's dedicatory recital in 1975, during his last U.S. concert tour, on the newly installed organ in Alice Tully Hall in New York, and many trips to Oberlin College, where he often served as guest faculty member. Even after Marchal's death, she and Giuseppe continued to travel to America, where they participated and presented papers in events such as the symposium on André Marchal and Giuseppe Englert at Duquesne University, and a conference at the University of North Texas in Denton.

Giuseppe preceded Jacqueline in death in 2007. In the years since then, she was cared for and assisted by their nephew, Michel Sneathlage, the son of Giuseppe's sister, Amalie. Michel accompanied her to the subsequent Biarritz organ competitions, in annual trips to Lausanne, Switzerland each summer, and in Paris spent many hours organizing papers and mementos of her father, mainly for the Bibliothèque Nationale's André Marchal Archives, and for her husband Giuseppe, including recordings of Marchal's performances on the French National Radio, which have recently been issued on the Solstice label as *Hommage à André Marchal*. Even during the last weeks of her life, she remained vitally interested in all aspects of organ culture and continued to be particularly sensitive to the need for diplomatic handling of the various personalities in this field.

Jacqueline was memorialized in a service of benediction, on May 4, at the parish church of Saint-Pierre du Gros Caillou in Paris. Marchal student and international recitalist Susan Landale served as organist. Music included compositions by Bach, Franck, and Brahms—the style and interpretation of which is part of the great legacy of André Marchal. In atten-

dance were about 150 friends, including three Americans: James David Christie, Jon Gillock, and Mrs. Michel Sneathlage, the wife of her nephew. Cremation followed, and her ashes were placed next to those of her husband at Père Lachaise Cemetery on May 11.

It has been my very great privilege to be counted among her friends; to be the beneficiary of many of her great kindnesses during her long life. Among the most recent of her American visitors, in July 2011, was Jeremy Jelinek, age 15, a student of mine from Pittsburgh. Jeremy wrote the following in response to news of her death:

I will never forget last summer when I visited Paris. I was so blessed to have the opportunity to meet Mme. Englert. Her sweet and kind personality was personified through her generous hospitality. Not only had she invited me into her home, but she invited me to come at my leisure. She would have let me continue to play the pipe organ in her apartment all day. She insisted that I stay and make myself at home. Meeting Mme. Englert was a once in a lifetime opportunity and event that will always be memorable and special to me. I am so sad to see a woman of such Christ-like humbleness and selflessness pass away. However, I am assured that she has been taken to a more appropriate place—a place of eternal rest where she will experience true happiness and joy. *Requiescat in pace.*

Jeremy's experience was only the latest of hundreds of students and friends over the years. All of them say, in response, "Amen."

In 1982, Jacqueline and other supporters founded the Académie André Marchal in Biarritz, France. It was charged with keeping Marchal's significant legacy alive and flourishing, and over the ensuing thirty years, it has done so. Jacqueline supported it with generous gifts of her time and treasure. It is the resolution of the members of the Académie, both French and American, that the next organ competition in performance and improvisation, to be held in Biarritz in October 2013, will be a memorial to Jacqueline. Those desiring to contribute may send a check, in dollars, to: Académie André Marchal, c/o Mr. Ralph Tilden, P. O. Box 2254, Banner Elk, NC 28604. ■

Ann Labounsky, Ph.D., is Professor and Chair of Organ and Sacred Music at the Mary Pappert School of Music, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Author of *Jean Langlais: The Man and His Music*, she studied with André Marchal and Jean Langlais in Paris from 1962–1964.

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