ACQUIRING THE ESSENCES OF THE "ARIEETES OUBLIÉES" BY CLAUDE DEBUSSY

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Arts

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nature of the Problem

In an era of constant change when each day may present a revolutionary new direction of scientific thought and theory, the demands made upon man to adjust and shift his thinking to new horizons are almost perpetual. Although the concert singer does not escape these changes in some aspects of his existence, he is in an artistic sense bound to one unchanging factor in the development of his effectiveness—his responsibility to a musical heritage. That is, he must transmit the knowledge, opinions, customs, practices of past and present generations. By and large, the recital program is recognized as one which contains the art songs, arias, and folk songs of various foreign origins. The art song, which is of immediate interest to this study, has been defined as one "in which the music is not bound by the stanza form of the poetry, but forms a running commentary on its contents with pictorial and emotional background provided by the accompaniment."\(^1\) The music and words are equally important; the poetry having inspired the composer

\(^1\)Harry Plunket Greene, *Interpretation in Song*, p. 199.
to write music which he feels will enhance it. These songs are distinct from the folk song in that they are not performed spontaneously or as the spirit may direct at any given moment, but they demand study, concentration, and serious preparation. Both the accompaniment and the melody are essential to its existence, and both should be understood in the light of the many aspects which contribute to their birth.

Because the concert artist, or one aspiring to this profession, is necessarily exposed to these art songs both foreign and English, and because he is presumably determined to present these works with maximum validity, he is compelled to recognize their backgrounds and intrinsic value. It is not important to note that Paul Verlaine wrote a particular poem at 10:00 on Monday, January 11, 1888, but what may be important is that this poem reflected an ideal which represented the thinking of many great minds around him, the voice of an era in poetic literature, as it were. The doors which are opened by such possibilities are many and each becomes another avenue to understanding the culture represented within this single creation. The poem becomes a vital thing. As music is added it may become a song of great potential and keen interest to the singer.

The French art song is but one part of the vocal artist's repertoire and upon this particular area this study is concentrated. It is the hope that through the
thorough investigation of these six songs, the student may become aware of the individual style and necessary demands involved in the presentation of the French art song.

**Importance of Study**

It is not supposed that an aspiring young vocal artist would attempt a performance of songs which he knew only notewise, and yet, sadly, this is found too often to be the case. However, if the singer's experience and exposure gives him no idea of a better way, or no worthier purpose, we must not be surprised at his efforts. To him they are but notes combined with impossible confusing foreign words which must be memorized in order. Guidance, example, and exposure to all possible aspects of interpretation are essential for his growth and development. It becomes necessary that he be stimulated and inspired enough to seek out these essences himself, at best, and at least, to be made aware of his responsibility to the music he performs. This cultural background is as much a part of his presentation as is his own vocal sound. For a young singer to remain dumb to the areas of the humanities which are in evidence (or at least brought to his attention by a wise instructor) in the study of his repertoire, his efforts are not artistic, but merely mechanical. His song becomes an objective experience of technique only and his effect upon the audience is limited to just that kind of reaction.
Intent of Study

In the following pages the writer will aim toward a definite concept of the French art song, as found in the songs of Claude Debussy, bringing to light its delicate, sensitive nature, and the demands it makes upon the vocal artist. Examples to be cited and discussed will be the six songs of a song-set composed by Claude Debussy, the "Ariettes Oubliées." There is some hesitation in calling the set a "song cycle" in the usual sense, in that the lyrics of the "song cycle" are generally related, as in the narrating of a continuous experience. Such is not the case with these songs. They are individual and associated with one another only in the sense that they were compiled by Debussy and published as a group. While it is true, that Paul Verlaine, the poet by whom the lyrics were written, wrote a set of poems which he grouped together under the same title "Ariettes Oubliées," Debussy has chosen only three of these eight poems to include in his musical settings, the remaining three having been selected from other sections of Verlaine's works.

It will be a second endeavor to present the reader with enough information and appropriate knowledge that he may form in his own mind a criteria by which he will judge subsequent performances of similar songs; establishing a standard by which he may feel secure in evaluating with a reasonable degree of accuracy.
If, in this study, are found helpful aids for obtaining insight toward valid interpretational aspects of the songs considered; if the approach of the student will be one of serious respect and responsibility; if he is encouraged to draw from this information and, together with his own past experiences, arrive at a more mature level of performance, this study will have accomplished its intent.

**Scope and Limitations**

This study is directed toward the student who is of college age. It is the belief of the writer that these works demand a considerable amount of mature thought and perception. The essence of the poetry, even in the most reliable translations, cannot be readily perceived by a limited experience of emotion and personal reflection.

It may be said, however, that this study in the hands of a skillful teacher can be of value to the younger student. Patience and understanding can achieve much toward developing his awareness and sensitivity. He may learn to see these vocal works in a much broader sense and profit from both the method of research and the theoretical understanding it promotes. As he grows in wisdom and maturity he will have established an invaluable habit of searching out all areas pertaining to the repertoire which he studies.
CHAPTER II
BACKGROUND--ITS IMPORTANCE TO THE
STUDY AND THE VOCAL ARTIST

The Study

A brief history of France leading up to and including the period in which these works were created will give us some degree of insight toward a better understanding of the people concerned.

The French Revolution, ending in 1795, caused a great agitation toward social and cultural revolution "that is almost without parallel in its influence on life, social creed, culture and art." \(^1\) For the first time people actually had some influence on the government. England, being the first to establish liberal democracy with the United States to follow, had inspired the French to strive for similar rights. At the close of the Revolution, peasants were given small plots of land as private holdings, many of which have been maintained to this day through inheritance.

Other Revolutions, 1830 (fall of Bourbons), 1848 (fall of Louis Philippe), were to follow, until in 1852 a

second Empire was established under Napoleon III, after a futile attempt of the people to organize the Second Republic.

Since 1866, when Prussia won the leadership of Germany, the leaders of the second French Empire had been eager to fight this growing power. But when war broke out, the disorganized French were faced by the greatest army organization then known, Prussia, with its North and South German confederations as allies. The French were defeated in one battle after another, and within two months after the German invasion of Alsace and Loraine, Emperor Napoleon and an army of nearly 100,000 men surrendered as prisoners of war. The Germans besieged Paris and in four months time starvation forced the city to surrender. France was humiliated, broken, and bitter. In 1871, the Communes, made up of the working class, then formed still another group, which revolted against the newly proclaimed Third Republic. This caused a fierce civil war in Paris, and after two months of indescribable violence the Commune was overthrown. As a result of such bitter struggle, hatred and suspicion flourished in the French people, not only for the Germans, but the working classes harboured bitter hatred for the new bourgeois republic, which condition was to remain for the next twenty years.²

The outbreak of World War I occurred just four years before Debussy's death. The entire world was in a turmoil

and France was again to know violent warfare in her perpetual struggle for "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity!"

In the field of literature, the early eighteenth-century produced the satire of Voltaire (1778), with his elaborate analysis of motives, weaknesses and failings of human character, and elaborate descriptions of natural beauty, both of which as we shall see, influenced the trends which were to follow in an immeasurable way.

The period between 1789 and 1830 has been called a sterile one from a literary standpoint. Many of the more serious writers called themselves "journalists" and wrote almost exclusively for the fast-growing number of periodicals which were in evidence. Political and parliamentary subject matter predominated. Chateaubriand (1848), however, should be mentioned, as a direct descendant of Rousseau's style but adding Christianity as an inspiring force in literature.

As in the other arts, so in literature, romanticism of the nineteenth-century brought a prominence of individualism. Literary criticism, previously unknown was perfected during this time, and a wealth of French prose and poetry

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3 The date which follows a name mentioned is the year in which that person died.

4 *Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. IX.

5 Ibid.
reached remarkable heights. Hugo (1885), Gautier (1872), and Flaubert (1880) are figures of importance to the romantic style. By 1866 the "naturalist" had abandoned the romantic element almost entirely. His subjects were the functions of life too often suppressed. Life was presented without prejudice, photographically. Zola (1902), Maupassant (1893), the deGoncourt brothers, and Huysmans (1907) were representative of this school of thought headed by Zola. The "natural" scenes and subjects were most often a predominence of vice, crime, grime, and even diabolism. Skepticism in thought and "unmoralism" in literature broke all ties with the past. In a portrait written by one of his contemporaries, Paul Valery (1945) refers to Huysmans in this way: "He was a creature of disgusts, welcoming the worst, and thirsting for the excessive, credulous to an incredible degree, easily accepting all the horrors that can be imagined in human life . . . everything that revolted his senses excited his genius."6

The search to know about man, to the depths of his soul evolved, and the psychological novel was a natural product of this period. Many of these authors were critics as well and the growth of art was stimulated by the intense interest in the field from both sides, the creator and the beholder.

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6 James Laver, The First Decadent, p. 54.
The next conspicuous group to be formed was that of "Symbolism," which will be discussed at length in Chapter III. This new thought contributed toward freeing the spirit from the narrow naturalist laws, the most important outcome being that works thereafter became more individual in style and were less inclined to be claimed by any particular school.

