

WIGMORE HALL

Monday 15 April 2024
1.00pm

Véronique Gens soprano
Susan Manoff piano

Charles Gounod (1818-1893)

Où voulez-vous aller? (1839)
Viens, les gazons sont verts (1875)

Edmond de Polignac (1834-1901)

Lamento (pub. 1870s)

Ernest Chausson (1855-1899)

La chanson bien douce Op. 34 No. 1 (1898)
Les papillons Op. 2 No. 3 (1880)

Reynaldo Hahn (1874-1947)

Le rossignol des lilas (1913)
Séraphine (1892)
Paysage (1890)
Les cygnes (1893-4)
Aimons-nous! (1891)

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Le papillon et la fleur Op. 1 No. 1 (1861)
Les berceaux Op. 23 No. 1 (1879)
Les roses d'Ispahan Op. 39 No. 4 (1884)

Henri Duparc (1848-1933)

L'invitation au voyage (1870)
Chanson triste (1868)

Reynaldo Hahn

Trois jours de vendange (1891)
Néère from *Etudes latines* (1900)
Le printemps (1899)



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All the composers represented in today's programme were prominent figures in the *grands salons* that dominated both the social and musical lives of late 19th-century Paris, and whose intricate workings are so brilliantly dissected in *A la recherche du temps perdu*. That novel's author, Marcel Proust, knew all the composers performed today, and the Venezuelan-born Reynaldo Hahn was his closest friend and for a while his lover. From 1895, Proust and Hahn regularly attended the glittering salon hosted by **Prince Edmond de Polignac** and his wife, the American sewing-machine heiress Winnaretta Singer, whose drawing room boasted two grand pianos and a Cavallé-Coll organ. Both Polignacs were homosexual, and agreed to a *mariage blanc* to ensure Edmond's financial security and the social advancement of Winnaretta, who later became one of the 20th Century's most important musical patrons. The well-connected Polignac family – Edmond's grandmother was a close friend of Marie Antoinette – disapproved of his plan to be a professional composer, but he persisted long enough to surpass Bizet in a competition for new operas. 'Lamento' treats a text by Théophile Gautier that Berlioz famously set as 'Sur les lagunes' in *Les nuits d'été*: Polignac's version reveals a sure-footed approach and a surprisingly distinctive harmonic language.

Gounod was the first French composer to produce a significant body of art song: Ravel described him as 'the founder of the *mélodie*' and the teenaged Proust ranked him alongside only Mozart. 'Où voulez-vous aller?' is another setting of a Gautier text immortalised in *Les nuits d'été*; Gounod's version precedes Berlioz's by a year and is somewhat more decorous, with hints of Italianate *bel canto*. 'Viens, les gazons sont verts' was composed 36 years later, after operas such as *Faust* and Queen Victoria's patronage had established Gounod as the doyen of French musicians; its freshness and charm belie the reputation for pomposity he had unfairly acquired. Gounod remained central to Parisian musical life until the end of his career – not least at the Conservatoire, where he taught the teenaged Hahn – but knew that his disregard for Wagner made him unfashionable and that a younger generation of composers was already eclipsing him.

Of that group, it might initially have seemed that **Duparc** was destined to claim Gounod's mantle. 'Chanson triste', composed in 1868 when Duparc was just 20, shows his willingness to break convention by emphasising unimportant words – 'Dans', 'un', 'et', 'je'. Over the next two years, Duparc's musical outlook was transformed by seeing *Tristan*, *Rheingold* and *Walküre* in Munich; his Wagnerian immersion is evident in 'L'invitation au voyage', composed in 1870, which responds to Baudelaire with restlessly imaginative music. But by 1885, a neurasthenic condition forced Duparc to abandon composition, though he lived for almost another half-century: his acknowledged output consists only of thirteen songs. In the event it was Duparc's older colleague, **Fauré**, who would ultimately

be regarded as France's greatest *mélodie* composer. 'Le papillon et la fleur' is Fauré's first official work, dating from 1861: an auspicious debut, demonstrating the melodious charm that distinguishes his entire output. Fauré's gifts as a melodist allowed him to turn metrically conventional and regular texts into songs that sound flexible and spontaneous, a quality amply displayed in 'Les berceaux' and 'Les roses d'Isphahan'.

