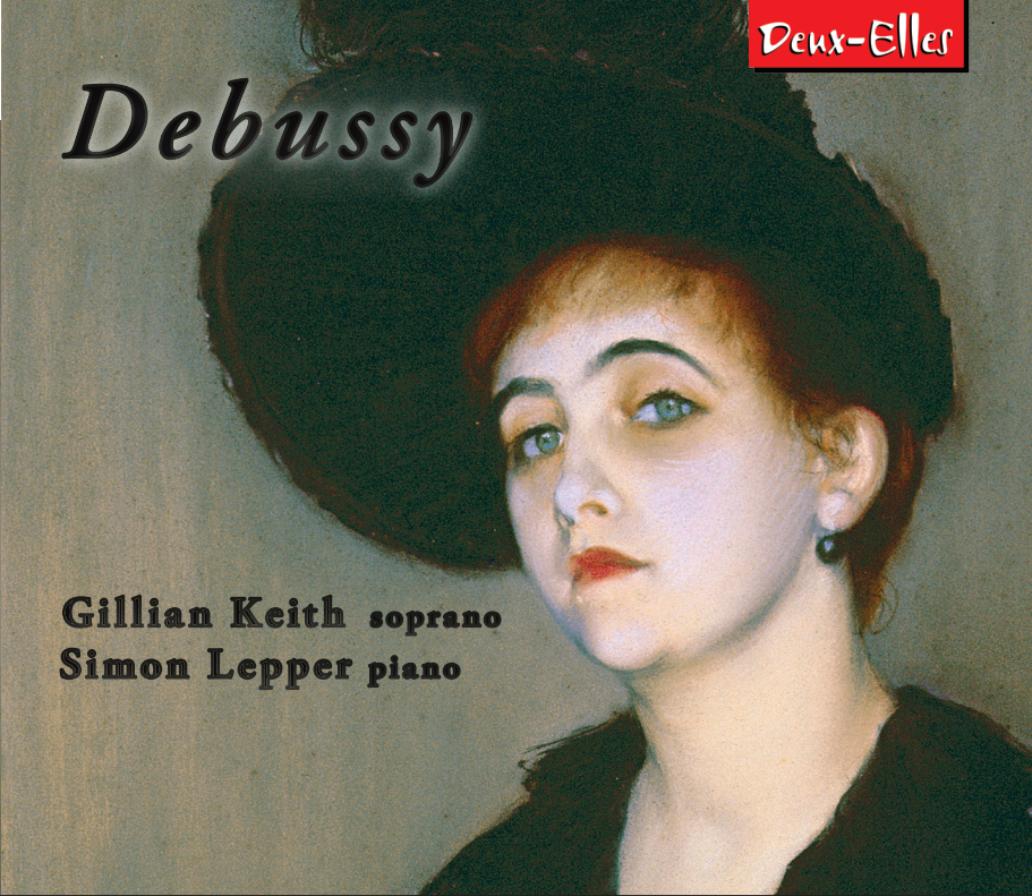


Deux-Elles

# Debussy



Gillian Keith soprano  
Simon Lepper piano

Songs For His Muse

With the exception of Debussy's *Ariettes oubliées* and his setting of Bourget's "Beau soir," the songs on this disc were composed between 1880 and 1883, when Debussy was between the ages of 18 and 21. Stemming from his student years at the Paris Conservatoire, most of them remained unpublished during his lifetime. Achille-Claude (Debussy's christened name) was accepted into that venerable institution in 1872 at the tender age of ten; his parents fervently hoped that he would become a piano virtuoso. While the young boy developed into a remarkable pianist, he was never awarded first prize in the piano *concours*; rather, by the age of fourteen, he had won first prize in *solfège*, and four years later, another first prize in accompanying. The year 1880 was pivotal for Achille, as he began a job as accompanist in the voice studio of Madame Victorine Moreau-Sainti and later that year started to take formal composition lessons. He was beginning to find his musical niche, after eight long years of study at the Conservatoire.

