

# DMA Collaborative Piano Recital

Katzin Concert Hall, ASU

March, 21, 2014 5pm

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## SÉRÉNADE FRANÇAISE

Drew Quiring, Piano

with

Nina Cole, soprano; Ryan Downey,  
bass-baritone; Michelle Lange, soprano;  
Kenny Miller, tenor; Jenna Daum, flute

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# Programme

From *Dardanus*:

Jean-Philippe Rameau (1683-1764)

*Ouverture*

*Air vif; "Allez, jeune guerrier"*

Nina Cole, Soprano

*La belle voyageuse* (Thomas Moore & Thomas Gounet)

Hector Berlioz (1803-1869)

*Le chasseur danois* (Adolphe de Leuven)

*Adieu Bessy* (Thomas Moore & Thomas Gounet)

Ryan Downey, bass-baritone

*Chanson d'avril* (Louis Bouilhet)

Georges Bizet (1838-1875)

*Ouvre ton cœur* (Louis Michel James Lacour Delâtre)

*Adieux de l'hotesse arabe* (Victor Hugo)

*Absence* (Pierre-Jules Théophile Gautier)

Michelle Lange, soprano

Selected vocalises from the Paris Conservatoire

*Vocalise-étude*

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)

*Vocalises No. 11, 25 and 29*

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

(newly discovered, published by Peters Edition 2013)

*Vocalise-étude en forme de Habanera*

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Jenna Daum, flute

## INTERMISSION

*Histoires naturelles* (Jules Renard)

Ravel

*Le paon*

*Le grillon*

*Le cygne*

*Le martin-pêcheur*

*La pintade*

Kenny Miller, tenor

*Hymne à la volupté* (Jean de La Fontaine)

Isabelle Aboulker (b. 1938)

*Je t'aime*

Nina Cole, soprano

## ∞ Dardanus ∞

Although rarely performed today, Rameau's third opera *Dardanus* was considered at its time to be one of his finest and most respected works. This *tragédie en lyrique* drew so much attention that Rameau was commonly known to the public as the "composer of Dardanus". However, due to an overreliance on magic and supernatural aspects within the plot, and an excessive dependence on *deus ex machine*, the original version of 1739 was not initially well received. Resistance was further heightened from the ongoing conflict between the Lullists and the Ramists, the latter being sometimes identified by the derogatory term "rameoneurs", or "chimney sweeps", in reference to Rameau's allegedly over-cluttered manuscript, resembling soot. One might assume that a second version of *Dardanus* in 1744 might reveal compositional ameliorations, but quite the contrary: although his contemporary audience was pleased by the adjustments made for more realistic plot developments in the revised version, most scholars agree that the musical material of the earlier version serves as a better representation of the genius of Rameau, who had by this point already reached his musical maturity.

Rameau had poor taste in librettists and cared considerably less about the texts than he did about the musical content. After a singer's expressed concern in rehearsal over her clarity of diction, Rameau responded, "It is of little importance that they hear your words, so long as they hear my music." Although the characters of *Dardanus* come from classic Greek mythology, the libretto, provided by Charles-Antoine La Clerc de la Bruère (1714-1754), is a fictional construct, very generously expanded from only scarce derivations: Dardanus, King of Jupiter, is at war with Teucer, the King of Phrygia but in love with his daughter, Iphise, who secretly shares the same affections for Dardanus in return. Meanwhile, King Teucer promises Iphise's hand in marriage instead to prince Antéonor if he agrees to assist in military combat against Dardanus. The eventual capture of Dardanus angers Neptune, who in vengeance sends a sea monster to punish the Phrygians. But with supernatural intervention from Venus, Dardanus is able to free himself and fight off the monster that otherwise would have destroyed Antéonor, on the agreed condition that he allow Iphise the option to choose her own husband. The two soldiers return to Phrygia where Dardanus and Iphise are happily wed among peaceful reconciliations brought on by the powers of Venus.

Most operatic overtures before the nineteenth century served as exclusively independent orchestral works, separate from the rest of the opera proper, but one can identify in Rameau an atypical and unprecedented trend where connective ties can be linked between content in the introductory overture and in the music within the following drama. In the case of this overture, the pervasive "echo" effects in thirds closely resemble similar gestures and themes associated with the "sleep" scene during Venus's intervention to free Dardanus. The following aria excerpted here features a local Phrygian woman from Act 1 who gives encouragement to Antéonor before his departure for battle, reminding him of the reward of a loving wife waiting upon his return.

Allez, jeune guerrier,  
 Courez à la victoire!  
 Le prix le plus charmant vous attend au retour.  
 Courez à la victoire!  
 Que votre sort est doux!  
 Vous voulez à la gloire  
 Sur les ailes du tendre amour.

Go, young warrior,  
 Run to victory!  
 The most charming prize awaits for you on your return.  
 Run to victory!  
 May your fate be sweet!  
 You seek the glory  
 On the wings of tender love.