The urbane Fauré was one of the most familiar figures in the salons, and fascinated his fellow artists – not least Proust, who adored his music and may have modelled the fictional Vimteuil on him. The opportunities that the salons offered young composers were not just social: in an age before recording, they were also an important means of disseminating new works and acquiring knowledge of the repertoire. At the age of 16 **Chausson**, intended by his wealthy parents for a career in the law, was introduced by his private tutor to gatherings where he encountered the music of Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann and others in piano duet form. From his marriage in 1883 until his untimely death in a bicycling accident, Chausson hosted his own salon, which was frequented by many of the most important writers and musicians of the day – Mallarmé, Debussy and Ysaÿe prominent among them. 'La chanson bien douce', composed a year before Chausson's death, sets a Verlaine text that urges readers to discover the beauty of poetry and song for themselves; Chausson dedicated this touching song to his daughter. Like the gossamer-light 'Les papillons', composed in 1880, it features a piano part whose delicacy belies its extreme difficulty.

Reynaldo Hahn moved with his family from Caracas to Paris at the age of three, and made his public debut three years later when he sang in a black velvet suit at the salon of Napoleon's niece, Princesse de Metternich. This precociousness saw Hahn become one of Paris's best-known musical figures while he was still a teenager. He composed all but one of the songs heard today before his late 20s; the exception is the elegant 'Le rossignol des lilas', from 1913. By this point, although Hahn still had a successful career ahead of him – as an operetta composer; as a conductor specialising in Mozart; and briefly, just before his death, as director of the Paris Opéra – he already seemed a figure out of time. The decade that defined Hahn was the 1890s, which generated a seemingly endless flow of songs characterised by rapturous melody and sensitivity to poetic nuance – and by voice and piano parts connected with an intimacy perhaps only easily achieved by a composer capable of performing both at the same time. Hahn's songs from this period conjure up the exquisite pleasures of a *belle époque* soon to be destroyed by the horrors of the First World War, and allow us to believe – if only while we listen to them – Proust's extravagant claim that 'never since Schumann has music painted sorrow, tenderness, the calm induced by nature, with such brush strokes of human truth and absolute beauty'.

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Charles Gounod (1818-1893)

Où voulez-vous aller? (1839)

Théophile Gautier

Dites, la jeune
belle,
Où voulez-vous aller?
La voile ouvre son aile,
La brise va souffler!

L'aviron est d'ivoire,
Le pavillon
de moire,
Le gouvernail d'or fin;
J'ai pour lest une orange,
Pour voile une aile d'ange,
Pour mousse un séraphin.

Dites, la jeune
belle,
Où voulez-vous aller?
La voile ouvre son aile,
La brise va souffler!

Est-ce dans la Baltique,
Dans la mer Pacifique,
Dans l'île de Java?
Ou bien est-ce en Norvège,
Cueillir la fleur de neige
Ou la fleur d'Angsoka?

Dites, la jeune
belle,
Où voulez-vous aller?

Menez-moi, dit l
a belle,
À la rive
fidèle
Où l'on aime
toujours.
– Cette rive, ma chère,
On ne la connaît guère
Au pays des amours.

La voile ouvre son aile,
La brise va souffler!

Viens, les gazons sont verts (1875)

*Jules Barbier, after Gil
Vicente*

Si tu dors, jeune
fille,
Debout, debout! voici le
soleil!

Where is it you would go?

Tell me, pretty young
maid,
where is it you would go?
The sail is billowing,
the breeze about to blow!

The oar is of ivory,
the pennant of watered
silk,
the rudder of finest gold;
for ballast I've an orange,
for sail an angel's wing,
for cabin boy a seraph.

Tell me, pretty young
maid,
where is it you would go?
The sail is billowing,
the breeze about to blow!

Perhaps the Baltic,
or the Pacific,
or the Isle of Java?
Or else to Norway,
to pluck the snow flower
or the flower of Angsoka?

Tell me, pretty young
maid,
where is it you would go?

Take me, said the pretty
maid,
to the shore of
faithfulness
where love endures
forever.
– That shore, my sweet,
is scarce known
in the realm of love.

The sail is billowing,
the breeze about to blow!

Come, the lawns are green

If you are sleeping, my
girl,
rise up, rise up, the sun is
here!