The bourgeois, or middle class, established the standard philosophy of the times, being steeped in pride, prejudice, and conventional social conforms. The supposition that suppression created hypocrisy was exposed by the artistic mind and the dilettante as well. In exposing it, the desire to shock both the bourgeois and the clergy sometimes led to astonishing ends. "Most of the right thinking people were convinced that an active diabolism was threatening church and state."7 Psychoanalysis became of interest, not only because of experiences with occultism and clairvoyance, but also because the reflective power of the mind was brought into the open through frequent philosophical sessions of those interested. (It should be remembered that Freud was not yet in the public eye.) Questions, uncertainty, curiosity, left these minds groping for satisfaction. Intense eagerness and zeal alternated with disgust and futility. Laver comments regarding this: "The notion that every

7Ibid., p. 154.
department of human life and thought should one day be studied by the methods of experimental sciences, and yield its ultimate secrets, was to this generation self-evident."\(^8\)

Paris continued to be a great center in which thrived all the latest creeds and ideas which stimulated the artistic world. Those in the arts were in the process of discovering unique potential yet unforeseen in each field.

Impressionism, Symbolism, poetic realism, were all simultaneously arousing the greatest enthusiasm, the liveliest curiosity and intellectual passions of great intensity. Painters, poets, sculptors were all engaged in de-composing the raw material of their arts, examining, and recomposing it to suit their fancy, all intent on endowing words, sounds, colours, and line with new shades of expression and new feelings. It was a happy time, when things of the mind were more important than the preoccupations of everyday existence, and as a result life was so much easier.\(^9\)

Such an atmosphere would appear made-to-order for 'la vie Boheme!"

The reshaping of life after the French Revolution had extreme importance for music, when we see that Paris became known as a musical metropolis and has remained so for more than a century. The Conservatoire was founded and it very soon became the "leading advanced school of music of the world."\(^10\)

\(^8\)Ibid., p. 264.

\(^9\)Rollo H. Myers, Debussy, p. 41. Quotation of Paul Dukas.

\(^10\)Leichtentritt, op. cit., p. 83.
The Romantic movement seemed an inevitable result of the increasing freedom of individual thinking and expression. This style of music demanded a human "soul" reaction by stimulating the sentiment of man and encouraging him to freely express himself. At the "fin de siècle" Wagnerian-ism had practically absorbed the music world. This influence is found in the works of most composers of that period. The Russians, however, stirred in protest to the Wagnerian fad in France proclaiming the glories of nationalistic music for all. In 1889 national orchestras, dancers, and singers from Africa, Orient, Arabia, and Russia presented their own exotic music. Almost every type of folk music in the musical world was heard in Paris that year and its various influences are seen in Debussy's compositions "Mazurka," "Ballade," and the Quartet. Debussy's determination to strive toward composition which was totally French in character became his relentless ambition in life.

What the French musicians learned from the rebirth of their national ideals was to strive, once more, for perfection by seeking simplicity. The "ars Gallica" movement\footnote{Frederick Dorian, \textit{The History of Music in Performance}, p. 296. The "Société" was founded in about 1862. The slogan of this group was "Ars Gallica." Romain Rolland asserts that "without the "Société" the greater part of the works that are the honor of our music should never have been played . . . for the best known French composers have taken part in its concerts, among them Franck, Bizet, D'Indy, and Debussy."}
of the nineteenth-century was directed principally against
the German influence, and the spirit of the "Société
Nationale de Musique" was greatly responsible for the
reawakening of ideals toward nationalistic music. In con-
trast to the Italian music, with its profusion of ornaments
and sudden changes from one method of execution to another,
the French chief attribute was simplicity—naturalness.
Music which demands the repetition of a word for a quarter
of an hour was thought an absurdity by Debussy. He
rebelled against the nineteenth-century "hypervirtuosity
and its Wagnerian pathos, the tone language of gods and
superhuman beings."12 The determined dedicated efforts of
Debussy have given to us, instead, a music of tenderness,
fine shades and emotional restraint.

The Vocal Artist
Realization of Demands Made upon the Vocal Artist

Vocal skill will be first considered. As a singer
prepares himself for a concert career he comes to know at
once the importance of discipline. It is essential that he
condition the body for the necessary strength and response.
In a rather recent visit with George London of the
Metropolitan Opera, he assured the writer that "regardless
of the extent of the vocal talent, anyone wishing to pursue

12 Ibid., p. 299.
a professional career in singing must have sound training. His gift is not enough!" Again, in the words of another great voice of our time, Giulietta Simionato:

This art, this music, is not something to be taken lightly. It is more difficult than anyone can imagine, requiring strength, power, unremitting devotion, dedication, and endless thinking. The voice alone is not enough. Every young singer must find a way to make his head the master of his throat. He has to analyze himself and form a psychology which has meaning for him and him alone.13

When this training becomes so much a part of a singer that it is an unconscious activity, he is then able to express and affect the voice with complete freedom. It is in this connection that young singers often develop undesirable vocal habits so difficult to rectify. They have perhaps heard these "colorful" effects in great voices of our time, and have attempted to color their sounds without sufficient vocal freedom. The result is an artificial means to an end which demands a natural freedom. So we are compelled to recognize that a foundation of discipline and control is primary. Only then is one free to wander the many paths of expression which the singing voice may travel.

In the songs we will study, the dynamics are more than just the general intensities of "piano" and "forte" because their impulse may require a unique emotional color, one from the other. One phrase may demand the effect of a

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restrained pianissimo or a forte, or perhaps one may best express a particular feeling with an excited trembling pianissimo. The middle voice especially lends itself to these nuances in coloring which are controlled by breath management and mouth and throat cavity adjustments. Another part of Miss Simionato's artistic creed is that she makes the throat follow the commands of the brain, and thus renders the voice light or heavy as the composer demands. Through years of training and a natural elasticity of the throat, a wide range of color and dynamics has, in her case, resulted.

Again, it must be stressed that until the free production is an unconscious part of the singer's training, these effects should be used sparingly if, indeed, at all.

In these particular songs to be studied the melodies are short phrased and flowing, and they demand a legato vocal line. Because of the gentle dynamics, they require ample flexibility and physical coordination to meet desired effects, which will create the needed excitement or depression of the senses.

Maturity, Musical Instinct, and Imagination

It would not do to measure maturity by the number of years one has been in this life, for apparent reasons. While a matured person is one "fully developed in character
and powers,"¹³ we can hope for a reasonable degree of maturity, both character-wise and music-wise, in the young singer who attempts to interpret these songs. While musical instinct is looked upon more as an innate quality which often accompanies a specific talent, musical taste can be cultivated and encouraged by exposure to superior performances. This ability guides the singer to the most expressive vocal line which his own vocal instrument can execute. Whether cultivated or by instinct, the presence of this attribute will elevate the singer's effectiveness immeasurably.

Imagination is a vital element in the creation of artistic beauty. Indeed, it is the very core of art. The great novelist André Malraux has said it in this way:

The greatest mystery is not that we should be tossed by chance amongst a profusion of matter and the welter of stars: it is, rather, that within this prison we are able to draw from ourselves images powerful enough to deny our nothingness.¹⁴

From "The Walnut Tree of Altenburg"

We have heard the expression that sometimes artists perform "better than they know." What marvelous mysterious forces are at work within a creative soul? Each will call them as

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¹³ Funk and Wagnalls College Standard Dictionary.

he will, but surely he cannot eliminate vision and imagina-
tion from his explanation. In singing, one must be able to
channel this imaginative power throughout the length of a
song. This requires intense concentration so as to keep
this vivid imagination alive. In the case of the young
eager singer we sometimes find that when he calls upon this
power of imagination it comes in such excess and passion
that he is a victim of its compulsion and this, in turn,
may cripple the instrument and body by its real presence.

Not every singer has this power of imagination.
Each must strive to develop this capacity, perhaps by giving
a part of his study time to the practice of expressing that
which he imagines. This will alert his power to bring
images vividly and quickly into being as his songs demand.

Knowledge of Language

In the course of preparation of the young singer for
a concert career he will be, in an ideal situation, exposed
to courses in Italian, German, French and English, that he
may have enough of an understanding of each language to
translate the songs he will sing and execute correct pro-
nunciation. This understanding as being essential to
effective interpretation would seem obvious, and yet pro-
nunciation alone is too often considered enough, and
translations found in English under the original language
are thought to be reliable. How keenly a singer feels this
desire to understand will vary, but once he is exposed to
the unique expressiveness of each language it is hoped that
he will realize it has been truly said "a poem cannot be
explained in any words than those it uses."

In the French language there are 34 different vowel
sounds. (In English there are 17 vowel sounds plus 4 dip-
thongs.) To accurately manage the many sounds in French
the ear must be alert and the mouth and tongue flexible
enough for clear enunciation and pronunciation. These
subtle vowel sounds require a light tongue, ready to adjust,
exactly, and instantly in a given phrase. (One need but
sing three phrases of "Chevaux de bois" to experience this
need!)

