

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF LAW
MANAGEMENT & HUMANITIES

[ISSN 2581-5369]

Volume 4 | Issue 5

2021

© 2021 *International Journal of Law Management & Humanities*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://www.ijlmh.com/>

Under the aegis of VidhiAagaz – Inking Your Brain (<https://www.vidhiaagaz.com/>)

This Article is brought to you for “free” and “open access” by the International Journal of Law Management & Humanities at VidhiAagaz. It has been accepted for inclusion in International Journal of Law Management & Humanities after due review.

In case of **any suggestion or complaint**, please contact Gyan@vidhiaagaz.com.

To submit your Manuscript for Publication at **International Journal of Law Management & Humanities**, kindly email your Manuscript at submission@ijlmh.com.

Singing Exploration of La Flûte de Pan, the first Piece of Debussy's Trois Chansons de Bilitis

NING JING¹ AND LI JIA²

ABSTRACT

Impressionism music, a new music genre, initially began at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, which is also known as the "modern music" era. Debussy (CLAUDEDEBUSSY ·1862-1918), as the founder of this genre of music, his French vocal cycle Trois Chansons de Bilitis plays an important role in the development of art songs. This paper will explain his works in combination with the author's experience of studying and singing in France and the characteristics of his music creation and poetry creation.

Keywords: Debussy, Impressionism, Art songs, Vocal divertimento, Vocal singing, La flûte DE Pan

I. A SURVEY OF FRENCH ART SONGS

(A) The background and characteristics of artistic songs

Art songs occupy a decisive position in the theme of vocal music art in the fabulous development of European vocal music historical records. Many scholars regard German Lied as the predecessor when studying the origin. The development has greatly promoted the perfection and development of the art song as a genre from the combination of poetry and music in Germany in the 17th century, to the neglect of the 18th century, and then to the 19th century with the introduction of romantic lyric poetry.

Art songs have three basic elements: poetry, music and accompaniment.

Poetry consists of literary works and language features, which understands the lyrics and be familiar with the language. Debussy once said of French: "Precision and clarity are the unique advantages of French." Conversely, the same is true of every language. Composer Reynalelo Hahn once said, "Say every word first, think well, and sing in the right voice."

Musice, the form is "melody, rhythm, beat, harmony, polyphonic, mode, tonality, timbre,

¹ Kolej International College, Krirk University, Thailand.

² College of Music, Shanxi Normal University, Linfen, China.

speed, strength, intensity and other elements of the combination with layout and development procedures.

Accompaniment, the piano accompaniment of art songs is an art. The unique art form and style formed by the piano accompaniment in the 19th century makes the vocal music singing more unique with artistic charm. This is an exchange and dialogue between piano art and vocal art.

(B) Background, evolution and style of French art songs

In the 11th century, a large number of song documents appeared in France. French secular songs played an important role in the 12th and 13th centuries due to the integration of French lyric poets and narrative poets; from the 14th century to the 15th century, French songs with accompaniment began to rise and flourish. The basic principles of early French songs were imitation and counterpoint, making the works of that time the crown works. In the 17th century, polyphonic music disappeared and homophonic music styles emerged. It was not until the mid-18th and 19th centuries that France gave birth to its art songs (Chanson, Romanbe, Mélodie).

Composer H. Berlioz (1803-1869) was the first to use the name "Mélodie" for his songs. His 1841 cycle *Les Nuits d'été* established the vocal theme of French art songs. At the same time, there were also composers Charles Gounod (1818-1893) and G. Bizet (1838-1875), who played an immeasurable role in the development of French art songs. After this, French composers Charles Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) and Jules Mile Frédéric Massenet (1842-1912) also began to enter the field of art songs. However, it was The French composer Faure Gabriel (1845-1924) who really made French art songs become an indelible part of French music culture. He created more than 100 art songs in his life, and was later known as "The Schumann of France". In the late 19th century, Claude Debussy (1862-1918) and Maurice Ravel (1875-1937), the founders of Impressionist music, also made great contributions to the creation of artistic songs. This was followed by the artistic songs created by Darius Milhaud (1892-1974) and Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) in the group of six in the 20th century.

French art songs convey romantic and poetic beauty with their elegant nationality, class, literature and artistry.

II. IMPRESSIONISM AND SYMBOLISM IN DEBUSSY'S MUSIC

In 1874, The painting *Impression, Soleil Levant* by French painter Oscar Claude Monet

(1840-1926) was exhibited. It was the first work of impressionism, which marked the emergence of Impressionist painting.

