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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS AND STUDY OF SOME TECHNICAL AND INTERPRETIVE PROBLEMS IN SELECTED MELODIES OF DEBUSSY

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSIC EDUCATION

BY

FREDERICK SCHUYLER FOX

Norman, Oklahoma

1974

A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS AND STUDY OF SOME TECHNICAL AND INTERPRETIVE PROBLEMS IN SELECTED MÉLODIES OF DEBUSSY

by

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of the requirements for the degree of
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Claude Achille Debussy, musicien français (1862-1918), died more than half a century ago. Today he is considered one of the most internationally significant and influential composers of the early 20th century. Contemporary composers have acknowledged Debussy as one of their primary sources of inspiration through his innovations in the use of harmony, melody, timbre, and rhythm. In this regard Boulez states that:

> Far from being a historical dead end, his music contains the sources of a great deal of 20th century music.[1]

Similarly, Stravinsky wrote in 1959, "The musicians of my generation and I myself owe the most to Debussy."[2]

Debussy composed music for almost every medium of performance. His instrumental music extends from large symphonic works through a Rhapsodie for saxophone and piano to an unaccompanied flute solo. His piano music encompasses etudes of extreme technical difficulty to the most delicately drawn vignettes from the Préludes pour le piano.

---

[1]Pierre Boulez, quoted in "Debussy Rediscovered" in Time, January 5, 1970, XCV (January, 1970), p. 43.

[2]Cynthia Miller, Impressionism in Art and Music (Pleasantville, N.Y.: EAV, Inc., 1970), p. 7.

Debussy's music for the voice ranges from an operatic opus magnus through diverse choral works to the exquisite songs of which Pierre Bernac writes:

> No musician of any nationality had greater mastery in creating the mysterious alloy of music and poetry than Debussy.[1]

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide prospective performers with information and background which writers such as Bernac[2] and Teyte[3] imply as being requisite for promoting more stylistically accurate performances of Debussy's mélodies. In this endeavor the importance of the relationship of the fine arts in the Impressionistic mentality out of which the words and music of the mélodies evolved is considered. Thus, Chapter II presents a discussion of the reciprocal influences of the arts in France during the time these mélodies were created. With Chapter II serving as a reference, inferences regarding style and general performance practices of the period were drawn and applied to a descriptive /performance analysis of the selected mélodies. The analysis for each mélodie thus serves as a point of departure for the solving of particular vocal and pianistic performance problems as well as a

---

[1]Pierre Bernac, The Interpretation of French Song (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1970), p. 154.

[2]Bernac, p. 35.

[3]Maggie Teyte, Star on the Door (London: Garden City Press, Ltd., 1958), pp. 54-63.

reference for interpretive consideration.

Criteria for Descriptive Analysis

Rather than a purely formal analysis for theoretical purposes, descriptive analysis is viewed as a means of providing the performer with an orientation to the mélodies from the point of view of the singer and pianist.

Criteria employed in the descriptive analysis of the selected mélodies are listed as follows:

Form and Structure

1. Innovative treatment of old forms
2. New treatment of developmental ideas
3. New forms

Tonality

1. Keys and key relationships
2. Vague tonality structure
3. Innovative attitude toward cadences
4. Modulation

Scales and Melody

1. Modes
2. Whole-tone scale (and fragments)
3. Chromatic scales
4. Pentatonic scales
5. Melodic contours

6. Intervallic relationships

7. Phrase lengths

8. Melodic accent placement

Rhythm and Meter

1. Rhythm

2. Syncopation

3. Ostinato

4. Agogic accents

5. Rhythm in text setting

6. Meter

7. Tempo indications

These criteria were established on the basis of other studies done on Debussy's music (Waite[1], Park[2], Barkema[3], and Van Appledorn[4]), and the writer's experience as a performer and teacher. As a result, both general stylistic tendencies and specific problematical instances in Debussy's compositional techniques were established and/or isolated.

---

[1]Ellen Waite, "The Harmonic Equipment of Claude Debussy" (unpublished Master's thesis, Eastman School of Music, 1932).

[2]Raymona Park, "The Later Style of Claude Debussy" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1967).

[3]Martha Barkema, "The Influence of Paul Verlaine, Symbolist Poet, on the French Art Song" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1967).

[4]M. Jeanne Van Appledorn, "A stylistic Study of Claude Debussy's Opera Pelléas et Mélisande", (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, Eastman School of Music, 1966).

This procedure was implemented in order to facilitate treatment of pedagogical and performance problems encountered in the mélodies.

Criteria for Performance Analysis

The factors considered in the performance analysis of the selected mélodies are listed as follows:

Pianistic Problems

1. Dynamic levels
2. Pedaling
3. Text-painting

Vocal Problems

1. Intervallic relationships in vocal line
2. Harmonic rhythm and vocal line
3. Phrasing
4. Guides for singing in French

Authority for the interpretive suggestions regarding performance problems in the study was based primarily on definitive recordings by Debussy and Garden[1], Danco and Agosti[2],

---

[1]Claude Debussy. Ariettes Oubliées, No. 3, performed be Mary Garden, soprano, and Claude Debussy, piano. (Enregistré en 1904). Pathe OVD 49-323.

[2]Claude Debussy. Ariettes Oubliées, performed by Suzanne Danco, soprano, and Guido Agosti, piano. London LPS-336.

Tourel and Kahn[1], and Souzay and Baldwin[2].

Need for the Study

In recent years there has been an increase in the programming of Debussy's music on symphony concerts, chamber music programs, and piano recitals. However, during several years of voice study and teaching on the college level and six years of professional performing, the writer has observed a marked absence of the greater part of Debussy's mélodies from most vocal performances including professional concerts, and faculty and student recitals. This observation has been corroborated with members of voice faculties in universities in Oklahoma, California, and New York, among others, as well as with professional singers and accompanists.

Though Debussy's songs have received more recognition in recent years, the majority of the songs is apparently not performed as widely as the songs might merit.

---

[1]Claude Debussy. Cinq Poèmes de Baudelaire, performed by Jennie Tourel, mezzo-soprano, and Erich Itor Kahn, piano. Columbia Masterworks, 4158, 1949.

[2]Claude Debussy. Fêtes Galantes II, Mandoline, Le Jet D'Eau, performed by Gerard Souzay, Baritone, and Dalton Baldwin, piano. Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft LPM 18758, 1961.

Teyte[1] and Bernac[2] indicate that the reason for this may be due to the technical difficulty inherent in the music as well as the lack of certain specialized knowledge required of the performers (i.e., Symbolistic poetic idioms, French diction, and general familiarity with Impressionistic style).

Regarding the aspect of Impressionistic style, Moore comments thus:

> Impressionism in music was allied to a similar movement in painting and literature. Opposed to intellectualism, overstatement, rhetoric, complexity, and the grand manner, it substituted a music of greater simplicity with more reliance upon purely sensuous effect, unpretentious in aim, and smaller in proportion.[3]

Bernac draws attention to particular qualities which performers of Impressionistic melodies should cultivate when he states:

> . . . the singer and the pianist must succeed in combining precision with lyricism. But it must be controlled lyricism, for just as the French composer never gives way to sentimentality or emphasis and abominates overstatement, so in the same way his interpreters must have a sense of moderation of expression, a critical capacity, which after all is no more than one of the most vigorous forms of intelligence.[4]

---

[1]Maggie Teyte, Star on the Door (London: Garden City Press, Ltd., 1958), pp. 54-63.

[2]Bernac, p. 35.

[3]Douglas Moore, A Guide to Musical Styles (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1958), p. 256.

[4]Bernac, p. 35.

In her writings concerning the performance of Debussy's mélodies Teyte comments:

> The essence of art lies deep beneath the surface, and the notes printed on a sheet of music do not tell you the whole of the composer's meaning, let alone that of the poet. The student must study the poem of a French song particularly deeply if he is to interpret the song successfully.[1]

Moore[2], Weinstock[3], Lockspeiser[4], and Thompson[5] have expressed ideas similar to those of Teyte and Bernac. For the most part, however, published material on the songs has not been directed toward making available a detailed study or edition with a descriptive analysis through which interpretive notes on the execution of the songs is provided, the particular technical problems in the accompaniments explored, or their relation to the impressionistic mentality examined.

In regard to the term "Impressionistic mentality", Webster[6] indicates that this attitude of thought involved the literary, visual, and musical arts in France, including

---

[1]Maggie Teyte, Star On The Door (London: Garden City Press, LTD., 1958), pp. 56-57.

[2]Gerald Moore, Singer and Accompanist (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), pp. 38-52.

[3]Herbert Weinstock, "On Singing Debussy," Saturday Review, XLVIII, (January, 1955), p. 61.

[4]Edward Lockspeiser, Debussy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1972), pp. 117-142.

[5]Oscar Thompson, Debussy: Man and Artist (New Yorks: Dover Publications, Inc., 1937), pp. 276-306.

[6]Webster's Third New International Dictionary (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1961), 1137.

Symbolist poetry and Impressionistic painting. Research revealed that Debussy endeavored to achieve effects in music which were similar to those sought by Impressionist painters and Symbolist poets. These effects included fleeting impressions or images created indirectly through subtle nuance and suggestion rather than direct description.

Concerning Debussy's musical style, Nallin states:

> Almost obsessively concerned with the conveyence of evocative ideas, Claude Debussy brought the allusiveness of Symbolist poets and the suggestivity of Impressionist painters to music.[1]

Cooper, enlarging on this idea, comments on a general tendency among artists during the Impressionistic period:

> Impressionism, symbolism and poetic realism merged together in an atmosphere in which enthusiasm, curiosity and intellectual passion competed. Painters, poets, and sculptors all took their material to pieces, as it were, examined it, questioned it, changed and remade it according to their own will. Words, sounds, colors and lines all must express new shades of meaning, new feelings.[2]

In amplification of this concept as related to music, Machlis points out that:

> The symbolist, like the impressionist painters, turned away from the pathos of the romantic movement. They discarded the story element in poetry; they scorned the moral, whether expressed or implied. Rejecting the passionate humanism of Byron and Shelley,

---

[1]Walter E. Nallin, The Musical Idea (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), p. 208.

[2]Martin Cooper, French Music From the Death of Berlioz to the Death of Faure (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 38.

> Hugo and Lamartine, they turned to nebulous suggestion and dreamlike evocation of mood. Theirs was an exquisite idiom nourished by art rather than by life, whose excessive refinement tended to replace objective reality by the private world of the poet. Symbolism was a hothouse flower that aptly represented the end of the century, with its longing for enchantment and escape.
>
> The new esthetic doctrines could not but make a deep impression on such musicians as were sensitive to painting and poetry. In consequence, the quest for subtilization of means and refinement of vocabulary soon passed over from painting and poetry to music.[1]

Machlis further states that:

> For Debussy, as for Monet and Verlaine, art was a sensuous rather than ethical or intellectual experience.[2]

There seems, then, to be sufficient evidence to indicate that a study of the background and characteristics of Impressionism, as seen through the interrelationship of music, painting, and literature of that period, may be helpful in contributing toward more stylistically authentic performances of the songs of Debussy. This information, applied through a descriptive analytical outline of selected mélodies of Debussy with interpretive suggestions is needed in order to encourage more frequent and accurate performances of these works.

---

[1]Joseph Machlis, Introduction to Contemporary Music (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1961), pp. 112-113.

[2]Machlis, p. 113.

Definitions of Terms

Impressionism. This term originated in France in the latter part of the nineteenth century specifically in regard to the visual arts. The term "Impressionism" was first used, derisively, by an art critic in 1874 to denounce an exhibition of paintings by a group of French artists whose work had been rejected by the official solon. (The particular painting this term was intended to censure was a canvas by Claude Monet entitled, "Impression: Sunrise.")[1] The term Impressionism later became generally utilized to denote the collective revolutionary movements in France in the fine arts, including literature and music, from about 1880-1915.[2]

Thus, in the visual arts, the term Impressionism refers to a theory or practice in painting especially among the French painters in the late 1800's of depicting the natural appearances of objects by means of dabs or strokes of primary unmixed colors in order to simulate actual reflected light, the subject matter being generally outdoor scenes painted directly.[3]

In literature the term is inextricably bound to

---

[1]John Rewald, The History of Impressionism (New York: The Museum of Modern Art; Distributed by Simon and Schuster, 1946), pp. 6-8.

[2]Webster, p. 1137.

[3]Webster, p. 1137.

the French "Symbolists," including Baudelaire, Verlaine, and Mallarmé. Impressionism in literature refers to the depiction of scene, emotion, or character by the use of detail that is sometimes brief and essential but often of great intricacy and colorfulness, or effectiveness more by evoking subjective and sensory impressions (as of mood and atmosphere) than by recreating or representing an objective reality.[1]

Apel defines Impressionism in music as a musical school of thought of the late 19th and early 20th centuries represented chiefly by Claude Debussy in France. This music is characterized by understatement as opposed to the prevailing exhibitionism and dramatic dynamism of German music of that period.

> Prominent characteristics of Impressionism are: unresolved dissonances, mostly triads with added seconds, fourths, sixths, sevenths; the use of chords, consonant as well as dissonant, in parallel motion: parallel chords (or gliding chords); the whole-tone scale in melodic as well as chordal combinations; frequent use of the tritone; modality, particularly avoidance of "direction" in the melodic contour (preference of vague "zigzag" design); irregular and fragmentary construction of phrases.[2]

Mélodie. The term "mélodie" was used throughout this study to denote French art songs cultivated near the

---

[1]Webster, p. 1137.

[2]Willi Apel, Harvard Dictionary of Music (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 350.

end of the nineteenth century as an artistic form. Bernac[1] holds that this is the correct term for French art songs as opposed to the term "chanson"; the two main definitions of which are:

1. Popular song, of a short, strophic nature; mostly of an amorous character.[2]

2. "French Chansons" usually refers in historical writing to the 16th century polyphonic songs written in the imitative style of the contemporary motet.[3]

In French there exists a distinct difference between the terms "mélodie" and "chanson." Bernac points out that:

> "Mélodie," which is the French equivalent of "Lied," denotes serious song, concert song; whereas "Chanson" refers to a folk song, a popular song or night-club song. If some composers of mélodies occasionally use the word "chanson" in the title of their songs, it is to suggest that they are intentionally in a very simple style, or in folk-song style: i.e. Poulenc: "Chansons Villageoises." It may also be because the word "chanson" has been used in the title of the poem: Duparc: "Chanson Triste."[4]

Thus, for the purpose of this study the term "mélodie" was used to denote Debussy's songs.

Descriptive analysis. The term "descriptive analysis" for the purposes of this study implies a descriptive process of examining the mélodies from a performer's point of view. Stylistic components including

---

[1]Bernac, p. xiii.

[2]Apel, p. 130.

[3]Apel, p. 130.

[4]Bernac, pp. xii, xiv.

form and structure, tonality, scales and melody, rhythm and meter, length and vocal range were analyzed and discussed with the intention of providing the prospective performer an overview of each mélodie. Results disclosed by this procedure then formed the basis from which to proceed with specific interpretive suggestions concerned with the above criteria as well as general interpretive guidelines.

Related Research

A survey of dissertation abstracts and a Datrix Reference listing prepared for the writer by University Microfilms revealed that three studies involving Debussy's mélodies have been completed. Two of these studies, the first by Waite[1] and the second by Barkema[2], are dated and bear little relation to this study. The writer was refused permission by Waite to obtain a copy of her study. The original study was subsequently obtained through interlibrary loan, however, and examined. It is a brief master's thesis containing material about which more recent and detailed information is available.

---

[1]Ellen Waite, "The Harmonic Equipment of Claude Debussy" (unpublished master's thesis, Eastman School of Music, 1932).

[2]Martha Barkema, "The Influence of Paul Verlaine, Symbolist Poet, on the French Art Song" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1967).

Barkema was concerned, primarily, with a statistical analysis of Verlaine's poetry. The study contains detailed tables and graphs regarding the numbers of strophes, syllables, lines and enjambments of Verlaine's poems with certain relationships established such as the number of measures of music present in respective settings of the poems. There seems to be little direct application of the poetic analyses to the stated purpose of the present study.

The third study was completed by Park[1] in 1967 and seems to provide more viable material than the studies done in the thirties. While primarily concerned with Debussy's instrumental music, certain general conclusions drawn by Park may be applied to the vocal music as well. Park found that in Debussy's music "the forms are often diminutive and tripartite," and that outlines tend to be blurred.[2] He also determined that significant structural techniques include:

> incessant repetition, a multitude of variations techniques, cyclic themes, through composed vocal lines with recurrent accompanying materials, and superimposed forms.[3]

---

[1]Raymona Park, "The Later Style of Claude Debussy" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1967).

[2]Park, p. xi.

[3]Park, p. xi.

Park continues:

> The infinite variety of materials includes diatonic, modal, chromatic, whole-tone, and pentatonic structures, often within a single work, creating ambiguity of mode and tonal center.[1]

Park further contends that in this music "chords are generally tertian" but that "tones are often openly spaced," and that chords usually contain added tones.[2] Also regarding Debussy's harmony, Park reported that "significant intervals include the perfect fifth, major second, and tritone" and that static harmony results from "extended pedals, ostinatos, and repetitive chords."[3]

According to Park, rhythmic characteristics in Debussy's music include:

> hemiola, subtle syncopations, cross-rhythms, nondescript and elusive patterns--all within flexible tempos. Meter is generally constant.[4]

"Timbre and articulation," Park wrote, "are prime musical factors." This is particularly true in Debussy's vocal music, contends Park, where the composer strives to preserve

> the inflections of the French texts, which are often set to an undulating, recitative-like melody moving conjunctly in a narrow range.[5]

---

[1]Park, p. xi.

[2]Park, p. 2.

[3]Park, p. 2.

[4]Park, p. 2.

[5]Park, p. 2.

Park points out that subtle nuances are required in Debussy's music and that there exists

> a plethora of expressive markings of which "doux," "leger," and "expressif" are particularly characteristic. The dynamic scale remains low.[1]

Park maintains that Debussy's "fascination with sonority," his "response to visual stimulus," and his "preoccupation with exotic idioms" was significant.[2] Park concluded that Debussy's music is "characterized by improvisatory qualities, ambiguity, individualism, and a striking expressiveness."[3]

Park's findings provided insight to the present study and have been substantiated and compared concerning particular aspects of form, tonality, and rhythm. The present study, being restricted to the examination of Debussy's mélodies, applies an analytical procedure of a more descriptive nature than Park's, with the specific purpose of providing interpretive suggestions for prospective performers.

A study by Van Appledorn[4] on Debussy's opera, Pelléas and Mélisande," examined the opera in detail regarding the construction of scenes and acts, the elaborate

---

[1]Park, p. 2.

[2]Park, p. 3.

[3]Park, p. 3.

[4]M. Jeanne Van Appledorn, "A stylistic Study of Claude Debussy's Opera Pelléas et Mélisande", (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Eastman School of Music, 1966).

system of leitmotifs, the cyclic recurrence of keys, and character development. A wealth of detailed information is presented in the Van Appledorn study such as the number of seventh and ninth chords utilized by Debussy in the total of 11,630 beats in the opera. But there is very little in the study regarding vocalization. Concerning this Appledorn stated:

> The voice parts do not participate in the leitmotiv mélodies, but rather adhere to a recitative style following the rising and falling inflections of the French words, and employing an abundance of repeated notes.[1]

In general the Van Appledorn study has little relation to this study beyond confirming certain observations of Debussy's style. These included the predominant scale forms utilized by Debussy such as the Dorian and Aeolian modes, whole-tone, and pentatonic scales and fragments.

In this regard, Thompson points out a lack of similarity between Debussy's opera and his mélodies.

> . . . these songs are not dramatic declarations. They do not purport to tell a story in music or to illustrate an episode. They are not in motion, like a drama. For the brief period of their duration, they are static. As Debussy put no song in his one music-drama, he put no music-drama in his fifty-odd songs. Instead of action there is shining fantasy--and impeccable taste.[2]

---

[1]Van Appledorn, p. iii.

[2]Thompson, p. 279.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to a representative number of mélodies by Debussy utilizing texts by the Symbolist poets: Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Paul Verlaine. Of the 57 published mélodies by Debussy, this study included 18 selected mélodies. Musical editions utilized for this study were the International Music Company Edition of 43 Debussy Songs for Low and Medium Voice, Number 1136, Edited by Sergius Kagen and published in New York City in 1961; and the Durand & Cie Edition of Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé, Claude Debussy, published in Paris in 1913. The works chosen represent a wide span of Debussy's active career and the texts are among the most characteristic works of the three Symbolist poets selected for consideration in this study.

The outcomes of the study are limited to the mélodies selected for inclusion in the study, the descriptive analysis criteria, the performance problems criteria, the writer's performance orientation, and the construct of the Impressionistic mentality provided in Chapter II.

Summary

In the preceding sections of the present chapter, it was the writer's intent to draw attention to the fact that Debussy's mélodies are not performed as widely as they might merit.

The primary purpose of the study was that of providing prospective performers of the selected mélodies with pertinent data on the reciprocal influences of the fine arts in France during the Impressionistic period, along with an analytical orientation to the songs as an aid to pedagogy and performance.

Criteria for the descriptive analysis were set forth as being concerned with form and structure, tonality, scales and melody, rhythm and meter, and the respective length and vocal range of each mélodie.

Criteria for suggestions on performance practices were set forth as treating both pianistic and vocal problems. Authority for performance suggestions was said to derive from definitive recordings by Debussy/Garden, Danco/Agosti, Tourel/Kahn, and Souzay/Baldwin.

Since Moore, Bernac, and Teyte point up the importance of an understanding of the "Impressionistic mentality" as being requisite for more stylistically authentic performances of this music, the need for an early chapter devoted to an examination of this area was discussed.

Following the section on the need for a chapter on the "Impressionistic mentality", terms peculiar to this study were defined.

Related studies by Waite, Barkema, Park, and Van Appledorn were cited and discussed as to their respective relativity to the present study.

Limitations of the study were stated as including the restriction of the study to eighteen representative mélodies with texts by the Symbolist poets: Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Verlaine. Further limitations cited included the descriptive analysis criteria, the performance problems criteria, the writer's performance orientation, and the construct of the Impressionistic mentality provided in Chapter II.

CHAPTER II

THE RECIPROCAL INFLUENCES OF THE FINE ARTS IN FRANCE DURING THE IMPRESSIONISTIC PERIOD

As the 19th century drew to a close, creative artists in France took a stand against the emotional excesses, "the passionate, violent outpourings of the Romanticists."[1] Creators of the visual and literary arts were abandoning accepted art forms which had enjoyed official approval in favor of methods which to them constituted a fresher, more relevant approach to artistic expression. "The impressionist painters were desirous of discarding everything in the romantic tradition that had hardened into academic formula."[2] Monet, Manet, Pissaro, Renoir, Cezanne, Degas, and Sisley were among the leading painters who came to reject the grandiose style of the romantic realists in favor of their new infatuation with the effects and scientific aspects of light. Influenced by the advent of the camera, the new generation of painters sought to convey momentary glimpses of scenes from life

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[1]Milo Wold and Edmund Cykler, An Introduction to Music and Art in the Western World (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co., Pub., 1967), p. 232.

[2]Joseph Machlis, Introduction to Contemporary Music (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1961), p. 111.

as they appeared just at a given instant under a specific atmospheric condition.

> They essayed to capture on canvas not the exact representation of things, but the artist's momentary impression of them, and to convey that with all spontaneity and freshness. To this end they took painting out of the studio into the open air. They looked at nature with an innocent eye. They saw the world in a continuous state of flux, its outlines melting in a luminous haze. Nor did they mix their pigments on the palette, as had been the custom hitherto. Instead they juxtaposed bits of pure color on the canvas, leaving it to the eye of the beholder to do the mixing. The result was a fluidity of line and an iridescence of color such as had never been seen before.
>
> The impressionists were repelled by the heroic themes of the romantic painters. The hero of their painting was not man, but light.[1]

The work which gave the movement in the visual arts its name (Impressionism) was done by Claude Monet (1840-1926) and first exhibited in Paris in 1863. His painting was entitled "Impression: Sunrise." Louis Leroy, a noted Paris art critic, snapped up the hint and took full advantage of it by deriding the entire exhibition in print as an "Exposition des Impressionistes;" stating that it was "only too easy to attract attention by painting worse than than anyone has hitherto dared to paint."[2]

Official rejection from the recognized salons placed the artists in a unique position--to be shared, as will be shown, by the poets and musicians.

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[1]Machlis, pp. 110-111.

[2]George Slocombe, Rebels of Art (New York: Arts and Decoration Book Society, 1939), p. 60.

In literature there seems to have been an almost simultaneous artistic revolution in process which coincided with the Impressionistic movement in painting.

"Towards the end of the 1870's new movements began to appear unequivocally in literature as well as in painting."[1] A group of French writers including Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine banded together in a reaction against the established literary styles of their day. These poets, who were to become known as "Symbolists," were unanimous in acclaiming their precursor to be Baudelaire.[2] The symbolists tried to create poetry in which "moral preachings" and "passionate emotional outpourings" were replaced by more suggestive and subtle poetic images. Rather than overwhelm the reader with explicit description and detail, the symbolists:

> tried to impart the essence of a poetic experience not by reproducing facts but by presenting the symbol and by exploiting the metaphor.[3]

Baudelaire, who had an intense interest in the mystical works of Edgar Allen Poe and who had introduced

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[1]Martin Cooper, French Music (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 33.

[2]"E.M.So.", "The Symbolists," Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1961), p. 559.

[3]David Ewen, The World of 20th Century Music (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968), p.196.

them through translation to France, states his philosophy of the synthesis of the arts thus:

> I have often heard it said that music could not boast of translating anything whatsoever with the same certainty as words or painting. This is true up to a certain point, but it is not quite true. It translates in its own way and by the means at its disposal. In music, as in painting and in writing, there is always a gap filled in by the imagination of the hearer.
>
> The really surprising thing would be if sound could not suggest colour, if colour could not give an idea of melody, and if sound and colour were unable to translate ideas; since things have expressed themselves by means of a reciprocal analogy from the day on which God pronounced the world a complex indivisible totality.[1]

Here in Baudelaire's own words, then, appears to be a suggestion of the mutual influences in the fine arts as a particular aspect of his own philosophy.

In 1889 the French journalist, Albert Aurier, attended an exhibit of paintings by the "revolutionary" artists in Paris. His review of what he saw there was published under the title, "Le Moderniste," and was noteworthy in that he apparently tried to be somewhat sympathetic toward the ends the painters were striving to achieve.

> But he did more than merely comment on the works: he linked them with Paris's foremost literary movement at the time by detecting in the painter's work and theories a trend which ran closely parallel to Symbolism

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[1] Raymond Rudoff, The Belle Epoque--Paris In The Nineties (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1972), p. 119.

> in poetry and prose. ...Just as Impressionism...represented revolt against past standards and conventions in painting, so Symbolism represented an attempt to shatter conventions in poetry and a determination to free poetic language from the mere task of conveying precise meanings.[1]

There is evidence which suggests that the Impressionist artists and Symbolist poets formed alliances of friendship, assembling together at perodic intervals to discuss mutual artistic interests:

> To keep in touch to some extent with the painters and their friends, like Duret, Mallarmé, Huysmans et al., decided to meet at least once every month in Paris at "impressionist dinners"....[2]

The visual and literary arts were well into a revolution so pointed that influence from the new thought began to reach outside the intimate circle of originators.

> Music, as often happens, lagged a little behind; but the times were ripe for changes which, if not revolutionary in form, were at any rate so fundamental that they represented little short of revolution in actual fact.[3]

Debussy was just returning from Rome where he had been engaged in activities pursuant to being the current winner of the Prix de Rome awarded by the Paris Conservatory. At that time Mallarmé was twenty years older than Debussy, and was already a man forty-five years old when Debussy

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[1]Rudoff, p. 119.

[2]John Rewald, The History of Impressionism (New York: Museum of Modern Art (Dist. by Simon and Schuster, 1946), p. 372.

[3]Martin Cooper, French Music (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), p. 33.

began attending the soirées on Tuesday evenings in Mallarmé's home. It was at Mallarmé's that Debussy met Verlaine, "One of those who thought of music as "colored hearing" and of "orchestrated verse."[1]

There is evidence which suggests that at these soirées Debussy began to relate more and more to the new philosophies being assimilated by his colleagues in the Fine Arts. The painters were advancing theories of artistic expression which deemphasized formal structure and design. Their paintings were characterized by the lack of dark, distinct outlines. Soft, gentle, hazy planes of color juxtaposed by the suggestion of reflected light on various objects formed the technique of Monet, Renoir, and Cezanne.[2]

Direct parallels may be observed in the poetry of the Symbolists. The Symbolist poets felt that not only the idea of the poem was important but also the sensuous sounds of the words:

> The Symbolists were interested in the music of versification; words were not only to be the carriers of ideas but were also to be used for evoking moods and sensations in much the same way that music does.[3]

In describing the works of Mallarmé, Olivero states that:

> He strove to capture the most elusive impressions, to isolate and intensify them; and, like tinklings of a fairy harp, his exquisite strains succeed in evoking

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[1]Oscar Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist (New York: Dover Publications, 1967), pp. 101-02.

[2]Rewald, p. 207.

[3]Ewen, p. 199.

> those faint, delicate images which hover on the verge of consciousness--symbols and tokens of half forgotten joys and sorrows.[1]

Mallarmé was apparently a writer who was very sensitive to all capacities of expression to be found in his medium. As a poet he discovered "new suggestions in the sounds and musical arrangements of words."[2]

According to Mallarmé "indefiniteness in description, precision in emotion" were distinct characteristics of the poetic art. Olivero states also of Mallarmé's lyrics that "the outlines of their images are indeterminate, but the rendering of emotion is intense and precise."[3] Olivero quotes Mallarmé as stating:

> I dream of a new style in poetry, clear and sober; only a few details will suffice to paint an ideal, placid landscape.[4]

In an obvious parallel to the above, Debussy is reputed to have expressed the following during one of the Tuesday evening gatherings of the Impressionists and Symbolists at Mallarmé's home:

> I should like to see the creation--I, myself, shall achieve it--of a kind of music free from themes and motives, or formed on a single continuous theme, which nothing interrupts and which never returns upon itself. Then there will be a logical, compact, deductive development. There will not be, between two restatements

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[1]Federico Olivero, Studies in Modern Poetry (London: Humphrey Milford, 1921), pp. 70-71.

[2]Olivero, p. 68.

[3]Olivero, p. 69.

[4]Olivero, p. 70.

> of the same characteristic theme, a hasty and superfluous 'filling in!' The development will no longer be that amplification of material, that professional rhetoric which is the badge of excellent training, but it will be given a more universal and essential psychic conception.[1]

This statement was apparently made by Debussy after listening at length to the praises of Wagner by various members of the gathering. Earlier in his life Debussy had been enamoured of Wagnerian ideals[2] but the main body of his mature works was created after a change in attitude occurred in Debussy in regard to Wagnerian principles:

> . . . He came to hate Wagner as much as he had first admired him, describing his music as "strange, beautiful, seductive, and impure"--remarking of a performance of Das Rheingold.[3]

Landormy states that, prior to Debussy, music in France had become (because of the Germanic influence) an art "sans elevation, sans poesie, et sans nuances."[4]

Debussy was becoming increasingly repelled by the German romantic school with its "indulgence in excessive sentiment, its love for expounding metaphysical ideas..." and its "preferences for inflated structures."[5] His ideal was to create music of a distinctive "French" character

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[1]Thompson, p. 103.

[2]Lockspeiser, pp. 26-27.

[3]George Copeland, "Debussy, The Man I Knew" Atlantic Monthly, Volume 195, January, 1955.

[4]Vallas, p. 64.

[5]Copeland, p. 38.