The nasal sounds of the French language and the velar
"r" pronunciation are strange to the ear of most Americans.
Diligent work with a competent coach or French instructor is
advisable so that an accurate "ear" and pronunciation will
follow. One authority warns us: "Verlaine of all poets is
too elusive to translate, and above all to translate liter-
ally into English prose." There appears to be no substi-
tute for understanding the original language.

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16 Harold Nicolson, Paul Verlaine, p. 5.
CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Review of Impressionism in Music: Claude Debussy

Impressionism appears in musical history as a revolutionary action to the romantic style, its broad melodic line, sweeping with passionate, violent dynamics. Impressionistic devices were found occasionally in the works of the past masters before Debussy so they were not totally strange in the ear, but the treatment of these devices was strange. The works of Griffes, Delius, Scriabin, and Debussy represent this period in music development.

Techniques of the impressionist included similar motions of open fifths and octaves, free rhythms and less predominance of bar-line regularity, similar motions of common chords, dischords of ninths, elevenths, and thirteenth, the use of the whole tone scale, and the dissolving of the major-minor scales into masses of restless unresolved chords. The desired result was to create continual subjective impression of a scene or material object. Just as in impressionistic painting, it was not intended to be definite, bold or dramatic, but rather, reticent, detail-free and above all to transfer the "material" into an
experience of the senses. "Impressionism," as Hull suggests, "is in itself a triumph over matter."\(^1\)

Liszt and Wagner had loosened the boundaries of key, with excessive modulations and chromaticism. The Romantic had exploited to its fullest the singing melody against a fluid accompaniment, sonorities in bright colors, passionate dynamics. Now the impressionist injected mystery, pastels and subtle dynamics which were more objective than the Romantic yet subtly intimate, with persistent vagueness. (Rather like the mysterious woman, who seems constant yet remains totally elusive to man. The parallelism is apropos when we know that Debussy considered music as being woman, personified!)

Romanticism as Debussy saw it, was "incessant restatement." Repetition was very distasteful to him, as noted by his criticism in 1903 of Wagner and his "leit motif."\(^2\)

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\(^1\) A. Eaglefield Hull, Modern Harmony, p. 193.

\(^2\) Leon Vallas, The Theories of Claude Debussy, p. 117. Debussy gives free rein to his ill humor in a revue published in "Gil Blas" after attending the "Ring of the Nibelings."

It is hard to imagine the state to which the strongest brain is reduced by listening for four nights to the "Ring." It is worse than obsession. It is possession. You no longer belong to yourself. You are but a leit-motiv moving in an atmosphere of tetralogy. . . . How unbearable these people in skins and helmets become by the fourth night! . . . Remember they never appear without the accompaniment of their accursed leit-motiv. Some of them even sing it! Which suggests a harmless lunatic who, on presenting his visiting card, would declaim his name in song. . . .
There are occasional "motifs" in some of Debussy's music though they are used sparingly and with discretion.

Debussy followed the fundamental series of harmonics for the formation of chords, that is, every note is related to the lowest one and follows the natural series of harmonics found in a musical tone of a vibrating string or air column. Rather than resolution of chords he preferred scale motion for harmonic progression, often times with a common tone as a link. "Because of the variable character of the tonal chords their use was invaluable: suggesting innumerable modulations. By approaching these tonal chords in one light, and quitting them in another, we see their possible derivation from altered or added notes imposed on the older chords."\(^3\)

Probably the most conspicuous device used by the impressionist was the consecutive use of ninth chords. If this were used solely as a harmonic device, it would be monotonous and tiresome. But when this principle is applied in a variety of ways the result can be very moving.

Used as a stream of harmonic colour against one or more free parts, or against another harmonically coloured stream, or even present only in some subtle spiritual way, the apparent "cul de sac" opens out into vistas of wonderous beauty. It is this which makes Debussy's songs so much more interesting than many of his pianoforte pieces. . . \(^4\)

\(^3\)Hull, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 130.
It is sometimes thought with regards to the impressionist that no real musical thought is behind his haunting harmonic webs and laces, that the birth of the music is that of sensuousness alone. Who can know a composers true motives or harmonic intentions? Is it not possible that through his sound musical education he draws his harmonic structure, orthodox or not, which may serve as his vehicle to create truth through his music? Debussy found musical analysis very distasteful, objecting strongly to "treating as a corpse scores that are full of life . . . through minute dissection--as though they were watches of curious construction . . . thus attempting to kill the mystery in cold blood."⁵ He further states:

Let us maintain 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. Let us at all cost preserve this magic peculiar to music for of all the arts it is the most susceptible to magic. In the name of all the gods, let us not attempt to destroy or explain it.⁶

With apologies to M. Debussy a partial musical analysis of his songs will appear on the following pages, with this understanding: "In the development of mankind the emotions have always preceded his mind. Truths, which the mind is powerless to express, are 'sensed' indubitably by the aesthetic faculties."⁷ Let the emotions then be the "why"

⁵Vallas, op. cit., p. 1.
⁶Ibid., p. 5.
⁷Hull, op. cit., p. 198.
Characteristic

Musical Devices Used by Debussy in This Work

1. Pedal Point -------------- Measure 11,12,13,14 - p. 5
2. Parallel 5th's ---------- Measure 59,60 - p. 12
3. Parallel Octaves ------- Measure 1,2 - p. 26
4. Parallel 3rd's ---------- Measure 39,40,41,42 - p. 20
5. Parallel 7th's -------- Measure 30,31,32 - p. 32
6. Alternating 4th's and 5th's - Measure 21 - p. 6
7. Ninth chords ---------- Measure 1,2,3 - p. 5
8. Two-measure phrases ----- Measure 35,36,37,38 - p. 19
9. Abrupt modulation ------ Measure 16,17 - p. 17
10. Consecutive 2nd's ------ Measure 59,60 - p. 22
11. Consecutive 4th's ------ Measure 11 - p. 31
12. Descending chromatics in bass ----------- Measure 7,8 - p. 8
13. Resolution to tonic ---- Measure 28,29,30 - p. 15
   also Measure 55,56,57 - p. 29
14. Counter-melody -------- Measure 9,10 - p. 30
Debussy's Published Songs

1876  Nuit d'étoiles (Theodore de Banville)

1878  Beau Soir (Paul Bourget)
      Fleur des blés (André Girod)

1880-84  Pierrot (Theodore de Banville)
         Apparition (Stephane Mallarmé)
         Pantomime (Paul Verlaine)
         Clair de lune (Paul Verlaine)
         Mandoline (Paul Verlaine)

         Trois chansons
         La Belle au bois dormant
         Paysage sentimental
         Voici que le printemps (Paul Bourget)

1887  Deux Romances
      Les Cloches (Paul Bourget)
      Romance (Paul Bourget)

1888  Ariettes, better known as they were later re-issued in 1903,
      Ariettes Oubliées (Paul Verlaine)
      C'est l'extase langoureuse
      Il pleure dans mon cœur
      L'Ombre des arbres
      Chevaux de bois
      Green
      Spleen

1890  Cinq Poèmes de Baudelaire
      Le Balcon
      Harmonie du soir
      Le Jet d'eau
      Recueillement
      La Mort des amants

      Les Angélus (G. Le Roy)

1891  Trois Mélodies (Paul Verlaine)
      La mer est plus belle
      Le son du cor s'afflige
      L'Échelonnement des haies

      Dans le jardin (Paul Gravollet)
1892 Fêtes Galantes (first series-Paul Verlaine)
En sourdine
Fantoches
Clair de lune

1894 Proses Lyriques (Claude Debussy)
De rêve
De grève
De fleur
De soir

1898 Trois Chansons de Bilitis (Pierre Louÿs)
La Flûte de Pan
La Chevelure
Le Tombeau des Naïades

1904 Fêtes Galantes (second series - Paul Verlaine)
Les Ingénus
Le Faune
Colloque sentimental

Trois Chansons de France
Rondel: Le temps a laissé son manteau (Charles d'Orléans)

La Grotte (Tristan L'Hermit)
Rondel: Pour ce que plaisance est morte (Charles d'Orléans)

1910 Le Promenoir des deux amants (Tristan L'Hermit)
Après de cette grotte sombre (same as La Grotte above)
Crois mon conseil, chère Chimène
Je tremble en voyant ton visage

Trois Ballades de François Villon
Ballade de Villon à s'amye
Ballade que fait Villon à la requeste de sa mere
pour prier Nostre-Dame
Ballade des femmes de Paris

1913 Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé
Soupir
Placet futile
Eventail

1915 Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maisons (Claude Debussy)
and the mind perceive as best it can the "how."

The piano was an instrument found most appropriate to the impressionistic style. Debussy realized its potential and transformed it into a marvellous media for his mysterious fantasies. As Stringham states: "He virtually inaugurated a new type of piano technique (both manual and pedal) and gave a new lease on life to an instrument whose golden age had seemed to be over with the first half of the century."\textsuperscript{8}

Musical impressionism came to such a realization in the art of Debussy that the man and the movement are considered to be inseparable. He was the first of the modern impressionists and he remains the greatest. While there is no grand musical architecture about Debussy's music upon which other composers may build, these techniques opened the way to subsequent music of the modern age.