The impressionist school had an influence on Debussy's musical biography, and here we have to mention an impressionist painter, James Abbott McNeil Whistler (1834-1903). Inspired by his paintings, *Fireworks Over the Thames: Serenade of Black and Gold*, Debussy wrote the orchestral suite *Nocturnes*. Debussy once said that "experimenting with various combinations of a single color is like studying the gray in a painting".

Symbolist poetry had an irreplaceable influence on Debussy's music creation. At the age of 11, he was introduced to symbolic poetry after he entered the Paris Conservatoire. A well-known piece, "Moonlight" (*Claire de Lune* 1900), He was influenced by Albert Giraud (1860-1929)'s epic poem "Moonbeam" and Paul Verlaine (1844-1896)'s poetry collection "Elegant Celebration." Since 1890, Debussy also frequently communicated with iconic poets such as Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898), Verlaine and Jean Nicolas Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891). Verlaine, Mallarme and Rimbaud are also known as the troika of iconic poets. In 1894, Debussy composed *L'après-midi d'un Faune*, an orchestral prelude, based on maramé's poem of the same name. The advent of this work established the status of impressionism music in the history of western music. Debussy explained this work by saying that he did not use music as the companion piece of Mallarme's poem, but it might just be the background. In order to bring people to the artistic conception similar to the poem, Mallarme, after listening to this work, thought that it was far beyond the poem.

The aesthetic thought and artistic concept of symbolic poetry and impressionist painting make Debussy sound have many connections with most of the features.

III. BACKGROUND INTRODUCTION OF DEBUSSY'S VOCAL CYCLE "THREE SONGS OF BILITIS"

In 1862, Debussy was born in Saint-Germain, France. At the age of 8-11 (1870-1873), he began to learn piano under Madame Mott. At the age of 11 (1873), he was admitted to the Paris Conservatory of Music. At the age of 22, he won the Rome Prize for composition, and at the age of 25 (1877) he returned to Paris and began a long career as a professional composer. Debussy created a total of 92 French art songs in his life, of which six are unfinished manuscripts.

The French duet *Trois Chansons de Bilitis* was composed in 1898, when Debussy was 36 years old, four years after he had made his name with the premiere of his orchestral prelude,

The Faun Afternoon. In 1893, Debussy met Pierre Louÿs (1870-1925), a French "Barnesse" poet, and got to know each other. Debussy began to be deeply influenced by this poet's pastoral poetry "Les Chansons de Bilitis" published in 1894. Three of more than one hundred poems were selected to create a vocal divertimento.

IV. ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH ON THE SINGING OF LA FLÛTE DE PAN, THE FIRST PIECE OF DEBUSSY'S TROIS CHANSONS DE BILITIS

This vocal cycle is divided into three pieces in order. The first one, La Flûte de Pan, is a traditional lyrical discourse in which Bilitis rendezvous with her lover; In the second one, la Chevelure, the lover's words enter the poem through quotations; The third track, le Tombeau des Naiades, further enlarges the number of speakers as Bilitis quotes another character and herself.

‘La Flûte de Pan ’

<p>Pour le jour des Hyacinthies, il m'a donné une syrinx faite de roseaux bien taillés, unis avec la blanche cire qui est douce à mes lèvres comme le miel. Il m'apprend à jouer, assise sur ses genoux; mais je suis un peu tremblante. Il en joue après moi, si doucement que je l'entends à peine. Nous n'avons rien à nous dire, tant nous sommes près l'un de l'autre; mais nos chansons veulent se répondre, et tour à tour nos bouches s'unissent sur la flûte.</p>	<p>For Hyacinthus day, he gave me a syrinx made of carefully cut reeds, bonded with white wax which tastes sweet to my lips like honey. He teaches me to play, as I sit on his lap; but I am a little fearful. He plays it after me, so gently that I scarcely hear him. We have nothing to say, so close are we one to another, but our songs try to answer each other, and our mouths join in turn on the flute. It is late; here is the song of the</p>
--	---

Il est tard; voici le chant des grenouilles vertes qui commence avec la nuit.	green frogs that begins with the night.
Ma mère ne croira jamais que je suis restée si longtemps à chercher ma ceinture perdue.	My mother will never believe I stayed out so long to look for my lost sash.

Translation © Richard Stokes, author of *A French Song Companion* (Oxford, 2000)

La Flute de Pan is a ternary form.

A (measures1-11)+ B(measures12-21) + C (measures22-30)

(b-Lydian scale+bD-Lydian scale+Pentatonic scale+b-Lydian scale)

This work has three characteristics. The first feature is the application of B-Lydian scale. The second feature is the use of Parallel fifths, and the third is the use of text painting-madrigal style.