"replete with exquisite detail, objectivity, both suggestive and controlled,"[1] recalling an earlier French musician, Rameau, who "in a genre essentially national, conscientiously served music."[2]

George Copeland, the American pianist who was among the first to perform Debussy's piano music in the United States, spent four months in almost daily contact with the French composer just prior to the First World War.[3] In an article appearing in the January 1955 issue of Atlantic Monthly Copeland reveals insights into the personality of the composer when he states that:

> . . . one of the basic factors in Claude Debussy's genius was... his ability to eliminate the obvious, the unnecessary, and the trivial, and in this way to conserve much vitality.[4]

According to Copeland, the composers Debussy respected were J.S. Bach, Scarlatti, Rameau, Mozart, d'Indy, Chausson, and Ravel. Debussy believed that:

> Beethoven had terrifically profound things to say but did not know how to say them, because he was imprisoned in a web of incessant restatement and of German aggressiveness.[5]

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[1]Vallas, p. 64.

[2]Vallas, p. 64.

[3]Copeland, p. 35.

[4]Copeland, p. 36.

[5]Copeland, p. 37.

Copeland affirms that Debussy's revolutionary concepts of composition were "encompassed in Symbolist ideals, requiring the establishment of tonal unity, with a complete lack of emphasis on melody or theme."[1] He states further that Debussy strove to eliminate emphasizing particular chords that would underline the harmonic framework. Traditional developmental techniques and cadences or "detachment from measure to measure" were things Debussy sought to avoid.[2]

> The objective was, rather, a blending of patterns, producing a fluidity and a transparency of tone which resulted from "clusters of chords," arising from the basic fact that Symbolist music never asserts, nor describes a specific image, but strives only to evoke and reflect.[3]

Copeland quotes Debussy himself as saying that to arrive at this end "the harmonics must seem to dissolve, even in the moment of emergence."[4]

In concluding the present essay on the reciprocal influences of the fine arts in Paris in the late 19th century with resulting influences on the music of Debussy, the writer submits closing paragraphs from Copeland's article and a concluding statement by Serge Koussevitzky as points of departure in an exploration into the realm of performance

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[1]Copeland, p. 38.

[2]Copeland, p. 38.

[3]Copeland, p. 38.

[4]Copeland, p. 38.

problems in the selected mélodies which follow:

> It is not enough to say that this music was in direct contradiction to the formalism and incessant restatement of the Germanic period, of which the current Wagnerian cult became, to Debussy, a sort of caricature. It went far beyond this, and became an artistic path-breaking on the threshold of a new world, opening up fresh vistas of sound experimentation and of sensuous hearing.[1]

"Musically," Copeland points out, "Debussy felt himself to be a kind of auditory 'sensitive'." Debussy apparently not only "heard sounds that no other ear was able to register" but discovered ways to express things that were not ordinarily said.[2] Copeland adds that Debussy

> had an almost fanatical conviction that a musical score does not begin with the composer, but that it emerges out of space, through centuries of time, passes before him, and goes on, fading into the distance (as it came) with no sense of finality.[3]

It was in this way, states Copeland, that Debussy discovered and created many innovative sounds:

> . . . sounds to represent distance and great height, as in the 'looking down" in Soiree dans Grenade when one hears fragments of sound in the near, middle and far distance, suggesting the Habanera; sound that expresses a remote and terrible antiquity, as in L'Apres midi d'un Faune; and sounds representing the luminosity of light, the transparence of water, the stateliness of cloud motion, and darkness, like night. Strangest of all, he invented a sound to express silence--which is, in itself, complete absence of sound.[4]

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[1]Copeland, p. 37.

[2]Copeland, p. 37.

[3]Copeland, p. 37.

[4]Copeland, p. 38.

Debussy's genius, then, seemed to lie in "extracting the essence of things."[1] Copeland further states that:

> Although Debussy never visited Spain, his Iberia is more Spanish than any Spanish music that has ever been written by her countrymen. Not essentially what is termed a "nature lover", he was still able to reduce to a kind of luminous distillation the aspects of nature (moonlight, the sea, the clouds, the sun, the forest) as they affected himself in his interior life--an artistic achievement, indeed, for one who so desperately shunned sentimentality, romanticism, and the obvious![2]

Recounting an intimate conversation between himself and Debussy regarding performance of the composer's music, Copeland writes:

> When I asked him why so few people were able to play his music, Debussy replied, after some reflection: "I think it is because they try to impose themselves upon the music. It is necessary to abandon yourself completely, and let the music do as it will with you--to be a vessel through which it passes." The effect of this music upon the listener is comparable to that experience when watching banked clouds form and re-form in the changing light of a hot afternoon. It evokes a procession of images, insinuated rather than seen--the shimmering reflection of a dream, only glimpsed, but never to be forgotten.[3]

And finally, Koussevitzky summarizes what he feels is paramount in any approach to Debussy's music:

> It has been charged that Debussy's music expresses nothing but an aimless play of sound tones. This is of course wrong, but it is the secret of his music that actually it not only 'expresses nothing,' but it simply does not exist for those who hear it, if their attitude toward it at the moment of listening is not one of active awareness. This is the reason its execution is so difficult. The mystic essence of this music

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[1]Copeland, p. 38.

[2]Copeland, p. 38.

[3]Copeland, p. 38.

lies in the fact that it becomes a reality only inasmuch as there is created within the performers and the audience that state of mind which called these sounds into existence.[1]

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[1]Serge Koussevitzky, "Debussy: The Resurrected Pan" Atlantic Monthly, Volume 169, June 1942, 743.

CHAPTER III

THE SELECTED MÉLODIES

The works selected for analysis in this study were restricted to eighteen mélodies of Debussy set to texts by Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), Paul Verlaine (1844-1896), and Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898), all Symbolist poets. In all, Debussy composed 57 mélodies which were published and 22 known mélodies which have not been published.[1] The mélodies selected for this study were chosen as encompassing a wide span of Debussy's active career as a composer. The texts chosen are among the most characteristic works of the three Symbolist poets selected for consideration in this study.

The first of these mélodies was composed in 1880 and the last in 1913. Four cycles have been selected, and a single mélodie, Mandoline, the poem of which was originally a part of the texts of the Ariettes Oubliées by Verlaine but which Debussy did not include in his cycle.

The selected mélodies, with the date indicating the year each was composed, are as follows:

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[1]Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1964), pp. 628-629.

Baudelaire Poems

CINQ POÈMES DE BAUDELAIRE[1] (1887-1899)

1. Le balcon (1888)
2. Harmonie du soir (1889)
3. Le jet d'eau (1889)
4. Recueillement (1888)
5. La mort des amants (1887)

Verlaine Poems

Mandoline (1880-1883)

ARIETTES OUBLIÉES (1885-1888)

1. C'est l'extase (1888)
2. Il pleure dans mon coeur (1888)
3. L'ombre des arbres (1888)
4. Chevaux de bois (c. 1885)
5. Green (1888)
6. Spleen (1888)

FÊTES GALANTES: BOOK II (1904)

1. Les ingénus (1904)

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[1]Maurice Dumesnil, in an article entitled "New Insights to the Masterv of Debussy" in the Etude of May. 1940, relates some difficulties Debussy experienced in getting his music published and in the case of the Baudelaire Mélodies, in hearing them performed. Dumesnil states that Debussy suffered "an additional stroke of hard luck [with his "Poèmes de Baudelaire"] in that "no singer consented to present these songs in public. They were too much above the musicianship of the average interpreter, and their unusual range and awkward intervals were enough to scare off even the more experienced vocalists."

2. Le faune (1904)

3. Colloque sentimental (1904)

Mallarmé Poems

TROIS POÈMES DE STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ (1913)

1. Soupir (1913)

2. Placet futile (1913)

3. Éventail (1913)

Debussy composed only one mélodie after the Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé. It was Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maison for which Debussy himself was the poet and which Pierre Bernac states is "rather more a 'chanson' than a 'mélodie'...."[1]

Bernac, p. 216.

CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF AND INTERPRETIVE NOTES ON SELECTED MÉLODIES WITH TEXTS BY BAUDELAIRE

Cinq Poèmes de Baudelaire

1. Le Balcon

Mère des souvenirs, maîtresse des maîtresses,
O toi, tous mes plaisirs! ô toi, tous mes devoirs!
Tu te rappelleras la beauté des caresses,
La douceur du foyer et le charme des soirs,
Mère des souvenirs, maîtresse des maîtresses,
Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon
Et les soirs au balcon, voilés de vapeur rose.
Que ton sein m'était doux!
Que ton coeur m'était bon!
Nous avons dit souvent d'impérissables choses
Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon
Que les soleils sont beaux par les chaudes soirées!
Que l'espace est profond! que le coeur est puissant!
En me penchant vers toi, reine des adorées,
Je croyais respirer le parfum de ton sang.
Que les soleils sont beaux par les chaudes soirées!
La nuit s'épaississait ainsi qu'une cloison,
Et mes yeux dans le noir devinaient tes prunelles,
Et je buvais ton souffle, O douceur, ô poison!
Et tes pieds s'endormaient dans mes mains fraternelles,
La nuit s'épaississait ainsi qu'une cloison.
Je sais l'art d'évoquer les minutes heureuses,
Et revis mon passé blotti dans tes genoux.
Car à quoi bon chercher tes beautés langoureuses
Ailleurs qu'en ton cher corps et qu'en ton coeur si doux?
Je sais l'art d'évoquer les minutes heureuses!
Ces serments, ces parfums, ces baisers infinis.
Renaîtront-ils d'un gouffre interdit à nos sondes
Comme montent au ciel les soleils rajeunis
Après s'être lavés au fond des mers profondes
O serments! ô parfums! ô baisers infinis!

The Balcony

Mother of remembrances, mistress of mistresses,
O you, my every pleasure! O you, my every obligation!

You will recall the beauty of caresses,
The peacefulness of home, and the charm of evenings;
Mother of remembrances, mistress of mistresses,
Evenings lighted by the glow of the coals,
And evenings on the balcony, veiled by rosy mist,--
How sweet your breast seemed to me!
How kind your heart seemed to me!
We often spoke of imperishable things
On those evenings, lighted by the glow of the coals.
How beautiful was the sun on torrid evenings!
How vast is space! How powerful is the heart!
Leaning toward you, Queen of all adored ones,
I imagined that I breathed the fragrance of your blood.
How beautiful is the sun on torrid evenings!
The night became close, as if surrounded by walls.
I know the art of evoking happy moments,
And I saw again my past, playing about your knees. . .
For why should one search for your languorous beauty
Any place except in your dear body and in your gentle heart?
I know the art of evoking happy moments!
Those vows, those perfumes, those endless kisses,
Were they reborn out of a depth beyond our reach,
As the rejuvenated sun rises again into the sky,
After it has bathed at the bottom of deep oceans?
O vows! O fragrance! O endless kisses!

The texts of these five mélodies are from Fleurs du mal, written in 1855. The poem of Le Balcon is a narrative of "reminiscent sadness embittered with remorse, but elevated beyond the personal plane of mortal failings to the spiritualized world of the poet's imagery..."[1] Lockspeiser states that:

> In its romantic and emotional effect, the dark, heavily laden style of the song conveys not only the indulgent pleasure of the Baudelairean malaise but also, with its Tristanesque suspensions and chromaticism, much of the poem's psychological anxiety."[2]

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[1]Lockspeiser, pp. 122-123.

[2]Lockspeiser, p. 123.

A precedent of form is established in Le Balcon which is repeated in each of the mélodies included in this study. This is that their formal design is based almost entirely on the text. Le Balcon is in five distinct musical sections with an introduction and a modulating interlude between sections III and IV. Each section is through-composed, although within sections rounding of form (recurrence of musical material) does occur due to the repetition of particular lines of poetry.

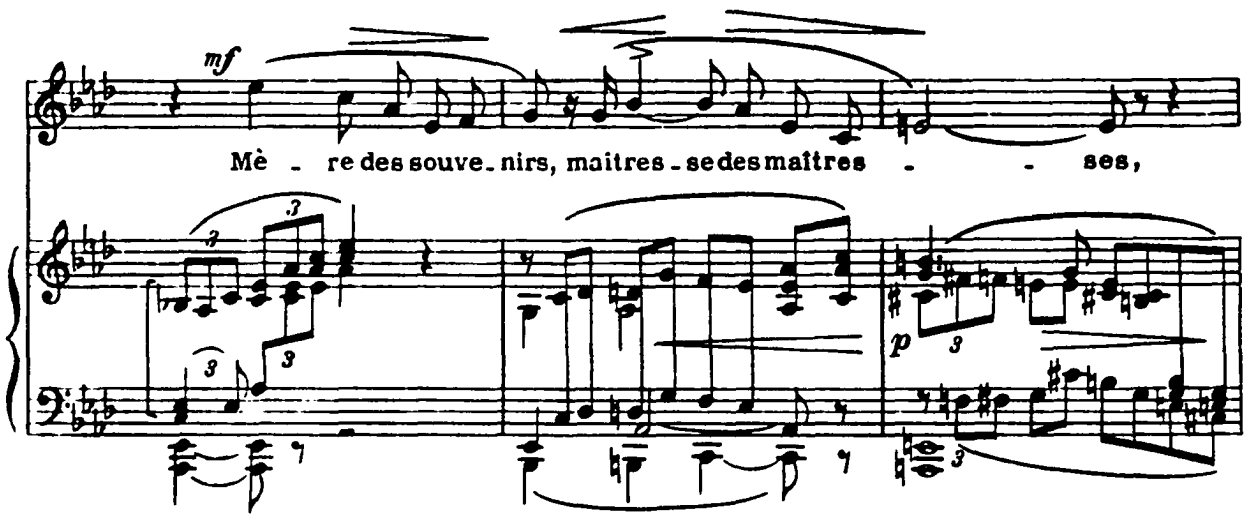
The poem has 31 lines with the text of lines 1 and 5, 6 and 11, 12 and 16, 17 and 21, and 22 and 26 being identical. Lines 27 and 31 are the same except for the article "ces" preceeding the series of vowels being changed to "o" in the final phrase. The vocal line spans and octave and a sixth, extending from a-flat to f".

Debussy employs the repetition of the lines of text as a unifying factor throughout the mélodie. The words of line 1 and line 5, for instance, are identical:

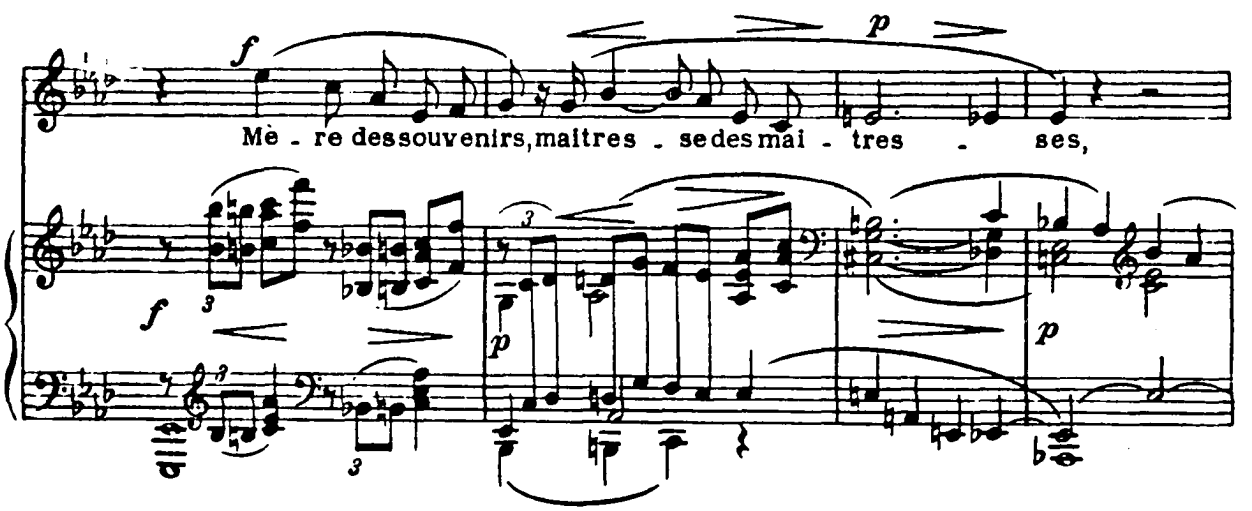
"Mere des souvenirs, maitresse des maitresses..."

The melodic material is almost exactly the same when this phrase occurs again, but the accompaniment is varied. (Ex. 1):

Ex. 1. First statement, line 1 (meas. 4-6).



Ex. 2. Second statement, line 5; varied accompaniment (meas. 16-19).



The recurrence of these repeated phrases mark the close of each of the respective sections.

Le Balcon is considerably the longest of the five mélodies of this cycle, encompassing 131 measures, as

opposed to the remaining four songs. Harmonie du Soir is 73 measures long; Le jet d'eau, 97; Recueillement, 66; and La mort des Amants, 48.

The meter for Le Balcon is $\frac{4}{4}$. This remains the same throughout the piece in the vocal line. However, a double meter marking of $\frac{12}{8}$ and $\frac{4}{4}$ is indicated simultaneously in the piano part at measure 62. This peculiarity of a double meter indication occurs in the prelude La Cathedrale Engloutie by Debussy. Maurice Dumesnil states the reason for this being that:

> the meter--or beat--shifts from one to the other several times. Normally this would have required new marking each time but not so with the above notation which leaves the change to the discrimination and "feel" of the interpreter.[1]

The beginning tempo indication is Allegro con moto with the first dynamic marking being mezzo forte. In the opening section of the mélodie the poet is beseeching his lover to recall with him the beauties of their past love. It should be understood that the symbolistic use of the term "Mère" in lines 1 and 5, and the phrase "blotti dans tes genoux" in line 23 have no incestuous connotation in this context.

Measures 1 through 3, which may be regarded as the prologue or introduction, are in A-flat major. Measures 4 through 42 comprise section I which is also basically in

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[1]Maurice Dumesnil, "Teachers Roundtable," The Etude, Volume 70 (June, 1952), 23.

the key of A-flat major. Section II, measures 43 through 61, bear the key signature of one sharp but is tonally ambiguous. Measures 62 through 80 form section III which is basically in D-flat major. Beginning at measure 81 and continuing through measure 87 a modulatory interlude occurs for the piano alone. Section IV is basically in F major and encompasses measures 88 through 103. The last section, V, begins at measure 104 and returns to the original key of A-flat major. The mélodie begins in A-flat major, establishes the tonality of D-flat major and then F major, and finally ends in A-flat major.

The harmony in this mélodie is largely nonfunctional in the traditional sense. It should be noted that the harmonic flavor of this mélodie, along with the second and fourth of this cycle, bears the somewhat obvious presence of Wagnerian influence. This may be observed in the presence of chromaticism, successive unresolved seventh chords, and a general avoidance of the tonic. It has been suggested that Debussy composed this cycle at the approximate time of his pilgrimages to Beyreuth.[1]

Thompson points out that "Like others of the group, Le Balcon is weightier and more declamatory than the typical Debussy song...."[2] Lockspeiser refers to the distinct

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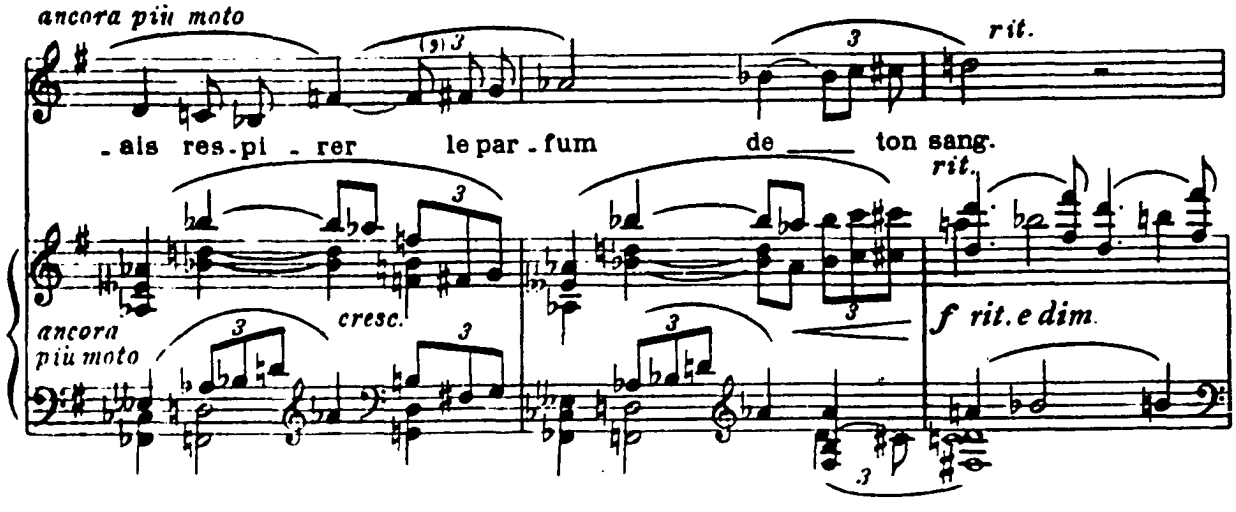
[1]Lockspeiser, p. 122.

[2]Thompson, p. 286.

chromaticism of the mélodie and the "accompaniment creating the illusion of an orchestra..."[1] (Example 3).

Ex. 3. Chromaticism in vocal line; orchestral quality of accompaniment (meas. 53-55).



Lockspeiser and Thompson both point out that the style of this mélodie is atypical of the majority of Debussy's songs. Le Balcon "is remarkable for the impassioned and declamatory style of the vocal writing."[2] The piano introduction begins in the lower registers with ascending chromatic harmonies. The piano part is unusually rich and full almost throughout the entire piece. It is necessary, therefore, that the damper pedal be used judiciously, and that the fortes not be overpowering. There is evidence in almost all literature on Debussy's pianistic

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[1]Lockspeiser, p. 123.

[2]Lockspeiser, p. 123.

technique in performing his own compositions that he did not intend his piano music ever to be bombastic. Debussy himself said "My music should be played softly with considerable blur from the pedal, and without marked rhythms."[1] Dumesnil says repeatedly, "Debussy never played very loudly."[2]

In view of this, the pianist might be well advised to use the una corda pedal along with the damper pedal in order to execute smoothly the rather "orchestral" conception of this mélodie.

The voice enters in the fourth measure with a gentle but solid mezzo forte and should follow explicitly the composer's dynamic indications. This cannot be emphasized too much. One of the greatest performers of French mélodies, who studied his music extensively with Debussy himself, says that "No composer has marked his scores with greater precision, or insisted more strongly that the interpreter should obey his instructions."[3] To pianists, Maier writes, "If you would become a good Debussy

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[1]Clarence Lucas, " Debussy and the Pedal Blur, "The Etude, Volume 53 (March, 1935), 147.

[2]Maurice Dumesnil, "Conferences with Claude Debussy," The Etude, Volume 51 (February, 1933), 81.

[3]Maggie Teyte, Star on the Door (London: Garden City Press, Ltd, 1958), 58.

interpreter follow the precise directions he gives in all his pieces."[1]

The second phrase begins piano and crescendos to a solid forte on the second syllable of the word "devoirs." At measure 11 the voice should again assume a piano and remain soft until measure 16 where a solid forte (with a gentle entrance) should begin the closing phrase of the first section, with a gradual decrescendo following to the end of the word "maîtresses." Section II is of a more introspective character. The poet speaks of "Les soirs au balcon, voilés de vapeur rose." The accompaniment is marked successively piano, then pp, then ppp. Both the una corda and the damper pedals should be engaged to insure the maximum legato and depth of tone. The chords in measures 27 and 31-42 should be played as softly as possible while the voice is particularly careful to sustain the phrases with adequate breath and gentle accents on the phrase "Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon." Beginning at measure 43 the accompaniment should slowly increase in volume and speed very gradually with the voice doing the same in measures 45-49. This section (III) contains several sensuous references to the beauty of nature, with the repeated line being "Que les soleils sont beaux par les chaudes soirées." The section closes with

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[1]Guy Maier, "Debussy," The Etude, Volume 65 (July, 1947), 373.

a ritard and piu lento marking which should be strictly observed.

In measure 57 the composer has directed that the short interlude be played sempre pp e calmato; the pp being emphasized in measure 60 and again in measure 62 where the meter is indicated both as $\frac{12}{8}$ and $\frac{4}{4}$ remaining thus through the end of the mélodie. Again, this double meter marking indicates that the "feel" of the meter or beat may shift between $\frac{12}{8}$ and $\frac{4}{4}$ at the discretion of the performer.

Section IV, beginning at measure 64, is marked piano and should be kept very subdued. The vocal line is very slightly accented on the phrase "La nuit s'épaississait ainsi qu'une cloison." At measure 67 the composer has indicated espressivo. Careful attention should be paid in regard to a delicate crescendo from measure 67 to the first beat of measure 69, where a decrescendo occurs to insure proper nuance. A little more motion should be observed at measure 70 and the composer's indication of teneramente strictly observed at measure 74. Rounding of the text occurs with a parallel repetition of melodic material at measure 78.

The piano interlude beginning at measure 80 should observe the poco a poco animato e crescendo indication with the pianist crossing the left hand over the right to execute the melodic fragment over the ostinato figure in the right hand. At measure 86 the molto ritard and gradual

diminuendo should be carefully observed.

Section V is marked Andante con moto, dolce expressivo and begins piano. This contains perhaps the most tender and sensuous part of the mélodie. Extremely delicate phrasing from piano up to mezzo piano and back to piano is required for the proper execution of the lines:

> Car a quoi bon chercher tes beautes langoureuses
> Ailleurs qu'en ton cher corps et qu'en ton coeur
> si doux?

Section VI begins piu lento at measure 104 with tender recalling of the "serments, parfums, et baisers infinis" of his love which the poet desires so desperately to recapture. This section begins slowly and softly, assuming a gradual increase in tempo and dynamic level at measure 108 and reaches the climax of the mélodie at measure 19 as the mélodie closes with a gradual softening occurring simultaneously in the piano and voice on to the end. The last phrase, "O baisers infinis!" should be almost in a whisper with the piano observing the pp and ppp as accurately as possible in the final three measures.

2. Harmonie du Soir

Voici venir les temps où vibrant sur sa tige,
Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir;
Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir,
Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige.
Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir,
Le violon frémit comme un coeur qu'on afflige,
Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige,
Le ciel est triste et beau comme un grand reposoir;
Le violon frémit comme un coeur qu'on afflige,
Un coeur tendre, que hait le néant vaste et noir!

Le ciel est triste et beau comme un grand reposoir,
Le soleil s'est noyé dans son sang que se fige...
Un coeur tendre, que hait le néant vaste et noir,
Du passé lumineux recueille tout vestige.
Le soleil s'est noyé dans son sang que se fige,--
Ton souvenir en moir luit comme un ostensoir.

Evening Harmony

Now comes that time when, trembling on its stem,
Each flower exhales fragrance like a censer;
The sounds and perfumes whirl in the evening air,
A melancholy waltz and a languorous intoxication.
Each flower exhales fragrance like a censer,
The violin vibrates like a heart in distress,
A melancholy waltz and a languorous intoxication,
The sky is sad and beautiful, like a great altar;
The violin vibrates like a heart in distress,
A tender heart, which abhors the vast and somber void!
The sky is sad and beautiful, like a great altar,
The sun has drowned in its own blood, which is congealing.
A tender heart, which abhors the vast and somber void,
Recalls all memories of the luminous past.
The sun has drowned in its own blood, which is congealing,--
My memory of you shines like a monstrance.

The form of this mélodie is again based entirely on the text. There are only 16 lines of poetry and 73 measures in Harmonie du Soir, as opposed to 31 lines and 131 measures in Le Balcon. Musical unity is somewhat strengthened in this mélodie over that of Le Balcon by the use of a triplet motive in the accompaniment. This motive is introduced in the second measure and recurs throughout the piece. The vocal line is through-composed except for the melodic repetition which occurs when certain lines of the text are repeated. This parallelism of text and melody is present between lines 2 and 5, 4 and 7, 8 and 11, 10 and 13, and 12 and 15. The vocal line spans an octave and a fifth, (a to e").

Tonality is clouded by the non-traditional progression of chords. Again, there is ambiguity of tonal centers in this piece. The four basic sections of the mélodie are delineated largely by texture and dynamics and are punctuated by the triplet motive in each instance except between sections III and IV, where a delicate decrescendo is indicated with unobtrusive eighth and quarter note syncopation.

There is a two measure introduction beginning on a B minor triad, though the opening key signature is three sharps. Section I begins at measure 3 and extends to measure 27, (with a sub-section occurring at measure 14, delineated by a change in the accompaniment from a basically chordal accompaniment to arpeggios.) The opening meter indication is $\frac{3}{4}$ and the tempo indication is andante, tempo rubato. The key center of section I is somewhat difficult to follow as the tonality changes measure by measure, beginning at measure five and continuing through measure 14 as follows: measure 5, G^7; measure 6, E-flat^9; measure 7, A minor; measure 8, A_2^4; measure 9-10, F-sharp minor; measure 11, F minor; measure 12, A major; measure 13, G^7; measure 14-15, A minor again with a G natural octave pedal-point in the bass. The meter changes to $\frac{2}{4}$ for one measure only at measure 16, returning to $\frac{3}{4}$ at measure 17. At measure 22 there are two measures of $\frac{2}{4}$ then measure 24 resumes the $\frac{3}{4}$ meter which remains constant until just before the end of the mélodie. Measures 70 and 71 are in

$\frac{2}{4}$ with the $\frac{3}{4}$ meter being re-established at the penultimate measure and encompassing the final measure.

Section II begins at measure 28 extending through measure 48. This section is in a somewhat stable B-flat major tonality. Section III occurs at measure 49 with the key signature of 2 sharps. Section III is the shortest of the four sections extending to measure 57 where the key signature returns to 3 sharps. Section IV encompasses measures 58 through 68 with measures 69 through the last measure, 73, forming a codetta which settles somewhat ambiguously on a final A major triad.

In the opening phrase the vocal line is distinctly made up of a whole tone scale fragment. However, this cannot be said to remain a constant characteristic of the mélodie, as the whole tone fragment appears only twice more in the voice part at measures 45-47, and measures 59-61. The entire mood of Harmonie du Soir is much more tranquil and subdued than Le Balcon. The general feeling evoked in Harmonie du Soir bears more than a slight resemblance to prelude number IV from Book I of Debussy's Préludes pour piano, the title of which, not surprisingly, is line three verbatim of this same poem: "Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir!" In this poem the lover, wanting to escape the sad loneliness of evening, thinks longingly of his beloved as all sights and scents around him intensify his memories.

A stylistically authentic interpretation demands that the singer refrain from using too much rubato even though the composer has indicated tempo rubato at the beginning of the mélodie. One authority for this is Jennie Tourel, who employs but the slightest hint of rubato and portamento in measure 6 and 8 in the opening section.[1] She maintains this approach, in fact, throughout her entire performance of this mélodie.

In regard to the general interpretation of the term "rubato" in the works of Debussy, Maurice Dumesnil offers this advice:

> In the first place, the tempo rubato, such as it is generally understood and used in the romantics and Chopin in particular, has absolutely no place in Debussy's works, whichever period of his life they may belong to. Does this mean that the tempo must be strictly observed? not in the least; because a rigid and metronomic pace would prove destructive. What must be used instead, and profusely so, is flexibility. Even when Debussy indicated a rubato, he meant flexibility and performed the passage accordingly.[2]

Regarding a similar approach to Debussy's vocal lines, Thompson states:

> The texts must be scrupulously enunciated and with their allied notes as scrupulously inflected. The minutest nuancing is demanded, but no conspicuous underlining of words or phrases. [sic][3]

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[1]Claude Debussy, Cinq Poemes de Charles Baudelaire, performed by Jennie Tourel, mezzo-soprano, with Erich Itor Kahn, piano, (Columbia LPml-4158, 1949), Side 1, band 2.

[2]Maurice Dumesnil, "New Insights into the Mastery of Debussy," The Etude, Volume 58 (May, 1940), 344.

[3]Thompson, p. 280.

In a further statement Thompson refers to the chromaticism in this, the second song of the Baudelaire cycle, as evidence of a Wagnerian influence.[1] He also points out the "sumptuous imagery" inherent in the opening lines:

> Voici venir les temps ou vibrant sur sa tige
> Chaque fleur s'evapore ainsi qu'un encensoir...