## ∞ Berlioz ∞

After a lengthy period of simplicity and sentimental naïvité in French vocal music, dominated largely by the *romance* and related forms, the introduction of Franz Schubert's *Lieder* into nineteenth-century France produced a tremendous influence into the world of Romantic French song. Schubert's songs demonstrated the artistic integrity that could be achieved within this musical genre with words. The designation of *mélodie* to this new, elevated French art song originates from Hector Berlioz's settings of Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies*, a collection of folk poetry supportive of nationalist pride during the Irish Revolt, sentiments that were echoed at that time throughout the entire continent, no less by Berlioz, whose item of infatuation was of this nationality: Harriet Smithson, the dedicatée and source of inspiration for his most famous work, *Symphonie fantastique*. Among Berlioz's progressive cha include bold, almost disturbing, harmonic shifts and creative deviations away from a strict strophic form. One might be surprised to find the abundance of anti-pianistic writing and somewhat ineffective accompanimental

textures that appear throughout these songs, especially considering his respect earned as the author of an important Orchestration treatise; these gestures may be borrowed from *grand opéra* or represent early visions of the orchestrated versions that would appear years later.

### La belle voyageuse

(Thomas Moore, 1779-1852; transliterated by  
Thomas Gounet, 1801-1869)

Elle s'en va seulette; l'or brille à son bandeau;  
Au bout de sa baguette étincelle un joyau.  
Mais sa beauté surpasse l'éclat de ses rubis.  
Et sa blancheur efface la perle au blanc de lys.

Belle, ainsi sans injure penses-tu voyager?  
Ta beauté, ta parure appellent le danger.  
Les mains les plus fidèles tressaillent devant l'or,  
Et les coeurs près des belles tiennent bien moins encor.

Chevalier, dans cette île mon âme ne craint rien;  
L'honneur en cet asile est le souverain bien.  
Toujours devant nos larmes on le vit s'arrêter.  
Pour mon or ou mes charmes que puis-je redouter?

Aux regards découverte, son sourire virginal  
Par toute l'île verte lui servit de fanal.  
Aussi l'as-tu bénie, des harpes doux pays,  
Celle qui se confie à l'honneur de tes fils.

### Le chasseur danois

(Adolphe de Leuven, 1800-1884)

Entendez-vous dans la bruyère?  
Déjà chante le coq des bois.  
Allons, allons réveillez-vous,  
Mon père! Volez à de nouveaux exploits!  
En chasse! en chasse! en chasse! et que Dieu vous protège!  
Et toi qui chantes là-bas,  
Ce soir tu ne chanteras pas.

Entendez-vous la voix fidèle  
De votre épagneul favori?  
Il se fait tard. Il vous appelle, il vous appelle,  
Pour que vous partiez avec lui.  
En chasse! en chasse! en chasse! et que Dieu vous protège!  
Et toi qui chantes là-bas,  
Ce soir tu ne chanteras pas.

Allons! allons sans plus attendre.  
Mon père levez-vous enfin!  
Allons! allons! La voix d'un fils, ne pouvez-vous l'entendre?  
Vous dormez bien tard, ce matin.

### The beautiful traveller

She goes alone; gold shines on her headband;  
At the end of her sparkling wand, a gem.  
But her beauty surpasses the radiance of her jewels.  
And her fairness outshines the pearl white lily.

Beautiful one, do you think you'll travel without harm?  
Your beauty, your adornment invite danger.  
The most faithful hands tremble before gold  
And hearts near the beautiful take even more.

Knight, on this island my soul fears nothing;  
The honor in this refuge is the sovereign good.  
Always before our tears we lived to stop it.  
For my gold or my charms can I dread?

Exposed to the gazes of others, her virginal smile  
Safely lighted her round the green isle;  
Therefore, you blessed her with harps, sweet country,  
She who entrusts herself to the honor of your son.

### The Danish hunter

Do you hear it in the heather?  
Already the rooster is calling.  
Come, come, wake up,  
My father! Hurry to some new adventure!  
To the hunt! And may God protect you!  
And you singing there,  
Tonight you will not sing.

Do you hear the faithful voice  
Of your favorite spaniel?  
It's getting late. He calls you, he calls you,  
So that you will leave with him.  
To the hunt! And may God protect you!  
And you singing there,  
Tonight you will not sing.

Come, come, without waiting longer.  
My father, get up, will you!  
Come, come! A son's voice, can't you hear it?  
You are sleeping quite late this morning.

En chasse! en chasse! en chasse! et que Dieu vous protège!  
Et toi qui chantes là-bas,  
Ce soir tu ne chanteras pas.

Ainsi disait dans la chaumière  
Un jeune enfant. Voeux superflus!  
Le vieux chasseur, son pauvre père,  
Hélas! ne répétera plus:  
En chasse! en chasse! en chasse! et que Dieu vous protège!  
Et toi qui chantes là-bas,  
Ce soir tu ne chanteras pas.