\textbf{Debussy's Life – 1862-1918}

Claude Debussy's parents were lower middle class with no special interest or background in music. It was his aunts who saw to it that he had piano study very early and at the age of nine his destiny as a musician became evident through the efforts of Mme. Mauté, an outstanding pianist. (She was also the mother-in-law of Paul Verlaine.) She

\textsuperscript{8}Edwin J. Stringham, \textit{Listening to Music Creatively}, p. 430.
encouraged Debussy's parents to send Claude to the Paris Conservatoire and she prepared him for the examination at the age of 11. He was accepted.

His individual style was evident from the start and he did not take instruction well. His harmony sequences were shocking to all who heard them. When asked what rules he did observe, he replied, "None--only my own pleasure." He learned to conform, however, long enough to secure a sound theoretical knowledge, and in 1884 he received the Priz de Rome for his cantata "L'Enfant Prodigue."

Contacts with aristocrats such as Mme. Vasiyers and Mme. von Mecke advanced his cultural education as well as his career, with ample time for composition while in their employ.

Throughout his life, Debussy was seldom really satisfied with his own work, though he pondered each notation very carefully as he composed, taking as long as several weeks if need be to decide upon just the right chording or color effect. He was extremely touchy in personal matters, and outspoken to anyone, as the mood commanded. He smoked continuously and read a great deal. He was considered a pantheist and a hedonist.

9 Rollo H. Myers, Debussy, p. 12.

10 Edward Lockspeiser, Debussy, p. 108.
Debussy found that, with the notoriety of winning the Priz de Rome, his music and life were to fall under pressure from which he was never again to be totally free. This took the form of a depression which is apparent in much of his conversation and letters to friends. In a letter to Ernest Chausson, whom he greatly admired, he remarked: "Ah! If only the times we were living in were less depressing, if only young people could be expected to take an interest in anything but the latest form of bicycle!"\(^{11}\)

Debussy met many of the "literati," including Paul Verlaine, at the famous Tuesday gatherings which were held in the flat of Stephane Mallarmé. These great creative minds contributed to his growth and helped to complete his rather narrow education. Nothing could have complimented his own musical instincts more than these Symbolist poets. He absorbed their spirit and shared their zeal. In fact, he wrote some poetry himself which he put into song: "Prose Lyriques."

Unlike other composers of his day, Debussy tried to protect himself from the Wagnerian influence which was then so popular. He neither composed for the masses nor was he influenced by their tastes. His inner conviction that tone

\(^{11}\) Myers, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 54.
color could best be expressed through his own individual style kept him in a world apart from most of his contemporaries.

One of his friends and former fellow-students at the Conservatoire, Raymond Bonheur, has recorded, "... he would more readily have agreed to make counterfeit money than to write three bars of music without feeling an irresistible craving to do so... . . . He was extremely sensitive to the opinion of a few... . . . but supremely indifferent to the favors of the crowd. ... ."12

Debussy expounded his theories while serving as a music critic for the various publications in and around Paris. He contributed to as many as fifteen different ones in his lifetime. Sometimes his criticisms were serious, sometimes in a bitter or mocking tone. All are interesting reading. Regarding music as a woman, he wrote passionately about it and was intolerant of those music critics who did not share his ideal.

Notice the tone in which critics write. How evident it is that they have no love for music! They seem to cherish some obscure grudge, some old, persistent hatred. And this attitude is not peculiar to our times: in all ages there have been people who regarded beauty as a veiled insult to themselves. They instinctively seek to avenge themselves by degrading the ideal that humiliates them.13

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12 Ibid., p. 45.
13 Vallas, op. cit., p. 5.
These statements almost need an accompanying reminder that Debussy was a musician, and not a psychoanalyst!

In his music Debussy treated no great spiritual issues, nor did he try to reach the depths of man's soul, or his highest moods of excitement. His desire was to create patterns of loveliness and gentle beauties during an era which had been excited by the grandiose treatment of music.

During his lifetime Debussy's music was received as music is received in any era when tradition has been ignored. It ever seems to be the question of time.\textsuperscript{14} The "Ariettes" were not eagerly received when they were first heard, but when they were published fifteen years later under the title of "Ariettes Oubliées" they became immediately popular. Debussy was highly and widely acclaimed as a composer of great genius at the time of his death, when he was 56 years of age. He was ever aware, however, of the

\textsuperscript{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 167. Quotation of Debussy.}

If ever a man of genius tries to shake off the heavy yoke of tradition, he is overwhelmed with ridicule. So the unfortunate man of genius decides to die young, and this is the only manifestation of his genius which is warmly encouraged. . . . I made music in order to serve music to the best of my ability and with no other thought. It was logical, therefore, that this music would run the risk of displeasing those who love only the one kind of music and who remain jealously faithful to her in spite of her wrinkles and rouge.
controversy directed toward him, yet never compromised his ideal for its sake.

On that distant day—I trust it is still very far off—when I shall no longer be a subject for dispute, I shall indeed have cause for bitter self-reproach. For in those last works, that odious hypocrisy which will enable me to please all mankind will have prevailed. 15

Review of Symbolism in Poetry: Paul Verlaine

The name of Paul Verlaine has been linked with the term "symbolism" almost as though he were its founder. To the contrary, he merely encouraged an idea which was already in evidence during the era in which he commenced his creative years as a poet.

It is in the works of Charles Beaudelaire (1867) that distinct changes in poetic style of interest to this study are first apparent, and much of this change was due to his great admiration and respect for America's Edgar Allen Poe. By some, Beaudelaire is classified as Parnassian (regard for formal excellence), by others as a Symbolist (poetry as music), but by all he has been claimed chief master of "modern" French poetry, wherein lies Symbolism. 16 The foundation of the Symbolist movement is found in his "Evening Harmony." It follows, in part:

The violin quivers, like a heart that suffers, hating the Nothing's vast and black extent!


16 Geoffrey Brereton, An Introduction to the French Poets, p. 150.
The sky, like an altar, is sad and magnificent; drowning in curdled blood, the sun sinks lower.

This is the time when each vibrating flower, like a censer, is breathing forth its scent; perfumes and sounds in the evening air are blent; melancholy waltz and dizzy languor!

Symbolism proved to be the connecting of the material to the senses, through suggestion of color, scent, imagery. One particular element of Beaudelaire's work which was to influence his "left-handed" sons, LaForgue, Rimbaud, Corbiere, and Verlaine, was his sinister and ironic quality, as found in the following: 17

**LaForgue:** Sundays (in part)

The sky keeps raining, with no cause whatever, shepherdess, it rains and rains on the river ... A group from a boarding school (poor creatures!) goes already with the muff's and winter clothes.

One who has neither muff nor furs today looks pretty pathetic in her somber gray.

Then suddenly--see there!--she darts from the ranks and runs--My God! is she crazy?--to the bank.

She's going to throw herself in the water, and there isn't a boatman or New foundland dog anywhere.

**Corbiere:** The Contumacious Poet (in part)

I have taken my hurdy-gurdy and my lyre, to try to call you back. My heart--that dumb moon-calf--deludes himself . . . Come week, if my verse makes you laugh; come laugh, if it makes you cry . . .

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Come, let's play Poor Man . . . it's a humorous part. Back to Nature.--"Love in a straw-thatched hut."-- . . . It rains on my hearth, it rains on my dead heart. Come, my candle's dead and my fire is out.

Rimbaud: The Lice-Hunters (in part)

They seat the child by the open window there where blue atmosphere is bathing a flowery tangle, and as the dew settles on his mop of hair, dreadful and charming, the shrewd fingers ramble.

He hears the blinking of their black eyelashes in the perfumed stillness and, as in a vise, royal nails electrically mashing to crackling death the gray and lazy lice.

The movement took place at the right psychological moment when the brash and shocking were exhibited almost with avengence. Some of this poetry is earthy, much of it is illusive. Probably the two qualities which best define it are intimacy and suggestion, elements found in most all good lyric poetry, but the Symbolist developed these qualities in a completely informal manner, which in turn, opened the door to modern "free" verse.

These poets had wearied of the naturalist and become bored with the Parnassians. Their desire was to use words in the same way a musician used musical sounds--by rearrangement or combination, rhythmic and musical effects were possible. Vowels and consonants were used to this end. Rimbaud "discovered" the color of the vowels: A noir, E blanc, I rouge, U vert, etc. Mallarmé was a central figure in this movement, holding frequent meetings at his flat where ideas could be exchanged freely. The name "decadent"
is often given these Symbolists. This term is not new to the artistic world, but it fits in well with the mood of the defeated France. It has been defined in many different ways, both complementary and uncomplementary. Verlaine's reply to defining the term was: "It was thrown at us as an insult, this epithet; I took it as a war-cry, but it did not mean anything in particular that I know of. . . . Decadent, at bottom, meant nothing whatsoever. It was but a flag, with nothing around it . . . ."