Lockspeiser elaborates on the profusion of imagery in this mélodie in his discussion on a theory of sensory relativity. The theory, developed by the Symbolists, stated that there existed some mysterious relation between colors, perfumes, and sounds. Lockspeiser contends that manifestations of this theory are evident in this poem.[2] Lockspeiser indicates further that Debussy was not totally successful in this setting of the poem in that the:

> automatically recurring motives and the too consistently sumptuous chromaticism suggest that he may have been aware that there were still realms to explore in this particular region of the Baudelairean world, as indeed he was to show in the first book of Preludes.[3]

The first section is soft in both voice and piano. At measure 10 Debussy has indicated doux which calls for very gentle phrasing and nuance with careful attention to keeping the vocal line smooth and devoid of any accented syllables. At measure 14 the animez un peu should be interpreted with a gradual increase in tempo, returning to the

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[1]Thompson, p. 287.

[2]Lockspeiser, p. 123.

[3]Lockspeiser, p. 123.

original tempo at measure 17. According to Kahn's[1] performance of this accompaniment the pianist should be especially careful to keep the arpeggios light and crisp in measures 14-18. A possible solution to keeping this section flowing with continuous sound without letting it become too muddy would be to use the damper pedal at about half pedal and raise it up not quite all the way in each measure after the chord in the left hand is played. This "pumping" technique has proven valuable to the writer in performances of similar passages from Debussy's piano works such as Reflet dans l'Eau, and Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest, the latter from Book I of the Préludes pour piano.

At measure 20 another gradual increase in tempo and intensity should begin in both the voice and piano. The first climax of this mélodie is reached at measure 26 but the pianist must be careful not to overpower the singer as the vocal line remains rather low and the piano part is somewhat heavily written at this point. An immediate diminuendo occurs with the directives calmato and tranquillo at section II, measure 28. This entire section should be more contrasting within itself--with the "tranquillo" idea maintained throughout but with much expressive intensity on both phrases of the words, "Un coeur tendre, qui hait le néant vaste et noir."

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[1]Tourel/Kahn recording (Columbia LPml-4158, 1949) Side 1, band 2.

Measure 52 begins the build-up of poco a poco stringendo to the second and last climax on the word "recueille." The singer should take a good breath just before this word in order to be able to sustain the climactic peak of the phrase and to have enough breath in reserve to taper the phrase down gently but evenly to a piano.

The whole tone flavor returns in measure 59 and 60 where the voice must accent the D-sharp on "sang qui se." The last phrase in the voice part is unusual in that it ascends to end on the high E-natural. Utmost care must be taken to plan the execution of this final phrase so that the pianissimo will be strictly observed. Male voices should consider the option of utilizing a small head tone or falsetto in measures 63-65. The accompaniment remains very soft to the end but should allow the characteristic triplet figure in measure 70 and 71 to be heard. The ppp in measure 72 and pppp in the final measure demands a sensitive touch allowing sufficient time for the execution of the final A major "lentement arpège."

3. Le Jet D'Eau

Tes beaux yeux sont las, pauvre amante!
Reste longtemps sans les rouvrir,
Dans cette pose nonchalante où t'a surprise le plaisir.
Dans la cour le jet d'eau qui jase
Et ne se tait ni nuit ni jour,
Entretient doucement l'extase
Où ce soir m'a plongé l'amour.
La gerbe d'eau qui berce
Ses mille fleurs,
Que la lune traverse
De ses pâleurs,
Tombe comme une averse

De larges pleurs.
Ainsi ton âme qu'incendie
L'éclair brûlant des voluptés,
S'élance, rapide et hardie
Vers les vastes cieux enchantés.
Puis, elle s'épanche, mourante
En un flot de triste langueur,
Qui par une invisible pente
Descend jusqu'au fond de mon coeur.
O toi, que la nuit rend si belle,
Qu'il m'est doux, penché vers tes seins,
D'écouter la plainte éternelle
Qui sanglote dans les bassins!
Lune, eau sonore, nuit bénie,
Arbres qui frissonez autour,--
Votre pure mélancolie
Est le miroir de mon amour.

The Fountain

Your beautiful eyes are weary, my poor beloved!
Rest a while without opening them,
In this carefree pose
In which pleasure has come upon you.
In the courtyard, the fountain which chatters
And never ceases, day or night,
Sustains sweetly the ecstasy
In which love has engulfed me tonight.
The column of water which rocks
Its thousand flowers,
Which the moon penetrates
With its pale light,
Falls like a shower
Of large tears.
And so your soul, setting aflame
The fiery lightning of desire,
Leaps quickly and fearlessly
Toward the vast, enchanted skies.
Then it diffuses, dying
In a wave of sad languor
Which, by way of an invisible incline,
Descends to the depths of my heart.
Oh, you, whom the night makes so beautiful,
I find it sweet, leaning against your bosom,
To listen to the eternal lament
That sobs in the fountain.
Moon, sonorous water, blessed night,
Trees trembling all about,--
Your pure melancholy
Is the reflection of my love.

In this mélodie the form is delineated more by texture and tempo rather than being virtually through-composed as are the first two songs in the cycle. The sectionalization could be stated as follows:

A B C B' D B"

This would appear to be an adaptation of the traditional rondo idea. When the "B" section (section II) returns, however, only the vocal line and certain elements of the harmony stay the same. The accompaniment changes considerably; alternation between sparse chords, arpeggios, and ostinato figures adhering relatively closely to the original harmonic structure of the first statement in section II.

The vocal line of Le Jet d'Eau is comparatively wide. It spans an octave and a minor sixth, (a-e-sharp").

The meter indication in the first measure is again a double one, $\frac{3}{4}\ \frac{9}{8}$. As noted in the analysis of Harmonie du Soir Debussy utilized this indication when he desired the performer to let the "feel" of either meter indication dictate the interpretation. In Le Jet d'Eau the accompaniment alternates between tied-triplet figures, arpeggios, ostinato figures, and single chords.

Measure 1 serves as an introduction containing an ostinato figure of major seconds an octave apart. Thompson suggests that there is more of an influence of Borodin here and less of the Wagnerian traces inherent in Le Balcon and Harmonie du Soir.

> Less of Wagner, more of Borodin, is to be found in the setting of this erotic lyric, with its dissonances, its seconds, its transparent flow.[1]

Lockspeiser, in contrast, alludes to the seconds as being:

> the discreet musical symbol of the forbidding closed eyes of the poet's beloved reclining alongside the fountain's 'glittering sheaf.'[2]

This flavor of major seconds is maintained through the first 9 measures with parallel sixths and thirds moving below. Section I extends from measure 2 to measure 19 with the ostinato of major seconds resuming in measure 12 through measure 17.

Section II begins at measure 20 with arpeggiated figures in which Lockspeiser finds an analogy to the "sparkling play of a fountain with its myriad bejewelled associations."[3] The harmony beginning the poco mosso at measure 22 alternates between an E^7 and an A^9 chord through measure 25. At measure 26 an F-natural pedal point occurs under arpeggiated parallel chords, giving way to a C-sharp pedal-point in measures 28 and 29. The arpeggio figures persist throughout section II.

Measures 34 through 50 are the boundaries of section III which is contrasted with sections I and II by the

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[1]Thompson, p. 287.

[2]Lockspeiser, p. 124.

[3]Lockspeiser, p. 124.

meno mosso tempo rubato directive and more varied dynamics. A forte climax is reached at measure 41 followed immediately by an a tempo and Andante tranquillo indication. Section III settles on an F^7 tonality in measures 48 and 49, ending on a C-sharp^9 chord in measure 50.

At measure 51 section II occurs with an exact repetition of text and vocal line extending through measure 63. Where the accompaniment was almost exclusively arpeggiated in the first statement of section II, it is now a hybrid of rolled chords and arpeggios over a bass of repeated perfect fifth sonorities (measures 54-57), followed by a bass accompaniment figure of rolled chords under an arpeggiated ostinato an octave higher (measures 68-72). Measure 64 through measure 72 is a sub-section of new material paralleling the direction of the text.

Section IV encompasses measures 73-82. Here the composer has marked piu lento, espressivo to indicate the most tender interpretation of the words:

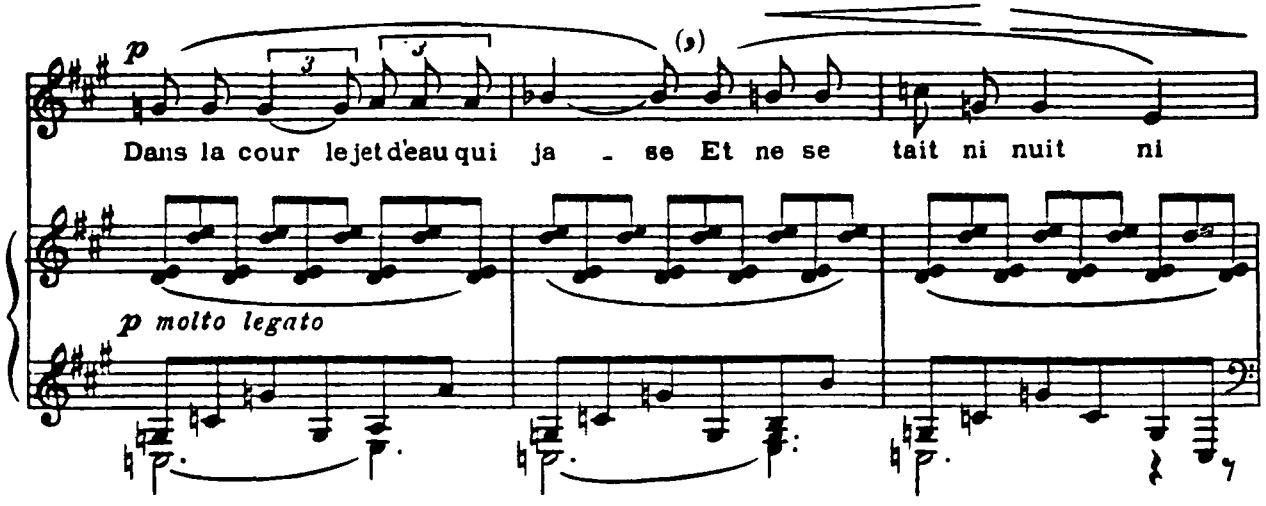
> Lune, eau sonore, nuit bénie,
> Arbres qui frissonez autour
> Votre pure mélancolie
> Est le miroir de mon amour.

From measure 83 through the final measure the text and vocal line are again the same as that in section II and its return. This seems to suggest strongly a section II" ending on an A^9 chord, ppp.

In performing Le Jet d'Eau a thorough understanding of the text is a prerequisite. The opening directives,

molto dolce and languido, suggest a gentle tone quality as well as careful legato phrasing. A mastery of the two against three cross rhythm is essential in order to accurately interpret the following phrase (Ex. 4):

Ex. 4. Cross rhythms between vocal line and accompaniment (meas. 12-14).



The accompanist will be of assistance to the singer in bringing out the counter melody with the left hand in measures 16 and 17, as well as adhering to the dynamic phrasing indicated. Care should be taken to keep the arpeggio sequences both ppp and léger in measure 22. The same three note counter-melody should be accented slightly in measures 26 and 27 with care taken not to cover the singer in a relatively low range there.

The composer has indicated meno mosso tempo rubato

at measure 35. According to Dumesnil[1] the performer would be well advised not to interpret this too loosely. Precision with "flexibility" should be the watchwords in this section. The vocal and pianistic climax should be equal to the brilliant text-painting of measures 39-42: "S'élance, rapide et hardie, Vers les vastes cieux enchantés."

At the return of the section II text, at measure 51 the tempo should be somewhat slower according to Gerard Souzay. Souzay interprets measures 51-57 at almost a whisper and very legato, tapering the phrase down to a ppp in a messa di voce at measure 58.[2]

The marking meno mosso tempo rubato is present again at measure 63 indicating to the performer that measures 64-71 should be interpreted with a slight ritard and legato phrasing. The decrescendo in measure 72 must be accompanied with a ritardando molto indicated in the preceeding measure. In measure 76 on the word "bénie," male voices should consider using a very light head voice or falsetto in order to execute the E-sharp as delicately as the phrase demands. The singer should take a very deep breath before beginning "La gerbe d'eau" at measure 83 so as to preclude

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[1]Dumesnil, "New Insights," Etude, Vol. 58, p. 344.

[2]Claude Debussy, "Le Jet d'Eau" from Cing Poemes de Baudelaire, in Lieder von Claude Debussy, perf. by Gerard Souzay, baritone, and Dalton Baldwin, piano (Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft LPM18758) side 1, band 5.

breaking the phrase before the word "fleurs" in measure 86. The composer's indication of ritardando molto e morendo at measure 90 must be followed explicitly and again male voices should consider the lightest possible head tone in measures 93-95. The voice should fade almost imperceptibly as the piano completes the mélodie, ppp.

4. Recueillement

Sois sage, ô ma douleur, et tiens-toi plus tranquille;
Tu réclamais le soir: il descend, le voici!
Une atmosphère obscure enveloppe la ville,
Aux uns portant la paix, aux autres le souci.
Pendant que des mortels la multitude vile,
Sous le fouet du Plaisir, ce bourreau sans merci,
Va cueillir des remords dans la fête servile.
Ma douleur, donne moi la main,
Viens par ici, loin d'eux.
Vois se pencher les défuntes Années
Sur les balcons du ciel, en robes surannées.
Surgir du fond des eaux le Regret souriant,
Le soleil moribond s'endormir sous une arche;
Et, comme un long linceul trainant à l'Orient,
Entends, ma chère, entends la douce nuit qui marche.

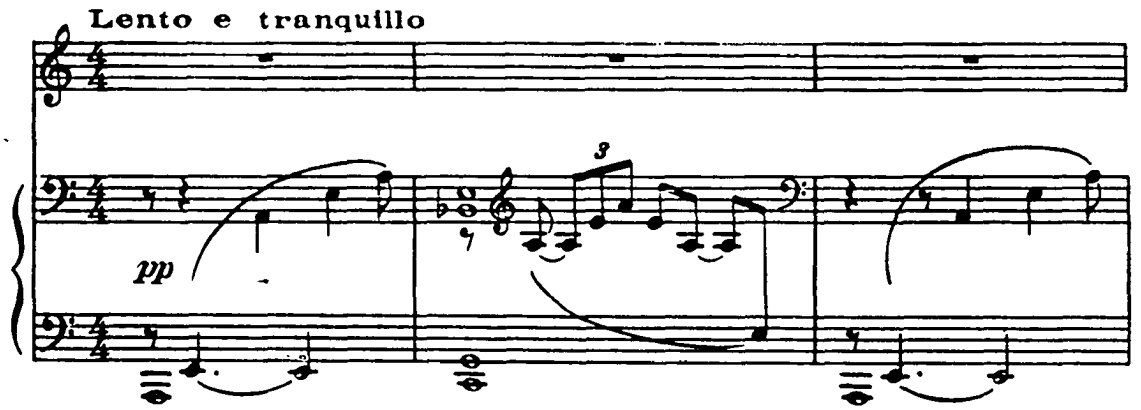
Introspection

Be wise, oh my sorrow, and behave more calmly;
You wished for the evening: it descends, it is here!
A dark haze envelopes the city,
Bringing to some peace, to others anxiety.
While the base multitude of mortals,
Under the whip of Pleasure, that merciless executioner,
Will suffer the pangs of remorse at the lowly feast,
Sorrow of mine, give me your hand,
Come hither, far away from them.
See the dead years leaning
Over the balconies of heaven, in faded garments.
See scornfully smiling Regret emerge from the depths of the waters,
The dying sun going to sleep beneath an arch;
And, like a long shroud trailing towards the East,
Hear, my beloved, hear the gentle night approaching.

In contrast to the extended settings of Le Jet d'Eau and Le Balcon this mélodie has only 15 lines of text and encompasses only 66 measures. It is through-composed with the only recurring material being measures 1-6 of the introduction repeated as accompaniment under the vocal line at measures 36-40. The harmony is tertian for the most part but is characteristically non-functional, in the traditional sense, utilizing frequent ninth and thirteenth chords.

Lockspeiser observes that the first three measures of Recueillement "strikingly recall the horns of Tristan."[1]

Ex. 5. Wagnerian influence in introduction (meas. 1-3).



Thompson[2], on the other hand, indicates that certain aspects of the introduction anticipate material in the last movement of the string quartet by Debussy, Opus 10, composed in 1893.

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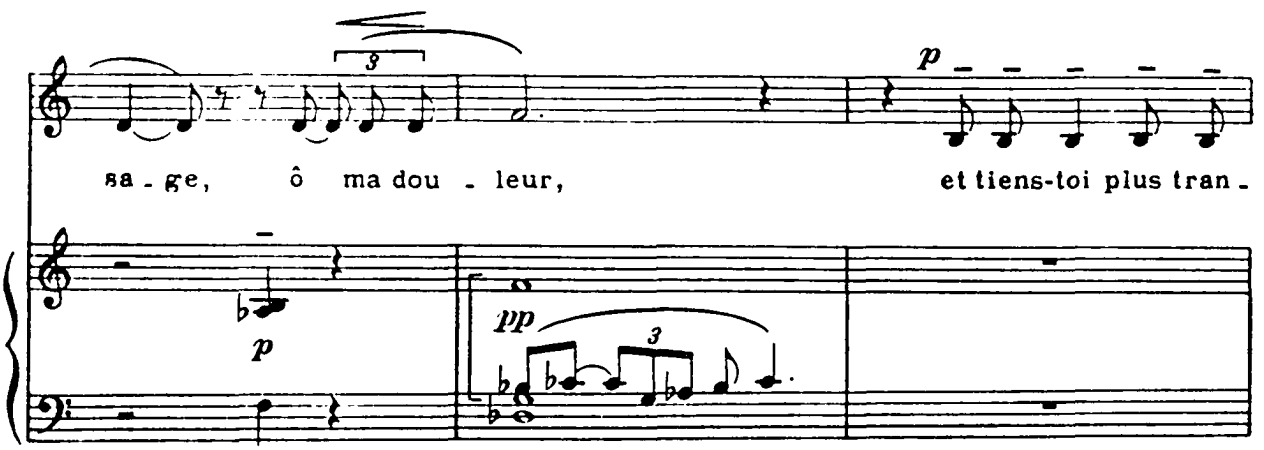
[1]Lockspeiser, p. 124.

[2]Thompson, pp. 287-288.

Measures 1-6 comprise the introduction of open fifths on A and E in measures 1 and 3, interrupted by a C^7 chord with an added sixth in measures 2 and 4. The tonality of A minor seems indicated but is never actually fully established. The meter is $\frac{4}{4}$ in the opening section, changing to $\frac{3}{4}$ at measure 15.

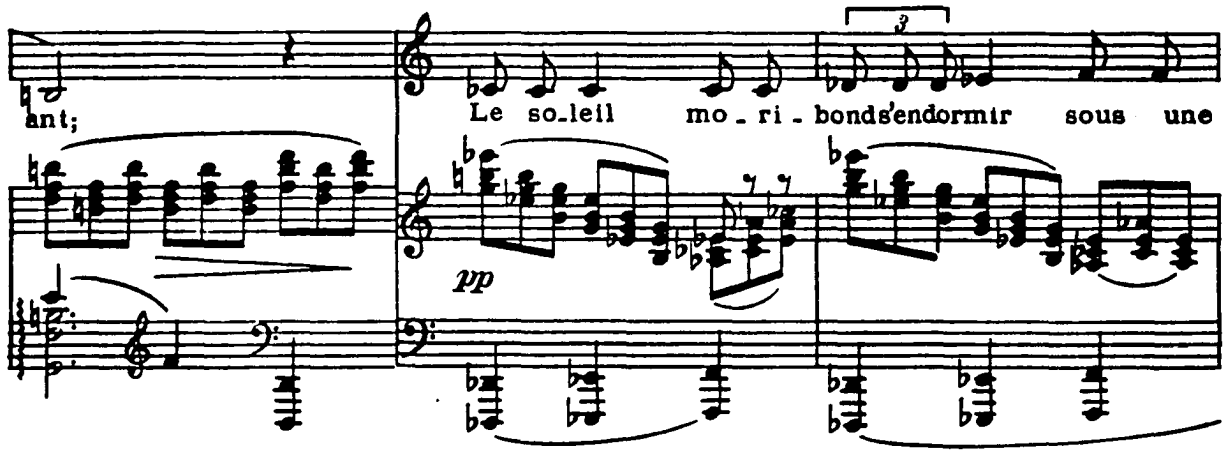
Recueillement contains several stark contrasts. One of the most sparsely constructed phrases in all of the Debussy song literature is found in measures 7-9:

Ex. 6. Sparse construction of accompaniment (meas. 7-9).



These measures, (7-9), provide an unusually marked contrast with the remaining part of the mélodie. Measures 52-54, for instance, contain some of the most lush and full scoring for piano by Debussy to be found (Ex. 7):

Ex. 7. Full scoring contrasted with meas. 7-9 (meas. 52-54).



Measures 7-14 comprise section I which cadences on a B major chord. Section II begins at measure 15 where the key signature changes to four flats. At measure 16 a triplet figure is introduced in the accompaniment which remains constant through the end of measure 35. Section II appears to begin in the tonality of A-flat major. However, the predominance of chromatic chords removes the establishment of any specific tonal center in the traditional sense. At measure 36 the key signature changes back to A minor/C major and the meter indication returns to $\frac{4}{4}$, with an indication of tempo I°. Measures 36-39 and the first two beats of measure 40 are an exact restatement of the accompaniment in measures 1-6. This time, however, a simple vocal line is superimposed above the piano part. Section III encompasses measures 42-55. This section begins

in A major with the meter returning to $\frac{3}{4}$. The tonality becomes obscure as the section progresses.

Section IV extends from measure 56 through measure 59 and is basically in A-flat major. The meter indication at measure 56 is $\frac{9}{8}$. A chromatic transition beginning in measure 59 eventually terminates on an A major chord in the final two measures. The final section, V, includes measures 60 through 66. There seems to be some hint of the introductory rhythm at this point bringing a feeling of unity in the final measures.

Debussy has indicated Lento e tranquillo at the opening of Recueillement. Because the accompaniment in the introduction and first section is somewhat sparse, the damper pedal should be utilized carefully in maintaining a smooth flow and connection of sound through measure 14. The singer should maintain concentration during the interludes and "keep singing" mentally in order to avoid making the mélodie seem as though it is made up of short, abruptly disconnected and separated phrases. The words "et tiens-toi plus tranquille" should be slightly stressed and very legato as there is no accompaniment whatsoever in measure 9 to help carry through the movement of the mélodie.

In performing the chords in measures 12-14, the pianist may need to roll the left hand chord or play the lower two notes together, immediately followed by the

upper note played with the left thumb. In the latter case the right hand notes should be played simultaneously with the upper "thumb" note of the bass, rather than the lower note. The tempo rubato at measure 15 should not be interpreted too freely. Again, it should be noted that Debussy intended precision and accuracy to prevail in the performance of his music. The piano part has an indication of Sourd et très soutenu (muffled, and very sustained) at measure 16 over a directive of sempre pp. This would best be accomplished by using the una corda pedal completely depressed and applying the "pumping" technique, previously described, on the damper pedal. From half to quarter pedal would be enough to keep this passage sustained with very quick releases of pedal between measures to avoid muddiness of sound. According to Tourel's interpretation at measure 20 a slight portamento may be sung on the word "ville."[1] Beginning at measure 25 there should be a slight increase in intensity and tempo in both the voice and piano parts. At measure 29 Debussy has indicated poco crescendo ed animando which culminates in a climax with a dynamic sf marked at measure 31. According to Tourel[2] the dynamic level should not decrease too soon after the climax but

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[1]Tourel/Kahn recording (Columbia LPml-4158, 1949) Side 1, band 4.

[2]Tourel/Kahn recording (Columbia LPml-4158, 1949) Side 1, band 4.

beginning in measure 32 should gradually soften on to the end of measure 35. The ritard in measure 35 may be enhanced by the use of portamento on the last two notes of the word "serville."

Tempo I° returns at measure 36 where the meter also returns to $\frac{4}{4}$. Here the singer should recapture the mood of the beginning, dolce ed expressivo, as indicated in the score. A slight portamento may be used to advantage in measure 44. Measures 45 through 55 should be kept quite soft with gentle phrasing, avoiding any heavy accents. Care should be taken from measure 50 through 55 to observe strictly the two against three cross rhythm between the voice and piano. At measure 56 the composer has indicated an interpretive directive, solennel, which, interpreted, means solemn. The piano part is marked with the accents, ⊤, which means that importance should be given to the tones by holding them full value then slightly detatching them before playing the next note. The damper pedal should be used at about quarter pedal in order to maintain the ties indicated in the left hand chords. According to Tourel[1] the final phrase should be executed with utmost legato and softness. Again, the style would indicate the smallest

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[1]Tourel/Kahn recording (Columbia LPml-4158, 1949) Side 1, band 4.

possible head tone or falsetto from the male interpreter in measure 63 with a slight portamento down to the E-natural in measure 64.

5. La Mort Des Amants

Nous aurons des lits pleins d'odeurs légères,
Des divans profonds comme des tombeaux;
Et d'étranges fleurs sur des étagères,
Ecloses pour nous sous des cieux plus beaux,
Usant à l'envi leurs caleurs dernieres;
Nos deux coeurs seront deux vastes flambeaux,
Qui réfléchiront leurs doubles lumières
Dans nos deux esprits, ces miroirs jumeaux.
Un soir fait de rose et de bleu mystique
Nous échangerons un éclair unique,
Comme un long sanglot tout chargé d'adieu,
Et plus tart un ange, entrouvrant les portes,
Viendra ranimer, fidèle et joyeux,
Les miroirs ternis et les flammes mortes.

The Death of Lovers

We shall have beds scented with faint perfumes,
Divans sunken like tombs,
And strange flowers on the shelves,
Unfolding for us beneath skies more lovely,
Vying with each other, in their expiring fires;
Our two hearts will be two great torches,
Reflecting their double light
In our two spirits, these twin mirrors.
On an evening spun of rose and mystic blue
We shall exchange a single lightning flash,
Like a long sob charged with parting,
And later, an angel, opening the gates,
Will restore to life, faithful and joyful,
The tarnished mirrors and the extinct flames.

This mélodie, which is published as the last of the Baudelaire cycle, was actually composed first.[1]

La Mort des Amants is the shortest song in the cycle, having

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[1]Thompson, p. 288.

ing only 14 lines of text and encompassing only 48 measures. The span of the vocal line is one half step less than two octaves, (g-sharp to g").

Lockspeiser regards this mélodie as "luxuriously imaginative."[1] The text is filled with Symbolism as in lines one, six, and seven:

> Nous aurons des lits pleins d'odeurs légères,...
> Nos deux coeurs seront deux vastes flambeaux,
> Qui réfléchiront leurs doubles lumières.

The form of this mélodie is again dictated by the text. It is through-composed with no repetition of text and very little repetition of musical material. Unity is primarily established by a syncopated rhythmic figure which is introduced in the first measures, recurs again in measure 30, and is utilized in the final four measures as the conclusion. The key signature at the beginning is four sharps with a meter indication of $\frac{3}{4}$. The tempo is andante. Measures 1 through 4 may be regarded as the prologue or introduction in which the first statement of the unifying syncopated motive is presented. The harmony of the introduction is typically non-functional in the traditional sense. This remains true throughout most of the mélodie.

Section I extends from measure 5 through measure 18. It is basically in E major with a marked use of

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[1]Lockspeiser, p. 125.

syncopation in the accompaniment. Section III begins at measure 30 and extends to measure 40. The key signature here is changed to two flats. The introductory material of measures 1-3 is transposed here to a tonal center on B-flat in measures 30-33. At measure 41 the key signature returns to four sharps with section IV extending from measure 41 through measure 48--basically in the key of E major. Measure 45 through 48 may be considered to be a codetta which utilizes material from the introduction.

This mélodie seems to present more problems for the pianist than for the singer; assuming, of course, that the two octave span of the vocal line presents no difficulty. Thompson states that La Mort des Amants is "an apotheosis of passion, in which two souls burn out like twin torches in the flame of their final hours together."[1]

In contrast to the general tone in the preceding songs in this cycle, there is a more contrasting emotional spectrum to be effected by the singer in this mélodie. In the following two phrases the utmost intensity of feeling should be expressed without in any way departing from the refined, finely drawn interpretive style Debussy requires (Ex. 8):

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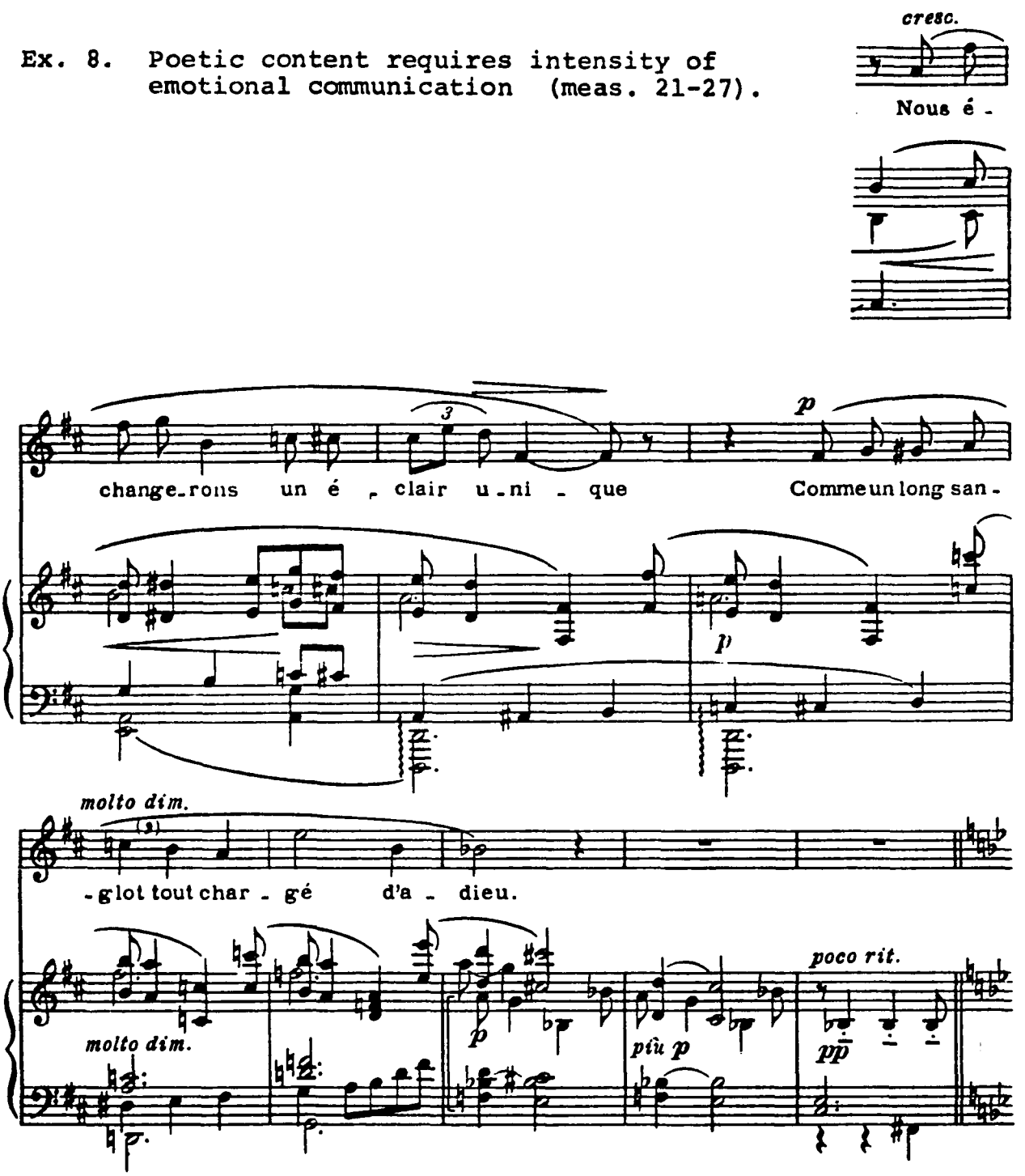
[1]Thompson, p. 288.

Ex. 8. Poetic content requires intensity of emotional communication (meas. 21-27).



