

Paris 1913: L'Offrande lyrique

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF SONGS

1. **André Caplet (1878-1925): En regardant ces belles fleurs** (Charles d'Orléans)

Seeing these beautiful flowers
solicited by love's new season,
each puts on her finery
and paints herself in charming colours.

Such is their delicious fragrance
no heart could fail to find new vigour.
Seeing these beautiful flowers
solicited by love's new season.
Birds begin their dance
on many a flowery branch,
and gladly sing their mirth
in ditties, lays and chants,
seeing these beautiful flowers. (*Simon Knight*)

2. **Darius Milhaud (1892-1974): L'innocence** from *Trois poèmes en prose de Lucile de Chateaubriand* Op.10

Daughter of heaven, kind Innocence!
If I dared use some of your features
to attempt a weak portrait of you,
I would say that you substitute for virtue in childhood,
And for wisdom in the springtime of life;
For beauty in old age,
and for happiness in misfortune.
That, a stranger to our indiscretions,
you weep only pure tears,
And there is only divinity in your smile.
Beautiful Innocence! But wait! Dangers surround you;
Envy looks you full in the face.
Will you tremble, modest Innocence?
Will you seek to shy away
From the perils that threaten you?
No: I see you standing asleep,
your head resting upon an altar.

3. **Reynaldo Hahn (1874-1947): À Chloris** (Théophile de Viau)

If it be true, Chloris, that thou lovst me,
(And I understand that thou dost love me well),
I do not believe that even kings
Could know such happiness as mine.
How unwelcome death would be,
If it came to exchange my fortune
With the joy of heaven!
All that they say of ambrosia
Does not fire my imagination
Like the favour of thine eyes. (*Richard Stokes*)

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937): Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé M.64

4. Soupir (Sigh)

My soul rises towards your brow o calm sister, where there lies dreaming
An autumn strewn with russet freckles,
And towards the restless sky of your angelic eye,
As in a melancholy garden,
A white fountain faithfully sighs towards the Azure!
Towards the compassionate azure of pale and pure October,
Which mirrors its infinite languor in the great pools
And, on the stagnant water where the tawny agony
Of the leaves stirs in the wind and digs a cold furrow,
Lets the yellow sun drag itself out in a long ray. (*Nicolas Gounin*)

5. Placet futile (Futile Supplication)

Princess! In envying the fate of a Hebe
Who appears on this cup at this kiss of your lips,
I expend my ardour, but have only the modest rank of *abbé*
And shall not figure even naked on the Sèvres.

Since I am not your bearded lap-dog,
Nor lozenge, nor rouge, nor affected games,
And feel you look on me with indifferent eyes,
Blonde, whose divine coiffeurs are goldsmiths!

Appoint me... you whose many berry-tinted laughs
Are gathered a flock of docile lambs
Grazing through all vows and bleating through all frenzies,

Appoint me... so that Love winged with a fan
May paint me there, fingering a flute and lulling this fold,
Princess, appoint me shepherd of your smiles. (*Richard Stokes*)

6. Surgi de la croupe et du bond (Risen from the crupper and the leap)

Risen from the crupper and the leap
Of an ephemeral ornament of glass
Without garlanding its bitter vigil
The neglected neck stops short.
I truly believe that two mouths never
Drank, neither her lover nor my mother,
From the same Chimera,
I, sylph of this cold ceiling!
The vase pure of any draught
Save inexhaustible widowhood
Though dying does not consent,
Naïve and most funereal kiss!
To breathe forth any annunciation
Of a rose in the shadows. (*Richard Stokes*)

7. Georges Auric (1899-1988): Le Pouf

from *3 Interludes* (René Chalupt)

Between the padded satin pouffes, the silk crinoline slips
The clock strikes on the mantelpiece
The clock that overrides naked love...

On his return from the Italian war
The Colonel has his portrait put on the wall
Which the Blue Dolman has embellished
And which stands out against the heavy folds of the hangings...

But the Colonel is not her beloved,
She prefers to hear not war stories, but the latest news
From Mérimée, who she met at court this winter...

And looking solemn, in her puffy dress,
She prepares to go into the woods,
While her velvet and silk crinoline slips between the pouffes. (*Claire Booth*)

8. Guy Ropartz (1864-1955): La Route (Guy Ropartz)

The road

In the bright sun, on the white road
Bordered by fields of rye all abloom with blueberries
She goes...
My gaze continues to follow her a while longer...

