

Both Sides Now

Julie Fuchs soprano
Alphonse Cemin piano

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Shéhérazade (1903)
Asie • La flûte enchantée • L'indifférent

Ondine from *Gaspard de la nuit* (1908)

Augusta Holmès (1847-1903)

La guerrière (pub. 1892)
La princesse sans cœur (pub. 1892)

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

La fée aux chansons Op. 27 No. 2 (1882)
Sérénade toscane Op. 3 No. 2 (?1878)
Après un rêve Op. 7 No. 1 (1877)

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

One charming night from *The Fairy Queen* Z629 (1692)

Stephen Sondheim (1930-2021)

From *Into the Woods* (1987)
Last Midnight • No One Is Alone

Joni Mitchell (b.1943)

Both Sides Now (1966) *arranged by Arthur Lavandier*



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'Shéhérazade, in which Debussy's influence, at least spiritual, is rather evident, dates from 1903', wrote **Maurice Ravel**. 'Once again I succumbed to the profound fascination which the Orient has exerted upon me since childhood...'

As ever, he revealed little and left his music to say much, though in the case of his song-cycle *Shéhérazade*, to poems by the painter and poet Tristan Klingsor (born Léon Leclère), the words and make leave commentary superfluous. The shimmering melisma; the quiet, yearning cry of 'Asie!'; the glittering cascade of sound that follows, and the swell of the harmony as the sails fill and poet and composer imagine themselves borne to that 'land from childhood tales/Where fantasy sleeps like an empress' – well, their entire function is to imply more than any prose. Ravel had attempted and abandoned an opera (also entitled *Shéhérazade*) based on the *Arabian Nights* in the previous decade. Now, under the spell of Debussy and Klingsor's verse, he found the soundworld he had sought. And possibly something more. For the openly gay Klingsor, the final poem *L'indifférent*, with its beautiful stranger whose 'eyes are soft, like a girl's' was perhaps more an open avowal of self than the setting by the intensely private Ravel, who originally placed this song second in his cycle and dedicated it to a woman: Emma Bardac, the ex-lover of Gabriel Fauré, who would shortly (and scandalously) elope with Debussy to the *isle joyeuse* of Jersey. Ravel finds everything he needs in Klingsor's words and images, and accusations of Orientalism are broadly irrelevant because the Orientalism is the whole point. *Shéhérazade* is an escape into an imaginary world where even the most private and forbidden desires find precise and endlessly tender expression.

To hear that imagination projected outwards, we jump forward to 1908 and the piano suite that Ravel composed under the spell of another poet: Aloysius Bertrand's 1836 anthology *Gaspard de la nuit*. 'All the romanticism of the nineteenth century is contained in that little book!' declared Ravel, and in *Ondine*, he imagines Bertrand's lovelorn water spirit. Her pleading speaks even from the raindrops that trickle down the poet's window until – despairing – 'she wept a few tears, sent forth a peal of laughter, and vanished in a burst of showers that ran down, colourless, all along my blue-paned window'.

Ravel's imagination flowered in fertile soil. **Augusta Holmès** – a Parisienne of Irish descent; a composer, a pianist, a poet and (by all accounts) a peerless singer – was long remembered principally for her effect on the men who loved her (a list once said to include César Franck, Saint-Saëns and Richard Wagner). In recent years her own remarkable achievement has come to be more widely recognised – it was certainly known to Ravel. She composed well over 100 songs, and these two, setting verses by the composer herself, come from her *20 Mélodies* of 1892. Holmès depicts a female

warrior and a nocturnal spectre with the directness and untrammelled fantasy of a composer whose willpower (in Saint-Saëns's words) 'breaks all barriers'.

Great women stood beside many of the eminent men in French music, and it's been suggested that Ravel's 'beloved master' **Gabriel Fauré** was inspired to write both his 'Sérénade toscane' (c.1878) and 'Après un rêve' (1877, and still probably his best-loved song) by Pauline Viardot's settings of Tuscan folk-poetry. Rural Italy was, at that time, quite as exotic as the Orient to a Paris-based composer, and the Italian originals in each case were adapted by Fauré's Conservatoire colleague Romaine Bussine. 'La fée aux chansons' is another shimmering supernatural vision – less tragic than Ravel's *Ondine* and not as sinister as Holmès's nocturnal Princess, but every bit as dazzlingly realised.