Chasse de tes yeux l'indolent
sommeil!
C'est l'heure du réveil!

Suis moi, vive et
gentille!
Pieds nus, viens! Les gazons
sont verts!
Les ruisseaux jaseurs par les
bois déserts
Promènent leurs flots clairs!

Brush idle sleep from
your eyes,
it is time to awake!

Follow me quickly and
sweetly,
barefoot, come, the lawns
are green!
The babbling brooks in
the empty woods
flow with limpid water!

Edmond de Polignac (1834-1901)

Lamento (pub. 1870s)

Théophile Gautier

Connaissez-vous la blanche
tombe
Où flotte avec un son
plaintif
L'ombre d'un if?
Sur l'if, une pâle colombe,
Triste et seule, au soleil
couchant,
Chante son chant;

Un air maladivement
tendre,
A la fois charmant
et fatal,
Qui vous fait mal
Et qu'on voudrait toujours
entendre,
Un air, comme en soupire
aux cieux
L'ange amoureux.

Lament

Do you know the white
tomb,
where the shadow of a
yew
waves plaintively?
On that yew a pale dove,
sad and solitary at
sundown
sings its song;

A melody of morbid
sweetness,
delightful and deathly at
once,
which wounds you
and which you'd like to
hear forever,
a melody, such as in the
heavens,
a lovesick angel sighs.

Ernest Chausson (1855-1899)

La chanson bien douce Op. 34 No. 1 (1898)

Paul Verlaine

Ecoutez la chanson bien
douce
Qui ne pleure que pour vous
plaire.
Elle est discrète, elle est
légère:
Un frisson d'eau sur de la
mousse!

The very gentle song

Listen to the very gentle
song
that weeps but to delight
you.
It is discreet, it is
delicate:
a shiver of water on moss!

La voix vous fut connue (et chère?),
 Mais à présent elle est voilée
 Comme une veuve désolée,
 Pourtant comme elle encore fière,
 Et dans les longs plis de son voile
 Qui palpite aux brises d'automne,
 Cache et montre au cœur qui s'étonne
 La vérité comme une étoile.

The voice was known to you (and dear?),
 but is at present veiled
 like a disconsolate widow,
 and yet like her still proud;
 And in the long folds of her veil
 which flutters in the autumn breeze,
 it hides and shows the astonished heart
 the truth, emblazoned like a star.

Elle dit, la voix reconnue,
 Que la bonté c'est notre vie,
 Que de la haine et de l'envie
 Rien ne reste, la mort venue.

It says, the voice you recognise,
 that kindness is our very life,
 and that of hate and envy
 nothing remains, once death has come.

Accueillez la voix qui persiste
 Dans son naïf épithalame.
 Allez, rien n'est meilleur à l'âme
 Que de faire une âme moins triste!

Welcome the voice that continues
 its simple bridal song.
 Come! Nothing so becomes the soul
 as making souls less sorrowful!

Elle est *en peine* et de passage,
 L'âme qui souffre sans colère,
 Et comme sa moral est claire! ...
 Ecoutez la chanson bien sage.

It is *transient* and *in travail*,
 the soul that suffers without wrath,
 and how manifest its moral is! ...
 Listen to the very wise song.

Les papillons Op. 2 No. 3

(1880)

Théophile Gautier

Butterflies

Les papillons couleur de neige
 Volent par essaims sur la mer;
 Beaux papillons blancs,
 quand pourrai-je
 Prendre le bleu chemin de l'air?

Snow-coloured butterflies
 swarm over the sea;
 beautiful white butterflies, when might I
 take to the azure path of the air?

Savez-vous, ô belle des belles,
 Ma bayadère aux yeux de jais,

Do you know, O beauty of beauties,
 my jet-eyed bayadere –

S'ils me voulaient prêter leurs ailes,
 Dites, savez-vous où j'irais?

were they to lend me their wings,
 do you know where I would go?

Sans prendre un seul baiser aux roses,
 A travers vallons et forêts,
 J'irais à vos lèvres mi-closes,
 Fleur de mon âme, et j'y mourrais.

Without kissing a single rose,
 across valleys and forests
 I'd fly to your half-closed lips,
 flower of my soul, and there would die.

