

Ange FLÉGIER

MÉLODIES FOR BASS VOICE AND PIANO

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INCLUDES FIRST RECORDINGS

ANGE FLÉGIER AND HIS FORGOTTEN MELODIES

by Hervé Oléon

Ange Flégier was born on 25 February 1846, into a family of modest means residing at 20 rue de la Paix in the first arrondissement of Marseilles. His father, Louis Raymond Flégier, was a porter, a labourer who loaded heavy cargo; that had also been the profession of Ange's grandfather, Jean-François Auguste Flégier. Ange's mother, Thérèse Antoinette Astoin, did not exercise a profession. One of his maternal uncles, Louis Astoin, was a locally recognised poet and had been a Deputy to the Assemblée Législative of 1848.

Young Flégier grew up in the milieu of the docks and warehouses. After saving carefully, his father was able to open a business on the rue de Rome, not far from the Old Port, as a merchant of goods imported from the colonies.¹ In his youth, Ange worked as a docker at that port. From this experience, he developed a special feeling for the sea, which would appear in many features of his musical *œuvre*, especially in his *mélodies*.

All that is currently known of his early study of music is that he entered the Marseilles Conservatoire at the beginning of the 1860s. By some miracle, he managed to 'go up to Paris', as they say, and sing for Berlioz during a public ceremony;² then in 1866 he was admitted to the Paris Conservatoire, in the composition class of Ambroise Thomas (1811–96) and the harmony class of François Bazin (1816–78). At that time, this prestigious establishment was directed by Daniel-Esprit Auber (1782–1871).

In the summer of 1868, Ange Flégier shared a small garret on the rue Lamartine with a certain Ferdinand Loviot, a medical student who was also an amateur poet. Since each felt abandoned by his respective Muse, they collaborated to write

¹ Fernand Guy, 'Quelques souvenirs sur Ange Flégier', *Comoedia*, 17 October 1927, p. 3.

² Jean Lefranc, 'Ange Flégier', *Le Temps*, 11 October 1927, p. 3.

a *mélodie*, *Stances*, that would bring fame to Flégier. In the long run, it probably also brought him a bit of misfortune – but more of that later.

In 1869 Flégier, triumphing in the knock-out round of the Prix de Rome with his chorus *La Nuit*, was one of the six finalists of the competition with the cantata *Francesca da Rimini*, performed by the soprano Marie Sasse, tenor Raphaël Grisy and baritone Victor Maurel, all from the Opéra in Paris. Flégier was placed third behind Antoine Taudou (1846–1925) and Gaston Serpette (1846–1904). A year later, bad health prevented him from entering a second time. After leaving the Conservatoire, he was named a Knight of the Order of Charles III of Spain, Spain's most distinguished civil award, although our research has not yet revealed the reason for this unusual recognition.

During the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, Flégier conducted the band of the 3rd Legion of the Bouches du Rhône. The beginning of the 1870s also marks the moment his musical production took flight, notably with the first performance of *Stances* for the Cercle Artistique de Marseilles on 21 December 1871, sung by the tenor Marius Salomon of the Paris Opéra. The publisher Heugel refused to add this *mélodie* to his catalogue and would live to regret it. In the same year, Flégier began to work as a music critic for the daily paper *Le Petit Marseillais*. From the start he did his best to get his work published, beginning with small publishers from whom he unfortunately only received sparse royalties. Although his music was steadily growing more popular, he had to wait until the extraordinary success of his *mélodie* *Le Cor*, premiered on 22 June 1880 in the presence of Léon Gambetta (then one of the most powerful politicians in France), before he could live comfortably from his profession. In an interview, he spoke of those first difficult years when ‘the call of my vocation drowned out the howling wolves at my door’ and ‘lively memories [...] of my first success nourished my youth’s big dreams and expansive hopes’.³

Meanwhile, the Grand-Théâtre de Marseille (the opera house there) successfully premiered *Fatma*, Flégier’s only opéra-comique (in one act), on 8 April 1875. From 1877 to 1884 he again worked as a music critic, this time for *Le Journal de Marseille*.

³ *Ibid.*

On 4 January 1885 the Théâtre des Nations in Marseilles organised the premiere of *Ossian*, a *poème lyrique* for soloists, chorus and orchestra. *Scènes antiques*, an orchestral suite, received its first performance by the Concerts Populaires of Angers on 8 March 1885. Flégier's *Fantaisie-ballet*, a *divertissement choréographique*, was performed on 30 November 1887 at the Théâtre du Gymnase in Marseilles. His Trio for clarinet, bassoon and oboe, dedicated to 'mon ami J[ules] Massenet', was performed for the first time on 15 October 1896 in Flégier's home in Paris,⁴ with Massenet in attendance, and his *Næniæ: Adaptation symphonique* for narrator, cello, violin, horns and piano received its premiere on 22 November 1897, at the Théâtre de la Bodinière in Paris. On 22 April 1898 Flégier's *Dixtuor*, a work for wind quintet and string quintet, was played at the Concerts Rouge, also in Paris. It was the first time a piece of chamber music had been composed for ten instruments; Flégier's term 'dixtuor' entered the Larousse dictionary of the French language the following year. In October 1899 Flégier received a special invitation from the City of Marseilles to reprise his *Scènes antiques* during the 25th centenary of the city. On 4 January 1900 his Piano Concerto in F major was premiered in the Palais d'Hiver of the Jardin d'Acclimatation in Paris. Several of his works were performed by the official orchestra of the 1900 Universal Exposition in Paris.⁵ And finally, on 11 January 1919, his *Grognards et Poilus*,⁶ an opera in one act and three scenes, was premiered, at the Opéra municipal in Marseilles.

These titles give only a limited view of Flégier's output, the proportions of which have still not been verified, although it is known to contain some 350 works. Among his numerous compositions, there are approximately 100 piano pieces and 120 *mélodies*, many of which Flégier orchestrated. Unlike the *mélodies* of (say) Massenet or Claude Debussy, many of Flégier's songs were not intended for the intimate, sedate atmosphere of the drawing rooms and more closely resemble those of Henri Duparc, for they use the

⁴ 2, rue Chapu, Paris, 16th arrondissement.

⁵ Database Leonore, Chancellerie de la Légion d'Honneur, file for Ange Flégier.

⁶ Literally, 'Grumbling and Hairy': the Grognards ('Grumblers') were members of Napoleon's Old Guard, so called because they were allowed to express their frustrations openly. During the First World War, French soldiers were affectionately referred to as 'grognards et poilus' – the latter term because so many of them had moustaches and beards (that is, until mustard gas necessitated a clean fit for gas-masks), although some French philologists contend that 'poilu' was once slang for 'brave'.

piano as if it were a complete orchestra, instead of being simply a single accompanying instrument. On the other hand, unlike Duparc, there seems to be no obvious Wagnerian influence in Flégier's *mélodies*. Even so, the piano accompaniment often resembles a thick cushion of orchestral sonorities the presence of which, far from overpowering the voice, serves to highlight its possibilities. Unlike many of his colleagues, Flégier managed to avoid awkward pianistic writing. The few reviews that have been found suggest that Flégier was not only a very good composer and a seasoned conductor but also an excellent pianist. This attribute is quite obvious in his writing, especially in his *mélodies*. He understood how to create for his audience all of the pleasure of an orchestral accompaniment by means of a lone piano which is, in and of itself, an unusual talent. The singer performing Flégier's *mélodies* must have a large range and considerable vocal stamina, allowing him or her to use up to two octaves, with nuances from *pianississimo* to *fortissimo*.