It should be emphasized that the rhythm here be as exact as possible in the voice part in order that the syncopation in the piano part may be executed with clarity. The pianist will find it necessary to divide the chords in the bass clef

beginning at measure 19 and continuing intermittently to the end at measure 48. This may be accomplished any one of several ways. In measure 19 Debussy has indicated that the bass chord may be rolled. In measure 22 it may be necessary for the pianist to play the bottom two notes together first, then the top note of the bass chord with the chord in the treble clef. This technique of dividing the bass chords will readily serve the pianist in the solution of this problem in measures 24 and 25, and throughout the rest of this piece. Debussy has indicated "M.D." to be used in the bass chords in measures 30, 33, and 45-48. This is an abbreviation for main droit, meaning "right hand." In measure 30 this does not mean that the left hand should then play the octaves in the treble. The damper pedal should be engaged immediately after striking the E-flat octave chord with the right hand in the bass, then the right hand should proceed to execute the syncopated octaves in the treble. It is not necessary for the right hand to return to the bass to play the last C octave as the left hand will then be free for this execution.

The climax of La Mort des Amants comes in measure 40 and should be gradually approached with intensity increasing steadily from measure 30. A slight stringendo and crescendo should be employed from measure 35, culminating in a burst of sound on the word "joyeux," in measure 40. Here Debussy has indicated "M.G." in the piano

part which is an abbreviation of main gauche, meaning "left hand." At this point only the top note of the first chord should be executed by the left hand passing over the right hand. The following octaves in the treble clef should be played with the right hand. The final phrase, beginning at measure 41, should commence somewhat softer than the forte reached in measure 40. The composer has indicated molto espressivo with a dynamic indication of mezzo piano. This phrase should be interpreted delicately with a gradual decrescendo but with a fairly constant tempo. Debussy has again indicated the use of the main droit in the final four measures of the piano part. There should be no feeling of being rushed in this closing phrase as in measure 48 the directive morendo e ritard is indicated. The pianist should play the first chord in the bass clef with the right hand and the bottom octaves with the left, immediately engaging the damper pedal and taking time to resume the notes in the treble clef with the right hand, freeing the left hand to execute the final chord in the bass clef. The una corda pedal may be engaged in measure 46 and every effort should be made to gradually shade the dynamic level to the ppp indicated in the final measure.

CHAPTER V

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF AND INTERPRETIVE NOTES ON SELECTED MÉLODIES WITH TEXTS BY VERLAINE

Mandoline

Les donneurs de sérénades
Et les belles écouteuses
Echangent des propos fades
Sous les ramures chanteuses.
C'est Tircis et c'est Aminte,
Et c'est l'éternel Clitandre,
Et c'est Damis qui pour mainte
Cruelle fait maint vers tendre.
Leurs courtes vestes de soie,
Leurs longues robes à queues,
Leur élégance, leur joie
Et leurs molles ombres bleues,
Tourbillonnent dans l'extase
D'une lune rose et grise,
Et la mandoline jase
Parmi les frissons de brise....
La, la, la, la, la.....

Mandolin

The serenading swains
And their lovely listeners
Exchange insipid remarks
Under the singing boughs.
There is Tircis and there is Aminta,
And the eternal Clitander,
And there is Damis, who for many cruel ladies
Fashions many tender verses.
Their short silken vests,
Their long dresses with trains,
Their elegance, their gaiety
And their soft blue shadows
Whirl madly in the ecstasy
Of a moon rose and gray,
And the mandolin chatters
Amid the trembling of the breeze....
La, la, la, la, la.....

"Debussy is a faithful follower of Verlaine's own principles: Rien que la nuance,"[1] (nothing but the nuance). Debussy was fascinated with the poetry of Verlaine to the extent that he composed "no fewer than eighteen mélodies" set to texts by that poet.[2] This particular mélodie is from a series of poems by Verlaine entitled Fêtes galantes, but was not included in either of the song cycles by Debussy which bear this same name.

In vibrant strokes of melody and accompaniment acridly depicting the mandolin's tonal characteristics, Debussy has exploited the possibilities inherent in the quintal tuning of the mandolin. This instrument has eight strings producing four different pitches with double strings tuned a fifth apart.[3]

This mélodie is in a somewhat loosely constructed ABA form with the primary unifying factors being the use of quintal harmony in an ostinato-like accompaniment pattern. The vocal line spans an octave and a fifth from a-flat to e-flat". There are 16 lines in the poem and the music encompasses 70 measures.

Section A extends from measure 1 through measure 27. It opens with a key signature of 4 flats and a meter

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[1]Martin Cooper, French Music, (New York: Dover Publications, 1951), p. 98.

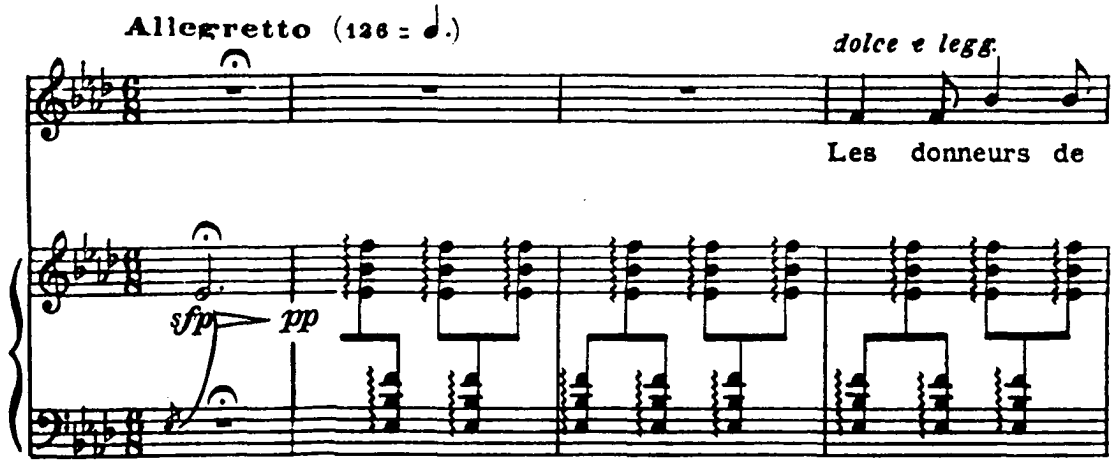
[2]Bernac, p. 138.

[3]Apel, p. 422.

indication of $\frac{6}{8}$. The first two notes seem to simulate a pizzicato effect on a stringed instrument. "It is as if the player plucked the string of his instrument to warn the singers and dancers to make ready."[1]

In measure 2 the quintal ostinato pattern of rolled chords immediately establishes the flavor of the mandolin and the rhythmic whirling of the dancers (Ex. 9):

Ex. 9. Opening pizzicato and quintal ostinato pattern (meas. 1-4).



Section A is basically in the key of A-flat major. The melodic line alternately outlines quartal and quintal harmonies and is made up of fragments of pure chromaticism, as in measures 11-13, and what seems to be a whole tone scale fragment as in measure 16, but may be a portion of of the C-flat major scale.

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[1]Gerald Moore, Singer and Accompanist (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1954), P. 49.

Section B begins at measure 28 and extends to measure 38. The basic tonality of this section is C major. Rhythmic change together with a utilization of contrasting dynamic and textural manifestations in the music constitute the change from section A to section B at measures 22 through 27. There is an unmistakable pentatonic flavor in both the accompaniment and vocal line in measures 27-29. The tonality remains basically in C major through section B with the final phrase passing through F major at measures 35-38 in preparation for the return of the A section in measure 39. There is a sectional elision at the return of section A, measures 37 and 38, created by the implementation of the introductory quintal harmonic motive under the final note of the second phrase of section B. The mélodie ends in A-flat major with a characteristic utilization of seventh and ninth chords somewhat clouding the tonality. The final E-flat octave seems to reaffirm the quintal tonal properties of the mandolin.

In approaching the interpretation of Mandoline it is essential to understand that the text is apparently describing a painting. The painting is probably in the style of, or by, the eighteenth century French painter, Watteau.[1] Pierre Bernac describes this type of painting

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[1]Bernac, pp. 121-122.

as follows:

> In these pictures, charming figures of both sexes are seen in the delightful costumes of the period, extremely elegant, handsome, refined and sophisticated, trivial and poetic, even sometimes melancholy. They are pictured in great shady parks, with many statues and fountatins, sitting or wandering about two by two, or playing the mandoline or the lute, and ... speaking of love; a kind of love which may be as sincere as romantic love, but which is completely opposite in its expression.[1]

It seems that a large measure of responsibility is placed on the pianist in order to bring off a satisfactory performance of this particular mélodie. There are many details and subtleties which the singer must also be cognizant of and strive to implement. These are all clearly indicated in the score.

The tempo for Mandoline is crucial. It should not be taken too fast as the clarity and accuracy of interpreting the rhythmic figures in the first three beats of measures 5 and 7, for example, will be impeded at too brisk a tempo. Debussy has indicated allegretto, not allegro or presto, at the beginning, though both Bernac and Moore indicate that this might better be taken at a slightly slower tempo. The point will always be to try in performance to adhere as closely as possible to the intentions of the composer while allowing taste and a realistic evaluation of one's ability to mold the ultimate interpretation.

Debussy chose to begin and end the mélodie with a

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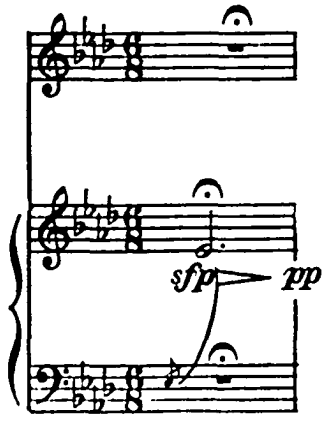
[1]Bernac, p. 122.

single octave, resembling a preliminary twang of the mandolin, (Example 10).

Ex. 10. Introductory octave: pizzicato effect (meas. 1).



Gerald Moore labels this a pizzicato note and suggests two ways of executing it.[1] The grace-note in the bass may be depressed and held, the treble E-flat following immediately with quite a pronounced sforzando effect. The latter should be executed simultaneously with the pianist depressing the damper pedal. The pedal should then be released immediately to one-fourth pedal as the upper note is released. This manner of executing the opening and closing measures allows the pianist to abide strictly by Debussy's dynamic indication, sfp > pp . A less successful way of attempting to capture the peculiar effect Debussy apparently intended here is to depress the top note silently and, keeping it fully depressed, to give the bass E-flat

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[1]Moore, p. 49.

a sharp, sudden attack with the left hand, leaving faint sympathetic vibrations to carry through the fermata. The former of these two techniques seems to work best on most pianos.

Beginning with measure 2 the una corda pedal may be engaged to advantage, leaving off the damper pedal entirely until measure 11. Debussy has indicated that the chords in both the left and right hands should be rolled. These should be played with one stroke per chord, completing the roll as quickly as possible. If the hands are kept hovering lightly just over the keys, indeed even lightly resting on the keys, much greater nuance and control are possible.

The pianist should be aware of the difference in notation between measures 2-5 and measures 6-10, for example. The former measures are written without rests between the chords, whereas the latter are notated with eighth rests between the chords. The notation thus requires that measures 2-6 be executed somewhat more legato than measures 6-10.

One of the most delightful aspects of this sprightly mélodie is brought out if both the pianist and singer strictly observe the dynamic indications such as those found in measures 6 and 7. Care should be taken to keep the general dynamic level at pianissimo where indicated with ensuing phrasing being shaded by crescendi and decrescendi as delicately as possible. The slight crescendo made simultaneously in measure 10 by both singer and pianist should

not exceed a mezzo-piano in measure 11. This should be followed by a careful and strictly even shading down to pianissimo through measures 11-14. In measures 11 and 12 the pianist may find the use of the damper pedal to be of advantage in achieving the overall legato effect required at this point. The damper pedal should then be disengaged promptly in measure 13, with the crisp strumming effect of the mandolin reestablished.

The singer should study carefully each of the markings throughout the mélodie as present in measures 8 and 9. On the word Echangent Debussy has indicated a legato followed immediately in measure 9 by three staccato (or detached) notes on the words des propos with a distinct accent on the first syllable of fades. If performed in this manner the innuendo becomes somewhat more obvious regarding the "platitudinous" compliments that were exchanged.[1]

Beginning at measure 18 the pianist should be aware of the accent mark on the first beat of each measure. The chords do not have to be robust but rather should be slightly emphasized, thus pointing up the first chord of each measure. The singer should be careful to observe the staccato markings in measures 22 and 23. This effect can be heightened somewhat to advantage by singing the notes immediately following the staccato indications as legato

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[1]Gerald Moore, p. 51.

as possible in each case. The accent marks in measures 26 and 27 should be observed within a diminuendo with only the slightest meno mosso occuring in measure 27. At measure 28 the original tempo should be resumed. In performance, there is a trend for this section to be taken at a rather noticeably slower tempo in relation to the opening section but there is nothing in the music which would indicate that Debussy intended a slower tempo here. Gerard Souzay sings this mélodie at a constant tempo from beginning to end.[1]

The piano momentarily ceases to imitate the mandolin in the transitory measures, 26 and 27, and at measure 28 reverts to a pianistic style depicting the elegance and suavity of the dancers. The damper pedal may be used judiciously beginning at measure 26 and carrying through measure 36 in order to effect the legato and tied bass notes indicated in the score. Care should be taken to work out the cross rhythm of two against three between the voice and piano parts in measures 28 and 29. Again, all dynamic markings are to be strictly adhered to in order to realize the nuance and subtlety requisite in a satisfactory performance of this mélodie.

At measure 37 the pianist should disengage the

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[1]Souzay/Baldwin recording, Side 1, band 2.

damper pedal, resuming the crisp rolled chords at a mezzo forte in the manner of the beginning. A diminuendo should occur in the piano part through measures 37 and 38 resulting in both singer and pianist beginning measure 39 pianissimo.

Bernac states that all of the "la, la" syllables of the last section of the mélodie should be "varied in expression."[1] He also advocates exaggerating the "l" in imitation of the plucking of the mandolin. Moore recommends a "quickening tempo"[2] for this closing section but there is no indication in the score that Debussy wanted the tempo altered. Souzay maintains a steady tempo rather than making an accelerando as Moore suggests. Breathing can be somewhat of a problem in this final section. Bernac suggests phrasing this section in the following manner: (Example 11).

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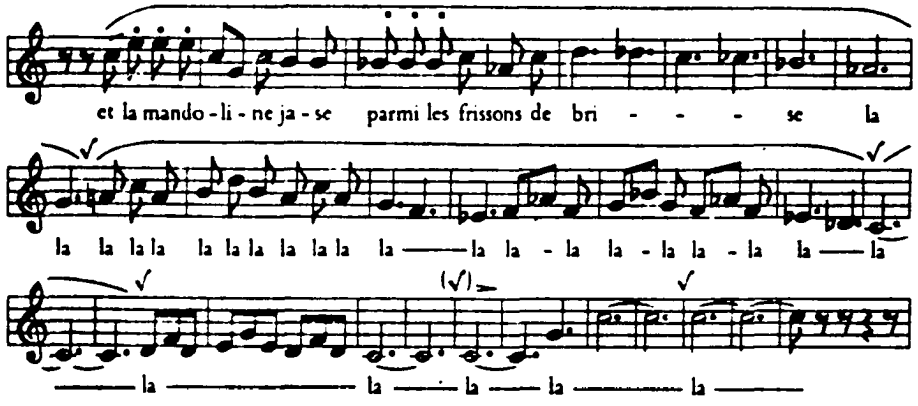
[1]Bernac, p. 159.

[2]Gerald Moore, p. 52.

Ex. 11. Breathing pattern for the closing section of Mandoline as suggested by Bernac.



Souzay employs this breathing pattern with one exception. He does not take a breath at measure 56 but carries through the third beat of measure 58, taking a breath there and proceeding with the Bernac pattern on through the end.

At measure 64 Debussy has indicated toujours en allant se perdant, which, translated, means, "always on to proceed losing oneself." This indication, in addition to the pianissimo and decrescendo already in effect for the closing measures suggests an acute diminuendo on the part of both singer and pianist from measure 64 through measure 68. The final E-flat octave is performed, of course, exactly as that in the opening measure.

Ariettes Oubliees

1. C'est l'extase

C'est l'extase langoureuse,
C'est la fatigue amoureuse,
C'est tous les frissons des bois
Parmi l'étreinte des brises.
C'est, vers les ramures grises,
Le choeur des petites voix.
O le frêle frais murmure,
Cela gazouille et susurre,
Cela ressemble au cri doux
Que l'herbe agitée expire.
Tu dirais, sous l'eau qui vire,--
Le roulis sourd des cailloux.
Cette âme qui se lamente
En cette plainte dormante,
C'est la nôtre, n'est-ce pas?
La mienne, dis, et la tienne
Don s'exhale l'humble antienne,
Par ce tiède soir, tout bas.

This is Ecstasy

This is languorous ecstasy,
This is sensual weariness,
This is all the rustling of forests
In the embrace of the breezes.
This is, through the gray boughs,
The chorus of little voices.
Oh, the faint cool murmur,
It twitters and whispers,
It resembles the gentle cry
Which the ruffled grass exhales.
You might call it, -- under the water which eddies--
The muted rolling of pebbles!
This soul which is lamenting
In this subdued plaint,
It is ours, is it not?
Say that it is mine and yours
Which breathes this humble anthem
So softly, on this mild evening.

C'est l'extase, the first of Debussy's cycle of six mélodies entitled Ariettes Oubliees, was written in 1888. These mélodies are all set to poems by Paul Verlaine and

are taken from three collections of Verlaine's works: Romance sans paroles, Aquarelles, and Paysages Belges. Dedicated to Mary Garden, the cycle was first published under the title, Ariettes. When the mélodies were published again fifteen years later, their title became Ariettes Oubliées.[1] The nature of the long and intimate association with Miss Garden is reflected in the charming dedication:

> A Miss Mary Garden, inoubliable Mélisande cette musique (déjà un peu vieille) en affectueux et reconnaissant hommage.[2]

The form of this mélodie again is dictated by the text and is through-composed. Texture and motivic repetitions are the primary punctuators of the form with the unity of the piece deriving from the first three measures which exhibit the primary unifying motive of parallel ninth chords as an introduction. These opening measures set the mood for the entire mélodie.

The poem of this mélodie has 18 lines and the music extends through 52 measures with a meter indication of $\frac{3}{8}$ which remains constant throughout the mélodie. The vocal span of this mélodie is a-flat to f". The basic tonality of the piece is C major. From measure 29 through measure 39 the tonal center of B-flat major seems to be established.

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[1]Thompson, p. 288.

[2]Claude Debussy, 43 Songs, Ed. Kagen, (New York: International Music Co., 1961), p. 63.

The harmony is primarily tertian over-all, with some use of 13th chords as in measures 18-20.

The introductory motive is utilized almost exclusively in the piano part except in measures 24 and 25 where it occurs in the voice part in a slightly modified form. This motive serves as a unifying factor by returning in its entirety (measures 18-20), or in a modified form (measures 24-26). The final use of the first two notes of the motive in measures 48-49 recalls the opening mood and serves to strengthen the codetta which closes the mélodie.

Bernac calls the Ariettes Oubliées Debussy's "first great masterpieces."[1] In regard to the first mélodie of this cycle, Bernac cautions that "Both singer and pianist must achieve the smoothest possible legato as well as the most beautiful quality of tone"[2] in order to accomplish a satisfactory performance of this piece.

Debussy has given the directives Lent and caressant at the beginning to indicate an unhurried and tender mood. In the opening bars the pianist should consider the use of the Damper and una corda pedals simultaneously in oreder to accomplish the pianissimo indicated by Debussy and the diminuendo marked on the descending motive of 9th

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[1]Bernac, p. 162.

[2]Bernac, p. 163.

chords. In this series of rather wide chords the pumping technique used on the damper pedal at one-half to one-fourth pedal is usually more effective than a full depression of that pedal, the latter easily resulting in muddiness of sound.

Debussy has given the directive reveusement (dreamily) at the beginning of the voice part in measure 3. The singer should observe the slight accent on the syllable "ta" in measure 4. It is imperative that the dynamic indications be strictly observed in this mélodie. A brief study will reveal that Debussy has indicated many more interpretive markings and is somewhat more explicit with his directions here than in the earlier songs.

At measure 11 the tempo may pick up just slightly as the indication un poco mosso is stated. The words should be sung with a slight stress on each syllable in the lines C'est tous les frissons des bois Parmi l'etiente des brises. Bernac indicates an "almost breathy" tone may be used to advantage here.[1] In the piano part the marking ÷ over the chords indicates that they should be given full value then slightly detached before playing the next notes. Careful attention should be given to keeping the rhythm precise in regard to the vocal line. There is a molto ritard indicated at measure 17 but this may be anticipated slightly

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[1]Bernac, p. 163.

to advantage beginning even as far back as measure 15 in order to achieve a smooth execution of measure 17. Suzanne Danco performs it in this way with splendid effect on her London recording of this cycle.[1]

The singer and pianist should gradually assume more intensity of feeling and dynamic level beginning in measure 22 with a double climax in both parts in measures 24 and 25 followed immediately by a diminuendo at measure 26. The most careful legato and pianissimo should prevail in both piano and voice parts at measure 29 where Debussy has indicated sempre dolcissimo.

According to the Danco/Agosti recording the following interpretive guidelines are suggested.[2] The pianist may take time and use the damper pedal rather liberally in the brief interlude at measure 35 being certain that the notes thereafter with the sforzando accent marking be executed in that manner. Both singer and pianist must begin the animato and crescendo at measure 40 with a gradual accelerando climaxing with the greatest intensity of volume in the entire mélodie on the word tienne at measures 43-44 with a diminuendo beginning in measure 45. This should quickly fall to a whisper in measure 46, dying away to an

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[1]Claude Debussy, "C'est l'extase langoureuse" from Ariettes Oubliees, in Songs of Debussy, performed by Suzanne Danco, soprano, and Guido Agosti, piano (London LPS 336), side two, band one.

[2]Danco/Agosti recording, Side 2, band 1.

almost imperceptible triple piano in measure 48. The pianist will find that these final chords may best be achieved at the softest possible level by stroking the chords gently with the fingers resting lightly on the keys and engaging both the una corda and damper pedals simultaneously. The two-note fragment of the opening motive should be brought out clearly but not abruptly in measures 48 and 49. These should be played, of course, with the left hand with the initial bass chords being held by the damper pedal. The C major triad at the end of measure 50 should be played by the right hand, the outside chords being held by the damper pedal.

2. Il Pleure dans mon coeur

Il pleure dans mon coeur
Comme il pleut sur la ville.
Quelle est cette langueur
Que pénètre mon coeur?
O bruit doux de la pluie,
Par terre et sur les toits!
Pour un coeur qui s'ennuie,
O le bruit de la pluie!
Il pleure sans raison
Dans se coeur qui s'écoeure.
Quoi! nulle trahison?
Ce ceuil est sans raison.
C'est bien la pire peine,
De ne savoir pourquoi,
Sans amour et sans haine,
Mon coeur a tant de peine.

Tears Fall in my Heart

Tears fall in my heart
Like the rain upon the city.
What is this languor
That penetrates my heart?
Oh, gentle sound of the rain,

On the ground and on the roofs!
For a heart that is weary,
Oh, the sound of the rain!
Tears fall without reason
In this anguished heart.
What! No betrayal?
This mourning has no reason.
This is truly the keenest pain,
To know not why,
Without either love or hate,
My heart bears so much pain.

The second mélodie of this cycle is based on a rather loose song form with sectionalization as follows: A A' B A", concluding with a coda. Tonality in this mélodie centers more or less around E minor and G major with unity between the sections maintained by the Dorian flavor of the raised 6th motive which is first stated in measures 3 and 4. This unifying motive serves to unite the four sections, recurring often in the piano part. The motive is, however, slightly altered in the B section where a more pronounced delineation is achieved by contrasting texture, tonality (B-flat minor), and tempo.

A secondary motivic element which also contributes to the overall unity of the piece is the descending chromatic scale fragment used in the piano part only, occuring first in measures 5 and 6, and repeated immediately in measures 7 and 8. This descending chromatic scale does not appear at all in the vocal line. Overall, the harmony in this mélodie is primarily tertian and is generally non-functional in the traditional sense.

The music for Il pleure dans mon coeur extends to

80 measures. Measures 1 and 2 form an introduction to the piece. Section A begins at measure 3 and extends to measure 22 with a key signature of one sharp and a meter indication of $\frac{3}{4}$. This remains constant throughout the piece. At measure 23 section A' begins, leading into section B which begins at measure 42. The B section is comparatively short, encompassing only 10 measures. Because of the plus lent indication, however, and the rather stark contrast in texture and tonality (the key signature here changes to four flats), it stands out significantly in the overall structure of the mélodie in spite of its brevity. The introductory material, slightly varied, forms an elision under the last note of the voice part in the B section (possibly in the nature of a retransition), leading into the return of the A'section, and the original key signature of one sharp (in this case, E minor). The coda begins at measure 71 and extends to the close of the mélodie, reiterating the Dorian-flavor motive and the descending scale fragment which recurs throughout the entire mélodie.

A point of conjecture here is whether the final chord, which is devoid of the third, might in any way correspond to the penultimate line of the poem which states, "sans amour et sans haine," with the final line of text reading, "Mon coeur a tant de peine."

Debussy has indicated a myriad of directions pertaining to interpretation in this mélodie. One of the

most significant is the triste et monotone at the beginning. Thompson points out that this mélodie

> . . . is prefaced by a line from a poem by Rimbaud, "Il pleut doucement sur la ville." As it rains over the city, there is rain also in the heart of the Symbolist; there is an all-pervading sadness. . . [1]

Bernac states that in addition to keeping the style "purposely monotonous" for this mélodie the performers might strive to "give the impression of tediousness."[2] He also remarks that the tempo should be about a quarter note at 116. and suggests that care should be taken not to perform this piece too slowly. Debussy indicates that the tempo should be moderement animé, ("moderately briskly"). Other directives indicated by the composer in the first measure are pianissimo and con Sordini. The latter term means "muted" and would suggest the use of the una corda pedal. The pianist might consider using both the una corda and damper pedals through-out the mélodie in order to better achieve the overall effect of sadness and monotony suggested by both the music and the text. In measure 3 Debussy has given the directive un peu en dehors, a marking also found frequently in his piano compositions. Translated literally this would read "a little outside." When Debussy indicates this it should be interpreted: "bring out, or make stand out

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[1]Thompson, p. 289.

[2]Bernac, p. 164.

somewhat" from whatever else is going on in the music; in this case, the Dorian-flavor motive introduced in measure 3 in the left hand.

According to the Danco/Agosti recording, the voice should enter in measure 4 at a mezzo-piano. There should be a stress on the syllable pleu in measure 5 followed by a slight diminuendo. It is permissable for the singer to breathe after the word coeur in measure 7 if necessary. The pianist should observe the accents on the first beat of measures 7 and 8 and the nuance of slightly shading off the dynamics there through the remaining part of those measures. Agosti[1] uses the damper pedal quite liberally along with the una corda pedal (apparently) throughout this section, obtaining a very lush legato under the voice. On the same recording Danco[2] sings the phrase beginning at measure 11 and extending through measure 18 without a breath interrupting the phrase. This is consistent with Bernac's advice:

> If the long phrase 'Quelle est cette langueur Qui penetre mon coeur' can be sung in one breath it is better (but not necessary) and easier too, to get a nice curve and top G.[3]

At measure 23 the A' section commences with the Dorian motive in the voice part. Care should be taken to observe strictly the dynamic indications at measure 25-27

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[1]Danco/Agosti recording

[2]Danco/Agosti recording

[3]Bernac, p. 165.

where the piano provides a contrasting sforzando accent to the voice part on the first beat of measures 27 and 28 followed by a decrescendo and in measure 29 a molto diminuendo. The dynamic level from here to the B section does not rise above piano. The singer should take an adequate breath at the first beat of measure 43 in order to be able to carry the phrase through to the end of measure 41.

Beginning at measure 42 the voice part should be treated more as a recitative. The descending chromatic fragment stated four times here in the piano part with the empty quality created by the rests seems to recall the classical sigh under the words: Quoi! nulle trahison? The composer has indicated Plus lent and ad lib in the voice part here with a continuing decrescendo dynamic indication in the piano part. The damper pedal should be disengaged with subtlety on the rests in measures 42 and 43 to enhance the rather empty quality called for at this point. The accents over the vocal line in measure 52 do not mean that the singer should detach the syllables but should stress them with intensity of feeling, with the tempo remaining rather slow and the dynamic level in both piano and voice pianissimo.

At measure 53 Debussy has indicated a return to the mood of the opening section of the mélodie. The pianist should take care not to increase the tempo too much

here and indeed may employ a slight meno mosso upon reaching measure 56, Debussy has chosen to wait until measure 57, the return of the A' section, to indicate the return of the tempo primo. Care should be taken at measure 57 to observe the triple piano marking in the piano part. The style requires that the singer execute the phrase C'est bien la pire peine De ne savoir pourquoi as legato as possible.

In order to achieve the effect indicated by the composer at measure 65 through measure 72, the singer must prepare and take a breath adequate to performing the phrase through the molto rallentando and the six-measure sustaining of the final word, "peine." It should be noted that the vocal line in measures 65-67 is identical to the vocal line in measures 11-13.

In measure 76 the pianist should roll the chord, playing the three middle notes with the right hand and crossing the left hand over the right to play the top E-flat and G, holding all of these notes down with the damper pedal. The right hand may then be freed to execute the same two notes an octave higher in measure 68. Debussy has indicated the directive perdendosi at measure 75 which means "to lose", or "become lost." The pianist must observe the ritard at measure 76 returning to tempo primo at measure 77 and "dying away" in the final 4 measures to the triple pianissimo.

3. L'ombre des arbres

L'ombre des arbres dans la rivière embrumée
Meurt comme de al fumée,
Tandis qu'en l'air, parmi les ramures réelles,
Se plaignent les tourterelles.
Combien ô voyageur, ce paysage blême
Te mira blême toi-même,
Et que tristes pleuraient dans les hautes feuillées,-
Tes espérances noyées.

The Shadow of the Trees

The reflection of the trees in the misty river
Is vanishing like smoke,
While, in the air, amidst the real branches,
The turtle doves lament.
How much, O traveler, this pallid landscape
Mirrored your own pale self,
And how sadly, in the high boughs, they wept,-
Your drowned hopes!

The form of this mélodie seems possibly to correspond with the German Barform[1], A A' B, with codetta. The shortest of the mélodies in this cycle, L'Ombre des Arbres encompasses only 31 measures. Section A extends from measure 1 through measure 10. Section A' begins at measure 11, extending to measure 20 with section B commencing at measure 21, closing at measure 26 with the final five measures comprising the codetta.

The tonality of this mélodie exhibits perhaps the most striking departure from the earlier Debussy style of any of the mélodies thus far considered. In this regard Thompson states that:

> The music goes through daring modulations that testify to the new independence of the man but .

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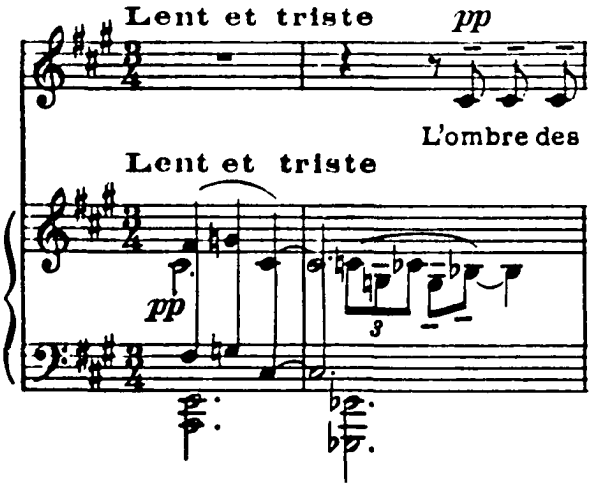
[1]See Glossary for extended definition of "Barform".

recently done with the academicians of the Conservatoire and the Villa Medici.[1]

The poem of this mélodie contains only 8 lines. The meter is $\frac{3}{4}$, remaining constant throughout the entire piece. The vocal line spans b to f-sharp" and the key signature is three sharps. The tonality may be considered to be somewhat vaguely in A major.