First of all, we will discuss the application of b-Lydian scale. In this work, the right hand piano texture appears for the first time in the first measure, starting with the second beat, ascending from the sixteenth note sextuplet scale ascending beginning with b, to la# in the third beat with the beginning of the left hand fifth hop and chord texture. In measures 1-2 uses the piano to imitate the melodious flute, we have entered a night of mystery and silence; the second reappearance of the typical B-Lydian scale is in 12 measure, the ascending of the sixteenth note scale on the right-handed piano texture, and "honking" appears again, indicating a new association. The third appearance of the typical B-Lydian Scale comes at the end of the work, when the protagonist realizes that she has gone out too late, and there is a dark reflection on the longing for unwise but enjoyable thinking.

Furthermore, we will discuss the use of Parallel fifths, which is an important feature of the work, for example, measures1-4, measures13-14, measures17-20, measures 28-29.

Finally, we will discuss the use of text painting - Madrigal style. Firstly, b-Lydian scale as a symbol for flute, and secondly, 'croak' symbol in measures18-21. The piano part, with the left hand jumping more than two octaves, vividly depicts the call of a group of frogs at the beginning of dusk. Chant des Grenouilles Vertes is the best description.

TROIS CHANSONS DE BILITIS

P. LOUYS

C. DEBUSSY

I
la flûte de Pan

1 *Lent et sans rigueur de rythme*

CHANT

PIANO

3 *Doux et soutenu*

Pour le jour des Hy-a-cin-thies, il m'a don-né u-ne sy-

5

...rinx fai-te de ro-seaux bien tail-lés, u-nis a-

Editions Jean JOBERT, 44, Rue du Colisée, Paris E. 14171 F

Tous droits d'exécution, de traduction, de reproduction et d'arrangement réservés pour tous pays

In singing, we need to focus on several vital points: language, notation, rhythm, emotion and technique.

In terms of language, the first thing is to have a clear understanding of the lyrics and the meaning behind the lyrics, and the second is to recite the lyrics. Unlike English, where the whole mouth is pronounced, French is devant la bouche (in front of the mouth). This is the only way in which the spoken and sung French will not "flee" everywhere.

Another point that needs to be noted is the French phonological chants. For example Des Hyacinthies, unis avec, il m'apprend à, je suis un peu, il en, je l'entends à peine, rien a nous dire, qui commence avec la nuit.

Language, notation, rhythm, emotion and technique are integrated. The work begins with the notes of Lent et Sans rigueur de Rythme (slow and not too precise in rhythm), and the singer can imagine a picture with the melodious sound of the flute. In measure 3, voice (P+doux et soutenu- means soft and gentle and supported by breath) with a little faster triplets. In measure 5, the voice continues to appear as SOL. At this time, it is suggested that breath and state should be sung in an upward trend.

6
vec la blan - che ci - re qui est douce à mes lè - vres com.me le miel. *Retenu*

7
Il m'apprend à jou.er, as - si.se surseesge - nous; mais je suis un peu trem.
p *pp*

9
- blan - te. Il en joue a - près moi, si dou.ce.ment que je l'en.tends à
pp *Très din.*

11
pei - ne. Nous n'avons
pp *Rit.* *a Tempo 1°*

E.4417¹ F.

Measure 6, sixteenth note triplets is slightly faster than the combination of two sixteenth notes. Each triplet has a Dim mark, when singing this summary, do not stay, but follow the rhythm and accent flow. From the beginning of 7 measure, the deduction characteristics of the characters have changed. The voice part sounds here are relatively low, but a sweet breath should be conveyed from the voice, besides, attention should be paid to stress (accentato) and rhythm. In measures 9-11, vocal part in rhythm of triplet in one beat, the first eighth rest begin to enter, the sentence to be expressed in these sections is rhythmical combination of two eighth note triplets + sixteenth notes + two sixteenth note triplets+ a quarter note + a eighth with a eighth rest + quarter rest. Here, the triplet transitions to sixteenth notes and then go back to triplets. It is crucial not to prolong the duration by changing the rhythm pattern, especially moi,si dou-ce ment, the sixteenth note can not prolong here, but treating it as two groups of decomposition of eighth notes.

Accentato: In singing, Accentato is emphasized for the flow of the rhythm, usually refers to the first note of each beat. But in this case, the first note of the triplet under the Dim mark.

4

F. 1417! F.

Now, in measure 12, the piano part that mimics the 'flute' comes in again, in measures 12-14, *Nous n'avons rien à nous dire, tant nous sommes près l'un de l'autre*; (We have nothing to say, so close are we one to another), we need to focus on the emphasis on pronunciation of the beginning letters of several words here, rien(R), dire (D), tant (T), près (P), so that we can clearly express the meaning of the lyrics and clearly express the emotions. In measures 14-18, the first thing is the intonation, there are chromatic scale in these sentences; secondly, *p*, *più p* and *pp* are continuously marked on the score, which means to speak and sing softly. Remember, the state of breath support should continue to support instead of declining.