And so we cross the channel to the English-speaking world, though we're staying for the moment in the realm of the supernatural. We're in the Athenian forest of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as re-imagined in **Purcell** and Thomas Betterton's 1692 theatrical spectacular *The Fairy Queen*. Titania and her train are looking forward to the pleasures of the night; that the lilting, caressing phrases of 'One charming night' are sung by the personification of Secrecy tells us all we need to know.

We're already in the woods, after all – a place, in the words of the late **Stephen Sondheim**, where it was perfectly possible that a crowd of unrelated fairy-tale characters might 'collide and intertwine in a mutual meeting ground'. *Into the Woods* (1987) was the result: a show in which Sondheim and his co-writer James Lapine followed a group of characters whose 'concerns are quotidian, their attitudes typically urban – impatient, sarcastic, bickering, resigned – prototypical except that they speak in stilted fairytale language and are surrounded by witches and princesses and eventually giants'. 'Last Midnight' is sung by one such witch; one of Sondheim's gloriously laconic, painfully honest waltz songs in which a character turns out to be not quite what we expected. But then, as we hear in the show's great eleven o'clock number 'No One Is Alone', 'witches can be right, giants can be good'.

The spirit, if not the precise method, finds an echo in **Joni Mitchell's** song 'Both Sides Now' – written in 1966 and inspired by a description of an air traveller gazing down from above the clouds; 'I've looked at love from both sides now/From give and take, and still somehow/It's love's illusions I recall...'. After an evening of fairy tales and fantastic visions, it's not quite a happy-ever-after. But it's the product of an imagination soaring free in pursuit of the secrets of the human heart; and that's an impulse that Ravel, Fauré and Augusta Holmès would all have recognised.

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Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Shéhérazade (1903)

Tristan Klingsor

Asie

Asie, Asie, Asie,
Vieux pays merveilleux des
contes de nourrice,
Où dort la fantaisie
Comme une impératrice
En sa forêt tout emplie de
mystères, Asie,
Je voudrais m'en aller avec la
goélette
Qui se berce ce soir dans le
port,
Mystérieuse et solitaire,
Et qui déploie enfin ses
voiles violettes
Comme un immense oiseau
de nuit dans le ciel d'or.
Je voudrais m'en aller vers
des îles de fleurs
En écoutant chanter la mer
perverse
Sur un vieux rythme
ensorceleur;
Je voudrais voir Damas et les
villes de Perse
Avec les minarets légers
dans l'air;
Je voudrais voir de beaux
turbans de soie
Sur des visages noirs aux
dents claires;
Je voudrais voir des yeux
sombres d'amour
Et des prunelles brillantes de
joie
En des peaux jaunes comme
des oranges;
Je voudrais voir des
vêtements de velours
Et des habits à longues
franges;
Je voudrais voir des
calumets entre des
bouches
Tout entourées de barbe
blanche;
Je voudrais voir d'âpres
marchands aux regards
louches,
Et des cadis, et des vizirs
Qui du seul mouvement de
leur doigt qui se penche
Accordent vie ou mort au gré
de leur désir.

Asia

Asia, Asia, Asia,
ancient wonderland of
fairy tales,
where fantasy sleeps
like an empress
in her mystery-filled
forest, Asia,
I long to set sail with the
schooner
which rocks this evening
in the harbour,
mysterious and solitary,
and which spreads at last
its violet sails
like a huge night-bird in
the golden sky.
I long to set sail for isles
of flowers
as I listen to the song of
the wayward sea
with its old bewitching
rhythm;
I long to see Damascus
and the cities of Persia
with their airy
minarets;
I long to see beautiful
silken turbans
above black faces with
white teeth;
I long to see eyes dark
with love
and pupils sparkling with
joy
sunk in skins as yellow as
oranges;
I long to see velvet
raiments
and long-fringed robes;
I long to see
calumets
in mouths
fringed about with white
beards;
I long to see grasping
merchants with shifty
looks,
and cadis and viziers
who with a single crook of
the finger
dispense life or death on
a whim.