Reynaldo Hahn (1874-1947)

Le rossignol des lilas (1913)

Léopold Dauphin

The nightingale among the lilac

O premier rossignol qui viens
 Dans les lilas, sous ma fenêtre,
 Ta voix m'est douce à reconnaître!
 Nul accent n'est semblable au tien!

O first nightingale to appear
 among the lilac beneath my window,
 how sweet to recognise your voice!
 There is no song like yours!

Fidèle aux amoureux liens,
 Trille encore, divin petit être!

Faithful to the bonds of love,
 trill away, divine little being!

O premier rossignol qui viens
 Dans les lilas, sous ma fenêtre!

O first nightingale to appear
 among the lilac beneath my window!

Nocturne ou matinal, combien
 Ton hymne à l'amour me pénètre!
 Tant d'ardeur fait en moi renaître
 L'écho de mes avrils anciens,
 O premier rossignol qui viens!

Night or morning – O how
 your hymn to love strikes at my heart!
 Such ardour reawakens in me
 echoes of my Aprils past,
 O first nightingale to appear!

Séraphine (1892)

Anonymous, after Heinrich Heine

Seraphine

Quand je chemine, le soir,
 Dans la forêt rêveuse,
 Toujours chemine à mon côté
 Ta tendre image.

When at evening I walk
 through the dreamy forest,
 always at my side
 your sweet image walks too.

N'est-ce pas là ton voile blanc?	Is that not your white veil?
N'est-ce pas ton doux visage?	Is that not your gentle face?
Ou bien, ne serait-ce que le clair de lune	Or might it be but the moonlight
Qui brille à travers les sombres sapins?	gleaming through the dark pines?
Est-ce mes propres larmes	Are these my own tears
Que j'entends couler doucement?	that I hear gently flowing?
Ou se peut-il, réellement,	Or might it really be you,
Que tu viennes, pleurant à mes côtés?	coming to weep by my side?

Paysage (1890)

André Theuriet

A deux pas de la mer qu'on entend bourdonner	Close by the booming sea,
Je sais un coin perdu de la terre bretonne	in Brittany I know a sequestered spot
Où j'aurais tant aimé, pendant les jours d'automne,	where in autumn I would so have wished,
Chère, a vous emmener!	my love, to go with you!

Des chênes faisant cercle autour d'une fontaine,	Oaks encircling a fountain,
Quelques hêtres épars, un vieux moulin desert,	scattered beech, an old abandoned mill,
Une source dont l'eau claire à le reflet vert	a well whose clear waters reflected
De vos yeux de sirène...	the green of your siren's eyes...

La mésange, au matin, sous la feuille jaunie,	The bluetit, each morning, among yellowed leaves
Viendrait chanter pour nous...	would come to sing for us...
Et la mer, nuit et jour,	And the sea, night and day,
Viendrait accompagner nos caresses d'amour	would accompany our loving caresses
De sa basse infinie!	with its boundless bass!

Les cygnes (1893-4)

Armand Renaud

Ton âme est un lac d'amour	Your soul is a lake of love
Dont mes désirs sont les cygnes ...	where my desires are the swans...
Vois comme ils en font le tour,	See how they explore it all,
Comme ils y creusent des lignes ...	how the ripples widen...
Voyageurs aventureux	Daring travellers,

A landscape

Ils vont les ailes ouvertes ...	they move with spread wings...
Rien n'est ignoré par eux	Nothing is unknown to them,
Des flots bleus aux îles vertes ...	from blue spray to green isles...
Bruyants et pompeux, les uns	Flamboyant and grandiose, some
Sont d'un blanc que rien n'égale,	are of an unmatched white,
Désirs, nés dans les parfums	desires born in the redolence
Par un soleil de Bengale!	of a Bengal sun!

Les autres, muets et noirs,	The others, mute and dark,
Ont comme un air de mystère ...	have such an air of mystery...
Désirs nés pendant les soirs	Desires born in the evening
Où tout s'endort sur la terre ...	when everything on earth is asleep...
Sans nombre sont ces oiseaux	Numberless are these birds
Que ton âme voit éclore!	that your soul sees take form!
Combien déjà sur les eaux	How many already on the waters,
Et combien à naître encore!	and how many yet to be born!
Ton âme est un lac d'amour	Your soul is a lake of love
Dont mes désirs sont les cygnes ...	where my desires are the swans...
Vois, comme ils en font le tour de ton âme!	See how they traverse every part of your soul!