Starting in the 1890s, Flégier was also seriously devoted to his two other passions, graphic art and poetry. He created some 100 water-colours and drawings, a number of which were exhibited in the Salon des Artistes Françaises in Paris, and also in Marseilles, Versailles, and Toulon. He donated several works to the Musée Saint-Saëns in Dieppe, the Musée de Digne, as well as the Musée Ziem in Martigues, of which he was a co-founder. He compiled a volume of poetry and memoirs entitled *À travers la vie* and *Per dire ooun cabanoun*, a collection of stories and poems in the Provençal language.⁷ From 1893 onwards Flégier was on the editorial staff of the magazine *Art Polymnie*, founded and directed by the feminist novelist Pauline Savari.

In 1902 Flégier was awarded the Prix Chartier for his body of chamber music. Previously decorated with the Palmes Académiques in 1884, he was named Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur by the edict of 19 July 1903.

In the sunset of his life, universally known, popular and admired by his contemporaries, Flégier and his wife left Paris to retire in his native Marseilles. They

⁷ Flégier's literary works, listed at the end of his published catalogue, have not yet been located.



*Pencil drawing by Flégier: street view in Martigues
(from the collection of Jared Schwartz)*

moved into a modest white house in the midst of a small garden in the Impasse Béranger of the Vieille-Chapelle district.

Some evenings, under the sky's beautiful stars, he would start to play his piano. Neighbours would immediately gather under his window and listen in rapt silence. Then, when he had finished his improvisations, a voice would call out: 'Thank you, Monsieur Flégier.... Good night'. And each returned home, happy to have heard his music.⁸

In an article published in *Le Petit Parisien* on 4 August 1922, the columnist Henri Béraud interviewed Flégier:

⁸ 'Un mort', *Le Cri*, 16 October 1927.



Flégier's nephew, the sculptor and physician Maurice Mangepan-Flégier, with his sculpture of his uncle and his death-mask (by permission of the Flégier estate)

He is an unpretentious, magnificent old man dressed in gabardine trousers, a stiffly starched shirt, white socks and scarlet slippers. M. Flégier's face would have been an admirable model for the Douanier Rousseau. Snowy triple spirals of a long goatee and handlebar moustaches adorn him. M. Flégier reminds us of old-fashioned Provence. [...] 'I worked', said M. Flégier, 'I worked until the end, and I ask myself as I begin my seventy-eighth year if one should not have two lives, one for work, and the other to enjoy it. [...] Tell you my story?' he continued, 'that won't take long. I was a happy man with no problems. I worked, that's all.'

On 6 October 1927, at around two o'clock in the afternoon, an accident destroyed the fabric of this well-filled artistic life. When he fell from a moving streetcar, one of Flégier's legs was severely mutilated. He was rushed immediately to the Saint-Joseph

⁹ Henri Béraud, 'Rencontre avec Ange Flégier, l'auteur des *Stances* et du *Cor*', *Le Petit Parisien*, 4 August 1922, p. 1.

hospital in the Prado district, where his leg was amputated. Loss of blood from the accident and the operation sapped his strength. Two days later, in his 81st year, Ange Flégier passed away. His nephew, sculptor and physician Maurice Mangepan-Flégier, molded his death mask. Flégier was buried in the Saint-Pierre cemetery in Marseilles. According to his last wishes, which he asked to have published in the local newspaper, he had a very simple civil burial.¹⁰

Alfred de Musset wrote that ‘Human ingratitude is the tomb of goodness.’¹¹ Flégier’s death soon demonstrated the accuracy of this metaphor. Famous and popular during his lifetime, Flégier’s music had been performed throughout France – and yet not long after he was laid to rest, the same France that had celebrated him rapidly erased him from its memory. What are the reasons for this collective amnesia?

Flégier died in 1927. During the ‘Roaring Twenties’, the French musical community rejected that generation of composers who, still working in the aesthetics of the nineteenth century, were not innovative enough for the new wave – an unjust judgment for those caught between two aesthetics, but who were also forward-looking and laid the foundations upon which flourished the creative energies of Debussy, Satie and Ravel and, after them, Poulenc, Milhaud and Honegger.

In addition to this rather generalised and systematic trend, Ange Flégier’s *œuvre* was probably the victim of other factors, more specifically:

- first, the contents of his catalogue, particularly its scarceness of large vocal works other than *Fatma*, *Grognards et poilus* and *Ossian* – opera, the most popular genre, no doubt rescued many composers from oblivion, and its slim presence in Flégier’s output was certainly a major handicap;
- second, even though Flégier studied music in Paris, he conducted much of his career from his native Marseilles. This regional anchorage certainly was not to the taste of the Parisian certainty that everything originating from other regions had less value;

¹⁰ ‘I request that no one mourn my death. As a result, no mass at the end of the period of mourning, neither anniversary commemoration, nor other religious ceremony’: Ange Flégier, ‘Les Dernières Volontés d’Ange Flégier: considérations et dispositions concernant mes funérailles, datées du 25 avril 1913’, *Le Provençal*, 9 October 1927.

¹¹ ‘Le bien a pour tombeau l’ingratitude humaine’ – in his ‘poème dramatique’ *La Coupe et les lèvres* (1831).

- finally, if some of Flégier's compositions benefited from the notoriety of publishers such as Heugel or Hamelle, most of his titles were edited by smaller houses – Grus, Gallet and Enoch. The first two were bought out, respectively by Lemoine in 1933 and by Combret in 1958. Since this type of take-over frequently occurred as a last resort, it is not impossible that a large number of manuscripts and printing plates were unceremoniously destroyed. And although the firm of Enoch is still in business, it has apparently decided not to republish Flégier or is unaware of his presence in its back-catalogue, since not a single title appears among its current offerings.

The last factor to consider is Flégier's choice of song texts. He was probably obliged to set those of his sister, Blanche Sari-Flégier, the author of several plays and numerous poems. Their style, pompous and excessively sentimental, would not have served her brother's cause. The famous *Stances*, set to a poem by Loviot, was also the subject of caustic comments, such as those of the critic Jean Lefranc in the newspaper *Le Temps*:¹² 'How many young ladies had their dreams cradled by this mélodie? [...] Those later called Midinettes¹³ wept with emotion, nostalgia, regret, and sometimes recognition, upon hearing the sounds of this sickeningly sweet music.'

Flégier's detractors quickly created an unjust association, assuming that because some of his works were based upon mediocre texts, his music itself must be of poor quality. But many composers have written songs which surmount poor texts. Flégier is one of them, and his songs are not limited to being 'little songs for well-brought-up young ladies'. Their complex style, his underlying resourcefulness and resulting sonorities clearly show that Flégier was far from content with obtaining gold stars from young damsels mooning over syrupy love-songs. 'Many of his songs, carefully polished and beautifully inspired, have garnered great and well-deserved success', as *Le Figaro* wrote on the day after his death.

¹² Jean Lefranc. 'Au jour le jour : Ange Flégier', *Le Temps*, 11 October 1927, p. 3.

¹³ Midinettes were young girls of modest means, usually seamstresses, often with origins in the Midi in southern France. They might also have been called Midinettes because their profession only allowed them to have a brief meal ('dînette') at noon ('midi').

Once described as the ‘poor man’s Massenet’,¹⁴ Flégier was certainly not his inferior. Indeed, that phrase can be understood also to mean that, because his background was much more modest than that of his illustrious contemporary, Flégier’s music was accessible to a different class of audience, to which he remained very close in spite of his own elevated social status. As Béraud wrote in *Le Petit Parisien*, ‘M. Flégier, born into the working-class and who gave it its most cherished love-song is, in his simple living room, full of modest glory as an example of unaffected Southern perseverance.’¹⁵

Flégier was not a long-winded composer who produced quantity at the expense of quality – and, tellingly, all the songs recorded here are free-standing, independent songs, not parts of larger collections. The rediscovery of his music currently underway reaffirms his important place in the history of French music. As Fernand Guy wrote shortly after the composer’s death, ‘Musical scholars appreciate Flégier as a powerful composer whose talent is especially varied and rich.’¹⁶ May this recording contribute to the rediscovery of the music of Ange Flégier, with all of the renown and recognition that it deserves.