Then we come to measures 17-21. The symbolic theme of the piano part 'frog' begins to appear, indicating that it is getting late. This imitation of nature is used very cleverly, as mentioned above. *Il est tard; voici le chant des grenouilles vertes qui commence avec la nuit*. (It is late; here is the song of the green frogs that begins with the night), the second line is rhythmical, which makes speech very fast, so make sure you say every word clearly, and speak the language with the rhythm, especially *des Grenouilles*.

21 *Plus lent*
 .mence avec la nuit.

24 *Pressez un peu*
pp *Presque sans voix*
 Ma mè-re ne croi-ra ja-

26
 -mais que je suis res-tée si longtemps à cher-cher ma cein-tu-re per-

27 *a Tempo*
 -du-e.

E. 14471 F.

Finally, let's come to the last part of this piece. In measures 22-26, the piano "talks" again. The right hand continuous triplet with Staccato, the left hand, eighth note groups and chords with big jump alternately, rendering a quiet late night and tense atmosphere. Then the voices began to enter, *Ma mère ne croira jamais que je suis restée si longtemps à chercher ma ceinture perdue.* (My mother will never believe I stayed out so long to look for my lost sash.) Here it says, *pressez un peu, pp, presque sans voix* -- fluently speaking. In 26 measure, stopping the piano part of the last sentence and "speak" without slowing down. 27 Measure begins, 'Flute' symbolic theme reappears, *Très Lointain* - Very far away, which are still in this atmosphere.

The whole piece does not have a particularly high tone to render the passionate atmosphere, but is narrated in beautiful French, which is the delicacy of this work. When singing this piece, be sure to taste the French language as if it were a delicacy.

V. CONCLUSION

Debussy used a very subtle writing technique in this work, combining music and poetry skillfully. In an interview, Debussy said, "I would like to completely get out of myself and write my musical dreams. I would sing with childlike innocence of the beauty in my heart."

Arias have long been popular with vocal singers and fans because of their showy technique, dramatic conflict and spectacular staging. The author agree with this viewpoint, but the art song is also a lifelong subject as a vocal singer, because the exquisite music creation, higher literature and delicate emotional changes, all of which build the perfect fusion in a pretty advanced knowledge.

Art song is an exquisite genre of vocal music works. After that, the author will continue to discuss the last two songs of this vocal music cycle, as well as the artistic characteristics of this cycle, the creative style and characteristics of Debussy's vocal music works. (To be continued)

VI. REFERENCES

- [1] Wang Dayan. An Introduction to Art Songs [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Publishing House, 2009.
- [2] Shang Jia Xiang. History of European Vocal Music [M]. Beijing: Huale Publishing House, 2003
- [3] Cai Shuang. Impressionism and Symbolism in Debussy's Music [J]. *Contemporary Music*, 2016, (1): 61-63
- [4] Hong Jiang. Aesthetics of Debussy's Impressionist Art Songs [J]. *Folk Music*,
- [5] Sui Siyi. Evolution and Style of French Art Songs [J]. *Contemporary Music*, 2018, (01): 83-84
- [6] Pan Sijun. Evolution and Singing Mastery of French Art Songs [J]. *Teacher Education*, 2010, (03): 30-33
- [7] Zhao Jing. Chen Bei. Introduction to European Art Songs [J]. *Music Creation*, 2011, (06): 113-115
- [8] Li Qing. Discussion on the Formation of Debussy's Art Song Style [J]. *Journal of Yanbian Education College*, 2018, (02): 40-42
- [9] Li Jia. Analysis on The Singing of Debussy's Art Songs [J]. *Journal of Jilin Institute of Education*, 2012, (09): 71-72
- [10] Qiu Shuwei. Analysis on the Origin and Singing of French Art Songs [J]. *Art Education*, 2009, (09): 94-95
- [11] Stephen Rumph. Debussy's *Trois Chansons de Bilitis*: Song, Opera, and the Death of the Subject [J]. *The Journal of Musicology*, Autumn, 1994, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Autumn, 1994), pp. 464-490
- [12] William Gibbons. Debussy as Storyteller: Narrative Expansion In the *Trois Chansons de Bilitis* [J].
- Qiu Shuwei. Analysis on the Origin and Singing of French Art Songs [J]. *Art Education*, 2009, (09): 94-95
- [13] Ashley L. Stone. *CLAUDE DEBUSSY'S TROIS CHANSONS DE BILITIS: AN ANALYSIS* [J]. Texas State University, 2007.