Je voudrais voir la Perse, et l'Inde, et puis la Chine, Les mandarins ventrus sous les ombrelles, Et les princesses aux mains fines, Et les lettrés qui se querellent Sur la poésie et sur la beauté;	I long to see Persia, and India, and then China, portly mandarins beneath their sunshades, and princesses with delicate hands, and learned men disputing about poetry and beauty;
Je voudrais m'attarder au palais enchanté Et comme un voyageur étranger Contempler à loisir des paysages peints Sur des étoffes en des cadres de sapin Avec un personnage au milieu d'un verger; Je voudrais voir des assassins souriant Du bourreau qui coupe un cou d'innocent Avec son grand sabre courbé d'Orient; Je voudrais voir des pauvres et des reines; Je voudrais voir des roses et du sang; Je voudrais voir mourir d'amour ou bien de haine, Et puis, m'en revenir plus tard Narrer mon aventure aux curieux de rêves, En élevant comme Sindbad Ma vieille pipe arabe Du temps en temps jusqu'à mes lèvres Pour interrompre le conte avec art...	I long to linger in enchanted palaces, and like a foreign traveller gaze at leisure on landscapes painted on fabrics in pinewood frames, with a figure in the midst of an orchard; I long to see assassins smiling, as the executioner cuts off an innocent head with his great curved Oriental scimitar; I long to see beggars and queens; I long to see roses and blood; I long to see death for love or else for hate, and then to return later and recount my adventures to those intrigued by dreams, while raising like Sinbad my old Arabian pipe from time to time to my lips, artfully to interrupt the tale...

Please do not turn the page until the song and its accompaniment have ended.

La flûte enchantée

The enchanted flute

L'ombre est douce et mon maître dort,	The shade is soft and my master sleeps,
Coiffé d'un bonnet conique de soie,	a cone-shaped silken cap on his head,
Et son long nez jaune en sa barbe blanche.	and his long yellow nose in his white beard.
Mais moi je suis éveillée encore	But I am still awake,
Et j'écoute au dehors	listening to the song
Une chanson de flûte où s'épanche	of a flute outside that pours forth
Tour à tour la tristesse ou la joie,	sadness and joy in turn,
Un air tour à tour langoureux ou frivole	a tune now languorous now lively,
Que mon amoureux chéri joue,	which my dear lover plays,
Et quand je m'approche de la croisée,	and when I draw near the casement,
Il me semble que chaque note s'envole	each note seems to fly
De la flûte vers ma joue	from the flute to my cheek
Comme un mystérieux baiser.	like a mysterious kiss.

L'indifférent

The indifferent one

Tes yeux sont doux comme ceux d'une fille,	Your eyes are soft like a girl's,
Jeune étranger,	young stranger,
Et la courbe fine	and the delicate curve
De ton beau visage de duvet ombragé	of your handsome downshaded face
Est plus séduisante encore de ligne.	is still more attractively shaped.
Ta lèvre chante	Your lips sing
Sur le pas de ma porte	at my door
Une langue inconnue et charmante	an unknown charming tongue,
Comme une musique fausse;	like music off-pitch;
Entre! et que mon vin te reconforte...	enter! and let my wine refresh you...
Mais non, tu passes	But no, you pass by
Et de mon seuil je te vois t'éloigner	and I see you leaving my threshold,
Me faisant un dernier geste avec grâce	gracefully waving farewell,
Et la hanche légèrement ployée	your hips lightly swaying
Par ta démarche féminine et lasse.	in your languid feminine way.