The opening motive introduces a rather startling tritone sonority in both the upper octaves and, between the lower octaves from measure 1 to measure 2, (Example 12).

Ex. 12. Tritone sonority of introductory motive (meas. 1 and 2).



Unity throughout the piece is established and maintained by this opening tritone note relationship which occurs in measure 1 and 3, is varied in measures 4 and 6, returns in

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[1]Thompson, P. 289.

measures 11 and 13, and finally in measure 27. The overall harmony is tertian. The codetta, beginning at measure 27 recalls the introductory motive and ends on a major third interval on A.

Lockspeiser comments that:

> The novel and arresting modulations of L'Ombre des arbres, are finely calculated to illustrate the poetic disparity between illusion and reality....[1]

Debussy places at the beginning of this mélodie an epigraph by Cyrano de Bergerac.[2] In essence it states that a nightingale singing in the top of a tree looks down and, seeing its reflection in the water, is filled with fear that it has fallen into the water. Bernac feels that this is a well chosen illustration of this particular poem as he comments:

> So the hopes of the poet, crying in the high branches, are for him already drowned, while he sees himself reflected in the misty and wan landscape.[3]

Bernac further states:

> Both singer and pianist have to suggest this atmosphere in the first stanza of this highly impressionistic mélodie.[4]

The opening directives which Debussy gives, then, must indeed be followed. Pianissimo is the dynamic indication

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[1]Lockspeiser, p. 127.

[2]Debussy, 43 Songs (New York: International Music Co., 1951), p. 72.

[3]Bernac, pp. 165-166.

[4]Bernac, p. 166.

along with Lent et triste. The singer should be aware of the relative difficulty of hearing and beginning on the correct pitch in measure 2. The pianist plays a C natural, a C-flat, and then a B-flat in a descending sequence and the singer is supposed to come in, then, on a C-sharp against the B-flat in the accompaniment. A rather startling and amusing faux pas is committed by Mary Garden at the beginning of her 1904 recording[1] of this mélodie with none other than the composer himself at the piano.[2] This historic recording was transferred undoubtedly from an early cylinder and is lacking in adequate sound quality in many respects, but is well worth listening to for its interpretive value.

Debussy employs the sustaining pedal profusely throughout the mélodie. However, at no time does the sound become muddy. Part of the reason for this clarity may indeed be due to the kind of piano used in this

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[1]Claude Debussy, Ariette Oubliée No. 3 (L'Ombre des Arbres), in Hommage À Claude Debussy Pour Le 50e Anniversaire De Sa Mort, performed by Mary Garden, soprano, and Claude Debussy, piano. (Les I.M.E. Pathe Marconi-Paris, OVD-49323), Side 1, Band 3.

[2]Miss Garden commences the first word on a pitch a full step lower than that which is written, resulting in Debussy giving the correct pitch a rather indignant thump, bringing the singer somewhat ungracefully to the correct pitch.

particular performance. It has been observed that earlier pianos,[1] for instance, seem to have a greater advantage over more modern pianos in that the performer seems to be able to accomplish a more lush, rather transparent fluidity of legato sound on the Bechstein as opposed to the more modern American-made instruments.

The following interpretive notes are based on the Garden/Debussy recording. The pianist should begin pianissimo taking care to keep the slow tempo relatively even as regards the triplet and stressed eighth notes of measure 2. The singer should commence at a matching pianissimo, taking a breath after the word arbres in measure 3. A particular aspect of Garden's interpretation is her rather more pronounced use of portamento than is commonly heard today. Between the last two notes in the vocal part of measure 4, for instance, there is a noticeable employment of portamento. The pianist should observe the sforzando accent immediately followed by a diminuendo in measure 5. The singer should lean somewhat more heavily on the syllables "com-me de la fu" in measure 5 as Debussy has indicated accents over these notes. Portamento is permitted between the octave B to B as the singer progresses from measure 6

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[1]The writer is the owner of a Bechstein grand piano made in Berlin, Germany in 1878. This piano has been completely restored and has provided the basis for obervation of marked contrasts in the performance of Debussy's music on instruments of this vintage as opposed to the modern Steinway or Baldwin pianos made in the United States.

to measure 7 but the singer is cautioned not to over do this effect. A breath should be taken after the word air in measure 7. In measure 9 the singer should not be in a hurry to get off of the syllable "plai" and may employ a slight agogic accent here with a portamento down to the following note. A simultaneous diminuendo should occur at this point. The accents over the words in measure 10 should be observed. At measure 11 the pianist should perform the octaves with even more delicacy of tone and legato than the identical opening measure of this piece if technique permits. The singer may breathe at the eighth rest in measure 13 and again at the end of measure 14. Little or no portamento should be used in measure 14. A gradual crescendo should begin in both piano and voice parts at measure 17 and build all the way to the first beat of measure 21. The singer should take a breath after the dotted quarter in measure 18 and then observe the stringendo at measure 19, increasing the tempo slightly. At measure 21 the climactic F-sharp should be sung, still piano, but with an accent and intensity of feeling, resuming the tempo primo and simultaneously observing a diminuendo. No breath should be taken by the singer from the beginning of measure 21 until the eighth rest in measure 23. Again, a slight portamento may be employed by the singer between the last two notes of measure 24. The pianist should observe the markings in the piano part as carefully as

possible, supporting the singer but never overpowering the voice at any time. The singer should take care to keep the E-flat in measure 25 in line dynamically with the F preceding it and may use a slight portamento between the final two notes in measure 26. The pianist must observe the decrescendo markings in measures 22, 24, 25, and 26. The accent markings over the chords in measures 24 and 25 again do not mean that these chords should be detached but that the pianist should strive for more clarity of rhythm in the syncopation at this point. The sforzando in measure 26 should not be a crashing one and should be caught with the damper pedal, enabling the pianist to play the three note chord above the E-flat octave in measure 27 with the right hand. The left hand then comes up to play the lowest G and C under the right hand octaves in measure 27. Debussy has indicated très retenu at measure 28 which means "very reserved" or "held back." This indicates to the pianist that he should strictly observe the pianissimo marking and will be facilitated by the use of both the una corda and damper pedals. The directive sempre dolcissimo e morendo over the concluding three measures of the mélodie suggests the most delicate stroking of the notes with the fingers resting lightly on the keys, rather than striking them from a distance above the keys. The C-sharp octave in the right hand in measure 28 should be caught with the damper pedal, freeing the right hand to play the

middle D and G-sharp above the lower octaves, returning then to catch the syncopated C-sharp octaves between the remaining middle notes, coming back down each time to play the middle notes and returning to play the upper C-sharp octaves. The final two measures should be barely audible.

4. Chevaux de Bois

Tournez, tournez, bons chevaux de bois,
Tournez cent tours, tournez mille tours.
Tournez souvent et tournez toujours,
Tournez, tournez au son des hautbois.
L'enfant tout rouge et la mère blanche,
Le gars en noir et la fille en rose,
L'une à la chose et l'autre à la pose,
Chacun se paie un sou de dimanche.
Tournez, tournez, chevaux de leur coeur,
Tandis qu'autour de tous vox tournois
Clignote l'oeil du filou sournois.
Tournez au son du piston vainqueur!
C'est étonnant comme ca vous soûle,
D'aller ainsi dans ce cirque bête:
Rien dans le ventre et mal dans la tête,
Du mal en masse et du bien en foule;
Tournez dadas, sans qu'il soit besoin
D'user jamais de nuls éperons
Pour commander à vos galops ronds.
Tournez, tournez, sans espoir de foin,
Et dépêchez, chevaux de leur âme,
Déjà voici que sonne à la soupe
La nuit qui tombe et chasse la troupe
De gais buveurs, que leur soif affame.
Tournez, tournez! Le ciel en velours
D'astres en or se vêt lentement,
L'Eglise tinte un glas tristement.
Tournez au son joyeux des tambours, tournez.

Wooden Horses

Turn around, keep turning, good wooden horses,
Turn a hundred times, turn a thousand times.
Turn often and do not stop,
Turn round, turn to the tune of the oboes.
The child quite red and mother white,
The boy in black and the girl in rose,
Each one doing as he pleases,
Each one spending his Sunday penny.

Turn round, turn, horses of their choice,
While at all your turning
The sly rogue casts a surreptitious glance.
Keep turning to the tune of the victorious trumpet!
It is astounding how it intoxicates you,
To move thus in this foolish circus,
With empty stomachs and dizzy heads,
Feeling altogether badly, yet happy in the crowd;
Turn, hobby horses, without needing
Ever the aid of spurs
To make you gallop on.
Turn round, turn, without any hope of hay,
And hurry, horses of their fancy,
Here, already the supper bell is sounded
By Night, which falls and disperses the crowd
Of gay drinkers, whose thirst has made them famished.
Turn, turn round! The velvet sky
Arrays itself slowly with golden stars.
The church tolls a mournful knell.
Turn to the gay tune of the drums, keep turning.

Chevaux de Bois is the fourth mélodie in this cycle but was "actually the first in order of composition of the Ariettes oubliées, " states Lockspeiser.[1] Thompson points out that it was composed about 1885 "when the composer was twenty-three or twenty-four years old."[2] Thompson further states that:

> It was one of the original Ariettes, published separately in 1885, and republished under the collective title of Ariettes Oubliées in 1903.[3]

Lockspeiser also suggests that Chevaux de Bois is "an unmistakable counterpart of the early Mandoline."[4]

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[1]Lockspeiser, p. 128.

[2]Thompson, p. 289.

[3]Thompson, p. 289.

[4]Lockspeiser, p. 128.

This mélodie also bears a slight similarity of form to Le Jet d'Eau in that both mélodies are based more or less on a rondo form or a type of ritornello. The sectionalization of Chevaux de Bois is as follows: A B A C A D A (coda).

This mélodie differs from most considered thus far in that its harmony is relatively functional. The key centers for the different sections are provided as follows. The introduction is devoid of sharps or flats in the key signature, beginning on an f/g trill, and is tonally unstable. The A section, however, settles into a distinct C major tonality, encompassing measures 9 through 16. The B section begins at measure 16 where the key signature and the tonality become A-flat major. The B section extends through measure 26. The A section returns at measure 27 with the key signature and tonal center of C-flat major extending through measure 34. At measure 35 the C section commences and the key signature becomes G major. At this point the tonality is more ambiguous than in the first two sections. At measure 47 a transition back to the A section occurs leading into the return of the A section at measure 51, this time in the key of E-flat major, extending through measure 58. The D section begins at measure 59 with the key signature of four flats. The tonality here is perhaps the most unstable and ambiguous of any section in the entire mélodie, possibly being more in E-flat minor than any other key. This section extends

through measure 78 with A returning for the last time at measure 79, back in the original key of C major. At measure 96 the last statement of the A section closes with a coda comprising the last six measures of the mélodie. There is no corresponding repetition of complete lines of text with the returning musical material. Only the word "Tournez" is repeated significantly, beginning lines 1-4, 9, 12, 17, 20, 25, and 28. There are 28 lines in the poem and 102 measures in the mélodie. This is by far the longest of the six mélodies in this cycle. The vocal line spans a to e". The meter indication for the entire mélodie is $\frac{2}{4}$ with the exceptions of measures 34, 46, and 57 which bear the meter indication of $\frac{1}{4}$.

The indication Debussy gives at the beginning of this mélodie in regard to tempo is Allegro non tanto. This suggests that care should be taken by the performers not to let the tempo get too fast. Bernac points out that:

> The scene is a little village fair in Belgium (Paysages Belges) at the end of the nineteenth century. This is sufficient to indicate that the tempo of this mélodie must not be too fast...the merry-go-round is not one of the fast engines of our modern fairs, but one of those turned by a handle....[1]

The opening trill is marked fortissimo and does not require either pedal. When the right hand enters at measure 3 Debussy has indicated sopra (above). Thus the

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[1]Bernac, pp. 167-168.

accented and staccato triplet and eighth note patterns should be brought out distinctly over the fortissimo trill. The composer has given the directives joyeux et sonore in regard to the general mood of the song. These should be interpreted "joyously and resonant or deep tones." The French definition also includes "clear and emphatic" under the term sonore.

This mélodie is pregnant with markings and indications concerning interpretation which Bernac points out "should be carefully observed."[1] He states further that he "finds the liaison too refined for the character of the poem."[2]

The style demands that the pianist give strict attention to working out the alternating triplet figures in measures 3-8 and to keeping the flourishes of 32nd notes light and crisp as the indication leger suggests in measure 9. The first "Tournez" there is forte with the second immediately becoming piano. Souzay[3] breathes after the word bois in measure 10 and then again after souvent in measure 11. The general construction of short phrases throughout this piece eliminates most breathing problems in that rests

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[1]Bernac, p. 168.

[2]Bernac, p. 168.

[3]Claude Debussy, Chevaux de Bois in Lieder Von Claude Debussy, performed by Gerard Souzay, Baritone, and Dalton Baldwin, piano (Deutsche Grammophon Gesellschaft LPM 18758), side 1, band 3.

are conveniently placed for adequate breathing wherever needed.

The following interpretive suggestions are based on the Souzay[1] recording. At measure 31 Debussy has indicated descretement (discreetly). This is in reference to the "slinking sneak-thief" and should be almost whispered, emphasizing the "s" sound on the word sournois in measure 32. The $\frac{1}{4}$ meter at measure 34 is simply on half of the duration of the $\frac{2}{4}$ measures preceding and following it. The pianist should perform measures 35-38 similarly to the opening measures of the mélodie. In measure 39-40, and 42-45, the singer should build to the penultimate syllable and accent it, coming off slightly on the last syllable of these measures. Very little use of the damper pedal is required in this song for the most part. The pianist should be careful to observe the sforzando accents indicated for the upper notes in measures 43-45. The singer should sing the phrase beginning at measure 45 somewhat more legato, building to a solid forte but the movement of the mélodie should not become heavy or sluggish. A general hint of diminuendo begins to take place at measure 59. Bernac suggests that from this point "night is gradually falling."[2] At this juncture the

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[1]Souzay/Baldwin recording, side 1, band 3.

[2]Bernac, p. 168.

performer is faced with the difficult task of putting into effect the tempo ritenuto poco a poco which Debussy indicates in measure 59. Over the span of 20 measures the tempo should gradually slow to one half the speed at which the mélodie begins. At the same time a corresponding diminuendo should occur. At measure 79 Debussy indicates a tempo (le double plus lent), meaning "twice as slow as at the beginning." Here the pianist should keep the tremolo in the bass as soft as possible and may well use both the una corda and damper pedals to advantage. From this point to the end of the vocal line, the voice must stay rather light and transparent. It is suggested that male voices employ a head or falsetto tone at measures 87-89 if necessary in order to keep the mood and sound of this section as light and soft as the style demands. There is even more slowing and softening in both voice and piano parts in measure 89 and 90. The pianist should keep the sforzando accents in measures 88 and 90 relatively soft and in line with the character of the piece at this point. At measure 91 there is an abrupt return to the original brisk tempo but the dynamic level stays piano. The damper pedal may be employed to facilitate the legato effect indicated in the bass part of measures 93-95. The voice part is again at a whisper and fading in measure 95. The pianist should retard even more in measure 96 and the dynamic level should begin to die away at measure 97 with the top notes in the piano part in measures 98 and 100 being

slightly brought out, possibly indicating the distant sound of the angelus referred to in the penultimate line of the poem.

5. Green (Aquarelle)

Voici des fruits, des fleurs, des feuilles et des branches,
Et puis voici mon coeur qui ne bat que pour vous.
Ne le déchirez pas avec vos deux mains blanches,
Et qu'à vos yeux si beaux l'humble présent soit doux.
J'arrive tout couvert encore de rosée,
Que le vent du matin vient glacer à mon front,
Souffrez que ma fatigue à vos pieds reposée,
Rêve des chers instants qui la delasseront.
Sur votre jeune sein, laissez rouler ma tête,
Toute sonore encore de vos derniers baisers;
Laissez-la s'apaiser de la bonne tempête,
Et que je dorme un peu puisque vous reposez.

Green

Here are fruits, flowers, leaves and branches,
And here, also, is my heart which beats only for you.
Do not tear it apart with your two white hands,
And may this humble offering seem sweet to you so lovely eyes.
I come, still covered with dew,
Which the morning wind has turned to frost on my brow.
Permit that my fatigue, reposing at your feet,
May dream of the cherished moments that will refresh it.

On your young bosom let me cradle my head,
Still filled with music from your last kisses;
Let it be soothed after the good storm,
And let me sleep a little, while you rest.

The form of this mélodie is a modified A B A song form with what seems to be the equivalent of a coda with words. The opening 4 measures comprise a prologue or introduction, setting the mood of the piece. Section A begins at measure 5 and continues to measure 20 where there is a transition, using material from the introduction, into the B section at measure 24. The B section

encompasses measures 24 through 39. Measures 40 and 41 again introduce the return of the A section with material from the opening measures of the piece. At this recurrence, section A is modified slightly and at measure 50 the remainder of the mélodie resembles a coda extending to the end, measure 58.

The tonality of the sections is again somewhat unstable, section A hovering around F minor with whole tone scale fragments in measures 13-16. Section B bears the key signature of two flats and appears to be in B-flat major.

There are 12 lines of text in the poem and the mélodie encompasses 58 measures. The meter indication is $\frac{6}{8}$ remaining constant throughout the entire piece. The span of the vocal line is from a-flat to f".

The poem of this mélodie is taken from Verlaine's Aquarelles which attempted to evoke "the feeling of water colors in verse."[1] Thompson suggests that "Debussy's setting of Green transfers this feeling to music."[2] Thompson further points out that:

> Green is a love song, not a nature picture--the love song of a symbolist whose ardor has the freshness of the color green, and who seeks its coolness in the arms of his beloved.[3]

The opening measures immediately set the mood for

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[1]Thompson, p. 290.

[2]Thompson, p. 290.

[3]Thompson, p. 290.

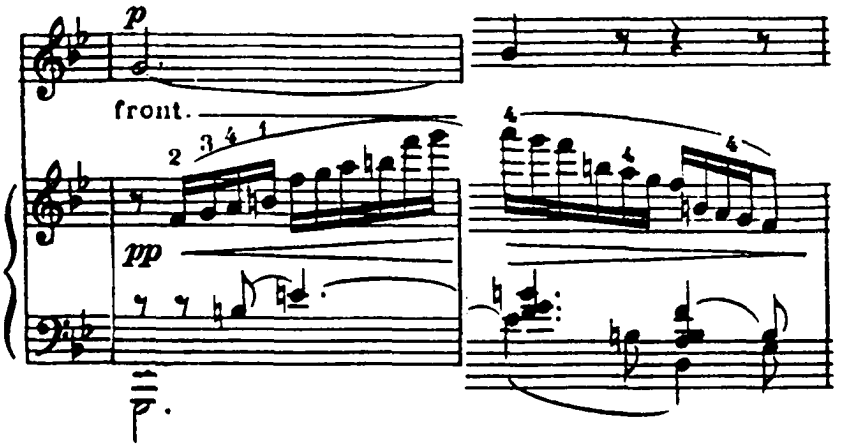
the entire mélodie which is to be Joyeusement animé, (joyously animated). Debussy has indicated leggierissimo which tells the pianist that the octaves should be performed as lightly and delicately as possible. One possible way to insure accuracy in executing these rather disjunct and rapid octaves is for the pianist to watch his thumbs. If the thumb gets to the right note more than likely the outside fingers will find their way also. The pianist is cautioned not to neglect the importance of the left hand and the two crescendo markings in measures 1-4.

Care should be taken on the part of the singer to perform the duplets accurately in measures 5-6, and thereafter when they occur in the mélodie. Heavier male voices should consider using the light head tone or falsetto on the top F in measure 7 in order to keep the line as soft and delicate as the composer has indicated. The decrescendo and ritard should be observed in both the voice and piano parts at measure 11, returning to the tempo primo at measure 13. Care should be taken to sing the whole-tone fragments accurately in measures 13-14 and 15-16. There should be a slight crescendo in measure 16 and then a diminuendo in measure 17 and 18 with a ritard on the last half of measure 18 and measure 19, resuming the original tempo at measure 20.

The B section at measure 23 should be somewhat subdued in the piano part. The style dictates that the singer

take an adequate breath before commencing the phrase in measure 24 in order to be able to carry through to the end of measure 27 without breaking the phrase. The staccato markings above the notes of the vocal line in measures 28 and 29 do not mean that the line should be choppy or sharply detached. Bernac comments that "The line '<u>Que le vent du matin vient glacer à mon front</u>' is <u>non legato</u> more than actual staccato."[1] Again, the pianist must not neglect the important left hand notes under the ascending and descending whole tone glissando-like flourishes in the right hand at measures 30-31. The execution of this seemingly difficult configuration may be facilitated by beginning the scale with the second finger of the right hand and fingering the passage as follows (Example 13).

Ex. 13. Suggested fingering pattern for ascending whole tone passage (meas. 30 and 31).



[1]Bernac, p. 170.

The style suggests that the descending part of the phrase may be performed slightly slower in anticipation of the retenu at measure 32. The indication Un peu retenu (a little reserved) may be interpreted "to hold back a little." The damper pedal should be engaged at measure 32 so that the left hand will be free to play the D in measures 32 and 34. At measure 36 the directive serrez tendre (literally means "to press on tenderly"). Then at measure 38 Debussy has indicated encore plus retenu which should be interpreted "again more holding back." Bernac remarks that at the andantino at measure 40

> the quiet pace of the music suggested by the poem indicates that the young lover has had his reward...[1]

And at this point (measure 42) the indication caressant "invites the singer to achieve the sweetest possible vocal line"[2] on through the end of the mélodie. This, again, will necessitate the use of a light head tone or falsetto on the top F in measure 44 and in measures 48 and 49 in the case of heavier male voices. The coda-like section at measure 50 should become more slow and soft with the voice stressing ever so tenderly the notes on the phrase Et que je dorme un peu at measures 53-54. The mélodie ends with a gradual dying away of sound in both voice and piano.

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[1]Bernac, p. 170.

[2]Bernac, p. 170.

6. Spleen (Aquarelle)

Les roses étaient toutes rouges,
Et les lieeres étaient tout noirs.
Chère, pour peu que tu te bouges,
Renaissent tous mes désespoirs.
Le ciel était trop bleu, trop tendre,
La mer trop verte et l'air trop doux;
Je crains toujours, ce qu'est d'attendre,
Quelque fuite atroce de vous!
Du houx à la feuille vernie,
Et du luisant buis je suis las,
Et de la campagne infinie,
Et de tout, fors de vous. Hélas!

Spleen

The roses were all red,
And the ivy all black.
Beloved, when you become a little restless,
All my despair is reborn.
The sky was too blue, too tender,
The sea too green, and the air too mild;
I am always afraid of what may come,
Of some cruel flight of yours!
Of the green-leaved holly,
And of the shining box trees, I am weary,
And of the endless countryside,
And of everything, except you. Alas!

The last mélodie in the cycle entitled Ariettes oubliées bears the singularly puzzling title Spleen. Like the previous mélodie, Green, Spleen is an Aquarelle and as with the name of the previous mélodie, Thompson states that "The English title is Verlaine's. Debussy knew little English."[1] Thompson further states that:

> It is melancholy with which we have to deal in this instance, not "spleen" as the word is understood in English....[2]

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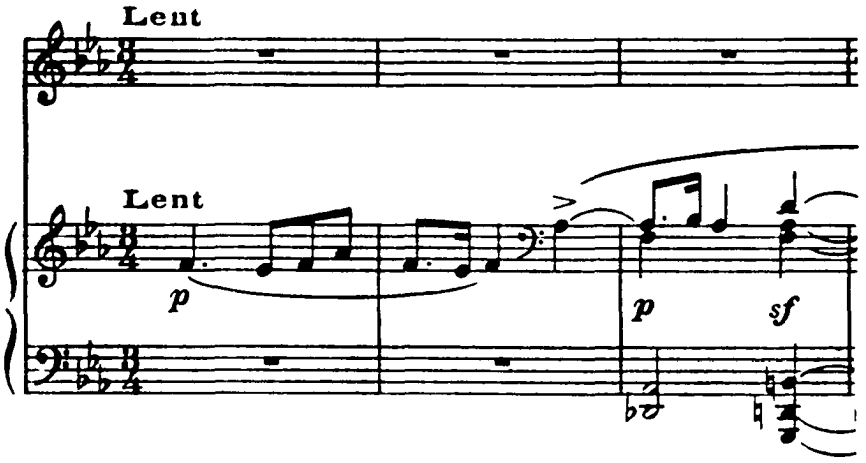
[1]Thompson, p. 290.

[2]Thompson, p. 291.

The vocal line of this mélodie is basically through-composed with unity maintained by recurrences of the introductory motive in the piano part (Example 14).

Ex. 14. Unifying introductory motive (Meas. 1-3).



This motive recurs in the piano part in measures 9-10, 18-19, 22-23, 24-25, 28-29, and 30-31. The tonality of this motive seems to hint at D-flat major. The final chord, however, is a C-minor triad. The intervening tonality is ambiguous. Key centers see more obscure and the tonality more ambiguous in this mélodie than any other song in the cycle. C minor is suggested because of the G flat^{9} chord in measures 3-4 going temporarily to the E-flat and G notes which sound together in measures 6 and 8; the C minor triads in the bass part of the piano accompaniment in measures 26-27; the final chords of the piece which are C minor; and the key signature of the beginning and ending measures

of the mélodie which is three flats, also that of C minor. At measure 14 the key signature changes to six sharps but tonality is ambiguous at best during the four measures bearing this key signature. The meter indication is $\frac{3}{4}$, remaining constant throughout the piece.

There are 12 lines of text in the poem of this mélodie, and the music encompasses 34 measures. The vocal line spans a-flat to f".

There are several unique problems involved with interpreting this final mélodie of the cycle; not the least of which is that of obtaining a clear understanding of the meaning of the text in relation to the music. Lockspeiser states that:

> Spleen, with its obstinately recurring theme in the accompaniment...provides another example of the new recitative style--the impression created by the singer is of the poem most expressively spoken.[1]

Thompson points out that:

> . . . the mood is tinctured with a sort of fanciful disgust--disgust for the too beautiful scenes of nature, disgust for almost everything except the loved one, of whose constancy the poet is none too sure.[2]

Bernac admits unequivacally that "this is certainly a difficult poem and a difficult mélodie,"[3] but he goes on to

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[1]Lockspeiser, p. 128.

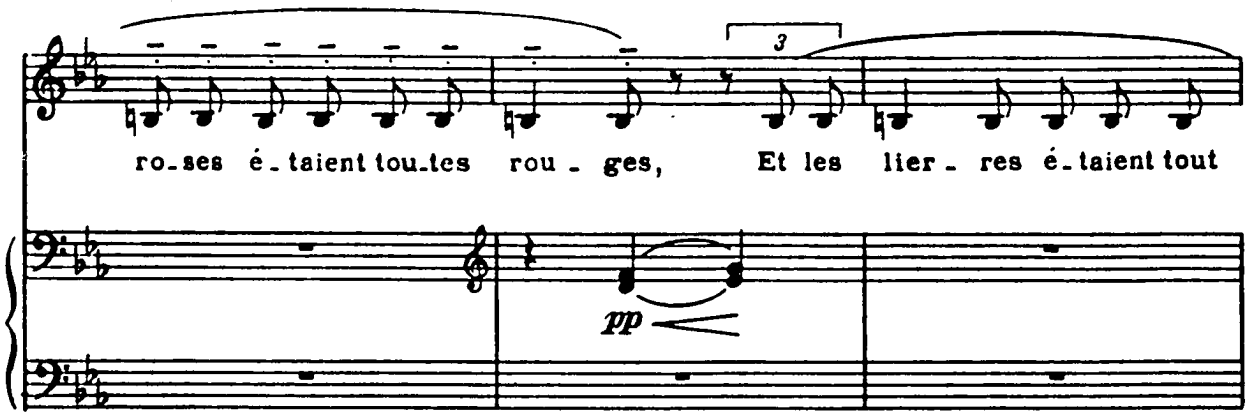
[2]Thompson, p. 291.

[3]Bernac, p. 171.

point out that Debussy "once more succeeds in making the meaning of the poem clearer."[1] Apparently the poet is weary of all nature in general "because of this love and his anxiety about it."[2]

The sparse accompaniment and soft dynamic level of measures 5-7 as compared with the relatively full scoring and fortissimo dynamic indication of 27-29 exhibit one of the several marked contrasts present within this mélodie (Example 15).

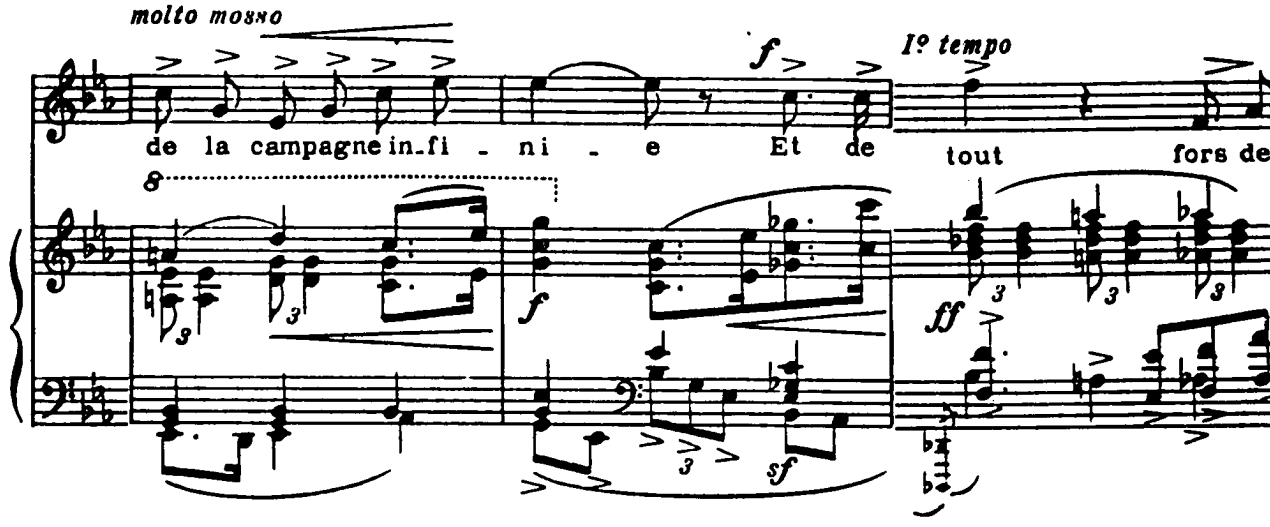
Ex. 15. Marked contrasts in dynamics and accompaniment within Spleen (meas. 5-7 compared with meas. 27-29).



[1]Bernac, p. 171.

[2]Bernac, p. 171.

(Ex. 15, continued)



Debussy simply indicates Lent at the beginning of Spleen, with a dynamic marking of piano. In measure 3 the composer expresses an "ingenious foreboding" of the anxiety and fear of the poet "which takes the form of a sudden sforzando."[1] The sforzando is immediately followed by a diminuendo in measure 4. The voice enters here with a dynamic indication of piano. Bernac suggests that the singer use no more than sotto voce from the beginning of the vocal line through measure 8, taking care not to "mark the beats with the voice."[2] At measure 9 Debussy has indicated con moto which should be expressed by a gradual but quickly beginning increase in tempo, dynamic level and intensity through

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[1]Thompson, p. 291.