The *Méodies*

The only Flégier *mélodie* still remembered is *Le Cor* (‘The Horn’) (1881) [1], a setting of several verses from a long poem by Alfred de Vigny (1797–1863), published in his *Poèmes antiques et modernes*. ‘Le son du cor’ (‘The sound of the horn’) resonates ‘au fond des bois’ (‘deep in the woods’) like a centuries-old echo of the hunting horn of Charlemagne’s nephew, Count Roland, who fell in a Saracen ambush of the rear guard of the Imperial Army on the mountain pass of Roncevaux in the Pyrenees.¹⁷ After a fight to the death against forces twenty times larger than his, the valiant knight Roland resigns himself, but too late, to blow his horn as a call for help from the other troops.

¹⁴ ‘La mort de Flégier’, *L’Homme libre*, 12 October 1927, p. 3.

¹⁵ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁶ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁷ *La Chanson de Roland*, an eleventh-century *chanson de geste* and the earliest extended text in the French language, ‘elevated’ Charlemagne’s ‘First Spanish Campaign’ (777–78) and his defeat by local Basque forces in northern Spain into a struggle between Christianity and Islam.

Flégier probably interpreted the subject, from the Carolingian epoch established in the poem, even though largely predating the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, as a metaphor for French bitterness after the loss of Alsace-Lorraine ('L'ombre du grand Roland n'est donc pas consolée' ('Great Roland's spirit finds no consolation')). There were hardly any French families who, after Sunday lunch, did not express their sorrow through the resolute sonorities of this *mélodie*. Very popular until the 1960s, the piece then sank into quasi-oblivion, no doubt because its rather nationalist tone seemed *passé*. This *mélodie* calls for a true dramatic bass voice and cannot be transposed for other voice types without losing its deep, warm colours. In its prime, it was a favourite for recordings on wax cylinders, then for gramophone and LP performances by, among others, Auguste Affre, Fyodor Chaliapin, Armand Narçon and André Huc-Santana.

La Poésie ('Poetry') (1897) [2], poem by Édouard Pailleron (1834–1901), shows surprising harmonic and melodic resemblance to 'Minuit, Chrétiens !' ('O Holy Night!'), composed in 1847 by Adolphe Adam, who categorised his hymn as a 'religious Marseillaise' because of its immediate and enduring popularity. Flégier, who described himself a non-believer, most probably intentionally imitated and then revised this religious theme in order to steer it progressively, in keeping with his own beliefs, in a secular direction. The narrative of the earliest Adam's encounter with Eve ('astre vivant, adorable et vermeil' ('living star, blushing and ethereal')) inspires the use of language which, united with love, gives birth to the art of poetry. Dedicated to a bass whose last name was David, of the Paris Opéra (the score does not reveal his first name), this *mélodie* calls for an accomplished singer with a complete control of *legato* and breath support to sustain these long phrases in a palette of expression extending from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*.

Spain has long been a source of musical inspiration. From Flégier's era, one quite naturally recalls Bizet's *Carmen*, Lalo's *Symphonie espagnole* or Chabrier's orchestral rhapsody *España. Au crépuscule* ('At Twilight') (1889) [3], on a poem by Jean Richepin (1849–1926), is an excellent example of this aesthetic trend. The text fits the composer beautifully, for its aquatic theme was a vital component of Flégier's personal and musical path. The *mélodie* is constructed in ABA form. It opens with the rhythm of a

sevillanas, *allegretto tranquillo*, in keeping with gentle rocking of the docked boat. A series of arpeggios portray the evening breeze as it lightly caresses the evanescent waves ('les flots déteints' ('the shadowy waves')). The second theme, less rhythmic, *espressivo*, introduces a widow with jet-black hair, leaning out over the water. Even more than her sparkling jewels, the twinkling stars are reflected in the watery mirror, creating a metaphor contrasting fantasy with reality. The first theme returns as the *mélodie* finishes in an atmosphere of carefree happiness.

Flégier's personal relationship with the ocean is magnificently expressed in *L'Homme et la Mer* ('Man and the Sea') (1893) [4], the fourteenth poem of *Les Fleurs du mal* by Charles Baudelaire (1821–67), from the section 'Spleen et Idéal'. With considerable finesse, the composer transcribes the poetic contents through continual comparisons between Man and the Sea, protagonists described in alternation. The introduction is constructed in organ-like chords depicting the brooding, ominous waves. The entrance of the voice follows suit with phrases constructed in two-bar groupings of unison with the piano, followed by the piano harmonisation with the voice, a structure of liturgical call and response. The Sea and Man share their mutual longing for the void, described by 'gouffre' ('chasm'), 'infini' ('everlasting'), and 'plonger' ('plunging'). Then, in a rising tide of notes, the Man's heart shudders in parallel with the 'indomptable' ('untameable') and 'sauvage' ('wild') Sea. A brief respite, as the ample waves momentarily abate, underscores their mutual spiritual dimension (both are 'ténébreux' ('shadowy'), 'intimes' ('intimate'), and 'secrets') in a text painted by the piano's spacious ascending and descending arpeggios. The final tempest represents the combat between Man and Sea, in an *agitato crescendo poco a poco* reaching its apogee at 'le carnage et la mort' ('carnage and death'). In benediction, the last eight-bar section presents the certitude of their fates, set using descending, increasingly heavy phrases: the relationship between Man and the Sea is nourished by the destructive fervour entangling love, liberty and death. In the climax of these last two sections, the voice takes on a truly operatic dimension, with its ascension to high D sharp followed by the plunge to a low G sharp, all in the space of the final four bars.

Flégier, displaying astonishing modernity, mixes aesthetic styles in *La Neige* ('The Snow') (1881) [5], another setting of de Vigny, found in his *Tablettes romantiques*

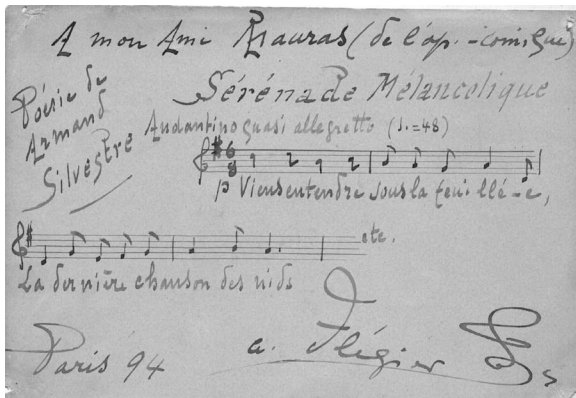
(1823). Debussian sonorities intermingle with ancient modes, foreshadowing Guy Ropartz, Francis Poulenc and Jehan Alain. The *mélodie*, developed in this way, unites romance, drama and a mystical dimension. It is another setting of a Carolingian legend, recounting the story of Princess Emma, the Emperor's daughter, and her forbidden love-affair with his page Éginard. After an early-morning snowfall, the princess sneaks across the courtyard, carrying her lover in her arms so that his footprints will not be seen in the fresh snow. The 'deux pieds dans la neige', 'petits et seuls' ('two footprints in the snow', 'small and alone') belong to Emma as she carries Éginard. Charlemagne is not fooled by this trick. Forcing himself to overcome his royal anger, he must decide whether he will punish or forgive the young lovers. The music is divided into two large sections, the first giving the context, the second the story itself. Set to suave and delicate music, the drama is highlit in a musical description of the King's emotions expressed by a two-octave range, from high E flat to a low E flat sustained for two bars. Mysterious, and lending itself to a feeling of abstraction, the general atmosphere of the piece seems closer to a Symbolist, rather than a purely Romantic, style.