But, when she disappeared behind the mountain,
I returned alone by the white road, and I cry.
Cruel road! Road that takes over me! I hate you!
Beautiful road! I love you! For it's you who will bring her back to me!

On a day of joy, you will do it softly at her light feet.
Many days have passed.
The rye has been cut, and in the meadows already burns - melancholic -
The mauve flame of the Autumn colchicum flower.

Each evening, upon the grey road
I watched in vain for her return...
She will never come again... I am so tired! My heart is full of pain!

Cruel road! Road that takes over me!
I cannot detach myself from you, beautiful road...
For you were the compassionate witness - perhaps - of our farewell. (*Claire Booth*)

Louis Durey (1888-1979): L'Offrande lyrique (Op.4)
(Rabindranath Tagore / André Gide)

9. Le jour n'est plus (The day is no more)

The day is no more,
the shadow is upon the earth.
It is time that I go to the stream
to fill my pitcher.

The evening air is eager
with the sad music of the water.
Ah, it calls me out into the dusk.
In the lonely lane there is no passer-by,
the wind is up,
the ripples are rampant in the river.

I know not if I shall come back home.
I know not whom I shall chance to meet.
There at the fording in the little boat
the unknown man plays upon his lute.

10. Au petit matin (Early in the day)

Early in the day it was whispered
that we should sail in a boat, only thou and I,
and never a soul in the world
would know of this our pilgrimage
to no country and to no end.

In that shoreless ocean,
at thy silently listening smile
my songs would swell in melodies,
free as waves, free from all bondage of words.

Is the time not come yet?
Are there works still to do?
Lo, the evening has come down upon the shore
and in the fading light
the seabirds come flying to their nests.

Who knows when the chains will be off,
and the boat, like the last glimmer of sunset,
vanish into the night?

11. Les nuages s'entassent (Clouds heap upon clouds)

Clouds heap upon clouds and it darkens.
Ah, love, why dost thou let me
wait outside at the door all alone?

In the busy moments of the noontide work
I am with the crowd,
but on this dark lonely day
it is only for thee that I hope.

If thou showest me not thy face,

if thou leavest me wholly aside,
I know not how I am to pass
these long, rainy hours.

I keep gazing on the far-away gloom of the sky,
and my heart wanders wailing
with the restless wind.

12. **Tu es le ciel (Thou art the sky)**

Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well.

O thou beautiful, there in the nest is thy love
that encloses the soul with colours and sounds and odours.

There comes the morning
with the golden basket in her right hand
bearing the wreath of beauty,
silently to crown the earth.

And there comes the evening
over the lonely meadows deserted by herds,
through trackless paths, carrying cool draughts of peace
in her golden pitcher from the western ocean of rest.

But there, where spreads the infinite sky for the soul
to take her flight in, reigns the stainless white radiance.
There is no day nor night, nor form nor colour,
and never, never a word.

13. **Cueille cette frêle fleur (Pluck this little flower)**

Pluck this little flower and take it, delay not!
I fear lest it droop
and drop into the dust.
[I may not find]1 a place in thy garland,
but honour it
with a touch of pain from thy hand and pluck it.
I fear lest the day end
before I am [aware],
and the time of offering go by.
Though its colour be not deep
and its smell be faint,
use this flower in thy service
and pluck it while there is time.

14. **Lumière ! ma lumière ! (Light, my light)**

Light, my light, the world-filling light,
the eye-kissing light, heart-sweetening light!

Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the centre of my life;
the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love;
the sky opens, the wind runs wild, laughter passes over the earth.

The butterflies spread their sails on the sea of light.
Lilies and jasmynes surge up on the crest of the waves of light.

The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling,
and it scatters gems in profusion.

Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling,
and gladness without measure.
The heaven's river has drowned its banks
and the flood of joy is abroad.

15. Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921): Petit main

from *Le Cendres Rouge* Op.146 (Georges Louis Edmond Docquois)

Little hand

In my unworthy hand, when I imprison you
And when you are willing to be kept, just for a moment,
It produces in me, a sort of ease.
Oh hand, little hand, loveliest of hands

And I no longer need anything or anyone,
Oh tiny hand, adorably frail
In my unworthy hand, when I imprison you
And when you are willing to be kept, just for a moment.