Aimons-nous! (1891)

Théodore de Banville

Aimons-nous et dormons	Let us love and sleep
Sans songer au reste du monde!	without a care for the rest of the world!
Ni le flot de la mer, ni l'ouragan des monts	Neither ocean waves nor mountain storms,
Tant que nous nous aimons	while we still love each other,
Ne courbera ta tête blonde,	can bow your golden head,
Car l'amour est plus fort	for love is more powerful
Que les Dieux et la Mort!	than gods and death!

Song continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly as possible

Le soleil s'éteindrait Pour laisser ta blancheur plus pure, Le vent qui jusqu'à terre inclina la forêt, En passant n'oserait Jouer avec ta chevelure, Tant que tu cacheras Ta tête entre mes bras!	The sun would extinguish its rays to make your purity more pure, the wind which inclines to earth the forest would not in passing dare to frolic with your hair, while you nestle your head in my arms.
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Et lorsque nos deux coeurs S'en iront aux sphères heureuses Où les célestes lys écloront sous nos pleurs, Alors, comme deux fleurs, Joignons nos lèvres amoureuses, Et tâchons d'épuiser La mort dans un baiser!	And when our two hearts shall ascend to paradise, where celestial lilies shall open beneath our tears, then, like flowers, let us join our loving lips and strive to exhaust death in a kiss!
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Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Le papillon et la fleur Op. 1 No. 1 (1861) Victor Hugo

La pauvre fleur disait au
papillon
céleste:
Ne fuis pas!
Vois comme nos destins
sont différents.
Je reste,
Tu t'en vas!

The butterfly and the flower

The humble flower said to
the heavenly butterfly:
do not flee!
See how our destinies
differ. Fixed to earth am
I,
you fly away!

Pourtant nous nous aimons,
nous vivons sans les
hommes
Et loin d'eux,
Et nous nous ressemblons,
et l'on dit que nous
sommes
Fleurs tous deux!

Yet we love each other,
we live without
men
and far from them,
and we are so alike, it is
said that
both of us
are flowers!

Mais, hélas! l'air t'empporte et
la terre
m'enchaîne.
Sort cruel!
Je voudrais embaumer ton
vol de
mon haleine
Dans le ciel!

But alas! The breeze
bears you away, the
earth holds me fast.
Cruel fate!
I would perfume your
flight with my fragrant
breath
in the sky!

Mais non, tu vas trop loin! –
Parmi des fleurs sans
nombre
Vous fuyez,

But no, you flit too far!
Among countless
flowers
you fly away,

Et moi je reste seule à voir tourner mon ombre A mes pieds.	while I remain alone, and watch my shadow circle round my feet.
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Tu fuis, puis tu reviens; puis tu t'en vas encore Luire ailleurs. Aussi me trouves-tu toujours à chaque aurore Toute en pleurs!	You fly away, then return; then take flight again to shimmer elsewhere. And so you always find me at each dawn bathed in tears!
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Oh! pour que notre amour coule des jours fidèles, O mon roi, Prends comme moi racine, ou donne-moi des ailes Comme à toi!	Ah, that our love might flow through faithful days, O my king, take root like me, or give me wings like yours!
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Les berceaux Op. 23

No. 1 (1879)

Sully Prudhomme

Le long du quai les grands
vaisseaux,
Que la houle incline en
silence,
Ne prennent pas garde aux
berceaux
Que la main des femmes
balance.

The cradles

Along the quay the great
ships,
listing silently with the
surge,
pay no heed to the
cradles
rocked by women's
hands.

Mais viendra le jour des
adieux,
Car il faut que les femmes
pleurent,
Et que les hommes curieux

But the day of parting will
come,
for it is decreed that
women shall weep,
and that men with
questing spirits
shall seek enticing
horizons.

Tentent les horizons qui
leurrent.

Et ce jour-là les grands
vaisseaux,
Fuyant le port qui
diminue,
Sentent leur masse
retenue
Par l'âme des lointains
berceaux.

And on that day the great
ships,
leaving the dwindling
harbour behind,
shall feel their hulls held
back
by the soul of the distant
cradles.