Ondine from *Gaspard de la nuit* (1908)

Augusta Holmès (1847-1903)

La guerrière (pub. 1892)

The warrior

Augusta Holmès

Sous un chêne, dans la clairière,	Beneath an oak, in the clearing,
Dort la guerrière	sleeps the warrior
Au casque d'or;	in the golden helmet;
Mieux qu'Amadis et Galaor,	greater than Amadis and Galaor,
De hauts faits elle est coutumière.	she makes a habit of heroic exploits.
Mais l'aube a versé la lumière.	But dawn has cast the scene in a new light.
Pourquoi donc sommeiller encor,	Why do you still sleep,
Belle guerrière,	lovely warrior
Au casque d'or?	in the golden helmet?
Dort-elle?	Does she sleep?
Dans sa main crispée,	In her clenched hand,
O grande épée,	O great sword,
Qui te brisa?	who has shattered you?
Un triste corbeau croassa:	A mournful crow croaks:
'Dans le sang finit l'épopée;	'The epic ends in blood;
A dix contre une ils l'ont frappée,	ten against one they struck her,
Celle que la gloire berça!	she who was raised by glory!
Et pour toujours, dans la clairière	And for all time, in the clearing
Dort la guerrière	sleeps the warrior
Au casque d'or!	in the golden helmet!
Sombre témoin, réponds encor!	Solemn witness, answer again!
Qui l'a blessée au cœur?	Who wounded her in the heart?
'Son frère!'	'Her brother!'

La princesse sans

The heartless

cœur (pub. 1892)

princess

Augusta Holmès

Avez-vous vu dans les bois cette nuit	Have you seen, in the woods tonight,
Passer comme un rayon lunaire,	like a ray of moonlight,
Sans bruit,	soundless,
Une forme blanche et légère	a white and light shape pass,
Qu'un fantôme accompagne et suit?	accompanied and followed by a ghost?
Elle cueille	She gathers
Feuille à feuille,	leaf by leaf,

Patience, dans les gazons, Les malfaisantes floraisons Dont l'enfer tire ses poisons Qui font tomber en pâmoisons Les infortunés qu'elle accueille De ses trahisons! C'est elle qu'il me faut aimer et suivre! C'est elle que je hais! C'est elle qui m'enivre! C'est elle qu'il me faut tuer, si je veux vivre, L'inférieure et magique fleur! C'est la traîtresse, L'enchanteuse, Qui torture et séduit sans cesse! C'est la princesse Sans cœur!	patiently, across the lawns, the wicked florescence from which hell draws its poisons that send into a swoon the unfortunates she takes in with her treacheries! It is she that I must love and follow! It is she that I hate! It is she that intoxicates me! It is she that I must kill, if I want to live, the monstrous, magical flower! That's the traitor, the enchantress, who endlessly torments and seduces! That's the princess with no heart!
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Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

La fée aux chansons
Op. 27 No. 2 (1882)
Armand Silvestre

The fairy of songs

Il était une fée
D'herbe folle coiffée,
Qui courait les
buissons,
Sans s'y laisser surprendre,
En avril, pour apprendre
Aux oiseaux leurs chansons.

There was a fairy
crowned with rank weeds
who ran through the
bushes
without being caught,
in April, to teach
the birds their songs.

Lorsque geais et linottes
Faisaient des fausses notes
En récitant leurs
chants
La fée, avec constance,
Gourmandait d'importance
Ces élèves méchants.

When jays and linnets
sang wrong notes
as they recited their
songs,
the fairy, tirelessly,
sternly rebuked
those naughty pupils.

Sa petite main nue,
D'un brin d'herbe menue
Cueilli dans les
halliers,
Pour stimuler leurs zèles,
Fouettait sur leurs ailes
Ces mauvais écoliers.

Her little bare hand,
with a tiny blade of grass
plucked from the
thickets,
to stimulate their zeal
would whip the wings
of those bad scholars.

Par un matin d'automne,
Elle vient et
s'étonne,

One autumn morning
she comes and is amazed

De voir les bois déserts: Avec les hirondelles Ses amis infidèles Avaient fui dans les airs.	to find the woods deserted. With the swallows, her unfaithful friends had flown away on the wind.
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Et tout l'hiver
la fée,
D'herbe morte coiffée,
Et comptant les instants
Sous les forêts immenses,
Compose des romances
Pour le prochain printemps!