[2]Bernac, p. 171.

measure 13. At measure 14 the pianissimo should suddenly occur almost in the manner of a subito piano. The vocal line at this point should be very legato as Debussy has indicated tres doux, (very gently, sweetly). At measure 18 the voice should resume at a piano level and begin a stringendo or "pressing forward" in measure 20. Here both the pianist and singer will begin the gradual crescendo and animato, observing the vigorous molto mosso (much more motion) at measure 26 and achieving a thrilling climax on the first beat of measure 28 at a solid fortissimo. At this same instant must occur the tempo primo. The dynamic level should not fall quite suddenly but rather gradually. The molto rallentando and molto diminuendo do not really go into effect until measure 30. Bernac states that at this point

> . . . the repeated musical theme, molto rallentando, brings the sad and bitter conclusion: 'helas!' intense in the p.[1]

Fetes Galantes: Book II

1. Les Ingénus

Les hauts talons luttaient avec les longues jupes,
En sorte que, selon le terrain et le vent,
Parfois luisaient des bas de jambes,
Trop souvent interceptés!
Et nous aimions ce jeu de dupes.
Parfois aussi le dard d'un insecte jaloux
Inquiétait le col des belles sous les branches,
Et c'étaient des éclairs soudains des nuques blanches,
Et ce regal comblait nos jeunes yeux de fous.

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[1]Bernac, p. 172.

Le soir tombait, un soir equivoque d'automne:
Les belles se pendant reveuses a nos bras,
Dirent alors des mots si speciaux, tout bas,
Que notre ame depuis ce temps tremble et s'etonne.

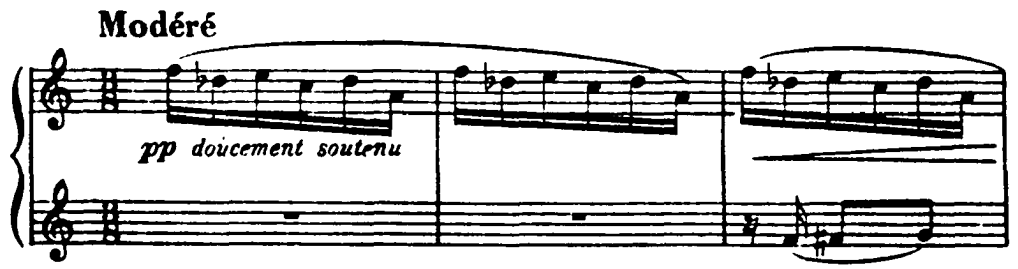
The Innocents

High heels struggled with long skirts,
So that, depending on the terrain and the wind,
The calves of legs sometimes glistened,
Too often spied!
And we loved this game of tricks.
Also, sometimes the sting of a jealous insect
Troubled the neck of some pretty maiden under the boughs.
And then there was a sudden sight of a snow-white throat,
And this treat strained our young foolish eyes.
The night was falling, the enigmatic autumn night:
The pretty maidens, leaning on our arms,
Were saying then, in low voices, such strange, peculiar words,
That our souls since then tremble and are astounded.

This mélodie is basically through-composed with unity maintained primarily by the introductory motive which is utilized extensively throughout the piece in both the piano and vocal lines. Another factor contributing to the unity of Les Ingénus is the presence of an ostinato pattern in almost every measure of the mélodie.

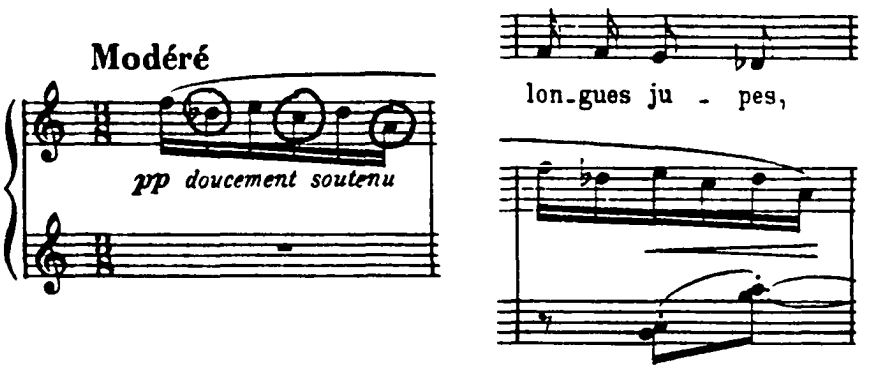
The sectionalization of this piece is delineated largely by variation of the ostinato in the piano part. The mélodie begins with a five measure introduction and contains four main section. The unifying motive which establishes the ostinato and recurs throughout the piece is stated in measure one and repeated identically in measures 2 and 3, (Example 16).

Ex. 16. Statement of unifying motive and establishment of ostinato (meas. 1-3).



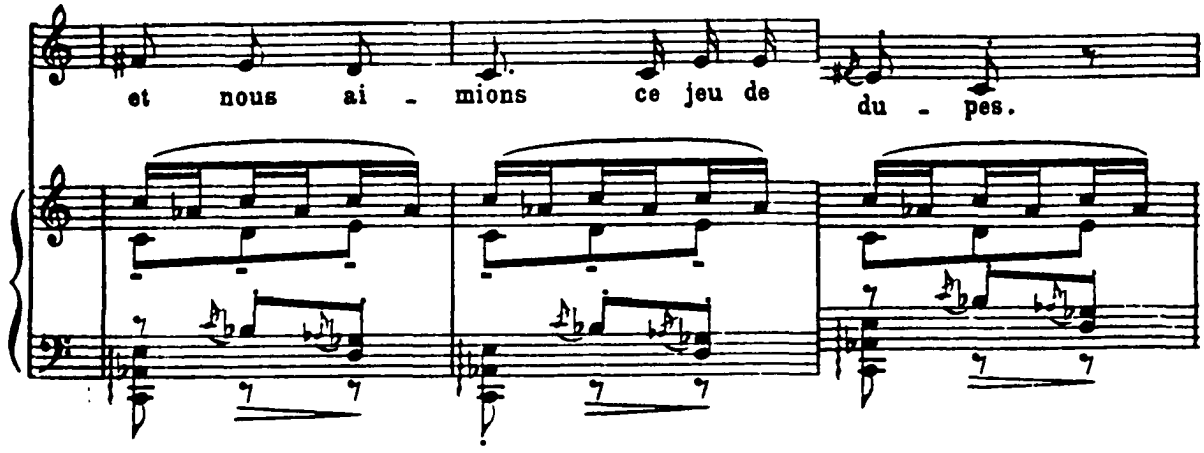
Section I begins at measure 6 and extends through measure 15. The motive made up of a half step followed by a minor third is now stated in the voice part in measure 8, (Example 17).

Ex. 17. Unifying motive stated in vocal line (meas. 1 and 8).



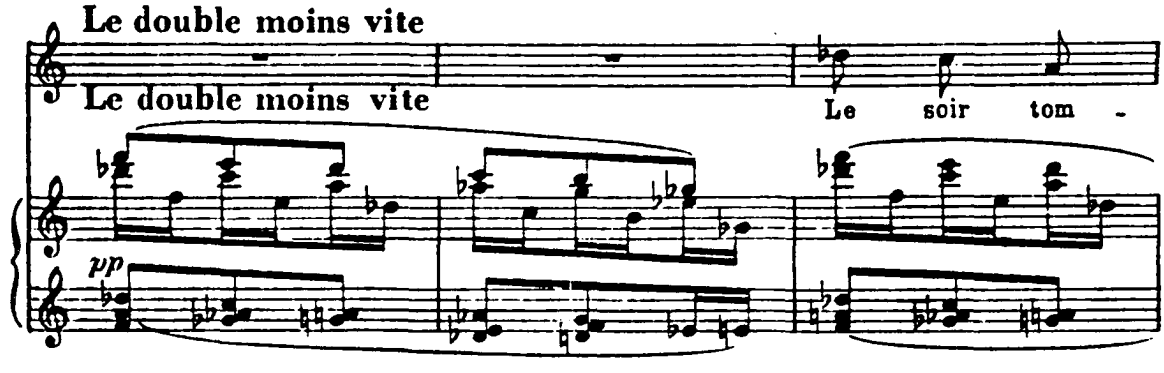
At measure 16 Section II begins, extending through measure 26. There is more influence of the whole tone scale in section II, particularly in the vocal line, (Example 18).

Ex. 18. Use of whole-tone scale in vocal line (meas. 17-19).



The ostinato is now varied significantly with an ascending whole-step figure under the sixteenth-note ostinato. Section III encompasses measures 27 through 36. The introductory motive is absent in this section in any recognizable form. A somewhat secondal flavor is present in the ostinato in measures 27-30. At measure 37 section IV commences at half the original tempo with the motive now in the vocal line and accompaniment as well, (Example 19).

Ex. 19. Use of introductory motive in octaves in accompaniment and vocal line simultaneously (meas. 37-39).



Measure 48 to the close of the mélodie comprises a codetta with the use of the introductory motive in the voice part in measures 49-51. The whole-tone flavor present intermittently in the piece is recalled as the mélodie ends on an augmented chord in the final two measures.

Of the ostinato so prevalent in this mélodie Thompson says:

> An inexorable succession of sixteenth notes illustrates the fondness of Debussy at this time for persistent patterns in which the rhythmic basis never changes.[1]

Thompson further states that "the accents of the vocal declamation at times are at variance with the accompaniment,"[2] contributing to the difficulty of this mélodie.

There are 13 lines of text in the poem of this mélodie and 53 measures of music. The meter indication is $\frac{3}{8}$, remaining constant throughout. The vocal line spans c' to f".

Bernac asserts that the three mélodies of this cycle, along with the Poèmes de Mallarmé are "perhaps the most subtle he ever wrote."[3] Bernac continues:

> A kind of mysterious haze seems to blur these three pictures. Therefore one must beware of giving them too tangible a reality.[4]

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[1]Thompson, p. 298.

[2]Thompson, p. 298.

[3]Bernac, p. 182.

[4]Bernac, p. 182.

Recordings by Teyte[1] and Souzay[2] were utilized as listening resources for this cycle of mélodies. There were many similarities and a few differences of approach in the interpretations of the two artists. For the most part Souzay followed the dynamic indications rather strictly whereas Miss Teyte's dynamic levels were generally louder over all. It is difficult, however, to ascertain just how much of the seeming difference of volume employed by the respective singers might be due to microphone quality and placement as opposed to an actual higher decibel output in the physical performance.

The modéré at the beginning of this piece should be interpreted "moderately and at a steady pace." Debussy has indicated doucement soutenu in measure 1 under the piano part which means "gently or sweetly sustained." Cortot[3] uses the damper pedal liberally throughout this mélodie without at any time letting the sound become muddy or indistinct. In this piece the singer should take dynamic cues from the pianist for the most part. Teyte enters in measure 6 at a mezzo piano but Souzay enters

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[1]Claude Debussy, Songs by Debussy, performed by Maggie Teyte, soprano, and Alfred Cortot and Gerald Moore, pianists. (Angel Records COLH 134 Great Recordings of the Century Series, LC# R 62-1417, 1962).

[2]Souzay/Baldwin recording.

[3]Teyte/Cortot recording, side 4.

pianissimo. The remaining part of the mélodie in each case is then performed in relation to the beginning dynamic level. Teyte rarely gets below a mezzo piano and indeed sings almost a mezzo forte in measures 42-45 where Souzay restricts his dynamic level to mezzo piano. One conclusion which could concievably be drawn form this is that the performer should be consistent with whatever dynamic level and scale are decided upon at the outset of the mélodie. It is the writer's opinion that the Souzay recording best captures the Impressionistic flavor of this setting but then Teyte studied Debussy's music with the composer himself[1] so a conclusion is difficult to arrive at in this regard.

Based on the Souzay and Teyte recordings, the following interpretive notes are suggested. The opening phrase should be sung all in one breath. The pianist will have to cross the left hand over the right in measure 8 and should engage the damper pedal in order to keep the notes crisp and clear within the flowing smoothness of sound. The crescendo markings in measures 10-12 must be observed by the pianist. These should be delicate nuances rather than obvious dynamic contrasts. Souzay breathes between measures 13 and 14 and not before the word Interceptes in measures 14-15. Teyte, in contrast, does not

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[1]Maggie Teyte, Star On The Door (London: Garden City Press, Ltd., 1958), Chapter X.

breathe at the comma in the text, but after the word souvent in measure 14. It would appear, then, that the singer could breathe at either point. Cedez at measure 15 should be interpreted as "slow down or hold back somewhat." At measure 16 the tempo primo returns immediately. The delightful bit of humorous text-painting accomplished by Debussy in the piano part of measure 21-26 should be given attention by the pianist. Here the "playful appogiaturas" mark "the intrusion of a ruthless insect" on Les Ingénus.[1]

Both singer and pianist must begin a gradual accelerando at measure 27 where Debussy has indicated Peu à peu animé (little by little more animated). The performer should be gaining considerable speed by measure 31 at the Toujours animé and crescendo strongly to measure 33-34. This should be followed immediately by a diminuendo in measure 35. The retenu indication in measure 36 means "reserved, careful" and should lead gently into measure 37 where the indication Le double moins vite means "to take half as fast" as what has gone before. The pianist should lift the damper pedal on every beat from measure 34 through measure 42, taking care to preserve a flowing legato but ensuring a smooth and clear change of harmony on each beat. The triplets deserve special care on the part of the singer in measures 40-41. Here again is one of the cross rhythms

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[1]Lockspeiser, p. 130.

(two against three) which Debussy is so fond of. The singer should begin a decrescendo in measure 46, anticipating the Lent at measure 48, and using an agogic accent on the first syllable of the word tremble in measure 50. The pianist should be softening then all the way to the end with the exception of the penultimate chord in measure 52 which should be an abrupt upward roll. The pianist should not be in a hurry to play the final third in the treble, which should be played by the left hand passing over the right. Bernac comments that at the end "a strange atmosphere should be created: uncertain, confused, interrogative...."[1]

2. Le Faune

Un vieux faune de terre cuite
Rit au centre des boulingrins,
Présageant sans doute une suite
Mauvaise à ces instants sereins,
Qui m'ont conduit et t'ont conduite,
Mélancoliques pelerins,
Jusqu'à cette heure dont la fuite
Tournoie au son des tambourins.

The Faun

An old satyr of terracota
Laughs in the middle of a bowling green,
Predicting no doubt a bad sequel
To these blissful moments,
Which led you and me.
Melancholy wayfarers,
To this point when the hours pass,
Circling about to the sound of tambourines.

Le Faune, the second mélodie of this cycle, is the shortest of the three with only 8 lines of text set to 39

measures of music. The vocal line spans only one octave, c' to c". The meter indication is $\frac{3}{4}$, remaining constant throughout the piece.

A noteworthy aspect of this mélodie is that it consists of 22 measures for the piano alone as opposed to only 17 measures for the voice. Except for the first three measures the 12th measure, and the very last measure of this mélodie the piano part contains an incessant ostinato on G_1 and D. Thus, the piano part seems to be in a G tonality with the voice part centering somewhat on a D minor tonality.

The form of Le Faune is through-composed with unity maintained by the persistent ostinato in the accompaniment (the tambourines mentioned in the concluding line of the Poem?), and the exoticism of the pentatonic motive stated in the first measure, and again in measures 19, 34, and 35, ainsi qu'une flute "in the manner of a flute." Sectionalization is not as clearly evident in this mélodie as in the majority of the others considered in this study. The piece seems to fall into three areas or sections. The first section begins at measure 1, extends through measure 14, and is for piano alone. Section II, beginning at measure 14 is punctuated by the entrance of the voice. Section II extends through measure 33. Section III seems to function as a coda-like area, again for piano alone, in which is heard the reiteration of the ostinato in the bass under the pentatonic flute motive.

The harmony of this piece is non-functional in the traditional sense with a predominance of augmented triads providing somewhat of a whole-tone flavor to the overall harmonic structure.

In contrast to the first mélodie in this cycle, (Les Ingenus), Le Faune is conspicuous for its lack of interpretive indications. Bernac comments that in this piece "the voice sings its part very simply, with scarcely any nuances."[1] Both the Souzay and Teyte recordings are similar in interpretation with the exception discussed in the preceding mélodie of Teyte's dynamic level being apparently somewhat louder than Souzay's in general.

Debussy has indicated Andantino (tempo rubato) at the beginning of this melodie. The style dictates that the performers use a slight flexibility without any great rhythmic deviation from the written score. The descending pentatonic scale in the first measure is best executed with the right hand taking the second five notes with the right hand passing over the left hand to play the notes of the second measure. The directive Debussy gives for the drum ostinato beginning in the piano part at measure 4 reads tres lointain sans nuances mais pourtant bien rhythme. This should be interpreted "very remote (distant) without nuances but still rhythmical (having well marked beats.)" The pianist should take care to give the full value to the dotted eighth notes

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[1]Bernac, p. 184.

which begin measures 4-6, and the accents on that same note in measures 7-11. Cortot[1] accomplishes this by engaging the damper pedal fully on that specific note in each of those measures, letting the pedal off for the ensuing notes of each measure. In measure 7 the directive avec unexpression sourde should be interpreted "with a muffled character or sound." The voice should enter softly at measure 14 keeping a flowing legato and articulating the triplets in measures 14 and 16 with precision. The pianist will necessarily have to accomplish the rather widely spread rolled chord sforzando in measure 18 with the right hand, taking care not to come in too loudly on the d''' of that same measure. The decrescendi are essential on the descending flute motives in measure 19. Bernac states that the phrases beginning at measure 20 and extending to measure 23 "must be sung in one breath."[2] The animé at measure 24 should be very slight and according to Bernac there should be no liaison between conduit and et in measure 26.[3] The coda, measures 34-39, exhibits again the characteristic recurrence of unifying motivic material as the dynamic level "becomes lost" and fades out plus rien to "nothing" in the concluding two measures.

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[1]Teyte/Cortot disc, side five.

[2]Bernac, p. 184.

[3]Bernac, p. 184.

3. Colloque Sentimental

Dans le vieux parc solitaire et glacé
Deux formes ont tout à l'heure passé.
Leurs yeux sont morts et leur lèvres sont molles,
Et l'on entend à peine leurs paroles.
Dans le vieux parc solitaire et glacé
Deux spectres ont evoqué leur passé.
Te souvient-il de notre extase ancienne?
Pourquoi voulez-vous donc qu'il m'en souvienne?
Ton coeur bât-il toujours à mon seul nom?
Toujours vois-tu mon âme en rêve? Non.
Ah! Les beaux jours de bonheur indicible
Ou nous joignions nos bouches: C'est possible.
Qu'il était bleu, le ciel, et grand l'espoir!
L'espoir a fui, vaincu, vers le ciel noir.
Tels ils marchaient dans les avoines folles,
Et la nuit seule entendit leurs paroles.

Sentimental Colloquy

In the old park, deserted and cold,
Two figures have just passed by.
Their eyes are lifeless and their mouths are slack.
And one can hardly hear their words.
In the old park, deserted and cold,
Two ghosts have evoked their past.
"Do you remember our rapture of yore?"
"Why do you wish me to remember it?"
"Does your heart still beat faster merely at my name?"
"Do you still see my soul in your dreams?" "No."
"O, the beautiful days of inexpressible joy,
When we would join our lips:" "It is possible."
"How blue was the sky and how sublime our hope."
"Hope has fled, defeated, towards the dismal sky."
And so they walked amidst the wild oats,
And the night alone has heard their words.

Colloque Sentimental is the longest of the three mélodies of this cycle containing 16 lines of poetry set to 58 measures of music. The vocal line extends from a-flat to f-flat". The meter indication is $\frac{3}{4}$ throughout with the one exception of measure 8 which is in $\frac{2}{4}$.

The form of this mélodie is again through-composed

with one repetition on the vocal line corresponding to the single repetition of text in the poem of line 1 which recurs as line 5. Unification is accomplished in the mélodie by the use of the triplet motive introduced in the opening three measures of the piece which recurs in transposition, variation, and fragmentation at various intervals throughout . There are two basic sections, preceded by an introduction and followed by a codetta. The introduction extends form measure 1 through measure 4, stating the unifying motive and setting the general mood of the piece. Section I begins at measure 5 and extends through measure 18. In section I there is some repetition of the introductory motive in an ostinato manner (measures 9-13), and the tonality is ambiguous. Section II begins at measure 19 with a key signature of five flats. Section II extends through measure 50 with a codetta beginning at measure 51, and extending through the end of the piece, measure 58, returning in the original key which could be construed to be A minor as the final chord is an A minor chord. The harmony manifests secondal and tertian aspects but is nonfunctional in the traditional sense.

Bernac points out that Colloque Sentimental "is the kind of song one can work on for a lifetime."[1] Thompson suggests that this mélodie bears a slight resemblence to

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[1]Thompson, p. 299.

Debussy's opera, Pelléas et Mélisande, in that "the words have the naturalness of speech."[1] Lockspeiser compares this mélodie to Schubert's Der Doppelgänger, obviously in reference to the "ghostly" character of the narrative. Bernac contends that this piece should never be transposed from the original key of A minor which is the key used for this study. Bernac further asserts that the vocal line

> . . . can be divided into three parts: (1) The Introduction of the Narrator: (2) The dialogue between the two ghosts: (3) The conclusion of the narrator. This is to say that the singer must succeed in giving three different colours to his voice: the narrator and the two ghosts.[2]

In the introduction the pianist should endeavor to "suggest the frosty night and the deserted park."[3] The voice should enter piano and legato and be as devoid of nuance or any crescendo in this opening section as possible. There should be a slight ritard at measures 17-18 followed by "a little more movement" at measure 19. Here Debussy has indicated Très expressif, mélancolique et lointain which should be interpreted "very expressive, melancholy and distant." Bernac[4] states that the triplet/syncopated motive introduced in measure 21 is a nightingale.

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[1]Bernac, p. 185.

[2]Bernac, p. 187.

[3]Bernac, p. 186.

[4]Bernac, p. 187.

Bernac suggests that in differentiating between the "female ghostly voice" and the "male ghostly voice" the singer should use a "clear voice, very simple and quite confident" on the line Te souvientil de notre extase ancienne?, at measure 22. Then the man

> replies, in a slower tempo, with darker timbres (which should not be overdone), and with a cold and indifferent expression: 'Pourquoi voulez-vous donc qu'il m'en souvienne?'[1]

This procedure should be carried on through the section of dialogue between the two ghostly figures. The pianist will encounter a specific problem in this section of the full rolled chords over the A-flat pedal. In measure 19 the left hand chord can be managed by playing the A-flat with the fifth finger of the left hand, then the ensuing notes with the 4th, 3rd, 2nd finger and thumb, respectively, then throwing the second finger over the thumb to play the A natural before completing the right hand part of the rolled chord. Thereafter until measure 33, the A-flat pedal note can be sustained by the damper pedal at one-half pedal producing the effect of a blending of tone rather than an accumilation of more sound. This will leave the left hand free to use the fifth finger on the next note up in the chord series. In measure 33, the second finger will have to cross over again as the low A-flat there is not sustained from the preceding measure. At measure 37 the pianist will

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[1] Bernac, p. 186.

have to simply anticipate the low A-flat slightly, then move the fifth finger of the left hand quickly up to the F natural to play the rest of the chord.

At measure 51 the tempo primo should return. This section is the conclusion or coda where Bernac maintains that:

> The narrator speaks again with exactly the same voice as in the introduction and in the same tempo: 'Tels ils marchaient dans les avoines folles.' Then more slowly, comes the last line: 'Et la nuit seule entendit leurs paroles.'[1]

At measure 54 the directive en allant se perdant jusqu'a la fin should be interpreted: "proceed on disappearing up to the very end." In measures 54, 55, and 56, "the song of the nightingale is heard before it vanishes for ever."[2]

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[1]Bernac, p. 187.

[2]Bernac, p. 187.

CHAPTER VI

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF AND INTERPRETIVE NOTES ON SELECTED MÉLODIES WITH TEXTS BY MALLARMÉ

Trois Poemes de Stephane Mallarmé

1. Soupir

Mon âme vers ton front où rêve, ô calme soeur,
Un automne jonché de taches de rousseur
Et vers le ciel errant de ton oeil angélique
Monte, comme dans un jardin mélancolique,
Fidèle, un blanc jet d'eau soupire vers l'Azur!
--Vers l'Azur attendri d'Octobre pâle et pur
Qui mire aux grands bassins sa langueur infinie
Et laisse, sur l'eau morte où la fauve agonie
Des feuilles erre au vent et creuse un froid sillon,
Se traîner le soleil jaune d'un long rayon.

Sigh

My soul toward your forehead where dreams, o calm sister,
An autumn strewn with spots of red
And toward the wandering heaven of your angelic eye
Ascends, as in a melancholy garden.
Faithful, a white fountain sighs toward the Azure!
--Toward the softened Azure of pale and pure October
Which reflects its infinite languor in the large pools
And leaves on stagnant waters where the wild agony
Of the leaves wanders in the wind and hollows a cold furrow,
The yellow sun trailing a long ray.

This cycle of poems was the last group set by Debussy just five years before his death, in 1913. They are dedicated to a Dr. Bonniot and to Stephane Mallarmé's memory.[1]

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[1]Oscar Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist (New York: Museum of Modern Art (Dist. by Simon and Schuster, 1946)p. 303.

Aside from Debussy's orchestral setting of L'Apres-midi d'un faune, Debussy set to music only one other poem by Mallarmé. It was the mélodie, Apparition, composed in 1884 while Debussy was attending the Conservatoire. In explanation of why Debussy may have been reluctant to attempt further setting of Mallarmé's work Thompson points out:

> That he postponed so long the labor of love--or duty, as the case may have been--would seem to indicate that he realized fully the danger courted by any musician who sought to add new sounds to this artist's "tortuous lyre," whose "hermetically sealed poems," so complete in themselves and of such perfection of form, seemed to discourage musical intrusion, save in the independant manner of the L' Apres-midi prelude[1]

Speaking of the general aura of these three mélodies Lockspeiser comments:

> Civilized and sophisticated are the settings, consisting of an endless succession of tiny musical images--some no more than a trill, an arpeggio, or an unexpected change of rhythm....[2]

The form of Soupir, the first mélodie in this cycle, is through-composed with unity maintained by the predominance of the interval of the fifth and by the recurrence in the concluding two measures of material from the introduction. There are 10 lines of text in this, the shortest of the three mélodies set to 31 measures of music. The span of the vocal line is from c' to f". The meter indication at the beginning of the mélodie is $\frac{4}{4}$. This

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[1]Thompson, p. 303.

[2]Edward Lockspeiser, Debussy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1972), pp. 140-141.

changes to $\frac{2}{4}$ at measure 6, returns to $\frac{4}{4}$ at measure 7, becomes $\frac{5}{4}$ at measure 12, returning to $\frac{4}{4}$ at measure 13. At measure 25 the $\frac{3}{4}$ indication returns, changing to $\frac{4}{4}$ at measure 27, $\frac{5}{4}$ at measure 28, $\frac{3}{4}$ again at measure 29, and returning to $\frac{4}{4}$ for the final two measures, 30 and 31.

The sectionalization of this mélodie is effected primarily by changes in tempo and texture. Measures 1 through 6 comprise the introduction which is for piano alone with a key signature of 4 flats. At measure 7 section I begins, extending through measure 17 with the tonality obscured by the use of large tertian sonorities with added tones. At measure 18 section II commences, extending through measure 22. This section is characterized by the recurring use of the A-flat pedal tone in the bass. Section III begins at measure 23 and extends through measure 26. This section is constructed over a tritone ostinato bass configuration. Measure 27 through the final measure, 31, comprises section IV which is characterized by the use of a syncopated ostinato rhythm in the accompaniment.

The harmony throughout this mélodie is enriched by the presence of tertian harmonies with added tones. The over-all tonality is basically the key of A-flat but it becomes ambiguous in many places.

Lockspeiser suggests that:

> The still waters and pale autumn skies of <u>Soupir</u> are

> clearly evoked in the music despite the poem's many abstruse allusions.[1]

Thompson points out that many of the metaphors used in the poem are almost untranslatable. However, a straightforward approach to the music, following closely the indications in the score would appear to be one answer to the question of interpretation of this set of rarely performed mélodies. Indeed, this approach must be followed if one is to give credence to the words of Maggie Teyte who states in the chapter on French Song in her autobiography that no composer "marked his scores with greater precision" than Debussy, and that he "allowed no liberties to be taken with his music."[2]

The following interpretive notes are based on a synthesis of stylistic practices observed in the recordings of Debussy's mélodies cited in the discography of this study, along with Debussy's own directives regarding the performance of his music in the writings of Dumesnil, Teyte, Garden, and Vallas.

The opening directive is Calme et expressif with piano and doux et soutenu indicated in the piano part in measure 1. This should be interpreted as "calm and ex-

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[1]Lockspeiser, p. 141.

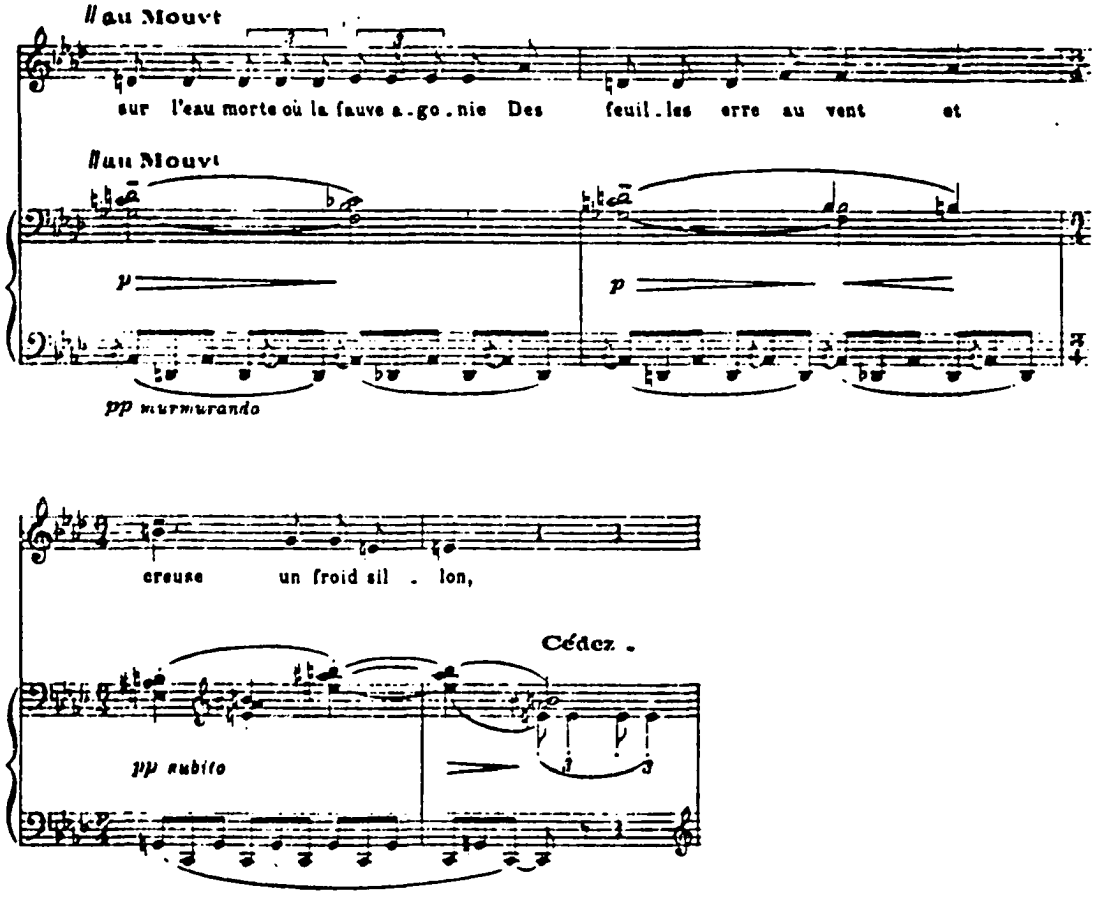
[2]Teyte, pp. 58-59.

pressive," and the piano part performed "gently and sustained" at a soft dynamic level. At measure 6 the voice enters with the indication repeated in the score to "sustain" the vocal line. This would indicate a very legato treatment by the singer. The chords in the piano part in measures 9 and 10 should be rolled gently and the damper pedal used to keep the sound flowing and legato. The left hand chords can best be performed by crossing over the second finger to play the top note of the chord. The singer should be careful to articulate the triplets in measures 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, and 13 with accuracy. A breath may be taken in measure 8 after the word rêve, and in measure 10 after the word rousser. At measure 18 a slight increase in tempo is indicated in both the piano and voice parts. The pianist will need to engage the damper pedal on the low A-flat in measures 18 and 19 to insure the sounding of the pedal tone there throughout each of those measures. A slight ritard should occur at measure 22, followed at measure 23 by an increase in movement. Debussy has indicated murmurando (sic) or "murmuring" in regard to the bass ostinato in the piano part. Both the una corda and damper pedals may be used to advantage at this point. Thompson points out that for the 9th line of text describing the wind "plowing a cold furrow",

> Debussy has a thin furrowlike line of melodic speech, bordering on recitative, skillfully supported by

an accompaniment of a melancholy bareness and discursiveness.[1]

Ex. 20. Text-painting with recitative-like vocal line (meas. 23-26.