Oh supple hand, warm hand with such fine fingers,
I give you, with these poor verses a sweet thank you, to deign to die.
Oh, so sweetly, oh hand, little hand, white hand of the Madonna..
in my unworthy hand, when I imprison you. (*Claire Booth*)

16. Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924): Il m'est cher, Amour, le bandeau

from *Le Jardin Clos* Op.106 (Charles Van Lerberghe)

My Love, the blindfold is dear to me

My Love, the blindfold is dear to me
That screens my eyes;
It weighs like a sweet burden
Of sun on languid roses.

If I move forward – how strange!
I seem to walk on water;
Wherever I place my too heavy feet,
They sink as if into rings.
Who, then, has loosened in the shade
The golden weight of my long tresses?
All enclosed by dark embraces,
I plunge into waves of fire.
My lips, where my soul sings
Of naught but rapture and kisses,
Open like an ardent flower
Above a blazing river.
(*Richard Stokes*)

17. Cecile Chaminade (1857-1944): Je voudrais être une fleur (Pierre Reyniel)

I would like to be a flower

I would like to be a flower,
Pink under the leaves,
With a particular ardent paleness
So that you'd pick me.

I would like to be a bird,
A tender nightingale,
So that in a subtle web
You would want to take me

I would like to be, you see,
The shadow of my shadow,
But my heart is beaten down
By countless evils

Because, alas! I am nothing,
But a passerby
Who cries and who may
Well die soon. (*Claire Booth*)

Claude Debussy (1862-1918): Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé M.64

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20. Eventail (Fan)

O dreamer-girl, if you'd have me plunge
Into pure pathless delight,
Manage, through a subtle lie
To keep my wing in your hand.

A freshness of twilight
Comes to you at each beat
Whose imprisoned stroke thrusts back
The horizon delicately.

Vertigo! see how shivers
Space like a great kiss
Which, mad at being born for no one,
Can neither spurt nor be calmed.

Do you sense the fierce paradise
Like a buried laugh
Flow from the corner of your mouth
Deep into the unanimous fold!

The sceptre of pink shores
Stagnant on golden evenings, this it is,
This closed white wing you place
Against the fire of a bracelet. (*Nicolas Gounin*)

Erik Satie (1866-1925): Trois poèmes d'Amour (Alfred Erik Leslie Satie)

The poet dares to make a discreet declaration to his beloved, a pale avowal in magical words of his own. She listens, coldly, disdainfully

21. I am only a grain of sand

I am only a grain of sand,
Always fresh and lovable.
Who drinks, who laughs, who sings
To please his lover.
Very gentle, my dear beautiful
Love your frail lover;
He is only a grain of sand,
Always fresh and lovable.

The poet expresses here all his devotion, all his concentration. He doubts his personal capacities and displays enormous anguish

22. Being bald from birth.

Being bald from birth.
Out of pure decency
I no longer have confidence
In my youthful courage.
Why this arrogance
From the so beautiful Hortense?
Very bald from birth,
Out of decency.

Subtitle: The poet, smitten with dizziness, seems mad with love. His heart thumps, his eyelids tremble like leaves

23. Your adornments are secret

Your adornments are secret,
O sweet little girl.
My beautiful, high-spirited girl
Smoke a cigarette
Will I have her
Would that I could be complete.
Your adornments are secret,
Oh sweet little girl. (*Claire Booth*)

24. Lili Boulanger (1893-1918): Vous m'avez regardé avec toute votre âme
from *Clairières dans le ciel* (Francis Jammes)

Vous m'avez regardé avec toute votre âme.
You gazed at me with all your soul.
You gazed at me long like a blue sky.
I set your gaze in the shade of my eyes ...
How passionate this gaze, and calm ...

25. Gabriel Grovlez (1879-1944): Guitares et mandolines (Camille Saint-Saëns)

Guitar and mandolin
Guitar and mandolin
Cause you to fall in love.
While crunching pralines,
Pepe lets herself be charmed
When, sounding sharps and flats,
Mandolin and guitar
Resound to disarm her.

Mandolin and guitar
Accompany with their sound
Lovers who follow the beacon
Of beauty in the night;
And feline Juana flashes
(Guitar and mandolin)
Her gleaming eyes and mouth. (*Richard Stokes*)