### Adieu Bessy

(Thomas Moore, 1779-1852; transliterated by  
Thomas Gounet, 1801-1869)

Loin de toi, Bessy, mes amours,  
Je vais traîner mes triste jours.  
Plaisirs passés que je déplore,  
Auriez-vous fui pour toujours?  
Adieu Bessy! Nous nous verrons encore!

Ces beaux jours doivent revenir.  
Reposons-nous sur l'avenir!  
Alors, le mal qui nous dévore  
Ne sera qu'un souvenir.  
Adieu, Bessy! Nous nous verrons encore.

Je croyais, te donnant ma foi,  
Pour toujours vivre près de toi.  
Notre amour, à peine à l'aurore,  
Du destin subit la loi.  
Adieu, Bessy! Nous nous verrons encore.

Pour mon cœur brisé désormais  
Plus de calme, de douce paix!  
Une heure, et celui qui t'adore  
T'abandonne pour jamais.  
Oh! non, Bessy! Nous nous verrons encore!

Adieu!

To the hunt! And may God protect you!  
And you singing there,  
Tonight you will sing no more.

Thus in the cottage spoke  
A young boy. Empty wishes!  
The old huntsman, his poor father,  
Alas! He would never repeat:  
To the hunt! And may God protect you!  
And you singing there,  
Tonight you will sing no more.

### Farewell, Bessy

Far away from you, Bessy, my love,  
I'll drag my sad days along with me.  
Past pleasures that I deplore,  
Would you have run away forever?  
Farewell, Bessy! We will see each other again!

These sunny days must return.  
Let us rest in the future!  
Then, the evil that devours us  
Will only be a memory.  
Farewell, Bessy! We will see each other again!

I thought I was giving you my faith,  
To always live near you.  
Our love, scarcely at dawn,  
is subject to the law of destiny.  
Farewell, Bessy! We will see each other again!

For my broken heart henceforth  
More calm, sweet peace!  
One more hour and he who adores you  
Will abandon you forever.  
Farewell, Bessy! We will see each other again!

Farewell!

## ♫ Bizet ♫

The song world was for Bizet not a serious pursuit, but rather a divertissement from his primary focus of operatic and symphonic work. Nonetheless, he was admittedly quite pleased with his resultant song output after very careful craftsmanship and refusing public publication of any of his songs that he felt to be only mediocre in quality. His love for the operatic realm carries over into his *mélodies* through several theatrical elements, including frequent dramatic, melismatic passages, sometimes unjustified by text; Fritz Noske has suggested that this occurrence may have been partly from the influence of have a father who was a prominent voice teacher. Bizet's style often contains very striking features by means of very modest and minimal resources—bold harmonic progressions and poignant dissonances over pedal point result in sonorities that are quite salient yet not too progressively offensive; melodic phrases exhibit a natural shape yet carry individual distinction. Many consider Bizet at his best during his explorations of exoticism, borrowing scale patterns, rhythms and harmonies from foreign regions, as heard here in the Spanish serenade *Ouvre ton Coeur* and the sultry *Adieux de le hôtesse arabe*. Bizet's beautiful, well-crafted melodies over Gounod-influenced accompaniment figures, set to verses from an eclectic selection of poets, generates a delightful and original means of expression.

Chanson d'avril

Louis Bouilhet (1822-1869)

Lève-toi! lève-toi! le printemps vient de naître!  
 Là-bas, sur les vallons, flotte un réseau vermeil!  
 Tout frissonne au jardin, tout chante et ta fenêtre,

Comme un regard joyeux, est pleine de soleil!

Du côté des lilas aux touffes violettes,

Mouches et papillons bruissent à la fois  
 Et le muguet sauvage, ébranlant ses clochettes,  
 A réveillé l'amour endormi dans les bois!

Puisqu'Avril a semé ses marguerites blanches,  
 Laisse ta mante lourde et ton manchon frileux,  
 Déjà l'oiseau t'appelle et tes soeurs les pervenches  
 Te souriront dans l'herbe en voyant tes yeux bleus!

Viens, partons! au matin, la source est plus limpide;  
 Lève-toi! viens, partons! N'attendons pas du jour  
 les brûlantes chaleurs;  
 Je veux mouiller mes pieds dans la rosée humide,  
 Et te parler d'amour sous les poiriers en fleurs.

Ouvre ton cœur

Louis Michel James Lacour Delâtre (1815 - ?)

La marguerite a fermé sa corolle,  
 L'ombre a fermé les yeux du jour.  
 Belle, me tiendras-tu parole?  
 Ouvre ton cœur à mon amour.

Ouvre ton cœur, ô jeune ange, à ma flamme,  
 Qu'un rêve charme ton sommeil.  
 Je veux reprendre mon âme,  
 Comme une fleur s'ouvre au soleil!

Adieux de l'hôtesse arabe

Victor Hugo (1802-1885)

Puisque rien ne t'arrête en cet heureux pays,  
 Ni l'ombre du palmier, ni le jaune maïs,  
 Ni le repos, ni l'abondance,  
 Ni de voir à ta voix battre le jeune sein  
 De nos sœurs, dont, les soirs, le tournoyant essaim  
 Couronne un coteau de sa danse,

Oh, bel voyageur ! que n'es-tu de ceux  
 Qui donnent pour limite à leurs pieds paresseux  
 Leur toit de branches ou de toiles !  
 Qui, rêveurs, sans en faire, écoutent les récits,  
 Et souhaitent, le soir, devant leur porte assis,  
 De s'en aller dans les étoiles!