18 A. Baju, the founder of the review "Le Decadent," explained it this way: "Decadents designated a group of young authors, disgusted with naturalism and in search of a renewal of art. . . . To be a decadent means to be a sceptic, and to accept all the progress of civilization." 19

In view of Verlaine's reaction to the term Symbolism --he referred to the group as "cymbalists"--it might seem prudent to classify these poets as we do the musicians of this style--Impressionistic. Surely no listing of adjectives describing Impressionistic music could more nearly describe Symbolistic poetry. For the most part, Verlaine's poetry is illusive, unreal imagery. The mention of minor objects or scenes which for him carry emotional significance, rouses


19 Ibid., p. 19.
similar sensation within the listener as he too recognizes personal associations to the scene, whereupon an emotional impression is experienced. Verlaine is not profound or searching, but seems content to recall incidental sensations experienced by mankind, "the touch of nature that makes the whole world kin."\(^{20}\) He achieves the feeling of intimacy by the use of a manner almost conversational.

C'est la nôtre, n'est-ce pas?
The element of suggestion was sometimes created by indicating an experience of continued sensation at the close of the poem, thus carrying the sense of the infinity, the unattainable.

Combien, ô voyageur, ce paysage blême
Te mira blême toi-même
Et que tristes pleuraient dans les hautes feuillées,
Tes espérances noyées.

This illustrates also Verlaine's use of exterior descriptions, turning them into a corresponding emotional impression.

Often he would suggest suffering by a reversed understatement of his anguish.

Je me souviens
Des jours anciens
Et je pleure,

Other Characteristics of Verlaine's Poetry are:

1. The placing of adverbs at the end of the line.
2. The use of foreign words.
3. The use of labial consonants and broad vowels.
4. The destroying of the power of rhyme-endings by inserting false rhymes or similar sounds elsewhere in the line.
5. The disregard of the rule requiring alternation masculine and feminine endings.

Nicolson states that Verlaine "was to succeed more than any other man in enfranchising French speech, and in rendering French prosody the servant of the poet rather than his master. . . . He insisted in treating the French language as a cheery contemporary and not as an aged unassailable tradition." Because Verlaine violated the traditional technique of French prosody in his attempt to make music of the language, he was resented by many of his own countrymen. For them Verlaine wrote but two lines of metrical perfection, those being:

Il pleure dans mons coeur,
Comme il pleut sur la ville.

It seems wise to comment briefly on several points of French versification. The French language has been described by Andre Gide as a piano without pedals. This is

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in evidence by the lack of accent and stress. French verse must rely solely upon balance and rhythm. This poetry is not measured therefore in the manner in which we measure English poetry. The stress is negligible, as it shifts and, at times, disappears completely. The qualities of importance are (1) **rhythmic form**, which is determined by the number of syllables from pause to pause (it should be remembered that the "e muet" is always pronounced in poetic diction) and (2) **balance**. Whatever else there may be (rhyme or stress) merely emphasizes or modifies these aspects.

**Verlaine's Life - (1844-1896)**

Like Debussy, Paul Verlaine was born of bourgeois parents. But unlike Debussy, who has been called the "instinctive aristocrat,"²² Paul Verlaine might be regarded as the "instinctive Bohemian." He was reared prudently by a worshipping mother who loved her son to the point of blind infatuation and a stern though loving father. The strength of the father's rigid discipline was too soon found ineffective because of the pitiful weakness of his mother to tolerate and protect his every move as a youth. His first glaring vice was heavy drinking and by the time he had reached twenty years of age he was a chronic alcoholic. His school record had been above average and upon finishing, he took  

²²Myers, *op. cit.*, p. 33.
a position as a clerk with the Civil Service. Verlaine was a reveller in every kind of pleasure, with wild enthusiasm for whatever could satisfy his palate, his emotion, or his mind. He rushed into everything, alcohol, love, friendship, without restraint. His needs seemed to be violent and irresistible, for surely he could have resisted them in light of the moral strength of his paternal rearing. Verlaine, himself, has stated, "The beauty of bodies, and eyes, scents, feasts, intoxications, caresses and indolences; only these barred the way to heaven."23

This man proclaimed himself to be an atheist, not through mere indifference but through rational and intellectual force of conviction. It is not surprising that his philosophy included the fatalistic notions that being born under the sign of Saturn left him no choice but that he was destined to a life "dogged by misfortune and melancholy . . . planned line by line by a maligne influence."24 In his later years he confessed: "I have ruined my life and I know very well that all the blame is going to be put on me. To that I can only answer that I truly was born under Saturn."25

23Marcel Coulon, Poet Under Saturn, p. 53.
24Ibid., p. 56.
25Ibid., p. 65.
This was a man of extremes, distemperance and excesses the amounts of which are seldom encountered. Roberts relates that Verlaine's statements were "rarely trustworthy" due to his frequent and violent changes of mood. As vehemently as he denied God, he later accepted Catholicism. He would shift instantly from the shameless monster to the conscious-stricken penitent. His wife suffered his violence as did his friends only to immediately find him filled with contrition and begging for forgiveness.

At the age of twenty-six Verlaine established a very close friendship with Arthur Rimbaud, a poet nine years his junior, whose influence upon him was very potent. It is not agreed upon among the various biographers as to which was the greater destructive force to the other.

Rimbaud came as a breath of fresh air to Verlaine, who had long been half consciously, half unconsciously oppressed by the respectability thrust upon him as Mathilde's (Mauté) husband. . . . Rimbaud's mind, young yet already mature and seemingly free from every sort of bourgeois prejudice, showed Verlaine a new world of intellectual freedom: for the first time the older man met somebody who truly practised the intellectual detachment of which he and his friends had for so long talked. By comparison with him, even the most bohemian of Verlaine's companions was a "poseur". . . . Rimbaud's mind was genuinely independent, hard as steel and diamond-sharp, wholly unmoved by the outer world which he despised.26

Rimbaud wrote to his friend Paul Demeny, just a few months before his meeting with Verlaine: "He (the poet) must

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26Bechhofer Roberts, Paul Verlaine, p. 80.
explore every form of love, of suffering, of madness . . .
appalling torture . . . through which he becomes a great
invalid, a great criminal, a great outcast—and supremely
wise. For he attains the unknown . . ."27

Whether by choice or destiny, Paul Verlaine's exist-
ence would seem to follow Rimbaud's theory to the letter.

Verlaine held positions as an instructor in private
schools in London and France, after his release from prison
in 1875, at the age of thirty-one. He gave lectures in
Belgium, Holland, England, and contributed to many respect-
able reviews. He experimented with farming for a time, but
was drawn again to his beloved Paris where, he remained
until his death in 1896.

Even as a child, Verlaine was "remarkably ugly." For
a poet so eager for beauty and pleasure this must have indeed
been a curse. His adult appearance was more like that of a
tramp than a Bohemian, for cleanliness was not his way!

As a result of dipsomania, he spent the last nine
years of his life as a poor vagabond, wandering from various
hospitals to various boarding houses in Paris. One uncon-
querable element in his make-up which shows itself repeatedly
throughout his biographies, is his unreasonable cheerfulness.
Coulon has stated: "The more catastrophies he accumulated

27Ibid., p. 81.
the further he was from being sad." An example of this amazing trait was seen when he was staying at a particular hospital during the latter years of his life. He found the life comfortable and cheap so he determined to make the doctors believe that he was insane, and he would have calling cards printed to read:

Paul Verlaine
LUNATIC
St. Anne Asylum, Paris

The greatest value of a biography of this unusual man is found in the motives, inspirations, and sensations in his life which may have induced the need to express himself in a particular manner. It is well to add this wisdom of Roberts:

I have no intention of trying to show a connection between the merits of Verlaine's work and the state of his soul. This essentially puritan past-time has always seemed foolish to me. Verlaine's case reduces to absurdity the pious notion that an artist's work will reflect his domestic character.

The poems of Paul Verlaine fill seven volumes, efforts which reveal "arts eternal victory over the human situation."

Relation of Above Factors to the "Ariettes Oubliées"

The Poems

The title "Ariettes Oubliées" was originally that of a group of eight poems written by Verlaine. They are a part

28Coulon, op. cit., p. 75.
29Roberts, op. cit., p. 221.
30Ibid., p. 35.
of the larger work entitled "Romances sans Paroles" which
was written during 1872 and 1873 after Verlaine had torn
away from family ties, thrown over all responsibility and
was travelling with Rimbaud in Belgium, the Ariennes, and
London. This work is dedicated to Rimbaud. These ten
months were devoted entirely to the writing of the five
hundred and forty lines contained in "Romances sans Paroles."
This work has been considered to be Verlaine's most intense,
for in these poems "are found blended together his two
styles: the objective with its representation of forms and
exterior recollections, and the subjective, with its expres-
sion of personal sensations and descriptions of real
sorrows."31

It was Lepelletier who managed the difficult task of
having the poems published while Verlaine was serving a
prison sentence, and the scandal of his behavior was no
boon to their circulation, society being as it was.