Le Manoir ('The Manor') (1870) [6], on a poem by René de Saint-Prest (18??–1905), is a Mephistophelian tale set to music in three verses and a refrain. The piano introduction creates the mood with solid B minor chords: the refined world of the *mélodie* has been relinquished in favour of a demonic vaudeville. In the first verse the gleeful devil looks on as an old baron, 'à l'âme impie et fière' ('with his pagan fury'), leads his gang in nightly cruelty and extortion. The baron's meeting with his henchmen is represented by two series of accented ascending quaver (eighth-note) chords, like the sudden flight of ancient owls or bats. The piano prolongs the motif for two brief phrases. The first is in dotted rhythms on a dominant-seventh chord, as if describing the boorish disarray of the horde. The second finishes in a plateau of D major chords, repeated in the right hand, generating their energy from the tonic of the left hand. This time the horrid troop takes off with the baron in the lead. The Devil is now free to celebrate, 'palpitant de bonheur' ('shivering with joy'). But in the second verse the old baron learns the hard way to beware of Satan and his secret weapon, when it is his turn to be snatched by

the Evil One and thrown into the blazing inferno, 'sa fournaise immense' ('his massive oven'). The following refrain becomes a victory dance. The last verse begins in a shiver of terror caused by this spooky story. In the final refrain, the Devil continues to rejoice, for he is truly the leading man of this tale. Flégier joins the long line of romantic lore using the theme of damnation. His *mélodie* recalls, in its message as well as its form, a list of devil's songs including Gounod's 'Ronde du Veau d'or' and 'Song of the Flea' by Berlioz and Mussorgsky.

À la dérive ('Adrift at Sea') (1888) [7], set to a poem by Jean Richepin (1849–1926), is a sea-chanty (subtitled 'Lamento') that once again remarkably illustrates the triangular relationship between the poet, the composer and the sea. It is not the ship that is cast adrift here, but indeed the sailor's very being, as he is incapable of resisting the magnetic attraction of the sea, synonymous with his state of alienation, instability and deceit, instead of remaining on land near the one he loves. The opening bars in the piano plunge into instability: what should logically be a full-octave arpeggio in the second inversion of a G minor triad is immediately decapitated and instead backtracks in a descending five-note scale, as if already thwarted from its goal. The descending motive continues with the vocal entry, punctuated by an *acciaccatura*, a sob on the word 'cantilène' ('cantilena'). The piano answers the cry of 'roulis, roulons' ('pitch and sway') with the surge and plunge of more five-note cells, intensified by their hemidemisemiquaver (64th-note) rhythm. A modulation to D minor, with the addition of the augmented C sharp leading tone, clearly translates the poet's bitterness as he endures the blaring screams of the wind, 'railleurs, des flonflons' ('mocking winds loudly shriek'). Flégier creates a musical coda with the opening line of poetry ('la mer pleure une cantilène', 'the sea weeps a cantilena'), returning to the initial tonality which, with its two sets of five-note descending octaves, seal the inevitable fate of this man who is destined to remain alone.

Chant d'automne ('Autumn Song') (1888) [8], poem by Armand Silvestre (1837–1901), quite naturally calls for a comparison with Gabriel Fauré's famous setting of the same text. Flégier chooses a more resigned and less turbulent opening tempo than that of his contemporary. His *mélodie* develops in five thematic sections. First, the impression of a dreary sky is accentuated by descending phrases on the text 'horizons navrants'



Flégier autograph with a quotation from his *mélodie Sérénade mélancolique*
(from the collection of Mary Dibbern)

(‘desolate horizons’) and ‘aurores pâlies’ (‘pale sunrises’), followed by an increasingly rapid pace, as if whirled by the wind to illustrate ‘sur l’aile des regrets’ (‘on wings of regret’). The theme of youthfulness briefly steadies the tempo, but it accelerates once again, as if to mark the inexorable passage of time. Then a memory of past love creates an *energico appassionato*, soon appeased by the reprise of the first theme, punctuated with the soaring arch of semiquavers (sixteenth notes) two bars before the end, as if for a final farewell. In this *mélodie*, where Fauré accentuated passion and exalted Romanticism, Flégier has chosen a musical description of the passing of time, expressed with subtle, pensive refinement.

Flégier enters the world of Paul Verlaine (1844–96) with *Apaisement* (‘Tenderness’) (1896) [9] from *La Bonne Chanson* (where its title is ‘L’Heure exquise’). Admirers of French song will recall the refinement and sensitivity of the setting of this poem by

Reynaldo Hahn. Clearly, Flégier's version for low voice, viola, and piano is no less subtle than that of his more famous colleague. Flégier actually wrote three versions, the first for voice and piano (in keys for medium or high voice), the second for voice, violin and piano (also in high and medium keys), and the third for low voice (contralto or bass), piano and cello. Because the last version has not yet been located, this recording presents a version for bass voice, viola and piano, created by transposing the second version. The 'Clair de lune' scene from Massenet's *Werther* is recalled by the instrumental introduction. The vocal line enters over a gentle, peaceful landscape. The piano creates a cushion of sound with small, delicate touches of alternating long or short notes, perhaps depicting the nocturnal songs of birds or the rustling of leaves as soft tremolos in the right hand recall the gently lapping water of the pond. The viola echoes the voice; they seek each other and criss-cross in the musical radiance of dancing iridescent lights of the moon and stars before uniting at the moment when 'le vent pleure' ('the winds whisper'). The voice expresses the text 'descendre du firmament' ('descend from the heavens') by rising, as if seeking the moon's iridescent glow, as the viola delicately traces a gesture in the opposite direction. The final repetition of the phrase 'c'est l'heure exquise' ('this is the moment of bliss') underpins the ephemeral quality of this moment, a moment to be welcomed and fully savoured, for perhaps it will never return.

The *lamento Les Larmes* ('Tears') (1892), poem by Jean Richepin ^[10], is another demonstration of Flégier's predilection for maritime themes. A sailor, far from his country, weeps for the loss of his family and his beloved. Flégier uses triplets in the pianist's right hand to describe the continual flow of his tears. At first tentative, then ever increasing, they become mounting waves and then a tempest over the ocean. Flégier constructs his *mélodie* as if it were an operatic scene culminating when the sailor asks the sea: 'Es-tu de la terre inconsolée le pleur amer?' ('Are you the bitter tear of the inconsolable earth?'). The singer's expression is intensified by the *acciaccatura* preceding the high note on the word 'amer' ('bitter'). Richepin certainly used the play on words also used by Marbeuf¹⁸ ('l'amour et la mer ont l'amer pour partage' ('love and the sea share

¹⁸ French Baroque poet (1596–1645) Pierre de Marbeuf's most famous sonnet was 'À Philis', from which this verse is taken. It creates a play on words between 'the sea' (*la mer*), 'the land-mark' (*l'amor*), and 'bitter' (*amer*).

landmarks')) that the composer no doubt appreciated. The song ends with a reprise of the first theme over pianistic triplets, then sextuplets, as if describing the last crashing of the waves before peace returns. Tears, like waves, seem to vanish into the distance.

In his *Confessions* (Book 10, Chapter 33) Saint Augustin admits that vocal music has 'great usefulness' as part of the liturgy. But he 'hesitates between the danger of this pleasure and its usefulness', warning against uncontrolled use of music in religious expression, for a believer might be 'less moved by the message than by the singing'. With his *O salutaris* [1] (1882) Flégier, even though reputedly a non-believer, perfectly understood this idea. He presents an uncluttered, melodic prayer for solo voice and piano, in the tradition of the French school of motet composition beloved of composers from Charles Gounod to César Franck. The text, taken from Thomas Aquinas' liturgy, is set with stark simplicity, avoiding useless grandiloquence. A few ornaments and a broad vocal line, whether ascending or descending and always saving the highest pitch for the keyword 'hostia', bestow upon this piece restrained solemnity and, in consequence, make it highly effective, both in aesthetic and liturgical terms. There are four versions of this *mélodie*, all with accompaniment for piano or organ. Our recording presents the bass-voice solo version in its original key of E flat major. The second version adds a violin obbligato to the original scoring. A third version, in F major, is for medium voice, harp, violin, choir *ad libitum*, and a duet version, in E major, uses two equal solo voices (either medium or low).