April song

Get up! Get up! Spring has just been born!  
 Over those valleys floats a ruby mist!  
 Everything trembles in the garden; everything sings  
 and your window,  
 like a joyful gaze, is full of sunshine,

On the side of the purple lilac bushes

Flies and butterflies flutter and hum all together,  
 and the wild lily-of-the-valley, shaking their little bells,  
 have woken up Eros who was sleeping in the woods.

Now that April has sowed its white daisies,  
 leave your heavy cloak and cold-weather muff!  
 Already the birds call you, and your sisters the periwinkles  
 will smile at you in the grass when they see your blue eyes.

Come, let's go! In early morning, the stream is clearer;  
 Get up! Come, let's go! Let's not wait for the day's  
 burning heat.  
 I want to wet my feet in the moist dew  
 and talk to you of love under the blossoming pear-trees.

Open your heart

The daisy has closed its pedals,  
 The shadow has closed its eyes for the days.  
 Beautiful, will you keep your word to me?  
 Open your heart to my love.

Open your heart, O young angel, to my flame,  
 That a dream may enchant your sleep.  
 I wish to reclaim my soul,  
 Like a flower opens to the sun.

Farewell of the Arabian Hostess

Since nothing can keep you in this happy land,  
 Neither the shade of the palm tree nor yellow corn,  
 Nor repose nor abundance,  
 Nor the sight of our sisters' young breasts trembling  
 at the sound of your voice, in wheeling swarm at evening,  
 garland a hillside with their dance.

Farewell, handsome traveller! Ah! Why are you not like those  
 Whose lazy feet venture no farther  
 Than their roofs of branch or canvas!  
 Who, musing, listen passively to tales  
 And dream at evening, sitting before their door,  
 Of wandering among the stars!

Si tu l'avais voulu, peut-être une de nous,  
 O jeune homme, eût aimé te servir à genoux  
 Dans nos huttes toujours ouvertes ;  
 Elle eût fait, en berçant ton sommeil de ses chants,  
 Pour chasser de ton front les moucherons méchants,  
 Un éventail de feuilles vertes.

Had you so wished, perhaps one of us,  
 O young man, would willingly have served you, kneeling,  
 In our ever-open huts;  
 Lulling you to sleep with songs she would have made,  
 To chase away the troublesome flies from your brow,  
 With a fan of green leaves.

Si tu ne reviens pas, songe un peu quelquefois  
 Aux filles du désert, sœurs à la douce voix,  
 Qui dansent pieds nus sur la dune ;

If you do not return, dream at times  
 Of the daughters of the desert, sweet-voiced sisters,  
 Who dance barefoot on the dunes;

O beau jeune homme blanc, bel oiseau passager,  
 Souviens-toi, car peut-être, ô rapide étranger,  
 Ton souvenir reste à plus d'une !

O handsome young white man, beautiful bird of passage,  
 Remember - for perhaps, O fleeting stranger,  
 More than one maiden will remember you.

Hélas, Adieu, bel étranger! Souviens-toi!

Alas! Farewell, fair stranger! Remember!

### Absence

(Pierre-Jules-Théophile Gautier, 1811-1872)

Reviens, reviens, ma bien-aimée!  
 Comme une fleur loin du soleil,  
 La fleur de ma vie est fermée,  
 Loin de ton sourire vermeil.

Come back, come back, my dearest love!  
 Like a flower far from the sun,  
 The flower of my life has drooped,  
 far from your ruby-red smile.

Entre nos coeurs tant de distance!  
 Tant d'espace entre nos baisers!  
 Ô sort amer! ô dure absence!  
 Ô grands désirs inapaisés!

Between our hearts how far a distance!  
 What a wide space our kisses divide!  
 O bitter fate! O harsh absence!  
 O grand desires, unsubsidied!

Au pays qui me prend ma belle,  
 Hélas! si je pouvais aller;  
 Et si mon corps avait une aile  
 Comme mon âme pour voler!

To that far land where dwells my love,  
 Alas! if I could only go!  
 And if my body had a wing,  
 Like my soul, to fly!

Par-dessus nos vertes collines,  
 Les montagnes au front d'azur,  
 Les champs rayés et les ravines,  
 J'irais d'un vol rapide et sûr.

Over the green hill tops,  
 The lofty mountains with peaks of blue,  
 The striped fields and ravines,  
 I would fly swiftly and steadily!

Le corps ne suit pas la pensée;  
 Pour moi, mon âme, va tout droit,  
 Comme une colombe blessée,  
 T'abattre au rebord de son toit.

The body can't follow the thought!  
 With me the spirit goes straight ahead,  
 But like a wounded dove that  
 Crashes down on the edge of the roof.