Achille was also growing out of adolescence into manhood, and his encounter with Madame Marie Vasnier, one of Moreau-Sainti's students, was doubly fortuitous. Possessing a high and agile voice, Marie became Achille's muse, inspiring no fewer than 29 of his early songs, seven of which are included on this disc. But more than that, the relationship between the married singer and her bachelor accompanist blossomed into a

full-fledged love affair. Achille was a frequent guest at the Vasniers' homes, where he rehearsed with Marie and enjoyed the intellectual friendship of her husband, the warmth of her family, and free rein of their library. The texts that were carefully chosen by the young composer to set to music share an important quality: in essence, they are thinly-veiled love songs. And their flowery dedications to Madame demonstrate how bedazzled the young man was of his *inspiratrice*. On the manuscript of "Caprice," which ends with the passionate words, "you are destined to adore me until death" ("c'est ton sort de m'adorer jusqu'à la mort"), Achille penned a dedication to her: "These songs conceived somehow in your memory can belong only to you, as does the author" ("Ces mélodies conçues en quelque sorte par votre souvenir ne peuvent que vous appartenir comme vous appartient l'auteur.").

As giddy in love as Achille was with Marie Vasnier, he was also enrapt and spellbound by the poetry and literature which he was now devouring. The stimulating cultural atmosphere of the Vasnier household, among other experiences such as his first travels beyond Paris, helped to remedy his serious educational gaps. Born into a family of limited means, Achille was essentially home-schooled prior to his matriculation at the Conservatoire, where his training was strictly focused on the acquisition of musical skills. As a teenager, he was experiencing the rich world

of literature for the first time. One of his more broadly educated friends at the Conservatoire, Raymond Bonheur, recalled his instant connection with Debussy when he noticed his classmate carrying a volume of Banville. In fact, about a dozen of Achille's earliest songs, including "Caprice," are based on poems by Théodore de Banville.

The adolescent composer was drawn to a great variety of poets, including other Parnassians like Leconte de Lisle ("Jane," "La fille aux cheveux de lin," and "Les elfes") and Théophile Gautier ("Les papillons" and "Séguidille"), as well as contemporaries Charles Cros ("L'archet"), Maurice Bouchor ("Romance" and "Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau"), and Paul Bourget ("Beau soir"). Debussy later hit his compositional stride in his settings of poetry by Symbolist writers such as Paul Verlaine (*Ariettes oubliées*), Charles Baudelaire, Stéphane Mallarmé, and of course Maurice Maeterlinck, whose *Pelléas et Mélisande* inspired his great opera.

A number of the earlier songs might be described as parlor tunes that derive from nineteenth-century musical traditions. These include "Fleur des blés," "Caprice," "Rondeau," Bouchor's "Romance," and the sentimental setting of "Jane," with its recurring refrains that linger in the listener's ear. The young composer's sensitivity to the text is already apparent, especially when

he highlights certain phrases by setting them in a quasi-recitative style. For example, the butterfly's fluttering wings, heard in the piano arpeggiations of "Les papillons," abruptly shift to simple block chords whenever the poem moves from narrative description to directly addressing the lover. Debussy's clear preference for the key of F-sharp (or G-flat) is manifest in "Caprice," "Les papillons," "Rondeau," and "Romance," as well as in "La fille aux cheveux de lin" and "Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau." Perhaps this bright key suited the range and timbre of Marie Vasnier's voice in addition to fitting comfortably under the pianist's fingers.

In contrast to the intimate miniatures suitable for a salon were more elaborate songs that Achille wrote to showcase Marie's high and flexible voice as well as his own pianistic virtuosity. An extended vocalise introduces the flaxen-haired girl, bookending the first strophe of "La fille aux cheveux de lin." Following this arresting opening is a memorable refrain that recurs thrice, ending each time on a high B-flat. Vocal trills and pyrotechnics abound in "Les elfes" and "Séguidille," and the piano part is a *tour de force* as well. These two recently discovered and reconstructed *mélodies* are in fact the longest songs Debussy would ever compose. The extended piano introduction of "Les elfes" sets the stage for a dramatic and epic ballad and the flamboyant "Séguidille" portrays a seductive Manola, Debussy's version

of Carmen. Like the Spanish *seguidilla* dance, which typically ends with a *bien parado* with the dancers freezing in their final position, so does this song end abruptly with the singer tossing off a high C-sharp.