An excerpt from Verlaine's collection *Sagesse*, the poem *Je ne sais pourquoi* ('I do not know why') (1894) [2] expresses anger, love and especially the poet's bewilderment after his estrangement from his lover, the young Arthur Rimbaud. The author compares himself to a seagull longing to fly freely into the sky but pulled down by a supernatural attraction for the crests of the waves. Flégier's music blends perfectly with the textual structure, in a sequential five-theme ABABA form. In the first section the halting rhythm translates the dismay felt in the poet's heart. Both rhythm and melody then lighten, taking flight as the gull rises into the sky. The return of dotted rhythms describes the sun, liberty and a vast space, this last becoming the climactic moment of the song, immediately followed by renewed, agitated flight. Like Icarus, the poet longs

to fly toward the sun. Using a vocal interval of a thirteenth (travelling from low G to a *fortissimo* high D), the following four bars beautifully express the text ‘un instinct la guide à travers cette immensité’ (‘instinct guides it through this vast space’), with the last world elongated over harp-like figuration in the piano. The music then calms unexpectedly into *pianississimo*, and, as if gently cradled, the drowsy seagull abandons itself to the breeze that carries it gently along. The reprise of the first theme, with its still unanswered question, returns the listener to reality, renewing the emotion of the poet’s despair after his abandonment.

Flégier returns to Spain with the drinking song *Ma coupe* (‘My Goblet’) (1870) [13], on a poem by René de Saint-Prest. Strangely, this *mélodie* seems simultaneously to combine elements of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* (‘Fin ch’han dal vino’) with the drinking song (‘Le vin dissipe la tristesse’) from Ambroise Thomas’ *Hamlet* (could this be a nod from Flégier to his teacher?). The two verses with refrain serve up all of the ingredients of this musical and semantic menu: Spanish wine, mordants inside triplets, an invitation to friends, burning desire to banish the ‘hideuse troupe’ (‘hideous horde’) of afflictions, and most importantly, his ‘chère maîtresse’ (‘dear mistress’), the goblet, whose nectar – (like Hamlet’s ‘liqueur enchanteresse’) – drowns sadness and helps him forget the ‘rêves déçus’ (‘futile dreams’) of love in the ‘ivresse qui rend heureux’ (‘drunkenness where I will find joy’).

The musicologist Hervé Oléon began his career as a classical singer, his solo engagements including numerous operas, recitals and oratorios in France, Germany, Italy and the United States. From 2003 to 2009, he worked as a freelance member of the Chorus of the Opéra National in Paris. Since 2008 he has been the Artistic Director of the Res Lyrica Association which promotes French repertoire of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He has also served as a music critic for several internet sites. The General Assistant Secretary of the International Massenet Association, he is also the Editorial Director of the annual Journal that it has published since the end of 2014. He is co-author (with Mary Dibbern) of Massenet: General Catalogue of Works (Pendragon Press, New York) and has written a monograph on Massenet’s last Muse, Lucy Arbell, voix d’ombre et de lumières... (in preparation from Res Lyrica, Paris).

The American bass **Jared Schwartz** is a versatile artist with a rich and varied performance experience in opera, art-song, oratorio, musical theatre, gospel and chamber music. His first disc for Toccata Classics, *Gabriel Fauré: Songs for Bass Voice and Piano* (with Scottish pianist-musicologist Roy Howat), entered *Billboard's* Traditional Classical Music Chart as No. 7 and attained No. 1 positions in Amazon's 'Hot New Releases' and 'Classical Best Sellers'. The album was welcomed by *Gramophone* ('All the songs suit his musicality well, and some [...] seem positively to gain from Schwartz's intensity'), *Fanfare* ('This is a recording that should be in the collection of everyone who loves French song'), the *Journal of Singing* of the National Association of Teachers of Singing ('In the lower range, his voice attains its richest and most distinctive beauty') and *Opera News* ('He is a sensitive and effective interpreter, bringing real emotional involvement. [...] *Nocture* is ravishingly sung, with poignant imagery'). Schwartz's vocal recitals in the USA, France and Austria have included collaboration with pianist Mary Dibbern for inaugural seasons of the Joan Stockstill Godsey Concert Series at Mercer University (Macon, Georgia), the Fine Arts Series (Sulphur Springs, Texas), and the Sunday Classical Series of the Winnsboro Center for the Arts (Texas). They frequently perform together in Dallas at the University of Texas, St Matthew's Cathedral Arts, Dallas Athletic Club and the Puccini Society. Jared Schwartz is in demand as an oratorio soloist, with recent performances of Verdi's Requiem, Haydn's *Creation*, Fauré's Requiem and Handel's *Messiah*. He has also collaborated with Grammy-nominated harpsichordist Jory Vinikour in the Early Music Festival of Rocky Ridge Music Center.



Photo: Beau Bumpas

Jared Schwartz was born in Berne, Indiana, where he began to play the piano at the age of three, then began lessons on violin at seven and French horn at ten. He studied piano with Masson Robertson of Indiana University-Purdue University and twice won the Frédéric Chopin Award (1998, 2000). He majored in music at Bethel College (Mishawaka, Indiana), studying voice with Victoria Garret and piano with Alexander Toradze at Indiana University-South Bend. He was awarded the Arthur Assum Scholarship to attend the Eastman School of Music (Rochester, New York), where he earned a graduate degree in voice. His solo roles with the Eastman Opera Theatre include productions of *East and West*, *La Rondine* and *Claudia Legare*. Since 2007 he has continued vocal studies with David Jones in New York. Between 2008 and 2013, he participated in masterclasses at the Franz-Schubert-Institut, Baden-bei-

Wien, Austria, with Elly Ameling, Wolfram Rieger, Wolfgang Holzmaier, Rudolf Jansen, Julius Drake and, in the USA, with Jory Vinkour and Michael Pinkerton. In 2011 he composed and produced *HOPE*, a recording of his original songs performed with members of the Dallas and Fort Worth symphony orchestras. In 2013 he won the People's Choice Award in the *American Traditions Vocal Competition*.

His website can be found at www.jaredschwartz.com.

The American pianist **Mary Dibbern** is an internationally known specialist in the field of vocal coaching and accompaniment and is currently the Music Director of Education and Family Programs for The Dallas Opera. Her long career has embraced recitals, opera-coaching, recording, master-classes, Young Artists programmes and television and radio appearances in Europe, North America, and Asia. After completing her Master of Music at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, she moved to Paris to work with Dalton Baldwin, Pierre Bernac, Nadia Boulanger and Gérard Souzay. She continued the study and performance of concert-song repertoire at the Orford Arts Centre in Quebec, the Geneva Conservatoire, Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey, and the Franz-Schubert Institut in Baden-bei-Wien, Austria, where she worked with Jorg Demus, Hans Hotter and Erik Werba, and received the Franz Schubert Prize for Lieder Accompaniment. The notable vocalists with whom she has recorded include Brigitte Balleys, Danielle Borst, Philippe Huttenlocher and Kurt Ollmann. Her discography includes *Mémoires de Jacques Leguerney* (Claves), winner of the Grand Prix du Disque; *Offenbach au Menu* (Maguelone); *Mémoires de Jacques Leguerney* (two LPs, Harmonia Mundi France); *Under Her Spell: The Viardot Effect* (Duelin' Sopranos); *Negro Spirituals* (Foxglove Audio); *Lotte Lehmann: To Honor Her Legacy* (Arabesque Recordings); *Le Chant de la Mer* (Aziles); and *Le Premier Matin du Monde* (Cambria). In 2015, she was the Artistic Director for *Gabriel Fauré: Songs for Bass Voice and Piano* with Jared Schwartz, bass, and Roy Howat, pianist, issued by Toccata Classics.