The six poems which Debussy included in his song
group have been selected from the following sections of
this work:

Ariettes Oubliées (9 poems in all)     1. C'est l'extase
                                      3. Il pleure dans mon coeur
                                      9. L'ombre des arbres

                                      June 1872

31 Edmond Lepelletier, Paul Verlaine, p. 306.
Paysages belges  - 3. Chevaux de bois
(6 poems in all)  
August 1872

Aquarelles  - 1. Green
(6 poems in all)  
2. Spleen
April 1873

Several changes appear in the poems which Debussy set to music. These changes are as follows:

1. Il pleure dans mon coeur

The eighth line of the original reads:

O le chant de la pluit!

(In light of Verlaine's characteristic devices mentioned earlier [No. 4] the altered verse appears to have been written with considerable authority.)

2. Chevaux de bois

Lines 5 through 8 of the original read:

Le gros soldat, la plus grosse bonne
Sont sur vos dos comme dans leur chambre;
Car, en ce jour, au bois de la Cambre,
Les maîtres sont tous deux en personne.

Line 13 of the original reads:

C'est ravissant comme ça vous soulè,

Line 15 of the original reads:

Bien dans le ventre et mal dans la tête,

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Lines 22 through 24 of the original read:

Déjà, voici que la nuit qui tombe
Va réunir pigeon et colombe,
Loin de la foire et loin de madame.

Line 27 of the original reads:

Voici partir l'amante et l'amant.

3. Green

Line 9 of the original reads:

Entre vos jeunes seins laissez rouler ma tête

**The Music**

These musical settings were originally published separately as "Ariettes" in 1888 and not until 1903, after the success of "Pelleas and Mellisande," did they appear published as we now know them, "Ariettes Oubliées." They were dedicated to Mary Garden, the "unforgettable Melisande," and published by Debussy's widow.

Debussy was often quoted as saying "music was intended to begin where speech fails," and in the choosing of poems for his musical settings Verlaine's were found to lend themselves to his own established ideals. Both men shared a hatred for rhetoric and drama. Like Verlaine, Debussy was a poet of the shaded colors and contours of nature, not as the eye sees them, but as they are transmitted to the feelings. This tie of Symbolism and Impressionism has been expounded in the Thesis of Mary Frances
Fox entitled "The Analogy between Debussy and the Symbolist Poets," which may be of interest to the reader. Debussy was of one mind with these Symbolists and their unique ideals. As he was to familiarize himself with the works of these men, he sought to bring to the poems, through his music, sensual activity which the words alone could not effect. He chose only those poems which he felt so strongly himself that they would not restrain his individual impulse of expression, but would inspire him further. He subordinated the vocal line to the poetic declamation of the verse. Any intention toward vocal display is inappropriate. This demand for sensitivity to the poetic essence must be realized by the singer, since this is the purport of the musical setting.

The Songs

It is a temptation for the young singer to be partial to either the words or the music of these songs. But it should be remembered that neither is to be treated in excess or at the expense of the other. It is the constant subtle dove-tailing of the vocal line into the accompaniment and its secondary melodies. Each takes the middle road, for both poem and music are complete agents of expression,

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33Lockspeiser, op. cit., p. 38. One interesting figure in the bond between music and the Symbolist is René Ghil, who attempted an elaborate system of verbal orchestration, i.e., flutes--ou, piccolos--oo, trombone--o, etc.
therefore should not be emphasized or stressed. Excessive sentiment has no place in the interpretation of these songs. Any extreme will destroy the illusion. Heavy stresses at once scream reality, and the unreal melancholy world of subtle sense is lost. The best effect is achieved in not seeking affect. The singer becomes the narrator—the recreator of an already sufficient thing of delicate beauty and shadowy suggestion.

These songs are not songs of action or motion like a short play, which presses on to the next scene of events, leading the expectation of the audience to one activity following the other. They are, rather, static or photographic. Like in a dream, where many details, many sensations, shifting emotions sweep through ones brain to bring one impression, finally subtly stirring and restless or else halting and inert: such are these songs. They are the creation of passive fantasy expressed in exquisite taste, words to music.

Debussy stated that his music was not intended "to reproduce nature exactly . . . but to receive the mysterious accord that exists between nature and the imagination."34 These words could belong to Paul Verlaine as well, their ideal being so similar. The singers' responsibility is that of making this ideal come to life through these songs.

34 Edwin John Stringham, Listening to Music Creatively, p. 429.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSES OF SONGS

No. 1 - Claude Debussy - C'est l'extase langoureuse

Poetry by Paul Verlaine

A. Music

a. Key - E tonality
b. Form - Free
c. Tempo - Lent
d. Meter - 3/8
e. Classification - Through-composed
f. Climax - Measure 43
g. Mood content

This music is mystical and static. The melody is fluid and speech-like with subtle dynamics. The chromatic figure which reoccurs in measures 24 through 27 and 32 and 33 creates a sensation of obscure caresses gently stirring until it is ceased by the steady stressed staccato in the last three measures which compel the senses to listen for the haunting sounds emerging from the summer night. The rise of intensity as the climax approaches, lifts and presses forward "animato e crescendo" to as grand a dramatic effect as one will discover in Debussy's music. It immediately, as though it recovers its reserve, drops back to

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quietness and veiled mystery, ending in a steady but very gentle sound. Because the sounds of the static summer evening are a universal experience, this music can be easily accepted and sensed by any man.

B. Poetry

1. French lyrics to Song No. 1

by

Paul Verlaine

C'est l'extase langoureuse,
C'est la fatigue amoureuse,
C'est tous les frissons des bois
Parmi l'étreinte des brises, - 4
C'est, vers les ramures grises,
Le chœur des petites voix.
O le frêle et frais murmure!
Cela gazouille et susurre, - 8
Cela ressemble au cri doux
Que l'herbe agitée expire . . .
Tu dirais, sous l'eau qui vire,
Le roulis sourd des cailloux. - 12
Cette âme qui se lamente
En cette plaine dormant,
C'est la nôtre, n'est-ce pas?
La mienne, dis, et la tienne,
Dont s'exhale l'humble antienne
Par ce tiède soir, tout bas.
2. English translation of Song No. 1

This is languorous ecstasy,
This is the weariness of loving,
This is all the rustling of forests
Amid the caresses of breezes.
This is, through the gray branches,
The chorus of little voices.
Oh, the faint and cool murmur,
That chirps and whispers,
That sounds like the sweet cry
Which the moving grass exhales.
You might say, under the water which ripples
The muted rolling of pebbles,
This soul which laments
In this drowsy plaint,
It is ours, is it not?
Mine, tell me, and yours,
From which comes forth the humble anthem
On this mild evening, very softly.

C. Poetic analysis of No. 1

a. Rhyme scheme - aabccbddeffe

b. Meter - Alternation of 7 and 8 syllables in the following pattern: 221221221221

c. Stanzas - Three

d. Poetic devices used

Alliteration: frêle/frais
Assonance: lamente/dormante, murmure/susurre, roulis sourd/cailloux
Stave: cette/lamente, cette/plainte/dormante
e. Mood content

This is a poem written as a hymn to nature's sounds of a summer evening. Real sounds are transformed into significant feelings and impressions representing the united souls of lovers, which each man can recognize for himself. The spell of the mystical murmurs of the night echo an anthem of love. As one reflects upon this spirit of gentle lamenting, he knows it to be one which is solely that of those who love—himsel and his beloved.

No. 2 - Claude Debussy - Il pleure dans mon coeur
Poetry by Paul Verlaine

A. Music
a. Key - G# tonality
b. Form - ABCDEFC
c. Tempo - Modérément animé
d. Meter - 3/4
3. Classification - Through-composed
f. Climax - None
g. Mood content

This song is melancholy with a plaintive sweeping melody, smooth and sighing, drifting sadly. There is an all prevailing sorrow which is heightened by the steady descending line of chromatics in the bass (measures 7 & 8).
The accompaniment is persisting, restless, until an abrupt chord in measure 47 breaks the flow for the following five measures, resuming again the misty rain-like pattern. The vocal melody dove-tails in and out of the accompaniment almost indiscernibly as the two answer one another interdependently.

B. Poetry

1. French lyrics to Song No. 2

by

Paul Verlaine

Il pleure dans mon coeur
Comme il pleut sur la ville.
Quelle est cette langueur
Qui 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 ce coeur qui s'écoeur.
Quoi! nulle trahison?
Ce deuil est sans raison.
C'est bien la pire peine
De ne savoir pourquoi,
Sans amour et sans haine,
Mon coeur a tant de peine.
2. English translation of Song No. 2

It weeps in my heart,
As it rains on the city.
What is this languor
That penetrates my heart? - 4
Oh gentle sound of the rain,
On the ground and on the roofs!
For a heart which is weary
Oh, the sound of the rain! - 8
It weeps without reason
In this heart filled with anguish.
What! No self-deception?
This mourning is without reason. - 12
This truly is the worst pain,
Not to know why,
Without love and without hate,
My heart is so filled with grief. - 16

C. Poetic analysis of No. 2

a. Rhyme scheme - abaa cdcc efee
b. Meter - Alternation of 6 and 7 syllables in the
   following pattern: 1211212212112122
c. Stanzas - Four
d. Poetic devices used
   Alliteration: pire piene, terre/toits
Assonance: pleure/coeur, bruit/pluit, haine/peine, se coeur/s'écoueure

e. Mood content

This poem was inspired by the sad droaning of the rain on the village, suggesting the weeping or raining in one's heart. The feeling of "ennui," neither love nor hatred, only depressive melancholia fills the heart. The greatest pain of all is not knowing why the heart is filled with grief. This wondering stirs the senses and the mind understands it not... yet ponders. This arouses a feeling common to mankind when he does not know the answers to life, nor even where to seek them. He senses only a deep well of loneliness.