Et dis, mon âme, à cette belle:  
 «Tu sais bien qu'il compte les jours!  
 Ô ma colombe! à tire d'aile,  
 Retourne au nid de nos amours.»

And say, my soul, to my sweetheart:  
 "You know well that he counts the days!  
 O my dove! Of haggard wing,  
 Return to the nest of our love!"

## ∞ Vocalises ∞

During the nineteenth century, composers grew tired of the pedantic and mechanical exercises so pervasive in pedagogical training, and turned to writing more artistically satisfying compositions that served specific didactic purposes for technical development, while fully functional as a musical piece with integrity. This concept is perhaps most familiar in the instrumental realm with the concert *étude*, especially those written for piano by Chopin, and Liszt, but also extant in the vocal world is the parallel variation of this genre for voice, the textless “vocalise”. By the twentieth century, the compositional quality of many of these so-called studies had risen to such excellence that many of them warranted appearances on concert stages. Arguably the most well-known vocalise is that written by Rachmaninoff.

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~~Beginning in 1907, the Paris Conservatoire commissioned one of its faculty voice teachers, Amédée-Louis Hettich, to seek and compile various vocalises into a comprehensive collection known as *La Répertoire Moderne de Vocalises-Études*. Beginning with an initial prototype from Gabriel Fauré, the series continued to include an incredible assortment of French composers including Dukas, Hahn, Vierne, and Poulenc among countless others, before eventually reaching out to composers of other nationalistic regions, notably Copland and Villa-Lobos. The series included a total of 158 vocalises before Hettich's death in 1937, though a handful of these are duplicates in different transpositions. They were available for purchase individually or in volumes of ten from Alphonse Leduc; the fact that Leduc's American distributors currently only offer a scant few available for purchase may be part of the reason why many of these vocalises are so commonly unknown today. Two of the more famous vocalises from this collection book-end the set on this recital: Ravel's vocalise for medium voice (No. 141), and Messiaen's vocalise for high voice (No. 151).~~

Messiaen's vocalise comes from his earlier period from which we encounter works of a similar nature, notably his *Préludes* for piano, *La banquet céleste* for organ and his *Trois mélodies*. Lingering remnants of impressionism are present in addition to many of Messiaen's stylistic trademarks that pervaded his entire œuvre, particularly his unique brand of modality and his meditative nature.

Until recently we knew only of one vocalise-étude provided by Fauré, the aforementioned publication that was the impetus for Hettich's project. Fauré's remaining vocalises from 1906 to 1916 have recently been discovered, are now held in the *Archives nationales de France*, and have been made public through publication by Edition Peters. The range of difficulty among them is varied as is the voice type intended: some are written for men, others for women (these being more nimbly written, generally), sometimes even those composed specifically for sight-singing examinations for instrumentalists. The following summary of Fauré's vocalises has been provided by Roy Howat and Emily Kilpatrick in the preface for the Peters publication:

Usually starting with exposed triadic intervals, they then probe essentials such as breath control, purity of tone and stability of pitch and rhythm, sometimes over distracting modal shifts in the accompaniment. The texturally simple keyboard accompaniments oblige singers to find their way from note to note mostly unaided by leading figurations, with progressively trickier vocal intervals and unintuitive melodic progressions to be negotiated. With no phrasing marked in most of the manuscripts, sight-singing students had to use their wits and read ahead to judge and shape phrase lengths, particularly when Fauré prolongs a melody or suddenly transfers it up an octave just as it seems about to relax into a cadence. In a similar spirit are enharmonic hazards. While Conservatory vocalises by other composers mostly mimic the *bel canto* aria, Fauré's sound much more like *mélodies*, with distinctly Fauréan gesture or turns of phrase in even the simplest ones, as well as some more overt echoes such as those of *Lydia*.

Gabriel Fauré was very passionate about vocal pedagogy and after being appointed as director at the Paris Conservatoire, made use of his vocalises to train singers in a shift away from a *grand opéra* focus, toward the field of art song through “exercises developing vocal suppleness, articulation, and voice placement and production, which are the basis of singing teaching.” Shortly before retirement, Fauré claimed that these specific efforts of his among others to develop the vocal pedagogy program were among his proudest achievements.

Fauré seriously considered publishing the “Cantilena” of Vocalise No. 29 but ultimately chose against doing so as he deemed it too difficult, perhaps the most challenging of the entire set with all the melodic twists and turns, enharmonic shifts, and alternation between various rhythmic patterns.

Ravel's Habanera Vocalise is one of his many compositions in a Spanish style. Perhaps influenced by his maternal Basque heritage, Spanish culture had a tremendous impact in his life and many jested that he wrote better Spanish music than actual Spaniards.