Mary Dibbern has been guest vocal coach at the Opéra National de Paris and the Opéra-Comique; at the operas of Bordeaux, Châtelet, Dijon, Lyons, Nice and Toulouse; at the Festival de Radio France-Montpellier, the Théâtre Municipal de Lausanne, the Círculo Portuense de Opera (Oporto), the Lithuanian National Opera, the Latvian National Opera and the Shanghai Opera House, where she was in charge of musical and language preparation for French-



Photo: Mike Itashiki

language productions. In the United States she was guest coach at Seattle Opera, Fort Worth Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Kentucky Opera, Opera Memphis and Hawaii Opera Theatre, and she served as Head of Music at the Minnesota Opera from 2009 to 2012.

As a writer, Mary Dibbern is published by Pendragon Press. She is the author of Performance Guides for *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *Carmen*, *Faust*, *Roméo et Juliette*, *Werther* and *Manon*. She is a co-author of *Interpreting the Songs of Jacques Leguerney: A Guide for Study and Performance*. Her *Massenet and His Letters: A New Biography* (translated from the French version by Anne Massenet) appeared in 2015 and her *Massenet: General Catalogue of Works*, in collaboration with Hervé Oléon, in 2016. Her musical editions of French works are published by Editions Max Eschig and Musik Fabrik (Paris), and Classical Vocal Reprints.

Her website can be found at www.Mary-Dibbern.com.

Thomas Demer, viola, has played with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra for 31 years, also playing as a kickin' country fiddler for those three decades. At sixteen, he won his first old-time fiddlers' contest while he was the youngest member of the Tucson Symphony. He later became their Principal Viola. Since before graduating from the University of Arizona School of Music (in 1980), he has maintained a parallel career as a honky-tonk bar-band fiddling 'sideman'. He is a former member of the Omaha Symphony and the Fort Worth Chamber Orchestra and a founding member of the 'Music in the Mountains' festival in Durango, Colorado. He has performed with Voices of Change on viola, mandolin and musical saw, and has recorded chamber music for Klavier Records and for the Hubbard Chamber Music Series. In addition to playing viola for the Dallas Symphony, Tom is also their fretted/plucked instrument musician and has recorded and toured Europe with the DSO, playing orchestral mandolin and tenor banjo. As 'Fiddlin' Man', Demer plays weekly nursing home concerts sponsored by Texas Winds Musical Outreach. A talented arranger, Tom writes orchestral arrangements for pops fiddling and writes and records full-string section parts for commercial pop and rock song productions. He has produced recordings for the '90s band Chamber Pop and for his son, the singer-songwriter Paul Demer. For decades Tom has delighted nightclub patrons and pops concertgoers with his uniquely entertaining style of authentic country fiddling with an orchestral slant. As he begins his fourth decade as a symphonic musician, he continually strives to be among the most entertaining and versatile string-players in the business.

His website can be found at <http://tomdemer.com>.



Texts and Translations

1 *Le Cor*

Poème pittoresque

Poem by Alfred de Vigny

J'aime le son du Cor, le soir, au fond des bois,
Soit qu'il chante les pleurs de la biche aux
 abois,
Ou l'adieu du chasseur que l'écho faible
 accueille,
Et que le vent du nord porte de feuille en
 feuille.

Que de fois, seul, dans l'ombre à minuit
 demeuré,
J'ai souri de l'entendre, et plus souvent pleuré !
Car je croyais ouïr de ces bruits prophétiques
Qui précédaient la mort des Paladins antiques.

Âmes des Chevaliers, revenez-vous encore ?
Est-ce vous qui parlez avec la voix du Cor ?
Roncevaux ! Roncevaux ! Dans ta sombre
 vallée
L'ombre du grand Roland n'est donc pas
 consolée !

1 *The Horn*

Picturesque poem

I love the distant sound of the horn, at night in
 the woods
Whether it sings of the deer's tears,
Or the hunter's echoing farewell
Carried through the leaves by the cool wind.

Often, I remained alone in the midnight
 shadows,
Sometimes smiled to hear it but, more often,
 wept!
For I seemed to recall those hopeless sounds
Before the ancient knights' defeat.

Souls of these knights, have you returned?
Is it you who speak through the horn's call?
Roncevaux! Roncevaux! In your sombre valley
Great Roland's spirit finds no consolation!

2 *La Poésie*

Évocation

Poem by Édouard Pailleron

Lorsque le premier homme à sa première
aurore,
Au sein du monde immense et vierge comme
lui,

Promenait vaguement, pensif et seul encore,
La curiosité de son divin ennui,

Les mots venaient éclore à sa lèvre étonnée
À chaque enchantement du spectacle infini,
Comme vient la chanson éclore au bord du
nid :

À l'heure qu'il naissait la parole était née.

Mais, lorsque s'éveillant de son autre sommeil,
Il vit, plus belle encore que l'aurore première,
Eve nue et debout dans la grande lumière,
Comme un astre vivant, adorable et vermeil ;

Il étendit les bras vers sa maîtresse blonde,
Et, jusqu'à son désir inclinant sa beauté,
Sachant bien que l'amour lui coûterait le monde,
Du remords éternel il fit la volupté ;

Et dans le doux transport dont l'âme était
saisie,
Et dans le dur sanglot qui s'y venait briser,
Tu naquis à ton tour, ô jeune poésie,
De la première larme et du premier baiser !

2 *Poetry*

Evocation

The first man, seeing his first sunrise
In an immense, pristine world
Wandered empty, worried, and all alone
As anxiety welled up within him.

Words had come to open his astonished
mouth
At the enchantment of the glorious spectacle,
Just as a song begins in a bird's nest,
The moment he was born, speech came forth.

But, when he awakened from a deep sleep
He saw, still more beautiful than the first
sunrise,
Eve, naked, standing in a shimmering light,
Like a living star, blushing and ethereal;

He stretched out his arms to his blond lover,
And his desire grew as they lay together,
Though he understood this love would cost
him the world,
To his eternal regret, he gave in to sensual
delight;

And in the sweet sensation seizing his soul
And as he broke out in harsh sobs,
You were born in turn, born as the poetry
Of the first tear and the first kiss!

3 *Au crépuscule*

Barcarolle

Poem by Jean Richépin

Dans le silence
Le bateau dort
Et bord sur bord
Il se balance.

Seul à l'avant
Un petit mousse
D'une voix douce
Siffle le vent.

Au couchant pâle
Et violet
Flotte un reflet
Dernier d'opale.

Les flots déteints
Ont sous la brise
La couleur grise
Des vieux étains.

Alors la veuve
Aux noirs cheveux
Se dit: «Je veux
Faire l'épreuve

De mes écrins
Dans cette glace.»
Et la Nuit place
Parmi ses crins,

3 *At Twilight*

Barcarole

In the silence
The boat rests
As it rocks
From side to side.

At the front
Sits a young sailor
Whose sweet voice
Whistles in the wind.

In the sunset's pale
And violet light
Floats a reflection,
A celestial opal.

The shadowy waves
Ruffled by the winds
Glisten the grey
Of old pewter.

Then the widow
With black hair
Murmurs: 'I want
To gaze upon

My finest jewelry
In this watery mirror'
And Night adorns
Her hair,

Sous ses longs voiles
Aux plis dormants,
Les diamants
De ses étoiles.