Les roses d'Ispahan

Op. 39 No. 4 (1884)

Leconte de Lisle

Les roses d'Ispahan dans
leur gaine de mousse,
Les jasmins de Mossoul, les
fleurs de l'oranger

The roses of Isfahan

The roses of Isfahan in
their mossy sheaths,
the jasmines of Mosul,
the orange blossom

Ont un parfum moins frais, ont une odeur moins douce, O blanche Leïlah! que ton souffle léger.	have a fragrance less fresh and a scent less sweet, O pale Leilah, than your soft breath!
Ta lèvre est de corail, et ton rire léger Sonne mieux que l'eau vive et d'une voix plus douce, Mieux que le vent joyeux qui Berce l'oranger, Mieux que l'oiseau qui chante au bord d'un nid de mousse ...	Your lips are of coral and your light laughter rings brighter and sweeter than running water, than the blithe wind rocking the orange-tree boughs, than the singing bird by its mossy nest ...
O Leïlah! depuis que de leur vol léger Tous les baisers ont fui de ta lèvre si douce, Il n'est plus de parfum dans le pâle oranger, Ni de céleste arôme aux roses dans leur mousse ...	O Leilah, ever since on light wings all kisses have flown from your sweet lips, the pale orange-tree fragrance is spent, and the heavenly scent of moss-clad roses ...

Oh! que ton jeune amour, ce papillon léger, Reviens vers mon cœur d'une aile prompte et douce, Et qu'il parfume encor les fleurs de l'oranger, Les roses d'Isfahan dans leur gaine de mousse!	Oh! may your young love, that airy butterfly, wing swiftly and gently to my heart once more, to scent again the orange blossom, the roses of Isfahan in their mossy sheaths!
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Henri Duparc (1848-1933)

L'invitation au voyage Invitation to journey (1870)

Charles Baudelaire

Mon enfant, ma sœur, Songe à la douceur D'aller là-bas vivre ensemble!	My child, my sister, think how sweet to journey there and live together!
Aimer à loisir, Aimer et mourir Au pays qui te ressemble! Les soleils mouillés De ces ciels brouillés Pour mon esprit ont les charmes Si mystérieux De tes traîtres yeux, Brillant à travers leurs larmes.	To love as we please, to love and die in the land that is like you! The watery suns of those hazy skies hold for my spirit the same mysterious charms as your treacherous eyes shining through their tears.

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté, Luxe, calme et volupté.	There – nothing but order and beauty dwell, abundance, calm and sensuous delight.
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Vois sur ces canaux Dormir ces vaisseaux Dont l'humeur est vagabonde; C'est pour assouvir Ton moindre désir Qu'ils viennent du bout du monde. – Les soleils couchants Revêtent les champs, Les canaux, la ville entière, D'hyacinthe et d'or; Le monde s'endort Dans une chaude lumière.	See on those canals those vessels sleeping, vessels with a restless soul; to satisfy your slightest desire they come from the ends of the earth. The setting suns clothe the fields, canals and all the town with hyacinth and gold; the world falls asleep in a warm light.
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Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté, Luxe, calme et volupté.	There – nothing but order and beauty dwell, abundance, calm and sensuous delight.
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Chanson triste (1868)

Jean Lahor

Dans ton cœur dort un clair de lune, Un doux clair de lune d'été, Et pour fuir la vie importune, Je me noierai dans ta clarté.	Moonlight slumbers in your heart, a gentle summer moonlight, and to escape the cares of life I shall drown myself in your light.
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J'oublierai les douleurs passées, Mon amour, quand tu berceras Mon triste cœur et mes pensées Dans le calme aimant de tes bras.	I shall forget past sorrows, my sweet, when you cradle my sad heart and my thoughts in the loving calm of your arms.
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Tu prendras ma tête malade, Oh! quelquefois, sur tes genoux, Et lui diras une ballade Qui semblera parler de nous;	You will rest my poor head, ah! sometimes on your lap, and recite to it a ballad that will seem to speak of us;
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Song continues overleaf. Please turn the page as quietly as possible

Et dans tes yeux pleins de tristesses,	And from your eyes full of sorrow,
Dans tes yeux alors je boirai	from your eyes I shall then drink
Tant de baisers et de tendresses	so many kisses and so much love
Que peut-être je guérirai.	that perhaps I shall be healed.