And all winter long, the
fairy,
crowned the dead grass
and counting time
in the vast forests
composes songs
for the coming spring!

Sérénade toscane Op.
3 No. 2 (?1878)
Romain Bussine, after
Anonymous

Tuscan serenade

O toi que berce un rêve
enchanteur,
Tu dors tranquille en ton lit
solitaire,
Eveille-toi, regarde le
chanteur,
Esclave de tes yeux, dans la
nuit claire!

You whom a lovely dream
lulls,
you sleep quietly in your
lonely bed;
awake, gaze at the singer,
enslaved by your eyes in
the moonlit night!

Eveille-toi mon âme, ma
pensée,
Entends ma voix par la brise
emportée:
Entends ma voix chanter!
Entends ma voix pleurer,
dans la rosée!

Awake, my soul, my
thoughts,
hear my voice borne on
the breeze:
hear my voice sing,
hear my voice weep in the
dew!

Sous ta fenêtre en vain ma
voix expire,
Et chaque nuit je redis
mon martyre,
Sans autre abri que la
voûte étoilée,
Le vent brise ma
voix et la nuit est
glacée.

Beneath your window my
voice fades in vain,
and each night I tell my
torment anew,
with no shelter but the
starlit vault,
the wind drowns my voice
and the night is chill.

Mon chant s'éteint en un
accent suprême,
Ma lèvre tremble en
murmurant je t'aime.
Je ne peux plus chanter!
Ah! daigne te
montrer! daigne
apparaître!

My song dies on a final
cadence.
My lips quiver as they
murmur: I love you,
I can no longer sing!
Ah! Deign to show
yourself! Deign to
appear!

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

Si j'étais sûr que tu ne veux paraître	If I were sure you did not wish to appear,
Je m'en irais, pour t'oublier, demander au sommeil	I would go away to forget you, I would ask of sleep
De me bercer jusqu'au matin vermeil,	to cradle me until the rosy dawn,
De me bercer jusqu'à ne plus t'aimer!	to cradle me till I loved you no more!

**Après un rêve Op. 7
No. 1 (1877)**

Anon. trans. Romain Bussine

Dans un sommeil que charmaient ton image	In sleep made sweet by a vision of you
Je rêvais le bonheur, ardent mirage,	I dreamed of happiness, fervent illusion,
Tes yeux étaient plus doux, ta voix pure et sonore,	your eyes were softer, your voice pure and ringing,
Tu rayonnais comme un ciel éclairé par l'aurore;	you shone like a sky that was lit by the dawn;

Tu m'appelais et je quittais la terre	You called me and I departed the earth
Pour m'enfuir avec toi vers la lumière,	to flee with you toward the light,
Les cieux pour nous entr'ouvraient leurs nues,	the heavens parted their clouds for us,
Splendeurs inconnues, lueurs divines entrevues.	we glimpsed unknown splendours, celestial fires.

Hélas! hélas, triste réveil des songes,	Alas, alas, sad awakening from dreams!
Je t'appelle, ô nuit, rends-moi tes mensonges;	I summon you, O night, give me back your delusions;
Reviens, reviens radieuse,	return, return in radiance,
Reviens, ô nuit mystérieuse!	return, O mysterious night!

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)

**One charming night from *The Fairy Queen*
Z629 (1692)**

Anonymous, after William Shakespeare

One charming night
Gives more delight
Than a hundred lucky days.
Night and I improve the feast,
Make the pleasure longer last,
A thousand thousand several ways.

Stephen Sondheim (1930-2021)

From *Into the Woods* (1987)
Stephen Sondheim

Last Midnight (1987)

It's the last midnight.
It's the last wish ...

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No One Is Alone (1987)

Mother cannot guide you,
Now you're on your own ...

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Joni Mitchell (b.1943)

Both Sides Now (1966)
arranged by Arthur Lavandier
Joni Mitchell

Rows and floes of angel hair
And ice cream castles in the air ...

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Translations of Ravel and 'Après un rêve' by Richard Stokes from A French Song Companion (Johnson/Stokes) published by OUP. Holmès by Jean du Monde. All other Fauré by Richard Stokes.