[4] *L'Homme et la Mer*

Contemplation

Poem by Charles Baudelaire

Homme libre, toujours tu chériras la mer !
La mer est ton miroir; tu contemples ton âme
Dans le déroulement infini de sa lame,
Et ton esprit n'est pas un gouffre moins amer.

Tu te plais à plonger au sein de ton image;
Tu l'embrasses des yeux et des bras, et ton
cœur
Se distrait quelquefois de sa propre rumeur
Au bruit de cette plainte indomptable et
sauvage.

Vous êtes tous les deux ténébreux et discrets :
Homme, nul n'a sondé le fond de tes abîmes ;
Ô mer, nul ne connaît tes richesses intimes,
Tant vous êtes jaloux de garder vos secrets !

Et cependant voilà des siècles innombrables
Que vous vous combattez sans pitié ni
remords,
Tellement vous aimez le carnage et la mort,
Ô lutteurs éternels, ô frères implacables !

Under its long veils
Of caressing waves,
With the diamonds
Of its stars.

[4] *Man and the Sea*

Contemplation

Hero, you will always cherish the sea!
The sea, a mirror where you contemplate your
soul
In the everlasting surging of its waves,
Your spirit is a chasm just as bitter.

You enjoy plunging into the heart of your image;
You embrace it with your eyes and your arms,
and your heart
Is sometimes distracted by its own noise,
By the sound of this savage, untameable moaning.

Both of you are shadowy and discreet:
Man, nothing has measured the depth of your
chasms;
Oh sea, no one knows your intimate richness,
For you jealously guard your secrets.

Now, however, see the innumerable centuries
That you wage war with neither pity nor regret,
For you truly love carnage and death,
Oh eternal warriors, oh unrelenting brothers!

5 *La Neige*

Poème dramatique

Poem by Alfred de Vigny

Qu'il est doux d'écouter des histoires,
Des histoires du temps passé,
Quand les branches d'arbres sont noires,
Quand la neige est épaisse et charge un sol
glacé !

Ils sont petits et seuls, ces deux pieds dans la
neige.
Derrière les vitraux dont l'azur le protège,
Le Roi pourtant regarde et voudrait ne pas
voir,
Car il craint sa colère et surtout son pouvoir.

Est-ce vous, blanche Emma, princesse de la
Gaule ?
Quel amoureux fardeau pèse à sa jeune épaule?
C'est le page Éginard, qu'à ses genoux le jour
Surprit, ne dormant pas, dans la secrète tour.

5 *The Snow*

Dramatic poem

How sweet it is to hear the old stories,
The old stories of past times,
When the tree branches are dead,
When the snow is thick and covers the icy
ground!

They are small and alone, these two footprints
in the snow.
Hidden behind the stained-glass windows,
The King is watching and wishes he hadn't
seen,
For he fears his own anger and, especially, his
power.

Is that you, pale Emma, princess of Gaule?
What loving burden weighs upon her young
shoulder?
It's the page Éginard who, as he lay with her,
daylight
Surprised, while they remained awake in the
secret tower.

6 Le Manoir

Légende

Poem by René de Saint-Prest

Strophe 1:

Il est un vieux manoir à la muraille altièr,
Là règne un grand seigneur à l'âme impie et
fière,
Que l'on redoute aux environs,
Le plus cruel des hauts barons!
Lorsque tombe la nuit, il quitte la tourelle
En s'écriant : amis, courons!
Puis l'arme au poing, le coeur gonflé de rage,
Ils s'en vont répandant l'effroi sur leur
passage!

Strophe 2:

Un soir qu'il chevauchait dans la forêt
prochaine,
Le diable, le suivant, l'entraîna dans la plaine,
Et s'élança sur lui soudain
En blasphémant saisit sa main
Et demi-mort d'effroi, tout pâle et sans défense,
Le renversa sur le chemin ;
Puis l'entraînant, malgré sa résistance,
L'emporta, d'un seul bond, dans sa fournaise
immense !

6 The Manor

Legend

Verse 1:

In an old manor behind a towering wall
Reigned a nobleman, whose pagan, menacing
fury
Was feared through all the land,
For he was the cruelest of the lofty barons!
At nightfall, he left the turret
And shouted: 'Friends, let's raise hell!'
Then, with vicious hearts, clutching their
weapons,
They tormented everyone on their path.

Verse 2:

One night, as the baron rode through the
nearby forest,
The devil stalked him and yanked him out
onto the moor
And deftly striking him,
Cursing and swearing, grabbed his haughty
hand.
The devil yanked the baron, half-dead of fright,
Completely pale and defenseless, down onto
the road.
Then, pulling him along like plunder,
In one fell swoop, threw him into his massive
oven!

Strophe 3:

On dit que tous les soirs, près de la tour
tremblante,
On entend retentir une voix languissante
Qui remplit l'air de cris affreux;
Puis on croit voir briller des feux.
C'est l'âme du baron qu'avec lui, sur la terre,
La nuit, Satan traîne en tous lieux;
Et du château les noirs oiseaux de proie,
Seuls seigneurs désormais, poussent des cris
de joie!

Refrain:

Et Satan, l'œil en feu, palpitant de bonheur,
Enfin sûr de sa proie est près du vieux
seigneur!

[7] À la dérive

Lamento

Poem by Jean Richépin

La mer pleure une cantilène
Sur d'invisibles violons.

Je n'aimerai plus Madeleine.
Tanguis, tanguons ! Roulis, roulons !
Les nuits sont courtes, les jours longs.

La mer pleure une cantilène
Où passent, railleurs, des flonflons.
Tanguis, tanguons ! Roulis, roulons !

Verse 3:

They say that every evening, near the haunted
turret,
You hear echoes of an impotent voice
Drifting through the air with horrendous
moans
As burning fires tinge the air.
The phantom is the nobleman's soul who Satan,
Every night, tortures wherever he goes;
And from the castle, the black birds of prey,
Now the sole rulers, scream cries of joy!

Refrain:

And Satan, eyes ablaze, shivering with joy,
Transfixed on his plunder, captures the
haggard lord!

[7] Adrift at Sea

Lament

The sea weeps a cantilena
On invisible violins.

I will no longer love Madeleine.
Pitch and sway! Sail, sail on!
The nights are short, the days long.

The sea weeps a cantilena
Where mocking winds loudly shriek.
Pitch and sway! Sail, sail on!

Mais c'est de sanglots qu'elle est pleine.
Elle et moi, nous nous désolons.
Les nuits sont courtes, les jours longs.

Je n'aimerai plus Madeleine.
Mieux vaut courir les Madelons.
Tanguis, tanguons ! Roulis, roulons !

Mais je sens passer son haleine
Et vois flotter ses cheveux blonds.
Les nuits sont courtes, les jours longs.

À son parfum de marjolaine
J'ai frêmi du crâne aux talons.
Tanguis, tanguons ! Roulis, roulons !

[8] Chant d'automne

Mélodie

Poem by Armand Silvestre

Automne au ciel brumeux, aux horizons
navrants,
Aux rapides couchants, aux aurores pâlies,
Je regarde couler, avec l'eau des torrents,¹
Tes jours faits de mélancolies.

Sur l'aile du regret mes esprits emportés,²
Comme s'il se pouvait que notre âge renaisse!
Parcourent, en rêvant, les coteaux enchantés
Où, jadis, sourit ma jeunesse.

¹ Original poem: 'Je regarde couler, comme l'eau des torrents.'

² Original poem: 'Sur l'aile des regrets mes esprits emportés.'

But the sea overflows with sobbing.
We grieve there together.
The nights are short, the days long.

I will no longer love Madeleine.
Better to chase after the Madelons.¹
Pitch and sway! Sail, sail on!