A ritard should occur in measure 26 with a somewhat slower

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[1]Thompson, p. 303.

tempo from measure 27 on to the end, measure 31. The singer should strive to perform the last phrase as legato as possible, taking a large enough breath in measure 27 to enable him to perform the phrase in one breath. A head tone or falsetto would be appropriate on the last two measures for lower male voices in order to taper the ending of the mélodie down in the characteristic style required here.

2. Placet futile

Princesse! à jalouser le destin d'une Hébé
Qui poind sur cette tasse au baiser de vos lèvres,
J'use mes feux mais n'ai rang discret que d'abbé
Et ne figurerai même nu sur le Sèvres.

Comme je ne suis pas ton bichon embarbé,
Ni la pastille, ni du rouge, ni jeux mièvres
Et que sur moi je sais ton regard clos tombé,
Blonde dont les coiffeurs divins sont des orfèvres!

Nommez nous ... toi de qui tant de ris framboisés
Se joignent en troupeaux d'agneaux apprivoisés
Chez tous broutant les voeux et bêlant aux délires,
Nommez nous ... pour qu'Amour ailé d'un éventail
M'y peigne flûte aux doigts endormant ce bercail,
Princesse, nommez nous berger de vos sourires.

Futile Petition

Princess! to be jealous of the destiny of a Hebe
Who appears on this cup at the kiss of your lips,
I wear out my fires but have only discreet rank of abbe
And won't even be a nude figure on the Sevres.

Since I am not your whiskered lapdog,
Nor pastille, nor rouge, nor affected games
And since on me I know your secret glance has fallen,
Blond of which the divine coiffeurs are goldsmiths!

Name us ... you from whom so many raspberry laughs
Are joined in flocks of tame lambs
Grazing with everyone the vows and bleating to deliriums,
Name us ... for that Love winged with a fan
May comb(my hair), with my flute in my hand,
putting this flock to sleep,
Princess, name us shepherd of your smiles.

This mélodie is through-composed with unity provided by the introductory motive which recurs throughout the piece. The minor sixth of the opening "Princesse" in measure 3 is repeated in measure 30, giving the effect of a slight rounding of form. There are 14 lines of text in this mélodie and 34 measures of music. The vocal line spans c' to g". The meter is $\frac{3}{4}$, remaining constant throughout the piece.

The sectionalization of this mélodie is brought about primarily by the change of texture in the accompaniment and by tempo variations. Measure 1 through measure 3 is the introduction with section I beginning at measure 4 and extending through measure 10. This section begins in what appears to be a G major tonality moving to F major by measure 10. Section II begins at measure 11 with a more obscure tonality and the use of 64th-note triplets in the accompaniment from measure 10 through measure 13. Section II extends through measure 15 with section III commencing at measure 16 and extending through measure 23. There is some recurrence of the introductory motive in this section. Section IV, beginning at measure 24 and closing at measure 28 combines motives from section II and from the introduction. Measure 29 through the end, measure 34, form a coda-like conclusion to the mélodie with a restatement of the "princesse" motive and the introductory motive, as well as a hint of the 64th-note flavor of section II

with the piece ending on G_1. The tonality of this mélodie is basically G major and the harmony is non-functional in the traditional sense with a predominant use of tertian sonorities with added tones.

Of this mélodie Lockspeiser writes:

> The 'futile petition' is to the painted princess adorning a Sèvres teacup and amusingly transmitted by means of a slow minuet with something of the character of a saraband.[1]

Thus, a feeling for the dance-like character of the piece should be sought by the pianist as Debussy indicates in the opening directive, Dans le mouv^t d'un Menuet lent, "in the movement of a slow menuet." The composer has also indicated doux et gracieux in the first measure which should be interpreted "sweetly or gently and gracefully." The singer and pianist should keep the dynamic level piano in these opening measures and with delicate expressiveness endeavor to transmit the "apparent humour"[2] intended by Debussy, sans lourdeur, "without any sense of heaviness or clumsiness", as indicated in measure 4. In measure 10 the right hand should briskly execute the 64th-note triplets with the left hand playing the bottom note and in measures 11-13, the bottom chords. Debussy has indicated a solid forte in measure 13 with accents on the words ni du rouge. A slight holding back should take place at measure

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[1]Lockspeiser, p. 141.

[2]Lockspeiser, p. 141.

15 with the movement being restored in measure 16. At measure 22 the directive Serrez un peu should be interpreted "press on a little." A slight rallentando should occur on the word Nommez in measure 23, followed by the original tempo in measure 24. The pianist will have to bring the left hand up to play the g' in measures 25 and 26. The left hand should also play the trills on d' in measure 27 with the right hand taking the A-flat trill. There should be a marked diminuendo in measure 28 leading into a restatement of the introductory motives at a somewhat slower tempo in measure 29. The flourishes in the piano part in measures 32 and 33 should be brisk, rapid and very light. The right hand should play the d of the last measure at pianissimo and the left hand the G_1 barely audibly.

3. Eventail

O rêveuse, pour que je plonge
Au pur délice sans chemin,
Sache, par un subtil mensonge,
Garder mon aile dans ta main.

Une fraîcheur de crépuscule
Te bient à chaque battement
Dont le coup prisonnier recule
L'horizon délicatement.

Vertige! voici que frissonne
L'espace comme un grand baiser
Qui, fou de naître pour personne,
Ne peut jaillir ni s'apaiser.

Sens tu le paradis farouche
Ainsi qu'un rire enseveli
Se couler du coin de ta bouche
Au fond de l'unanime pli!

Le sceptre des rivages roses
Stagnants sur les soirs d'or, ce l'est,
Ce blanc vol fermé que to poses
Contre le feu d'un bracelet.

Scherzando

O dreamer, so that I may plunge
Into pure delight without a path,
Know how, by a subtle lie,
To guard my wing in your hand.

A freshness of dawn
Comes to you at each stroke
Of which the imprisoned movement pushes back
The horizon delicately.

Vertigo! here is space shivering
Like a huge kiss
Which, wild at being born for no one,
Can neither burst out nor calm down.

Feel the wild paradise
Flowing from the corner of your mouth
Like a buried laugh
In the depth of the unanimous fold!

The scepter of rose-colored shores
Stagnant on the golden evenings, that is it,
This white closed flight that you oppose
To the fire of a bracelet.

The last of the Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé is an enigmatic work which Thompson quotes Fry as stating that "the real meaning of this poem is to be found in its revelation of a lack of meaning."[1] Thompson states further that in this "scherzando setting" Debussy accomplished the task he proposed for himself. Thompson maintains that:

> Such complexity as the song possesses is that inherent in the text. For those to whom the poem itself has an appeal he has found a musical parallel that

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[1]Thompson, p. 304.

> may be said to have enhanced its essential quality. But the test of interest remains an addiction to Mallarmé.[1]

Debussy wrote only one mélodie after this cycle, the Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maisons, composed in 1915.

The form of Eventail is again through-composed. A feeling of unity is achieved by the recurrence of introductory material at various points throughout the mélodie. The different sections in this piece are determined by changes in texture, tempo and rhythm, in addition to the presentation of new material.

Measures 1-4, constituting the introduction, present a distinctly pentatonic scale series followed by a parallel treatment of 7th chords. Section I begins at measure 5 and extends through measure 13. This section is characterized by a relatively thin texture with a return of the introductory motives in measures 12 and 13. Section II commences at measure 14 and extends through measure 24. There is more parallelism in the accompaniment in this section in measures 19-22. At measure 25 section III begins with a marked contrast in the accompaniment and tempo. Section IV begins at measure 46, continuing to measure 58. The introductory measures are restated in this section at measures 47-48, along with the parallelism of 7th chords. At measure

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[1]Thompson, p. 304.

59 a codetta-like section begins, characterized again by very sparse accompaniment and ending on an E minor chord with an added seventh. The harmony is generally tertian in this mélodie but it is again non-functional. The tonality of the piece is, over-all, rather obscure.

Éventail is the longest of the three mélodies in this cycle with 20 lines of text and 65 measures of music. The vocal span is from d' to f-sharp". The meter at the beginning is $\frac{2}{4}$, changing to $\frac{3}{4}$ at measure 7 and back to $\frac{2}{4}$ at measure 8, remaining thus through the end of the piece.

In regard to interpretation the over-all mood of this mélodie should be one of humour and lightness. Debussy has indicated Scherzando at the beginning which suggests a playful or joking manner. Also indicated at the beginning are the terms Délicat et léger, which should be interpreted "delicate (exquisite) and lightly." The metronomic indication here is a quarter note at 76. On the 32nd-note pentatonic ascending scale the composer has marked legg. which would indicate that the pianist should execute these with a shimmering flourish at piano with a slight decrescendo at the top. The rubato indication at measure 4 should be taken to mean "with flexibility" and not overdone. The voice should enter softly at measure 5 and proceed in a playful manner, observing the triplets with precision and the dynamic nuances indicated in the score. Both pianist and singer should increase the tempo slightly at measure

12. The pianist should take care to observe the pianissimo markings in measure 15-18 along with the small crescendo markings. The staccato marks here should not be interpreted to mean a jerky, detached sound but rather a gently punctuated second and fourth beat. The damper pedal may be just touched on each of these chords and released between them. At measure 24 the term serrez means to press on somewhat, leading into the brisk section at measure 25. Here the left hand should play the first note of each triplet with the right hand playing the following two notes. There should be a marked diminuendo at measure 26 followed by an even quicker tempo at measure 27. Debussy has indicated here again for the pianist to keep the 32nd notes very light and crisp. At measure 29 the directive le chant doucement en dehors means "the melody (or song) sweetly as from outside (or from a distance)." At measure 30 Cédez un peu means "slow the tempo a little", followed immediately in measure 31 by a quicker tempo. At measure 40 the pianist will find it necessary to catch the rolled F_1 and C with the pedal, thus freeing the left hand to play the trill in measures 40-41. The same procedure should be used in measures 42-43 with care being taken not to let the trill become too loud. Cédez, très peu at measure 44 means "slow down very little" and should be followed with a quickening of tempo immediately in measure 46. Measures 47-49 should recall very closely

the opening measures of the mélodie. En retenant peu à peu jusqu'à la fin at measure 50 should be interpreted "reserved, carefully, little by little up to the very end." The indication in the piano part is doux et lointain, meaning "sweetly or gently and from a distance." At measure 59 Toujours en retenant means "always to hold back or control." The dynamic level here is pianissimo in both voice and piano, beginning a gradual softening on to the end. Serrez at measure 62 indicates a slight "pressing on," followed by Retenu or "holding back" at measure 63. In the piano part at measure 63 Debussy has indicated à peine which should be interpreted "hardly or scarcely audible" with the accompaniment fading gradually through the final measure. Lockspeiser observes of the conclusion of this mélodie that :

> The playful setting marks each of the numerous undertones of expectation and disillusionment, trailing off at the end into a high, gaping B-natural and leaving the listener with a series of philosophical vignettes where the roles of poet and musician are not merely merged but virtually exchanged.[1]

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[1]Lockspeiser, p. 141.

CHAPTER VII

STYLISTIC GUIDES TO INTERPRETATION OF DEBUSSY'S MELODIES

General aspects of Debussy's Style

In discussing any approach to the performance of Debussy's piano accompaniments it might be well to look into the composer's statements concerning the performance of his music, and also his own interpretation of his music. According to Vallas, Debussy held that in the performance of this music:

> . . . pianists should avoid all romantic affectations, they should not attempt to emphasize the melody, but leave it to achieve of itself such slight prominence as is necessary; nor should they, in the gymnastic, acrobatic manner of the virtuoso, stress the chords which form the harmonic framework of the principal themes: they should rather aim at blending the patterns into one sonorous halo. As regards the notes which are surmounted by a small stroke, these should be neither detached nor emphasized; they should be rendered with a transparent tone, which can be achieved by attacking them boldly, but not harshly, then letting go the keys and allowing the pedal to prolong the sound.[1]

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[1]Leon Vallas, Claude Debussy: His Life and Works (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 157.

Vallas continues:

> That was how Debussy played. But some of the mysterious, delightfully subtle effects of his playing were lost in large halls.[1]

Maurice Dumesnil, French pianist and conductor and one of the earliest authorities on Debussy's piano music states that:

> He (Debussy) always played with the lid of the grand piano closed, even in a drawing room, and this is eloquent in itself. He did so not only in order to keep the volume of tone subdued but also to make this tone more mellow, more liquid, more drowned. Speaking of his "Preludes" he used to say that they should be played "entre quat'z-yeux," a French colloquialism or rather an expression of familiar and quite acceptable slang, which translated literally into English would read "between four eyes," or confidentially.[2]

Dumesnil further quotes Debussy in a subsequent article in 1938. Speaking of interpretive techniques in regard to his music, Debussy commented:

> "Play with more sensitiveness in the finger tips. Play the chords as if the keys were being attracted to your finger tips, and rose to your hand as to a magnet."[3] (quotation marks Dumesnil's)

And also

> "Too much relaxation, all the time, is not advisable. In order that the various notes of a chord should sound together, the fingers must have a certain firmness; but the firmness of rubber, with no stiffness whatsoever. The little cushions at the finger

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[1]Vallas, p. 157.

[2]Maurice Dumesnil, "New Insights to the Mastery of Debussy," The Etude, May, 1940, Volume 58, p. 344.

[3]Maurice Dumesnil, "Debussy's Principles in Pianoforte Playing," The Etude, March, 1938, Volume 56, p. 154.

> tips should be extremely sensitive, and, through their 'feel,' one should be almost able to foretell the quality of the tone which is going to come out."[1] (quotation marks Dumesnil's)

In a later article Dumesnil quotes Debussy as saying in regard to tempo suggestions: "The metronome is good... for one measure." "Flexibility is the rule," Dumesnil adds, "but it must be discreet and free from sentimental rubato."[2] Dumesnil elaborates on the rubato issue in a related article stating that:

> In the first place, the tempo rubato, as it is generally understood and used in the romantics and Chopin in particular, has absolutely no place in Debussy's works, whichever period of his life they may belong to.[3]

Dumenil goes on to say that this does not mean that the tempo must always be rigidly observed. He states that this would "prove destructive" to the music and that what Debussy intended when he indicated a rubato was that the performer would use flexibility.[4] Herein, perhaps, in an important insight to a more stylistically authentic

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[1]Maurice Dumesnil, "Debussy's Principles in Pianoforte Playing," The Etude, March, 1938, Volume 56, 154.

[2]Maurice Dumesnil, "The Teacher's Round Table," The Etude, February, 1948, Volume 66, 68.

[3]Maurice Dumesnil, "New Insights to the Mastery of Debussy," The Etude, May, 1940, Volume 58, 344.

[4]Maurice Dumesnil, "New Insights to the Mastery of Debussy," The Etude, May, 1940, Volume 58, 344.

interpretation of Debussy's mélodies:

> Tonal research, careful adjustment of sonorities, and sensitive pedaling are in order, with the discreet flexibility, the "discipline within liberty" recommended by the master himself.[1]

Debussy seems to have been more interested in delicate details of nature rather than colossal structures. He chose not to describe them realistically in his music, but rather, strove to "evoke the impressions they made on him."[2] Marek points out that Debussy

> . . . was interested in the curve of a bird's back in its flight, in the lights on top of sea foam, in the motion of a single flower petal. He seemed to have heard the grass grow. Of all composers, he was the most painterlike, and his work bears an affinity to that of his contemporaries, the French Impressionists.[3]

Marek further contends that Debussy's music

> . . . speaks by suggestion, hints, and innuendoes of a sadness that is never fully articulate.
>
> Though there are no mountains or orgies in Debussy's music, and few fortissimos--with the exception of the powerful orchestral composition La Mer--he was not a small composer. If you stand close to his music, you observe a deep vista of beauty.[4]

Schonberg maintains that Debussy's style, impressionism, symbolism, super-realism--whatever it might be labelled, had the effect as did the work of the "great

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[1](Probably) Maurice Dumesnil, "Wants Debussy Etudes", in The Etude, October, 1947, Volume 65, 552.

[2]George Marek, "The Master of the Whisper," Good Housekeeping, October, 1950, Volume 131, 114.

[3]Marek, 114.

[4]Marek, 114.

poets and painters, heightening reality by giving a new picture to the world."[1] He adds that Debussy's work

> has a texture--transparent, glowing, vaguely modal, unerringly precise--that is the most original in music.[2]

Schonberg goes on to state that Debussy's harmony was uniquely original

> with its hitherto unheard of parallel chordal movements, unresolved dissonances, arbitrary scales and a new grammar.[3]

Schonberg suggests that in some respects Debussy's music was the "dissolution of music." He adds that:

> No longer were there to be set rules by which this modulation or progression was allowed...Debussy did to tonal relationships what Monet and Cezanne did to traditional color relationships. Poof! and out they went. Art and music became insinuation rather than rhetoric or illustration.[4]

In a penetrating observation of Debussy's compositional technique, Schonberg concludes his article by stating:

> One magical chord was enough to set the mood. Why bother about unnecessary development? Debussy never forgot the remark of Verlaine that one must wring the neck of eloquence.[5]

In arriving at particular aspects of Debussy's

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[1]Harold C. Schonberg, "Still Ecstatic About Debussy," New York Times, August 19, 1962, 38.

[2]Schonberg, 38.

[3]Schonberg, 38.

[4]Schonberg, 38.

[5]Schonberg, 38.

style, with specific regard to his pianistic and vocal idioms, several important points should be considered. First, Debussy was a product of the environment and times in which he lived. Scholl points out in this regard that:

> Debussy's many daring innovations emerged from an ideological mixture of the spirit of Impressionism in painting, the techniques of the symbolist poets, and the tonal resources of non-western musical systems.[1]

Second, Debussy was almost totally devoted to nature as the basis for his creative impetus. The composer, himself, in discussing his art wrote in 1903:

> Music is a mysterious form of mathematics whose elements are derived from the infinite. Music is the expression of the movement of the waters, the play of curves described by changing breezes. There is nothing more musical than a sunset. He who feels what he sees will find no more beautiful example of development in all that book which, alas, musicians read but too little--the book of Nature...[2]

Not only was nature his principle source of inspiration but Debussy seemed to understand life and nature as being ever transient, changing, illusory. In a statement concerning artistic reality versus illusion, Debussy provides the following insight into his own work:

> Art is the most beautiful deception: and no matter how much a man may wish to make it the setting for his daily life, he must still desire that it remain an illusion lest it become utilitarian, and as dreary

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[1]Sharon Scholl and Sylvia White, Music and the Culture of Man (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), p. 228.

[2]Leon Vallas, The Theories of Claude Debussy, Musicien Francais (New York: Dover, Pub., 1967), p. 8. Trans. by M. O'Brien.

> as a workshop. Do not the masses as well as the select few seek therein oblivion, which is in itself a form of deception? The smile of Mona Lisa probably never really existed,--still its charm is eternal. Let us then avoid disillusioning anyone by clothing the dream with too much reality. Let us be satisfied with interpretations that are the more consoling because of their undying beauty.[1]

Debussy's preoccupation with illusion in art, then, may be a clue to a better understanding of his music. His mélodies at various turns seem almost to defy analysis in the traditional sense. Considering Debussy's thoughts about illusion it may be that as the Impressionist painters created their compositions with hazy outlines, and the Symbolist poets intensely shunned direct description or graphic verbal portrayal of any subject in favor of an indirect approach or suggestion, a central characteristic of Impressionistic art seems to be that of evoking images through an appeal to the senses rather than appealing predominantly to the intellect.

A third point in considering specific aspects of Debussy's style may be his proclivity toward the "relative" as opposed to the "absolute." His music is characterized by a certain vagueness of tonality.

> His key centers lose their boundaries; progressions move about freely in tonal space; the predominance given to the tritone interval accents the indefinite drift; and everything is in a state of flux, always

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[1]Vallas, The Theories of Claude Debussy, Musicien Francais, p. 8.

> on its way but never arriving.
>
> His harmonic method... was well suited to the rendition of the ambiguities and obscurities of the symbolist poets.[1]

Along with his love for indirectness and ambiguities, Debussy shared certain techniques with the Symbolist poets and Impressionist painters in creating, in a way, the aural equivalent of their visual and literary Impressionism.

> Debussy used wedges of tone color in the same deliberate manner that artist used individually distinguishable strokes of the brush. His dominant tool was that of tone color used for sensuous appeal rather than for emotional effect.[2]

Dukas, in describing his reaction to an encounter with Debussy's music when set to poetry declared himself

> unable to analyse separately a music intimately bound to the poem and compared such an attempt to one consisting in the wish to see a stained glass window in the shade to enjoy its splendour, deprived of the light which assures its reflection.[3]

This seems to indicate that Symbolistic poetry may have found a near-perfect musical vehicle in Debussy's settings.

Perhaps one of the most significant statements made by Debussy in regard to his inner convictions concerning his art was his declaration that:

> Music should humbly seek to please; within these limits great beauty may perhaps be found. Extreme complication is contrary to art. Beauty must appeal to the senses, must provide us with immediate

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[1]William Fleming, Arts and Ideas, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968), p. 175.

[2]Scholl and White, p. 228.

[3]Alfred Cortot, The Piano Music of Claude Debussy (London: J. and W. Chester, Ltd., 1922), p. 7.

> enjoyment, must impress us or insinuate itself into us without any effort on our part.[1]

A fifth point for consideration should perhaps be Debussy's vehement feelings in regard to musical theorists and analysts. He maintained that

> the beauty of a work of art must always remain mysterious; that is to say, that it is impossible to explain exactly how it is created.[2]

In this regard Debussy pleaded for preservation of the mysteries and "magic peculiar to music, for of all the arts it is the most susceptible to magic."[3] Debussy deplored on more than one occasion the business of certain theorists who subjected musical compositions to dissection "as corpses that were full of life," maintaining that they (the theorists) "insist on sticking their aesthetic noses where they have no business."[4]

As a summary to these general considerations of the reason for certain aspects of Debussy's musical style, Monsieur Croche states:

> Music is the sum total of scattered forces... And people have made of it a song composed of theories!

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[1]Vallas, The Theories of Claude Debussy, Musicien Francais, p. 13.

[2]Vallas, The Theories of Claude Debussy, Musicien Francais, p. 3.

[3]Vallas, The Theories of Claude Debussy, Musicien Francais, p. 3.

[4]Vallas, The Theories of Claude Debussy, Musicien Francais, p. 1.

> I prefer a few notes from the flute of an Egyptian shepherd. He collaborates with the scenery around him and hears harmonies of which our textbooks are ignorant... Musicians listen only to music written by skilful hands; they never hear what is written in Nature. There is more to be gained by seeing the sun rise than by hearing the Pastoral Symphony.[1] (Sic!)

With these considerations in mind, let us proceed to more specific technical aspects in regard to the performance of the mélodies.

Approaches to Specific Pianistic Problems

That Debussy's accompaniments present technical difficulties which require diligent and patient study on the part of even the accomplished pianist will be immediately evident on the most casual perusal of almost any of his mélodies. Beyond the mechanical difficulty which is inherent in his music there remains, however, an aspect perhaps even more important, "more of an intimate order," which is in the interpretive realm.[2] Concerning this Gatti states:

> Because of this, many who cannot succeed in liberating their sense of hearing from the four-squareness and symmetry of classical pieces, call Debussy difficult: and difficult the music of Debussy will always remain for those who can see in it nothing but dissonances, and are desperately seeking their melody.[3]

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[1]Vallas, The Theories of Claude Debussy, Musicien Francais, p. 8.

[2]Guido M. Gatti, "The Piano Works of Claude Debussy" in the Musical Quarterly, July, 1921. Volume 7, 454.

[3]Gatti, 454-455.

Gatti goes on to say that:

> There is no need of searching in Debussy's compositions for something that is not there; it is enough to understand fully that which they do contain... Then we will already be well advanced toward becoming its qualified interpreters.[1]

Gatti further comments that the pianist should refrain from trying to draw "effects" that Debussy did not intend.[2] Gatti quotes Laloy as stating that "That quality of execution which is of major importance is tonal unity."[3] Laloy, also concerned with this aspect states:

> All that disturbs this unity, vocal portamenti, suspensions in rhythm, arbitrary rallentandi or accelerandi, is not only useless but fatal.[4]

"Pianists," says Laloy, "should give up their pretentions to emphasizing the melody" in order to accomplish a more stylistically authentic performance of Debussy's music.[5] He further states that:

> Pianists should not draw undue attention to the rapid figurations whose business it is to envelope the principal song theme, to signalize it with a linear harmony, conforming to the individual character of the piano itself, and to give life to the background.[6]

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[1]Gatti, 455.

[2]Gatti, 455.

[3]Gatti, 455.

[4]Gatti, 455.

[5]Gatti, 455.

[6]Gatti, 455.

Laloy's view is that it would be more in keeping with the style

> to confound, to mix these designs, even to drop occasional false notes, than to conquer their difficulties in order to celebrate a triumph, and bid for applause with a gymnast's grace...[1]

Laloy holds that the many notes in Debussy's piano music which are marked with a small line are to be

> secured with a frank attack for a tone without hardness, which the pedal will prolong, the finger suddenly releasing the key...[2]

With this in mind, it may be well to proceed to some considerations and recommendations regarding pedaling.

1. Pedaling.

"My music must be played softly with considerable blur from the pedal, and without marked rhythms," said Debussy.[3] Lucas describes the composer's performances of his own music stating that:

> In his best period, and before he gave up playing the piano to a more or less restricted public, his piano sounded very often like a wind-swept Aeolian harp. The most practiced ear could hardly distinguish the divisions between the harmonies. One chord would melt, so to speak, into another chord, by a dexterous management of the pedal; and the chords were never loud... The pedal was as important a part of the performance as were the

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[1]Gatti, 455.

[2]Gatti, 455.

[3]Clarence Lucas, "Debussy and the Pedal Blur", The Etude, March, 1935. Volume 53, 146.

> fingers... His music demands a pedal blur which would be intolerable in Bach. His unsteady rhythms would make Beethoven sound flabby and exasperating.[1]

Dumesnil points out that Debussy rarely indicated pedal markings in his music. He states that in general if the pianist will "treat the runs, arpeggios and passages as waves of tone...from the sonorous and vibrating standpoint," he will be "on the right path."[2]

Pianists should be cautioned, however, to use discretion in pedaling as this can be overdone, thereby losing its effectiveness by altering too much the essential transparency of the music. Dumesnil contends that "extreme tact and discretion" are requisite in the matter of blurring, otherwise the resulting sound of the music might more resemble "undesirable confusion."[3]

Dumesnil gives an account of what "blurring" is and how Debussy accomplished it in his own playing:

> . . . it consists of changing the pedal just a little too late after each chord or each harmony, or group of chords or harmonies, in such passages that warrant this sort of "encroaching" process.[4]

The pianist should at all times remember that the depth the sustaining pedal is depressed has a great deal to

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[1]Lucas, 146.

[2]Maurice Dumesnil, "Debussy's Principles in Pianoforte Playing", The Etude, March, 1938. Volume 56, 154.

[3]Dumesnil, The Etude, 154.

[4]Dumesnil, The Etude, 154.

do with the kinds of sounds that will result. There will be some places where relatively full pedal will be required. In the accompaniments of the mélodies, however, there will be perhaps a greater need for varying amounts of damper pedal, from 1/4 to 1/2 to 3/4 depression, often in combination with the una corda pedal. The technique of "pumping" the damper pedal described in the performance notes of the mélodies considered in this study should be mastered by any pianist wishing to obtain greater facility in the performance of Debussy's accompaniments. Indeed this will be essential for as Debussy remonstrated:

> The undisturbed truth is perhaps that the abuse of the pedal is but a way of concealing a lack of technique, and then it is necessary to make a lot of noise to keep one from hearing the butchered music. Theoretically, it is necessary to find a graphic means of indicating this 'respiration'... this isn't possible...[1]

Copeland states that in Debussy's piano music;

> . . . The sustained sound and the transparency of tone and color timbre are induced by the almost continuous use of overlapping pedals, raising the foot a fraction from the damper pedal, and depressing it again immediately to preserve the continuity. In other words, the pedals are played in levels in order to get air under the tone; for if tone is there, it must rest on something. Legato is played almost invariably in this way, and the arpeggios are "light and luminous" instead of defined and aggressive as in the German manner.[2]

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[1]Claude Debussy, Lettres de Claude Debussy a son Editeur, (Paris: Durand, 1927.)

[2]Copeland, p. 38.

It seems indeed unfortunate for pianists that Debussy could not have found a graphic way to indicate the relatively complicated pedaling his music requires.

It should be remembered that the una corda pedal may be used to great advantage in performing Debussy's music. If there is a predominance of dynamic markings in Debussy's accompaniments to the mélodies it would be varying degrees of piano. In his essay "Debussy and the Pedals," Eisenberg states that:

> The una corda pedal plays an important part in equalizing the power of the long strings of the low bass with the shorter strings of the treble. When used simultaneously with the beautifying (damper or loud) pedal it softens and mellows the low bass and proportionately strengthens the treble tones.[1]

2. Fingering.

The marked absence of finger indications in Debussy's piano music is perhaps best explained by Debussy in his brief treatise to pedagogues and students in the preface to his "Douze Etudes":

> Intentionally, the present Etudes contain no fingering. To impose a fingering is wrong, because it cannot logically adapt itself to the different conformations of the hand. Modern pianism has believed to solve the problem by sometimes placing several optional fingerings on top of one another. It is only one more hindrance, and the music takes on the aspect of some strange mathematical operation where, by an inexplicable phenomenon, the fingers ought to multiply themselves.

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[1]Jacob Eisenberg, "Debussy and the Pedals", The Etude, January, 1942. Volume 60, 65.

> . . . In conclusion: The absence of fingerings is an excellent exercise; it suppresses the spirit of contradiction which prompts us to prefer not to use the fingering marked by the author; and it verifies these everlasting words: 'one is never better served than by one's self.' Let us find our own fingerings![1]

Raad observes an amusing footnote by Debussy in the music of the etude Pour les Huit Doigts:

> In this etude, the changing position of the hands makes the usage of the thumbs inconvenient; the performance would become acrobatic.[2]

"Ironically," Raad points out, "one remembers that Debussy, the pianist, did not like to use his thumb."[3]

It will be necessary, then, for each individual to devise and implement that fingering which will best suit his own needs. Whatever fingering patterns are selected should be dictated by an elegant and flowing style wherever the music requires it and for the most part an avoidance of clumsiness or jerky, detached phrases.

3. Touch.

Eisenberg states that though competent handling of the pedals is essential in performing Debussy's piano music well,

> the performance strays far from the desired artistry unless there is a perfectly coordinated functioning

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[1]Maurice Dumesnil, "New Insights to the Mastery of Debussy", The Etude, May, 1940. Volume 58, 344.

[2]Virginia Raad, "Sketches of Claude Debussy...Pianist", in The American Music Teacher, September, 1971, Volume 21,45.

[3]Raad, 45.

> of both fingers and feet as directed by a mind moved by tasteful emotions and a logical intellect.[1]

He contends that for adequate performance of Debussy's piano music a piano must be capable of producing both "gossamer mellowness" and brilliant tones. He states that in playing melody tones either at pianissimo or at fortissimo, or at any dynamic level in between,

> the finger action should be determined with a hammer-fall precision, yet without causing the key to crash down upon its keybed...the finger stroke being stopped before the key reaches bottom.[2]

The tones produced in this manner, he states,

> are brilliant, full, resonant, and rich in overtones imparting the rare tonal colorings so necessary a part in an artistic performance of Debussy's music.[3]

Dumesnil reiterates Debussy's admonition:

> Play with more sensitiveness in the finger tips. Play the chords as if the keys were being attracted to your finger tips and rose to your hand as to a magnet.[4]

Copeland comments that Debussy achieved a "blending...fluidity and a transparency of tone" that at the same time was crystal-clear. He states that Debussy

> through complete disregard of the piano as a percussion instrument, and by a method of contacting

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[1]Eisenberg, 20.