## ❧ Histoires naturelles ❧

Composed in 1906, Ravel took as a literary source the prose collection of anthromorphic caricatures by Jules Renard (1864-1910), "Histoires naturelles", accompanied by drawings provided by Toulouse Lautrec. The vocal world had already seen earlier anthromorphic creatures set to music, but perhaps never before with the same degree of wit and humour. Additionally distinct was Ravel's deviant decision to adopt a more colloquial and informal use of the French language by abandoning traditional aspects of lyric diction, notably the pronunciation of the mute E, which was often incorporated into conventional art song diction, being given at least some attention in order to aid with poetic lyricism and flow. Through its avoidance, Ravel's primary aim was to preserve the prose quality of Renard's writing. ~~This "café-concert diction" application into art song was regarded by many as crass, and as such~~ greatly contributed to an overall dismissive reception of this set upon its first appearance. Fauré hated the set, Debussy even more so, and Renard was absolutely vexed at the notion of his works set to music. Nonetheless, over time these songs have certainly gained their due recognition and are now considered perhaps one of the most important French song collections of the twentieth-century due to Ravel's ingenious and finely crafted technique, which effectively narrates, through music, the experiences of this eclectic cast of eccentric characters. Ravel was an animal lover, and this set served as an antecedent for his forthcoming vocal composition of a similar anthromorphic nature of larger proportion: his opera, *L'enfant et les sortilèges*.

### La Paon

Il va sûrement se marier aujourd'hui. Ce devait être pour hier. En habit de gala, il était prêt. Il n'attendait que sa fiancée. Elle n'est pas venue. Elle ne peut tarder. Glorieux, il se promène avec une allure de prince indien et porte sur lui les riches présents d'usage. L'amour avive l'éclat de ses couleurs et son aigrette tremble comme une lyre. La fiancée n'arrive pas. Il monte au haut du toit et regarde du côté du soleil. Il jette son cri diabolique : Léon ! Léon ! C'est ainsi qu'il appelle sa fiancée. Il ne voit rien venir et personne ne répond. Les volailles habituées ne lèvent même point la tête. Elles sont lasses de l'admirer. Il redescend dans la cour, si sûr d'être beau qu'il est incapable de rancune. Son mariage sera pour demain. Et, ne sachant que faire du reste de la journée, il se dirige vers le perron. Il gravit les marches, comme des marches de temple, d'un pas officiel. Il relève sa robe à queue toute lourde des yeux qui n'ont pu se détacher d'elle. Il répète encore une fois la cérémonie.

### Le grillon

C'est l'heure où, las d'errer, l'insecte nègre revient de promenade et répare avec soin le désordre de son domaine. D'abord il ratisse ses étroites allées de sable. Il fait du bran de scie qu'il écarte au seuil de sa retraite. Il lime la racine de cette grande herbe propre à le harceler. Il se repose. Puis il remonte sa minuscule montre. A-t-il fini ? Est-elle cassée ? Il se repose encore un peu. Il rentre chez lui et ferme sa porte. Longtemps il tourne sa clé dans la serrure délicate. Et il écoute : Point d'alarme dehors. Mais il ne se trouve pas en sûreté. Et comme par une chaînette dont la poulie grince, il descend jusqu'au fond de la terre. On n'entend plus rien. Dans la campagne muette, les peupliers se dressent comme des doigts en l'air et désignent la lune.

### The Peacock

He will surely get married today. It should have been yesterday. In full dress for the gala, he was ready. He was waiting for his fiancée. She did not come. She can't be long now. In all his glory, he promenades with the air of an Indian prince and wears the customary rich presents. Love sharpens the brightness of his colors and his crest trembles like a lyre. His fiancée does not arrive. He climbs to the top of the roof and looks in the direction of the sun. He throws forth his diabolical cry: "Léon! Léon!" It's thus that he calls his fiancée. He sees nothing coming and no one responds. The fowls, who are used to it, don't even lift their heads. They are tired of admiring him. He descends again into the courtyard, so sure of being handsome that he is incapable of bearing a grudge. His wedding will take place tomorrow. And, not knowing what to do with the rest of the day, he directs himself toward the terrace steps. He climbs the steps, like the steps of a temple, with an official gait. He takes off his robe, with its train so heavy with eyes that cannot detach themselves. He repeats the ceremony again.

### The cricket

It's the hour when, tired of straying, the black insect returns from his outing and carefully repairs the disorder of his domain. First he rakes his narrow lanes of sand. He makes sawdust, which he scatters onto the threshold of his shelter. He files down the root of that tall blade of grass that might annoy him. He rests. Then he winds up his tiny watch. Has he finished? Is it broken? He rests again a little. He goes back into his house and closes the door. For a long while he turns his key in the delicate lock. And he listens: Nothing alarming outside. But he is still not safe. And, like a small chain With a squeaky pulley, He lowers himself into the depth of the earth. Nothing more is heard. In the silent countryside, the poplars stand erect like fingers in air and point to the moon.