But I am haunted by the caress of her breath
And taunted by her swirling blond hair.
The nights are short, the days long.

At just a whiff of her marjoram perfume
I shivered from head to toe.
Pitch and sway! Sail, sail on!

[8] Autumn Song

Mélodie

Autumn with hazy skies, with desolate
horizons,
With rapid sunsets, with pale sunrises,
I watch them flow, mountainous torrents,
Your days shaped by sadness.

My thoughts are carried away on wings of
regret,
As if our youth could be reborn,

¹ Women whom the sailor can find in every port.

Je sens, au clair soleil du souvenir vainqueur,
Refleurir en bouquet les roses déliées,
Et monter à mes yeux des larmes, qu'en mon
cœur,
Mes vingt ans avaient oubliées !

9 Apaisement

Mélodie

Poem by Paul Verlaine

La lune blanche
Luit dans les bois ;
De chaque branche
Part une voix
Sous la ramée...

O bien-aimée.

L'étang reflète,
Profond miroir,
La silhouette
Du saule noir
Où le vent pleure...

Rêvons : c'est l'heure.

Un vaste et tendre
Apaisement

And once more dreamily run over the
enchanted hills
Where youth smiled at me long ago.

And now, in the bright sunshine of vivid
memory,
The scattered roses reunite in a bouquet,
And my eyes well up with tears that my heart
Forgot during my twenties.

9 Tenderness

Mélodie

The crystal moon
Sparkles in the woods,
Through every branch
A voice is heard
Beneath the boughs...

O my beloved.

The water reflects,
Like a mysterious mirror,
The silhouette
Of the black willow
Where the winds whisper...

Dreams begin in this time.

A vast and loving
Tenderness

Semble descendre
Du firmament
Que l'astre irise...

C'est l'heure exquise.

10 Les Larmes

Lamento

Poem by Jean Richepin

Pleurons nos chagrins, chacun le nôtre.
Une larme tombe, puis une autre.
Toi, que pleures-tu ?³ Ton doux pays,
Tes parents lointains, ta fiancée.
Moi, mon existence dépensée
En vœux trahis.

Pleurons nos chagrins, chacun le nôtre.
Une larme tombe, puis une autre.
Semons dans la mer ces pâles fleurs.
À notre sanglot qui se lamente
Elle répondra par la tourmente
Des flots hurleurs.

Pleurons nos chagrins, chacun le nôtre.
Une larme tombe, puis une autre.
Peut-être toi-même, ô triste mer,
Mer au gout de larme âcre et salée,
Es-tu de la terre inconsolée
Le pleur amer.

Seems to descend
From the heavens
Lit by the stars....

This is the moment of bliss.

10 Tears

Lamento

Weep over our sorrows, each his own,
One tear falls, then another.
You, what do you mourn? Your dear homeland,
Your distant family, your fiancée?
I mourn for a life wasted
In broken promises.

Weep over our sorrows, each his own,
One tear falls, then another.
Fling these pale flowers into the sea.
Our sobbing cries
Will be answered by the crashing
Of the sea's howling waves.

Weep over our sorrows, each his own,
One tear falls, then another.
Perhaps you as well, o sea of sadness,
Sea tasting of acrid, salty tears,
Are you the unconsolable earth's
Bitter tear?

³ Original poem: 'Toi, qui pleures-tu ?'

[11] O Salutaris

O Salutaris Hostia
Quae caeli pandis ostium:
Bella premunt hostilia,
Da robur, fer auxilium.

[12] Je ne sais pourquoi

Marine
Poem by Paul Verlaine

Je ne sais pourquoi
Mon esprit amer
D'une aile inquiète et folle vole sur la mer.
Tout ce qui m'est cher,
D'une aile d'effroi
Mon amour le couve au ras des flots. Pourquoi,
pourquoi ?

Mouette à l'essor mélancolique,
Elle suit la vague, ma pensée,
À tous les vents du ciel balancée,
Et biaisant quand la marée oblique,
Mouette à l'essor mélancolique.

Ivre de soleil
Et de liberté,
Un instinct la guide à travers cette immensité.
La brise d'été
Sur le flot vermeil
DouceMENT la porte en un tiède demi-sommeil.

[11] O Salutaris

O saving Victim, opening wide
The gate of heaven to all us below:
Our foes press on from every side;
Thine aid supply, Thy strength bestow.

[12] I do not know why

Seascape

I do not know why
My bitter spirit
With uneasy, delirious wings flies across the
sea.
Protecting everything I love,
With fearful wings,
I nest over the trembling waves. Why, why?

The melancholy seagull
Soars over the waves of my thoughts,
Catching the sky's rocking winds,
Then angling away as the tide turns,
The melancholy seagull.

Drunken with the sun
And with freedom,
Instinct guides it through this vast space.
The summer breezes
On the ruddy waves
Gently cradle it in a warm languid dream.

Parfois si tristement elle crie
Qu'elle alarme au loin le pilote,
Puis au gré du vent se livre et flotte
Et plonge, et l'aile toute meurtrie
Revole, et puis si tristement crie !

Je ne sais pourquoi
Mon esprit amer
D'une aile inquiète et folle vole sur la mer.
Tout ce qui m'est cher,
D'une aile d'effroi
Mon amour le couve au ras des flots. Pourquoi,
pourquoi ?

13 Ma coupe

Chanson à boire

Poem by René de Saint-Prest

Strophe 1:

Holà! qu'on m'apporte ma coupe,
Et qu'on appelle mes amis !
Si vous m'en croyez, de tous nos soucis
Nous allons chasser la hideuse troupe !

Il faut nous égayer morbleu !
Que dites-vous du vin d'Espagne ?
Réchauffons vite, à son doux feu,
Nos coeurs que le froid gagne !

Sometimes it sadly cries out
And alarms the distant pilot,
Then at a whim of the wind it gives up and floats
And dives, and with a damaged wing,
Keeps flying, and then sadly cries out.

I do not know why
My bitter spirit
With uneasy, delirious wings flies across the
sea.
Everything dear to me,
With fearful wings,
My love nestles over it on top of the waves.
Why, why?

13 My Goblet

Drinking Song

Verse 1:

Hey! Bring me my goblet,
And bring on my friends!
Listen here, now we can banish
Our hideous hordes of problems!

We must cheer up, my god!
Why not bring out some Spanish wine?
Its sweet burn will perk up
Our hearts before they frost over!

Strophe 2:

Jadis, oui, j'ai fait la folie
De croire à de tendres serments !
Quels rêves déçus ! quels affreux
tourments !
Par bonheur, un jour, tout cela s'oublie.

Hein? qui donc parle ici d'amour ?
Au diable ! la trompeuse flamme !
Ma coupe m'aime, et sans détour
C'est une rude femme!

Refrain:

A moi, ma coupe, à moi, chère maîtresse !
Au nectar qui jaillit de ton sein généreux
Laisse-moi noyer la tristesse,
Ah! donne-moi l'ivresse
Qui rend heureux !

Verse 2:

Once upon a time, yes, I was crazy enough
To believe in promises of love!
What pointless dreams! What wretched
torments!
Thankfully, one day, all that was behind me.

Eh? Now who dares mention love?
To the devil with your miserable lies!
My goblet loves me, and without doubt
She's the truest of all woman!

Refrain:

Come to me, my goblet, come, my dear, sweet
mistress!
With nectar flowing from your bounteous
breast
Let me drown my sadness,
Ah! Make me so drunk
That I will find joy!

*Translations by Mary Dibbern
and Jared Schwartz*



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ANGE FLÉGIER *Mélodies for Bass Voice and Piano*

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2	<i>La Poésie*</i>	6:37
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13	<i>Ma coupe**</i>	3:09

Jared Schwartz, bass

Mary Dibbern, piano

Thomas Demer, viola 9

TT 64:31

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