Reynaldo Hahn

Trois jours de vendange (1891)

Alphonse Daudet

Je l'ai rencontrée un jour de vendange,	During the vintage I met her one day,
La jupe troussée et le pied mignon;	skirt tucked in and dainty feet;
Point de guimpe jaune et point de chignon:	no yellow veil and no coiled-up hair;
L'air d'une bacchante et les yeux d'un ange.	a maenad with an angel's eyes.
Suspendue au bras d'un doux compagnon,	She was leaning on a sweet friend's arm,
Je l'ai rencontrée aux champs d'Avignon,	when I met her at Avignon in the fields,
Un jour de vendange.	during the vintage one day.

Je l'ai rencontrée un jour de vendange.	During the vintage I met her one day.
La plaine était morne et le ciel brûlant;	The plain was bleak and the sky ablaze;
Elle marchait seule et d'un pas tremblant,	she was walking alone, with faltering steps,
Son regard brillait d'une flamme étrange.	her face was lit by a curious glow.
Je frissonne encore en me rappelant	I still shudder as I remember
Comme je te vis, cher fantôme blanc,	how I saw you, dear white spectre,
Un jour de vendange!	during the vintage one day!

Je l'ai rencontrée un jour de vendange,	During the vintage I met her one day,
Et j'en rêve encor presque tous les jours.	and still almost daily I dream of it.
Le cercueil était couvert en velours,	The coffin was draped in velvet,
Le drap noir portait une double frange.	the black shroud had a double fringe.
Les sœurs d'Avignon pleuraient tout autour ...	The Avignon nuns wept all around it ...
La vigne avait trop de raisin;	The vine had too many grapes;
L'Amour avait fait la vendange.	Love had gathered its harvest.

Three days of vintaging

From *Etudes latines* (1900)

Leconte de Lisle

Néère (1900)

Il me faut retourner aux anciennes amours:
L'Immortel qui naquit de la Vierge Thébaine,
Et les Jeunes Désirs et leur Mère inhumaine
Me commandent d'aimer toujours.

Blanche comme un beau marbre, avec ses roses joues,
Je brûle pour Néère aux yeux pleins de langueur;
Venus se précipite et consume mon cœur:
Tu ris, ô Néère, et te joues!

Pour apaiser les Dieux et pour finir mes maux,
D'un vin mûri deux ans versez vos coupes pleines;
Et sur l'autel rougi du sang pur des agneaux
Posez l'encens et les verveines.

Le printemps (1899)

Théodore de Banville

Te voilà, rire du Printemps!
Les thyrses des lilas fleurissent.
Les amantes qui te chérissent
Délivrent leurs cheveux flottants.

Sous les rayons d'or éclatants
Les anciens lierres se flétrissent.
Te voilà, rire du Printemps!
Les thyrses des lilas fleurissent.

Couchons-nous au bord des étangs,
Que nos maux amers se guérissent!
Mille espoirs fabuleux nourrissent

Neaera

I must return to the loves of old:
the Immortal One, born of the Theban Virgin,
and youthful Desires and their cruel Mother
command me to love anew.

White as beautiful marble, with her pink cheeks,
it is Neaera I burn for with her languishing look;
Venus rushes up and consumes my heart:
you laugh, O Neaera, and frolic!

To appease the gods and end my woes,
fill your goblets with two-year-old wine;
and on the altar, stained with lambs' pure blood,
set the incense and verbena.

Spring

Smiling Spring, you have arrived!
Sprays of lilacs are in bloom.
Lovers who hold you dear
unbind their flowing hair.

Beneath the beams of glistening gold
the ancient ivy withers.
Smiling Spring, you have arrived!
Sprays of lilacs are in bloom.

Let us lie alongside pools
that our bitter wounds may heal!
A thousand fabled hopes nourish

Nos cœurs émus et
palpitants.

Te voilà, rire du
Printemps!

our full and beating
hearts.

Smiling Spring, you have
arrived!

Translations of Gounod, Polignac, Chausson, all Hahn except where indicated, Fauré and Duparc by Richard Stokes from A French Song Companion (Johnson/Stokes) published by OUP. 'Séraphine', 'Paysage' and 'Aimons-nous!' by Richard Stokes. 'Les cygnes' by Jean du Monde.