Le cygne

Il glisse sur le bassin, comme un traîneau blanc, de nuage en nuage. Car il n'a faim que des nuages floconneux qu'il voit naître, bouger, et se perdre dans l'eau. C'est l'un d'eux qu'il désire. Il le vise du bec, et il plonge tout à coup son col vêtu de neige. Puis, tel un bras de femme sort d'une manche, il retire. Il n'a rien. Il regarde : les nuages effarouchés ont disparu. Il ne reste qu'un instant désabusé, car les nuages tardent peu à revenir, et, là-bas, où meurent les ondulations de l'eau, en voici un qui se reforme. Doucement, sur son léger coussin de plumes, le cygne rame et s'approche... Il s'épuise à pêcher de vains reflets, et peut-être qu'il mourra, victime de cette illusion, avant d'attraper un seul morceau de nuage. Mais qu'est-ce que je dis ? Chaque fois qu'il plonge, il fouille du bec la vase nourrissante et ramène un ver. Il engraisse comme une oie.

Le martin-pêcheur

Ça n'a pas mordu, ce soir, mais je rapporte une rare émotion. Comme je tenais ma perche de ligne tendue, un martin-pêcheur est venu s'y poser. Nous n'avons pas d'oiseau plus éclatant. Il semblait une grosse fleur bleue au bout d'une longue tige. La perche pliait sous le poids. Je ne respirais plus, tout fier d'être pris pour un arbre par un martin-pêcheur. Et je suis sûr qu'il ne s'est pas envolé de peur, mais qu'il a cru qu'il ne faisait que passer d'une branche à une autre.

La pintade

C'est la bossue de ma cour. Elle ne rêve que plaies à cause de sa bosse. Les poules ne lui disent rien : Brusquement, elle se précipite et les harcèle. Puis elle baisse sa tête, penche le corps, et, de toute la vitesse de ses pattes maigres, elle court frapper, de son bec dur, juste au centre de la roue d'une dinde. Cette poseuse l'agaçait. Ainsi, la tête bleuie, ses barbillons à vif, cocardière, elle rage du matin au soir. Elle se bat sans motif, peut-être parce qu'elle s'imagine toujours qu'on se moque de sa taille, de son crâne chauve et de sa queue basse. Et elle ne cesse de jeter un cri discordant qui perce l'air comme un pointe. Parfois elle quitte la cour et disparaît. Elle laisse aux volailles pacifiques un moment de répit. Mais elle revient plus turbulente et plus criarde. Et, frénétique, elle se vautre par terre. Qu'a-t-elle donc ? La surnoise fait une farce. Elle est allée pondre son oeuf à la campagne. Je peux le chercher si ça m'amuse. Et elle se roule dans la poussière comme une bossue.

The swan

He glides on the pond, like a white sleigh from cloud to cloud. For his hunger is only for the fleecy clouds that he sees forming, moving and being lost in the water. It is one of them that he desires. He aims at it with his beak, and dives suddenly with his snow-clad neck. Then, like a woman's arm emerges from a sleeve, he pulls it back. He has caught nothing. He looks: The startled clouds have disappeared. He remains disillusioned for only a moment, for the clouds slowly return bit by bit, and, over there, where the ripples on the water are dying away, one cloud is reforming. Softly, on his light feather cushion, the swan paddles and approaches... He exhausts himself fishing for empty reflections, and perhaps he will die, a victim of that illusion, before catching a single piece of cloud. But what am I talking about? Each time he dives, he burrows his beak in the nourishing mud and comes back with a worm. He's fattening up like a goose.

The Kingfisher

Not a bite this evening, but I had a rare emotional experience. As I was holding my fishing rod out, a kingfisher came and perched on it. We have no other bird so striking. It resembled a big blue flower at the tip of a long stem. The rod bent beneath its weight. I held my breath, very proud to be taken for a tree by a kingfisher. And I'm sure that he didn't fly away out of fear, but because he believed that he was merely passing from one branch to another.

The guinea-hen

She is the hunchback of my barnyard. She dreams only of afflicting others because of her hump. The hens say nothing to her: Brusquely, she rushes in and harasses them. Then she lowers her head, bends her body, and with all the speed of her skinny legs, dashes over to strike with her hard beak right in the center of a tail of a turkey. This show-off annoyed her. Thus, her bluish head, her lively wattle, cocky, she rages from morning to evening. She fights without motif, perhaps because she always imagines that they make fun of the size, her bald head and of her low tail. And she incessantly utters a discordant cry that pierces the air like a knife point. Sometimes she leaves the courtyard and disappears. She grants the peace-loving fowl a moment of respite. But she returns more rowdy and shrill. And, in a frenzy, she sprawls on the ground. What's wrong with her? The sneak is playing a farce. She went out into the countryside to lay an egg. I can go look for it if I feel like it. And she rolls in the dust like a hunchback.