[2]Eisenberg, 20.

[3]Eisenberg, 20.

[4]Maurice Dumesnil, "Debussy's Principles in Pianoforte Playing:, in The Etude, March 1938. Volume 56, 154.

> the keys gradually with the cushions of the fingers, in an oblique, "caressing" motion, like a cat rubbing itself against the hand that caresses it.[1]

Maier urges that pianists use the "close, key-contact" technique in fast passages calling for a percussive sound. This is accomplished by playing the notes with the "extreme finger-tips in a light, swift pluck... or by a quick "tickle."[2] In contrast to this, he says:

> Chords and broken chord clusters are best realized with wide finger-pads, reinforced by free forearm rotation and full arm rebound.[3]

As we proceed to the vocal problems from the pianistic, it may be well to take cognizance of Maier's admonition that pianists

> always should remember that Debussy, like Mozart, is a singing composer. Every curve, every phrase, color, nuance must be sung to the hilt. No human voice can produce the shimmering, sparkling melodic line which Debussy extracts from the pianists' hands and feet.[4]

Approaches to Specific Vocal Problems

A juncture from which to proceed in considering the vocal aspects of Debussy's mélodies may be the

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[1]Copeland, 38.

[2]Guy Maier, "The Pianist's Page", The Etude, July, 1947. Volume 65, 416.

[3]Maier, 405.

[4]Maier, 374.

comment made by Virgil Thomson in reviewing a Maggie Teyte recital of late 19th and early 20th century French songs in 1945. He wrote:

> That style is based technically on being able to sing any vowel in any color and at any degree of loudness or softness on any note of one's voice. It is based interpretively on reading aloud. No other technique will do... Singing...Debussy without it is about equivalent to treating Melisande as though she were erring daughter to Wotan....[1]

In an article concerning performance of Debussy's mélodies, Weinstock contends that each mélodie is

> a drama so private that the listener must be made to feel half voyeur, half eavesdropper.[2]

Merneth, in a somewhat more detailed discussion, states that:

> Debussy's vocal literature, distilled from an intense curiosity about and deep study of the nature of word-sounds, aimed at a unity of language with melody that literally sought the prosody of spoken French speech and re-built the French recitative as a result.[3]

He further contends that "It is a declamatory style... half-way between arioso and recitation tone." He adds that in order to perform Debussy's mélodies "properly" the singer should "take the composer's own advice and sing "as you would speak," in a natural manner.[4] He further points

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[1]Herbert Weinstock, "On Singing Debussy", Saturday Review, January 29, 1955. Volume 38, 52.

[2]Weinstock, 52.

[3]Edward F. Menerth, Jr., "Singing in Style-Part I", Music Educators Journal, December, 1966. Volume 53, 49.

[4]Menerth, 49.

out that the ideal approach to the mélodies is for the singer to possess as clear as possible an idea of the images in the poem as was intended by the poet. This presents somewhat of a problem in that some of the poems are so Symbolistic, the imagery so obscure and singularly conceived that they are all but untranslatable. However, he continues:

> the vocal line rests on an underlying sensuous quality that is an integral part of all this "suggestive" music (as Debussy cautioned, on ne dit pas, on suggera), in which the musical elements must never be allowed to solidify but to remain suspended in a shadow land of indirection and understatement.[1]

"The intimate merging of text with music" in Debussy's mélodies, Merneth states, was "evidence of his profound understanding of a spoken language" which was "malleable enough to be adopted to the subtlest musical intonations."[2] It is for this reason, he adds, that a thorough knowledge of French pronunciation and language is absolutely necessary for the singer "and listener as well."[3]

1. On Singing French.

It is not within the scope of this study to delve into the intricate and myriad problems involved with phonetics in the French language, pronunciation and diction. For this the singer should study the language formally in France. If

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[1]Menerth, 50.

[2]Menerth, 50.

[3]Menerth, 50.

this is not possible, French courses are usually available in schools in the United States. For a general orientation to French diction, books by Bernac[1], Cox[2], and Adler[3], contain informative sections.

Concerning French song, Teyte states that:

> It must be realized from the beginning that the chief characteristic of sung French is an absolutely equal balance between voice value and word value--and French, for singing purposes, is a study on its own, and not the same as spoken French.[4]

Teyte goes on to say that it is very difficult to attain the "fusion of the voice and word in French."[5] In order to "master the true art of French singing we must go to recitative." In no other area of musical study, she writes, is it possible to learn "the exact combination of weight between word and music."[6]

Bernac emphasizes several aspects of singing French which may merit consideration. He recommends a thorough grounding in the International Phonetic Alphabet as an

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[1]Pierre Bernac, The Interpretation of French Song, (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1970).

[2]Richard G. Cox, The Singer's Manual of German and French Diction, (New York: Schirmer, Inc., 1970).

[3]Kurt Adler, Phonetics and Diction in Singing, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965).

[4]Teyte, 54.

[5]Teyte, 55.

[6]Teyte, 55.

invaluable aid to singing in French.[1] He further states that singers who are unfamiliar with authentic French speaking or singing must be prepared to "use their lips and tongues" much more actively in forming both their vowels and their consonants"[2] than is usually required in English. Bernac also discusses the problems involved in an accurate production of the four nasal sounds. In this regard he states that:

> Singers who are not French often have a tendency to overdo this resonance. The sounds should be rich and full, and carefully blended with the sound of the pure vowel.[3]

Bernac contends that there are two basic rules singers should know about French speech and diction:

1. In French every syllable must contain one and only one vowel sound.
2. In French every syllable begins with a consonant and ends with a vowel.[4]

"French diction," Bernac states, "is based entirely on these two fundamental rules."[5] According to Bernac, this applies fully to sung as well as spoken French. He then sets down a fundamental concept pertaining to singing

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[1]Bernac, p. 12.

[2]Bernac, p. 15.

[3]Bernac, p. 17.

[4]Bernac, p. 20.

[5]Bernac, p. 20.

French:

> In French, more so than in any other language, to obtain a proper line, a proper legato, one must fill the entire duration of each note with the vowel sound.[1]

He elucidates this statement by adding that:

> . . . in French, one has to carry the vowel sound unaltered right through the whole duration of the musical sound, without anticipating at all the following consonant.[2]

And he adds, emphatically, that this "is the only possible procedure to get both the music of the words and the music itself."[3]

Bernac cautions "singers who are not French born" never to double consonants if they are in doubt as to the correct procedure in any given instance. He further advises a thorough study of the rules surrounding the use of the liaison as non-French singers usually find this point quite puzzling.[4]

2. Breathing, Phrasing, and Vocal Style.

Bernac maintains that "there can be no overall, single style of interpretation for French mélodies.[5]

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[1]Bernac, p. 23.

[2]Bernac, p. 23.

[3]Bernac, p. 25.

[4]Bernac, p. 32.

He asserts, furthermore, that even the earlier mélodies of Debussy cannot be approached in the same interpretive manner as the later songs, when his "individuality and personality were strongly marked."[1] As a guiding principle in this regard, Bernac refers the singer to Debussy's dictum that "Music should humbly seek to give pleasure."[2] Bernac elaborates on this concept stating that initially the composer must seek to create a beautiful composite of "sonority, rare and subtle harmony, supple modulation...", all the while "seeking the beauty and charm of the melodic line," as well as the "resulting interplay of colours."[3]

> In short, the aim is to give aesthetic pleasure through pure music, stripped of all philosophical, literary, or humanistic significance, such as that which goes so willingly hand in hand with German music.[4]

Bernac further quotes Debussy as saying that "clarity of expression, precision and concentration of form are qualities peculiar to the French genius."[5] He also quotes Nietzsche who, speaking of Bizet, said:

> His refinement is that of a race, not of an individual: it presupposes a listener who is not only musical but also intelligent.[6]

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[1]Bernac, p. 32.

[2]Bernac, p. 32.

[3]Bernac, p. 32.

[4]Bernac, p. 32-33.

[5]Bernac, p. 33.

[6]Bernac, p. 33.

The writer submits that this may be essentially true of Debussy and his mélodies.

As the poetry and the music are inextricably bound in Debussy's mélodies, it would seem that the problems of breathing, phrasing and vocal styles are essentially all one and the same. Concerning this Teyte comments:

> The student must study the poem of a French song particularly deeply if he is to interpret the song successfully.[1]

Bernac amplifies this by stating that:

> A French mélodie is a musico-literary work in which the heart plays its part, but which, in its poem and its music, is an art infinitely more concerned with sensitive perceptions and impressions more intellectual and more objective, than a German Lied, which is almost always subjective, both musically and poetically.[2]

Bernac cautions the singer against considering the vocal line as "quasi parlando." Rather, he states that:

> To obtain the necessary beauty of sound, it is above all essential for the vocal line to be phrased with extreme smoothness--sustained--'sung' in the fullest sense of the word.[3]

Breathing will thus be dictated by a joint consideration of the poem and the design of the music. The mélodies considered in this study have shown that Debussy, for the most part, has taken care of breathing and phrasing problems in the way the mélodies are constructed.

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[1] Teyte, 57.

[2] Bernac, p. 34.

[3] Bernac, p. 34.

Rarely, if ever, is there a problem of breathing for the singer. Due to the placement of commas in the text, and to the length of the phrases in the vocal line, the singer has but to follow as closely as possible the indications Debussy has given in the score in order to achieve the desired effect.

Teyte gives this penetrating statement on the interpretation of that body of song literature to which the Debussy mélodies belong:

> Interpretation is the ultimate aim of the French school of singing. A beautiful but cold voice will win laurels in other lands, but the French will applaud a less beautiful voice if there is good interpretation behind it. There are so many tints--"nuances" they would call them in the French language, demanding skilful production of the voice to offset the characteristics of modern French speech which do not make for an attractive singing tone. So, again, if someone asked me how to study interpretation in the French school of singing, I should without hesitation bring them back to recitative....[1]

And finally she emphasizes that:

> No composer marked his scores with greater precision, or insisted more strongly that the interpreter should obey his instructions...[2]

than Debussy. "Many singers seem to think they can do as they like with Debussy's songs," says Teyte, proceeding to discount this type of approach:

> I always try to be exact, and even pedantic, in singing or teaching the songs of a master who knew

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[1]Teyte, 57.

[2]Teyte, 58.

> his own mind and allowed no liberties to be taken with his music.[1]

The Ensemble

In considering some of the most pertinent aspects of the ensemble of voice and piano in the performance of Debussy's mélodies two areas seem to stand out: dynamic levels, and interpretive markings.

1. Dynamic Levels.

It should be a major concern to performers of Debussy's mélodies to try to become knowledgeable of unique interpretive requirements of this particular idiom and to understand what the composer desired concerning the dynamic ranges and characteristics of this music. Schmitz, who studied many of these pieces with the composer himself, states that:

> Crescendos in those days were one of Debussy's obsessions in piano playing. He liked slight crescendos, a ppp increasing to a mere pp. Such tiny changes were meaningful and important to his art.[2]

Many pianists today, writes Schmitz, do not observe Debussy's markings accurately. Schmitz adds that it is essential on coming upon a ppp with a crescendo marked after it that the pianist look at the marking at the other end of the crescendo rather than suddenly effecting an fff,

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[1] Teyte, 59.

[2] E. Robert Schmitz, "A Plea for the Real Debussy", The Etude, December, 1937. Volume 55, 782.

when perhaps at the very most Debussy called for an mp.[1] Dumesnil points out that "Debussy never played very loudly."[2] He goes on to say that:

> . . . everything [Debussy] did was governed by tact, taste, and discretion, and if his pianissimos impressed one as the iridescent materialization of multicolored shimmering atoms of light, his climaxes were carefully kept far from the thundering noises used by so many"romantic" pianists in the music by Liszt and Rubinstein, composers whose conception of the piano was the absolute antithesis of Debussy's.[3]

Thus, the inference may safely be drawn that the general dynamic scope of Debussy's mélodies will be on the softer side. There are some exceptions but these are few and clearly marked. Dumesnil says in regard to this that "even when a fortissimo is marked it will be well to keep on the "inner side."[4]

Williams suggests that what Debussy may seem to have "lacked in loudness he supplied in color."[5] And he adds:

> His music has the finest, most variegated, most subtle color...And that is true not only of the orchestral compositions, where color might be supplied merely by clever instrumentation, but also of the piano works and the songs.[5]

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[1]Schmitz, 782.

[2]Maurice Dumesnil, "Conferences With Claude Debussy", The Etude, February, 1933. Volume 51, 81.

[3]Dumesnil, "Conferences With Claude Debussy", 81.

[4]Maurice Dumesnil, "New Insights to the Mastery of Debussy", The Etude, May, 1940. Volume 58, 344.

[5]Williams, 112.

Bernac summarizes ensemble considerations by stating that "the singer and the pianist must succeed in combining precision with lyricism."[1] He proceeds to state that:

> . . . it must be controlled lyricism, for just as the French composer never gives way to sentimentality or emphasis and abominates overstatement, so in the same way his interpreters must have a sense of moderation of expressing a critical capacity, which after all is no more than one of the most vigorous forms of intelligence.[2]

Bernac concludes with the following crowning statement:

> Let it be said that for the listener himself the access to the enchanted world of French music and poetry probably demands a greater collaboration. But this very demand makes its access free to people of the greatest sensibility and taste, of whatever nationality. In music, as in any art, one can only enjoy the pleasure one deserved.[3]

2. Interpretive Markings.

The following is a list of French interpretive markings and their English translations compiled from the 18 mélodies included in this study. It is advised that these markings may well be interpreted with varying shades of difference depending upon their context in the music.

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[1]Bernac, 35.

[2]Bernac, 35.

[3]Bernac, 35.

à l'aise - with ease, comfortably

ainsi qu'une flûte - in the manner of a flute

animez et augmentez peu a peu - animated and augmented little by little

animez un peu - a little animated, more lively

à peine - scarcely, hardly (audible)

au Mouv^{t} un peu retardé - slow down somewhat

avec une expression sourde - with a muffled or dull sound or expression

calme et expressif - calm and expressive

caressant - tenderly stroking

cédez - slowing down, rallentando

cédez très peu - slowing very little

cédez un peu - slowing somewhat

dans le mouv^{t} d'un Menuet lent - in the style of a slow Minuet

délicat et léger - delicately and lightly

discrètement - discreetly, carefully

doucement soutenu - gently sustained

doux - sweet or gentle

doux et gracieux - gently, sweetly and gracefully

doux et lointain - gently, sweetly and from a distance

en allant se perdant jusqu'à la fin - proceed (itself losing) or becoming increasingly obscure up to the very end

en animant un peu - in a slightly animated fashion

encore plus lent - again more slowly

encore plus retenu - again more cautious or held back

en retenant peu à peu jusqu'à la fin - held back or reserved increasingly, little by little, up to the very end

joyeusement animé - joyously animated, lively

joyeux et sonore - joyfully and resonant, deep-toned (sonore may also mean clear and emphatic)

jusqu'à la fin - up to the end

le chant doucement en dehors - bring out the vocal line gently

le double moins vite - execute half as fast

le double plus lent - execute twice as slowly

léger - light, airily

lent - slow

lentement arpègé - slowly arpeggiated

lent et caressant - slow and tenderly or caressingly executed

lent et triste - slow and sad

main droit - abbreviated M.D. - right hand

main gauche - abbreviated M.G. - left hand

mais pourtant bien rhýthmé - but (yet) rhythmical, having well-marked beats

mais un peu en dehors - but bring out a little

marqué - marked, evident, conspicuous, obvious

melancolique et lointain - in a melancholy manner, and as from a distance

modéré - moderately, at a steady pace

modérément animé - moderately animated, lively

murmuré - murmuring or whispering

peu à peu anime - little by little more animated

plus lent - more slowly

plus rien - becoming more obscure, to nothing

rapide - quick, fast, hasty, sudden

rapide et léger - quick or fast and lightly

retenu - reserved, cautious, discreet, wary or held back

retenu Mouv^{t} - hold back the movement

rêveusement - dreamily

sans lourdeur - without heaviness or clumsiness

sans nuances - without nuances or varying expressions

serrez - press on (stringendo)

serrez tendre - press on tenderly or gently

serrez un peu - press on a little

solennel - solemn

sourd et très soutenu - muffled and very sustained

soutenu - sustained

tempo I^{o} - return to the original or beginning tempo

toujours animé - always or consistently more animated or lively

toujours en retenant - always cautiously or held back

très doux - very sweet, gentle

très expressif - very expressive (much nuance)

très lointain - as from a great distance

très retenu - very reserved, discreet

très soutenu - very sustained

triste et lent - sadly and slowly

triste et monotone - sadly and monotonously

un peu animé - a little more animated or lively

un peu en dehors - bring out a little - or as from outside

un peu plus mouvementé - a little more movement or animation

un peu retenu - a little held back or cautious

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to provide prospective performers with some aspects of information and background which authoritative writers imply as being requisite for promoting more stylistically accurate performances of Debussy's mélodies. As one of these areas involves the relationship of the fine arts in the Impressionistic mentality out of which the words and music of the mélodies evolved, Chapter II presents a discussion of the reciprocal influences of the arts in France during the time these mélodies were created. With Chapter II serving as a reference, inferences regarding style and general performance practices of the period were drawn and applied to a descriptive/performance analysis of the selected mélodies. The analysis for each mélodie thus serves as a point of departure for the solving of particular vocal and pianistic performance problems as well as a reference for interpretive consideration.

The Impressionistic Mentality as Related to Debussy's Mélodies

Cumulative research revealed substantial evidence that Debussy shared with artists and writers of his time a common bond of rebellion against Romantic tradition. There was, in fact, much similarity between techniques utilized by creative artists in the visual, literary, and musical arts of the Impressionistic period. Their goals exhibited a common striving for a breaking down of traditional forms and theories governing art which were felt to be too artificial, restricting, and not essentially "French" in nature or origin. Whereas in earlier traditions "development by formula" and "over-statement" seemed more the norm than the exception, the Impressionists endeavored to evoke sensuous responses rather than define or describe objects in graphic detail. This idea was manifested in the visual arts, poetry, and music of the period.

Painters during the Impressionistic era advanced theories of artistic expression which deemphasized formal structure and design. Their paintings were characterized by the lack of dark, distinct outline. Soft, gentle, hazy planes of color suggesting the reflection of light characterized Impressionistic paintings.

Regarding form, direct parallels may be found in Debussy's mélodies. Strict formal construction is not a characteristic of Debussy's music. The general avoidance

of cadences, the blending of tonalities, the ambiguity of key centers and rhythmic alternations may be compared closely to the hazy, fleeting glimpses of life characterized by the paintings of Monet, Renoir, Cezanne, and Sisley.

An even closer blending of artistic style and purpose may be observed between the Symbolistic poetry of the Impressionistic Era and Debussy's mélodies. In the works of Symbolist poets such as Baudelaire, Verlaine and Mallarmé, Debussy found ideal texts for his

> music free from themes and motives, ...formed on a single continuous theme, which nothing interrupts and which never returns upon itself.[1]

According to Mallarmé, one of Debussy's closest friends and favorite poets, indefiniteness in description and precision in emotion were distinctly desirable characteristics of the poetic art. Debussy favored Mallarmé's lyrics because they were a perfect vehicle for his own musical designs and goals. The outlines of their images were indeterminate, but their rendering of emotion was intense and precise.

Impressionist painters, poets, and the singular outstanding Impressionist composer, Debussy, were obsessed with illusion in their art. They purposesly created their compositions with hazy outlines. They intensely shunned direct description or graphic portrayal of any

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[1]Oscar Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist (New York: Dover Publications, 1967), p. 103.

subject in favor of an indirect approach or suggestion. A central characteristic of Impressionistic art was that of evoking images through an appeal to the senses rather than appealing predominantly to the intellect.

The Selected Mélodies

The works selected for analysis were restricted to eighteen mélodies of Debussy set to texts by Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), Paul Verlaine (1844-1896), and Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898), all Symbolist poets. Debussy composed 57 melodies which were published and 22 known mélodies which have not been published. The mélodies selected for this study were chosen as encompassing a wide span of Debussy's active career as a composer. The texts chosen are among the most characteristic works of the three Symbolist poets selected for consideration in this study.

The first of these mélodies was composed in 1880 and the last in 1913. Four cycles were selected and a single mélodie, Mandoline, the poem of which was originally a part of the texts of the Ariettes Oubliées by Verlaine but which Debussy did not include in his cycle.

The selected mélodies, with the date indicating the year each was composed, are as follows:

Baudelaire Poems

CINQ POÈMES DE BAUDELAIRE (1887-1899)

1. Le balcon (1888)
2. Harmonie du soir (1889)
3. Le jet d'eau (1889)
4. Recueillement (1888)
5. La mort des amants (1887)

Verlaine Poems

Mandoline (1880-1883)

ARIETTES OUBLIÉES (1885-1888)

1. C'est l'extase (1888)
2. Il pleure dans mon coeur (1888)
3. L'ombre des arbres (1888)
4. Chevaux de bois (c. 1885)
5. Green (1888)
6. Spleen (1888)

FÊTES GALANTES: BOOK II (1904)

1. Les ingénus (1904)
2. Le faune (1904)
3. Colloque sentimental (1904)

Mallarmé Poems

TROIS POÈMES DE STÈPHANE MALLARMÉ (1913)

1. Soupie (1913)
2. Placet Futile (1913)
3. Éventail (1913)

Findings Regarding the Construction of the Mélodies

Most of Debussy's mélodies are through-composed as a result of his permitting the poem to dictate the musical setting. The primary reason for this was that Debussy's chief goal was to enhance, amplify, and clarify the poem above all else with his music. On occasion this endeavor led to the accompaniment of a particular mélodie seeming to exhibit a concentric tendency toward one tonality with the vocal line lying, perhaps in a different key. In addition, it is not unusual for a mélodie to begin in one key and end in another key in such an ambiguous way that the tonality is relatively obscured.

There is a general predominance of two part and three part forms with occasional manifestations of a modified rondo-like form. Compositional techniques include variation techniques, recurrence of material, and through-composed melody lines with recurring accompaniment material.

Unity is maintained in the mélodies through repetition of motivic material either by identical restatement, or in transposition or modified form. Unity is also accomplished through recurring ostinato, modal, or arpeggiated patterns.

Debussy's tonal resources often include whole-tone, modal, diatonic, chromatic, and pentatonic scales or

fragments, contributing to ambiguity of tonal center. These are on occasion all found within the same mélodie.

Vocal lines vary from narrow to wide ranges, sometimes encompassing two octaves. The voice is used more often than not as an orchestral instrument, blending with harmonies which are at times sparse, at other times lush and full.

Harmonic structure in the mélodies is characterized by parallelism, seventh, ninth, and thirteenth chords, added tones, occasional quartal and quintal harmony, with significant intervals including the tritone, the major second, and perfect fourths and fifths. Extended pedal tones, ostinatos, and repeated chords often contribute to keeping the harmonic movement somewhat static.

Rhythmic features in the mélodies include mixing of meter indications, syncopation, cross-rhythms, and markings indicating a slight rubato or flexibility.

Findings Regarding Performance Techniques

In order to approach a stylistically authentic performance of the mélodies, there is strong indication that both singer and pianist should have a working knowledge of the French language. In addition, to achieve any depth of appreciation of these works, the hearers of these songs should be able to comprehend the French texts to which they

are set. This is necessary in order to recreate accurately what the composer has indicated in the score. Furthermore, the poems require nuances on so many of the words in order to convey accurately their precise meaning that a lack of understanding of the language makes an adequate performance of the mélodies almost impossible.

Pianists would do well to avoid all "romantic affectations" in these accompaniments, and should strive to acquire agility in fractional pedaling and in specific touches and techniques for "stroking" the keys. The dynamic levels of the mélodies are consistently varying shades of piano. Thus the performer's responsibility is one of conveying to the listener the many nuances indicated throughout the scores within this limitation. There is a definite danger of performing Debussy's mélodies too loudly. During Debussy's performance of his own music, the lid of the piano was always kept fully closed. A subtle, mellow, liquid, blending of tone characterizes the effect which should be sought by the pianist.

The absence of fingering in the accompaniments is due to the fact that Debussy felt that each performer should select that fingering which best served his individual needs, as different performers have differences in hand span and technical facility.

Both singer and pianist should become adept at subtle flexibility in tempo which is almost always dictated by the text of the poem. Rubato as traditionally utilized in earlier

Romantic music has no place in the performance of Debussy's music. Indeed, research repeatedly reveals that Debussy strictly intended his music to be performed precisely as indicated in the score with relatively steady tempi, and "interpretation," in the Romantic sense of the word, being kept at a minimum.

One of the best techniques for the singer to employ in mastering the style required for the performance of the mélodies is to study the French recitative. This, according to Teyte, teaches the balance between word and melody so requisite to a stylistically authentic performance.[1]

To approach a stylistically authentic performance of Debussy's mélodies the singer must strive for a vocal technique which will permit him to "sing any vowel in any color and at any degree of loudness or softness on any note in one's voice.[2]

Conclusions

On the basis of the findings reported, the specific conclusions to be drawn are stated in this section of the present chapter.

1. To approach a more stylistically authentic performance of Debussy's mélodies, a thorough familiarization

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[1]Teyte, 57.

[2]Herbert Weinstock, "On Singing Debussy," Saturday Review, January 29, 1955. Volume 38, 52.

with the Impressionistic mentality out of which these mélodies sprang is requisite on the part of prospective performers. The principal characteristic of the style concerns the ability to convey the illusive and Impressionistic quality of the poetry and music of Debussy's mélodies.

2. Specific techniques characteristic of French piano compositions of the Impressionistic period should be isolated and mastered on the part of the pianist. The most important of these include a stroking touch, fractional pedaling, subtle flexibility, and an extreme degree of control regarding ensemble balance between the singer and pianist.

3. Both singer and pianist should cultivate thorough knowledge of the French language in order to approach the subtlety and nuance required in understanding and interpreting the Symbolist poetry to which the mélodies are set.

4. The Debussy mélodies are generally not for beginning singers. A considerable vocal technique and understanding is required in order to approach a valid, authentic interpretation of the mélodies. Therefore, the mélodies should be attempted by advanced singers who have established a solid vocal technique.

5. A study of authentic French diction, apart from a study of French grammar, is necessary on the part of the singer who would endeavor to present a stylistically

accurate performance of the mélodies. This should be augmented by a study of the French recitative style in order to achieve the fusion of the voice and the word.

6. Prospective performers will be aided in their performance efforts by becoming familiar with underlying compositional techniques of Debussy, including form, tonal characteristics and usages, and harmonic structural procedures.

Recommendations for Additional Research

1. A study comparing the earlier mélodies with the later mélodies regarding differences in text setting and the development of compositional technique.

2. A study comparing the piano accompaniments of the mélodies to the Preludes, Books I and II, particularly in the light of the poetic fragments quoted at the end of each Prelude.

3. A replication of the present study encompassing all of the mélodies to be a resource for prospective performers.

4. A study comparing musical settings of poems by Debussy with those of other composers such as Fauré and Hahn.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Agogic accent. A duration accent as opposed to a pitch or tonal accent, or dynamic variation.

Augmentation. The recurrence of musical material with notes of longer duration than were employed initially; augmentation often involves doubling of note values.

Barform. A term which is used frequently in modern German studies to denote one of the oldest and most important musical forms, that is, the form with the basic scheme AAB.

Chromaticism. The prevalent use of all or most of the twelve possible tones; opposed to diatonicism or any other system that excludes certain pitches.

Cross rhythms. The simultaneous appearance of two or more different and conflicting rhythmic patterns, often creating such ratios as two against three, three against four, and so forth.

Disjunct. Melodic motion primarily by large skips.

Exoticism. Traditionally, the term refers to aspects of extra-European cultures. However, the meaning is occasionally broadened in this study to include idioms outside of French culture: Spanish folk style, Oriental, and the like.

Figuration. Arpeggiation, tremolos, scale passages, or similar material that, frequently, lacks distinctive melodic features.

Flourish. An elaborate melodic passage containing ornamentation and/or embellishments.

Functional harmony. Conventional harmony and harmonic progression associated with the "classical" system of tonal music. (Non-functional harmony refers to non-traditional usage of tertian harmony.)

Harmonic rhythm. Speed or frequency of harmonic change.

Liaison. The pronouncing of the last consonant of a word with the vowel beginning the next word, when this consonant would otherwise be silent.

Mode, Modal, Modality. Refers to qualities of major and minor scales, either separately or in combination, or to the earlier ecclesiastical scales.

Motive. A brief, concise, and distinctive melodic fragment that is self-contained and often serves as a germinal idea in a composition.

Nuance. Subtle modification of tempo, dynamics, phrasing, and so fourth.

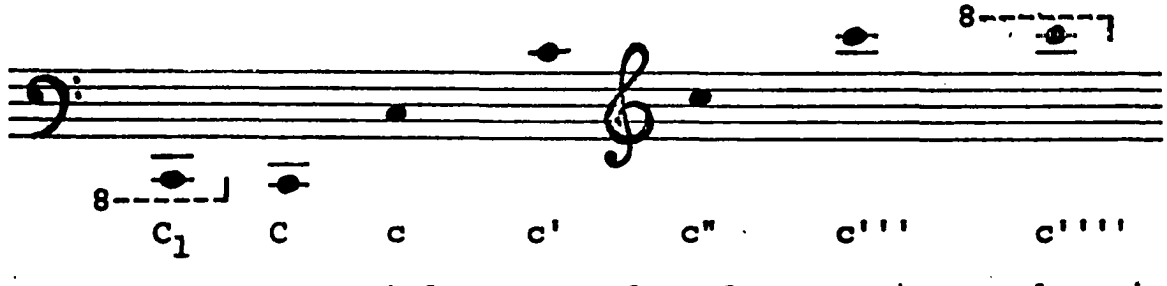
Ostinato. A brief, but distinctive, musical fragment that is repeated several or many times, usually without variation and generally on the same pitch level.

Parallelism. Parallel motion of two or more simultaneous voices, progressing either by the same interval or by intervals that are nearly the same.

Pedalpoint. A sustained or reiterated pitch in the bass which is usually associated with harmonic or melodic movement in other superimposed parts.

Pentatonicism. Refers to a five-note scale that usually excludes semitones.

Pitch designation. References to precise pitches in this study are derived from this scale:



Portamento. A special manner of performance in vocal music in which the tone glides gradually, in a connecting manner, from one pitch to another.

Quartal harmony. Harmony based on the interval of a fourth.

Quintal harmony. Harmony based on the interval of a fifth.

Recitative-like. A declamatory or parlando style that, in vocal music, tends to preserve the inflections and nuances of the text.

Ritornello. A recurrent material that is often varied in successive appearances and that freely alternates with contrasting materials.

Rondo. A musical plan in which a principal thematic element alternates with contrasting elements.

Rubato. Rounding elasticity and flexibility of tempo within an unchanging metric context.

Secondal harmony. Harmony based on the interval of a second.

Tertian harmony. Harmony based on the interval of a third.

Texture. The "fabric" of music, emanating from the combination of melodic and harmonic ingredients and their various relationships, density, spacing, degree of independence, and the like.

Through-composed. A non-strophic vocal setting in which the music is "composed throughout" and therefore may freely follow the changing moods and situations in the poetry.

Timbre. The quality or color of a tone.

Tonal. Having concentricity toward a certain pitch.

Tonality. Maintaining concentricity around a center pitch to which all the other tones are related.

Transposition. Restating material at a different pitch level.

Tritone. The interval of an augmented fourth, which divides the octave in half and therefore tends to be tonally neutral and ambiguous.

Whole-tone chord. A chord derived from selected members of a whole-tone scale.

Whole-tone material. Material based on one of the two possible whole-tone scales: six successive whole steps within the octave.

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