No. 3 - Claude Debussy - L'ombre des arbres

Poetry by Paul Verlaine

A. Music

a. Key - C# tonality
b. Form - Free
c. Tempo - Lent et triste
d. Meter - 3/4
e. Classification - Through-composed
f. Climax - None
g. Mood content

The plaintive sombre despair in the opening measures is brought out by the figure of a triplet and
eighths which appears again and again through the song. The melody swells and falls smoothly, wistfully. Harmonies and hesitant rhythms establish a feeling of despondency and hopelessness. The patterns of stressed triplets in the vocal melody are very effective in creating emotional restraint and the slow sure foot of fate approaching. The concluding word "noyées" is rendered exquisitely effective by the use of the ascending and descending interval of the 7th. This contrast, word and text, stirs a chain of emotional reactions—truly the work of a master.

B. Poetry

1. French lyrics to Song No. 3

by

Paul Verlaine

L'ombre des arbres dans la rivière embrumée
Meurt comme de la fumée,
Tandis qu'en l'air, parmi les ramures réelles,
Se plaignent les tourterelles.

- 4

Combien, ô voyageur, ce paysage blême
Te mira blême toi-même,
Et que tristes pleuraient, dans les hautes feuillées
Tes espérances noyées!

- 8
2. English translation of Song No. 3
The shadow of the trees in the misty river
Dies like smoke,
While in the air, amid the real branches above,
The turtle doves lament.
How much, oh traveler, this gaunt landscape
Mirrored your gloomy self,
And how sadly in the high branches wept
Your drowned hopes.

C. Poetic analysis of No. 3
   a. Rhyme scheme - aabbcodd
   b. Meter - Alternation of 7 and 13 syllables in the
      following pattern: 21212121
   c. Stanzas - One
   d. Poetic devices used
      Alliteration: ramure réelles
      Assonance: blème toi-même, feuillées/noyées
   e. Mood content
      This poem was inspired by the nightingale high
      in the tree noticing itself as reflected in the river below,
      and fearing, because it imagines itself to be drowning. So
      like the traveler, this colorless landscape, as there in the
      high branches is heard the sad weeping while he witnesses
      his hopes and desires drown slowly in the dark waters. The
      content is first descriptive, then reflective and at last
futility is sensed, and the very intimate nature of the poem compels a response, continuing after the words cease. Again, depression and melancholy hold man in a state of helplessness which he accepts, knowing no other path.

No. 4 - Claude Debussy - Chevaux de bois

Poem by Paul Verlaine

A. Music

a. Key - E, C, E flat, B, G tonality
b. Form - ABACADA
c. Tempo - Allegro non tanto, Plus lent
d. Meter - 2/4, 1/4
e. Classification - Through-composed
f. Climax - Measure 50 might be considered as such.

Musically a lift is experienced by the drastic modulation, suggesting a high point in the song.

g. Mood content

The pulse of activity and excitement, joy and motion, are continuous in this song through accented sounds and angular intervals in a gay motif. The melody is gay and bright until, at the closing, a sudden calm develops, as one senses the weariness of the tired crowd after the sensations of merriment have passed. The various sudden modulations in measures 17, 26, 34, and 46, produce a variety of color and activity suggestive of the occasion, lending a flavor of chaotic, insatiable excitement. The restatement
of the original rhythm in measures 90 through 95, is
delightful to the senses, as it recalls, as the mind will
do, the theme or pulse of the joys which are now passed and
have become memories.

B. Poetry

1. French lyrics to Song No. 4

by

Paul Verlaine

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 vos tournois
Clignote l'œil du filous sournois,
Tournez au son du piston vainqueur.
C'est étonnant comme ça vous souûle,
D'aller ainsi dans ce cirque bête!
Rien dans le ventre et mal dans la tête,
Du mal en mass et du bien en foule.
Tournez, dadas, sans qu'ils sout besoin
D'user jamais de nuls éperons,
Pour commander à vos galops ronds,
Tournez, tournez, sans espoir de foin.
E dépêchez, chevaux de leur âme:
Déjà, voici que sonne à la soupe
La nuit que 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'Église tinte un glas tristement.
Tournez au son joyeux des tambours, tournez.

2. English translation of Song No. 4

Turn, turn, good wooden horses,
Turn a hundred times, turn a thousand times
Turn often and turn forever.
Turn, turn to the tune of the oboes.
The child very red and the mother white:
The boy in black and the girl in rose,
One blasé and the other striking a pose,
Each pays a Sunday penny.
Turn, turn, horses of their heart,
While round about all your dizziness
Winks the eye of the sly rogue.
Turn round to the tune of the conquering piston!
It is astonishing how it intoxicates you,
To move this way, in this foolish circus:
Nothing in the stomach and an ache in the head,
Plenty of trouble and plenty of good fortune,

Turn hobby horses, without the need
To use spurs
To command your gallop around.

Turn, turn, without any hope of hay,
And hurry up, horses of their lives,
For already there is the sound of the dinner bell
The night falls and disperses the crowd
Of gay drinkers, whose thirst is tortured

Turn, turn! The velvet sky
Adorns itself slowly in golden stars.
The church tolls a knell sadly.

Turn to the gay tune of the drums, turn!

C. Poetic Analysis of No. 4
   a. Rhyme scheme - abba cddc effe
   b. Meter - Alternation of 9 and 10 syllables in the
      following pattern: 1111222211112222
   c. Stanzas - Seven
   d. Poetic devices used
      Alliteration: soif affame, L'Église'glas,sonne/
      soupe/ sans/soit besoin, mal en masse
Assonance: chose/pose, ça vous soule, leur coeur/vainqueur
Stave: tournez tournez/tours/tournez/tours/
tournez toujours, l'une à la/ l'autre à la,
tandis qu'autour de tous vos tournois, tinte/
tristement, tambour tournez.

e. Mood content

Activity predominates. One sees the crowd and feels the pulsation of it, the delight, the sickness—the virtuous, the wicked all pulled together in the surge of activity centering around the merry-go-round. As dusk falls, the tired hungry crowd disperses and the toll of the church bell is heard as the villagers return home. The use of extended repetition of the same consonant "t" gives the lyrics an agitation. The extended use of broad vowels in lines 22 through 24 gives a smooth continuity to the weary stillness which the text intends. The last phrase instantly throws the thoughts again into the swirl of excitement, as though it were reluctant to let the experience come to an end.
No. 5 - Claude Debussy - Green

Poetry by Paul Verlaine

A. Music

a. Key - E flat, D flat, G flat tonality
b. Form - ABCDAE
c. Tempo - Joyeusement animé
d. Meter - 6/8
e. Classification - Through-composed
f. Climax - None
g. Mood content

The melody in this song is delightfully lyrical, sweeping, altogether joyous and adoring. The vocal line presses forward, with animated desire to express this passion. This pattern of pushing ahead and then pulling back is an excellent example of the true French lyric style. At the close is a serene peace, a calm vigil over the resting lovers. The sensuous vocal phrases are exquisitely intimate and tender. The subtle conflicting rhythms in the closing measures arouse the feeling of the comforting caress which is tenderness itself!
B. Poetry

1. French lyrics to Song No. 5

by

Paul Verlaine

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 délasseront.
Sur votre jeune sein laissez rouler ma tête
Toute sonore encor de vos derniers baisers;
Laissez-la s'apaiser de la bonne tempête,
Et que je dorme un peu puisque vous reposez.

2. English translation of Song No. 5

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 lovely hands,
And may the humble present be sweet in your lovely eyes.
I arrive, still covered with the dew,
Which the morning wind has frozen on my forehead.
Pity my fatigue, as I repose at your feet,
Dreaming of the dear moments that will refresh it.
On your young breast let me cradle my head,
Still filled with the music from your last kisses,
Let it be quiet after the good storm,
And let me sleep a little, while you rest. - 12

C. Poetic Analysis of No. 5

a. Rhyme scheme - abab cdcd efef

b. Meter - Alternation of 12 and 13 syllables in the
   following pattern: 2121212121

c. Stanzas - Three

d. Poetic devices used
   Alliteration: fruits/fleurs/feuilles, vent/vient,
   peu/puisque
   Assonance: sonore encore, laissez/s'apaisez

e. Mood content

This poem is a tender, animated demonstration of
love and adoration. The simple gifts given in the name of
love, include the heart. It is the essence of humble and
complete devotion such as only lovers experience which is
brought to life in this poetry. When all is expressed,
another great delight remains—to rest in the arms of ones
beloved, the brain still ringing with the sounds of recent
kisses. The delightful storm has passed, sweet rest follows.
The music in the very words used in this poem are tender-
ness and intimacy at its best. The gentle consonants and
assonance used contribute to this effect. Again, when the
words have ceased, the sensations of a beautiful peace, to be found only within the arms of ones beloved, remains with the listener, and belong to all mankind.