## ∞ Aboulker ∞

Celebrated in France and throughout the world, Isabelle Aboulker is known mainly for her operatic and other vocal works. She was born in 1938 as the daughter of an Algerian-born film director and writer, and granddaughter of the French composer Henry Février, pupil of Fauré, Messager and Massenet. After studying composition and keyboard skills at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique she continued to work there as chief accompanist and voice teacher. She composed for Theatre, Film, and television before turning her primary focus to operatic and other vocal works from that time forward. Influences of Ravel, Poulenc and Debussy permeate her works and confirm her prominence among the lineage of the great French masters. A substantial portion of her output is intended toward children, perhaps the most celebrated of these works being her settings of the fables by Jean de la

Fontaine. In this programme, we encounter another of her settings of La Fontaine, but of a very different nature: "Hymne à la Volupté" comes from a very experimental and atypical work of La Fontaine, titled *Les amours de Psyché et Cupidon* (1669). This particular poem appears at the end of the story when the character Polyphile ("he who loves everything") and his three friends are walking in the park of Versailles to admire the treasures of Louis XIV. Polyphile recites a poetic ode to Volupté—the personified goddess of voluptuousness, referring to the extreme pleasure of all senses and experiences of all things (physical, intellectual, emotional, etc.). Polyphile's eclectic character is an allusion to this unusual novel format, which is an assortment of mixed media, all combined within the same work: theatre, prose and poetry. Aboulker's many contrasting and immediately juxtaposed musical sections help represent Polyphile's manifold and eclectic interests, often times with luscious legato lines or bouncy quirky gestures reminiscent of Francis Poulenc.

The concluding work on the programme is the amusing "Je t'aime". Originally concerted with orchestra, this animated "vocalise amoureuse" features a rejected lover who remains relentlessly enamoured with her object of affection, despite the obvious lack of reciprocation. The several gymnastic endeavours for the voice—deviously awkward intervals and pyrotechnic coloraturas alongside a fully dramatic, bi-polar, schizophrenic demonstration—account a hilarious and entertaining showpiece for voice.

### Hymne à la volupté

(Jean de La Fontaine, 1621-1695)

Ô douce Volupté, sans qui, dès notre enfance,  
Le vivre et le mourir nous deviendraient égaux;  
Par toi tout meut ici-bas.  
C'est pour toi, c'est pour tes appas,  
Que nous courons après la peine:  
Il n'est soldat, ni capitaine,  
Ni ministre d'État, ni prince, ni sujet,  
Qui ne t'ait pour unique objet.  
Ce qu'on appelle gloire en termes magnifiques,  
Ce qui servait de prix dans les jeux olympiques,  
N'est que toi proprement, divine Volupté,  
Et le plaisir des sens n'est-il de rien compté?  
Pour quoi sont faits les dons de Flore,  
Le Soleil couchant et l'Aurore,  
Pomone et ses mets délicats,  
Bacchus, l'âme des bons repas,  
Les forêts, les eaux, les prairies,  
Mères des douces rêveries?

Volupté, Volupté, qui fus jadis maîtresse  
Du plus bel esprit de la Grèce,  
Ne me dédaigne pas, viens-t'en loger chez moi;  
Tu n'y seras pas sans emploi:  
J'aime le jeu, l'amour, les livres, la musique,  
La ville et la campagne, enfin tout; il n'est rien  
Qui ne me soit souverain bien,

### Hymn to voluptuousness

O sweet Voluptuousness, without which, from our childhood,  
Life and death would become equal to us;  
Through you everything moves down here.  
It's for you, it's for your charms  
That we pursue pain.  
There is no soldier nor captain,  
nor Minister of State, nor prince, nor subject  
That has you as its unique object.  
What we call glory in magnificent terms,  
What served as prizes in the Olympic games,  
Is only you, divine Voluptuousness.  
And the pleasure of the senses, do they count for nothing?  
Why are the gifts of Flore made?  
The sunset and the dawn,  
Pomona and her delicacies  
Bacchus, the soul of good meals,  
Forests, waters, prairies,  
Mothers of sweet dreams?

Voluptuousness, who once was mistress  
Of the most beautiful mind of Greece,  
Do not disdain me, come to stay with me.  
You will not be without work:  
I love gambling, love, books, music,  
The city and the countryside, everything, there is nothing  
that is the one highest good

Jusqu'au sombre plaisir d'un cœur mélancolique.  
Viens donc; et de ce bien, ô douce Volupté,  
Veux-tu savoir au vrai la mesure certaine?  
Il m'en faut tout au moins un siècle bien compté  
Car trente ans, ce n'est pas la peine.

**Je t'aime**

Ah! Je t'aime!  
Mon amant délaisse Il ne veut plus de moi!  
Je me jette a ses genoux, je pleure, je défaïlle!  
je me jette a ses genoux, mais il reste de marbre.  
Mon amant ne veut plus de moi!  
Pour tant je l'aime, je l'aime, je l'aime! je l'aime tant!  
Ah! Je t'aime!

Right down to the dark pleasure of a melancholy heart.  
Come then, O Sweet Voluptuousness,  
Do you want to know the true extent of this gift of yours?  
I would need at least one good century  
For thirty years is not enough.

**I love you**

Ah! I love you!  
My lover abandons me. He does not desire me anymore!  
I throw myself at his knees I cry, I faint!  
I throw myself at his knees, but he remains cold as stone.  
My lover does not want me anymore!  
Nevertheless, I love him, how I love him so!  
Ah! I love you!

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