No. 6 - Claude Debussy - Spleen

Poetry by Paul Verlaine

A. Music

a. Key - F tonality
b. Form - Free
c. Tempo - Lent
d. Meter - 3/4
e. Classification - Through-composed
f. Climax - Measure 27 and 28
g. Mood content

The melody of this song is restrained, very expressive and melancholy, falling in short phrases. It chant's on the same tone for five measures. The accompaniment supports it with sensuous secondary melodies, the principal one of which is announced in the opening measures of the song. This theme is of wistful coloring as it exudes a feeling of foreboding. The experience of having the loved one near is almost too much to bear, for this dreadful fear of approaching loss also hovers near. How despairing is the anxiety that the beloved one may vanish! The interplay of melodies is suggestive of the perpetual conflict, though illusive, between fate and human desires. The accompaniment
is so complete in itself, that the vocal line seems secondary to it. The haunting motif carries the subtle fatalistic tone which the words intend.

B. Poetry

1. French lyrics to Song No. 6

by

Paul Verlaine

Les roses étaient toutes rouges,
Et les lierres 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!

2. English translation of Song No. 6

The roses were all red,
And the ivy all black.
Dearest, if you but move a little
All my despair revives.
The sky was too blue, too tender,
The sea too green, and the air too soft.
I am afraid of what may come!
You may escape in a cruel flight.
Of the green-holly leaves
And of the shining box-wood I am weary,
And of the endless countryside,
And of everything, except you, Alas!

C. Poetic Analysis of No. 6

a. Rhyme scheme - abab cdcd efef
b. Meter - Alternation of 8 and 9 syllables in the
   following pattern: 21212121

c. Stanzas - Three
d. Poetic devices used
   Alliteration: pour peu, tu te, trop tendre
   Assonance: luisant buis/suis
   Reiteration: trop bleu/ trop tendre/ trop verte/ trop doux
   Stave: étaient/toutes/étaient/tout, étaient
   trop bleu trop tendre
e. Mood content

   This poem creates the feeling of foreboding that
one experiences when emotions and desires become so intense,
so real, so lovely, that it seems impossible and must
inevitably end in despair. When ones only refuge from the
wearisome universe is her beloved, and now he too may vanish,
how wretched the thought! What profound loneliness! The change in verb tense establishes two levels of thought, one that of remembering perhaps the last beautiful moment of love together, and the other the actual presence of the loved one. Remembering the one, fearing the other because it accompanies feelings of dread that this beauty can never again be known.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

It has been the attempt of the writer to seek out and investigate a relatively small but significant part of our cultural heritage, the transition period between the Romantic era and the Abstract of our present day. In addition:

1. It is hoped that the French Art Song has been sufficiently represented as a unique form of art song, that an inclusive description of the particular demands made upon the artist has made these elements real to the young artist.

2. It is hoped that this study has exposed new fields of exploration which are vital to authoritative interpretation, and that it has created incentive to investigate them further.

3. It is hoped that within the mind of the young vocal artist, a vital stimulation has been experienced to consider more seriously his responsibility to his talent and the music he chooses to perform. The privilege extended to the singer to recreate such masters as Debussy, Duparc, Chausson, and Faure demands his most consecrated efforts.

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and thoughts so that this music may live through him, in truth. This will involve the whole person, dedicated and serious, for he must first obtain knowledge and the knowledge must be understood that he may heighten the intrinsic value of all he expresses in song.

4. It is hoped that this work has helped to form a concept of the cultural atmosphere of the period in which the work was written, plus an idea of the thinking of these artistic creators from which Impressionistic music and poetry has evolved.

5. It is further hoped that this study has confirmed our confidence in the worth of a similar procedure for the study of other works to be presented by the concert singer. In this way, he may compile an authoritative collection of data which, together with his maturity and musical instincts, will aid him in performing with Authority (knowledge), Sincerity (understanding), and Effectiveness (communication).
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1. C'est l'Extase

Le vent dans la plaine
Suspend son haleine

(FAVART)

CLAUDE DEBUSSY
(1862-1918)

PAUL VERLAINE

Voice

Lent et caressant

PIANO

Lent et caressant

C'est l'extase langoureuse

C'est la fatigue amoureuse

Un poco mosso

C'est tous les frissons des bois Parmi l'interdite des brises C'est vers les ra.

Un poco mosso

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2. Il pleure dans mon coeur

Il pleut doucement sur la ville.

(A. RIMBAUD)

PAUL VERLAINE

Modérément animé (triste et monotone)

Piano

Voice

Il pleure dans mon coeur

Comme il pleut sur la ville

Quelle est cette lance
e Par terre et sur les toits!

Pour un cœur qui s'ennuie

O le bruit de la

1224
Ce deuil est sans raison
revenez au 1er mouv!

C'est bien la pire peine De ne

savoir pourquoi, sans amour et sans
3. L'Ombre des Arbres

Le Rossignol qui du haut d'une branche se regarde dedans, croit être tombé dans la rivière. Il est au sommet d'un chêne et toute fois il a peur de se noyer.

(CYRANO de BERGERAC)

PAUL VERLAINE

Lent et triste

Voice

L'ombre des arbres dans la viièremebrumé e

Meurt comme de la fumée, Tandis qu'en l'air, parmi les ramures réelles

Se plaignent les tourterelles

Com.

 sempre dolcissimo
bien voyageur, ce paysage bléme Te mi-

scendo un poco stringendo a tempo

ra blémetoi méme Et questristes pleu.

raient dans les hautes feuillées, Tes espérances noyés.

tres retenu sempre dolcissimo e morendo

1224
4. Chevaux de Bois

Par Saint Gille
Vieus nous en
Mon agile
Aliez

(V. HUGO)

PAUL VERLAINE

Allegro non tanto (joyeux et sonore)

Voice

Allegro non tanto (joyeux et sonore)

PIANO

Tournez, tournez,

bons chevaux de bois Tournez cent tours tour...
nez mil-le tours Tour-nez sou-vent

et tour-nez tou-jours Tour-nez, tour-nez au

son deshautbois L'enfant tout

rou-ge et la mère blan-ché Le gars en
noir et la fille en rose L'une à la chose et l'autre à la pose, Chacun se
C'est étonnant comme ça vous soule D'aller ainsi
dans ce cirque bête: Rien dans le ventre et mal dans la tête,
D'embrasser et du bien en fou
noz, dadas, sans qu'il soit besoin D'u

ser jamais de nuls éperons Pour

ommander à vos galops ronds Tour

nez, tournez, sans espoir de
Tempo ritenuto poco a poco

Et dépêchez, chez, chevaux de leur

à même

J'aurais voulu que sonne à la
La nuit qui tombe et chasse la troupe
De gais buveurs que leur soif affame
molto dim. e rite.

pp

nu

to

Tour

a tempo (le double plus lent)

nez, tournez!

Le ciel en velours D'as tres en

ppp

encore plus lent

or se vet lentement

molto dim. ppp
(pp)

L'Église tinte un glas tristement.

a tempo

Tournez au son joyeux des tambours tour.

nez.

Lent mov.

rendo
5. Green

Aquarelle

Paul Verlaine

Joyeusement animé

Voici des fruits des fleurs des feuilles et des branches

Et puis voici mon cœur qui bat que pour vous
Ne le déchirez pas a vec vos deux mains blanches,

Et qu'à vos yeux si beaux — l'humile présent soit doux.

tout couvert encore de rosé

J'arrive
Que le vent du matin vient glacer à mon front.

un peu retenu

Souffrez que ma faible fatigue à vos pieds repose.

Serrerez encore plus tendrement.

Rêvez des chers instants qui la délaisseront.

Andantino

caressant

Andantino

Sur votre jeune sein, laissez.
-sez rouler ma tête
Toute sonore encore

rit.

Plus lent

de vos derniers baisers
Laissez la s'apaiser

très retenu

- ser de la bonne tempête,
Et que je
dorme un peu puisque vous reposez.
6. Spleen
Aquarelle

PAUL VERLAINE

Voice

Lent

Les

PIANO

p

sf
dim.

ro-ses é-taient tous-tes rou-ges,
Et les lier-res é-taient tout

pp

con moto

noirs.

Chè-re, pour peu que tu te

pp

p mais un peu en dehors
Tempo I très doux

Le ciel était trop bleu, trop tendre, La mer trop verte et l'air trop doux.

J'craïns toujours, ce qu'est d'attendre

Quelque fuite atroce de vous.

stringendo crescendo