The composer's lifelong fascination with exoticism continues from Gautier's Andalusian vision to Marius Dillard's Mandarin tableau, "Rondel chinois" and Armand Renaud's Persian landscape, "Flots, palmes, sables." A haunting, modal quality permeates the refrains of "Flots, palmes, sables," where profuse vocal cascades are echoed in the accompaniment, depicting the fluidity of water, above a relentlessly pulsating bass. It is the only song by Debussy that includes a harp, enhancing its ancient quality and undulating effects. It is also the only poem by Renaud that he ever set, although he may have known songs by other composers (including Saint-Saëns) based on Renaud's *Les nuits persanes*. Similar to the opening of "La fille aux cheveux de lin," the "Rondel chinois" features an untexted vocalise, although its minor mode and plentiful augmented seconds lend a contemplative and exotic element. Achille's calculated attempt to portray the allure of the unconventional in this song is also reflected in his dedication to Madame Vasnier, "the only person who can sing and make forgettable all that this music has that is unsingable and Chinese" ("la seule qui peut chanter et faire oublier tout ce que cette musique

a d'inchantable et de chinois"). In 1881, Marie and Achille apparently performed the "Rondel chinois" together in a concert.

The varied and experimental nature of Debussy's early songs led to works like "Beau soir" and the well-known *Ariettes oubliées*, in which the composer's unique compositional voice came into its own. Verlaine's understated and evocative Symbolist aesthetic in particular elicited a perfectly attuned musical response from Debussy. All six *Ariettes* were composed when Achille was in his early twenties and living in the Eternal City as winner of the coveted Prix de Rome. Each *Ariette* was published separately in 1888, but they were not revised as the *Ariettes oubliées* (*Forgotten Airs*) and published as a collection until 1903, a year after his wildly successful opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* had catapulted him to fame. By that time, his relationship with Marie Vasnier and her family was long over, and he now dedicated this collection of songs to Miss Mary Garden, the "inoubliable Mélisande" ("unforgettable Mélisande") who had starred in the premiere of his opera. A comparison between his 1888 *Ariettes* and the 1903 *Ariettes oubliées* (the version recorded here) reveals adjustments in vocal contour and refinements of declamation, demonstrating his ever increasing sensitivity to the text. By 1903, Debussy was no longer writing solely for Marie Vasnier but for posterity.

Marie Rolf

#### A personal note about the recording from Gillian Keith

When assembling this programme of early songs by Debussy, I repeatedly asked the question, "how could so many pieces of such high calibre by a composer of such renown be unpublished nearly a century after his death?" And these are not fragments nor unworked ideas of questionable merit; these are exquisite pearls in the crown of his vocal output which display his unmistakable, and highly attuned sense of poetry, and captivating sound world. It surprises me greatly that so many have remained unknown for so long; indeed there are still some for which we are waiting and hoping to know.

Marie-Blanche Vasnier, the woman who awakened in Debussy the first adult passion of his life, seemed to be the ideal vehicle for his musical and poetic instincts. These years of infatuation with Madame Vasnier and her sweet, fragile soprano yielded some of his most heartbreakingly pure and ravishing music. She was his first great love, his muse, his "melodious fairy", and the only one, according to the young, besotted composer, who had "a voice light enough to sing about butterflies".

As a young student I fell under the spell of Debussy's *Chansons de jeunesse*, particularly the early Verlaine settings, all of which he dedicated to Madame Vasnier. The *Ariettes oubliées*, given to Mary Garden, have always struck me as some of his most perfectly constructed mélodies, and since the very beginning of my partnership with pianist Simon Lepper, these early songs have been a staple in our repertoire. As Debussy's days with the Vasniers were described by their daughter as "the years of his youth, of his hopes, of his well-being", so were my first experiences performing these youthful masterpieces.

A decade on from our first volume of early Debussy songs, we are eager to offer the next chapter in our Debussy chronicle, and thrilled to include "Séguidille" which was unpublished at the time of recording. We believe it to be a world premiere on a commercial release. Other rarities, like "Les papillons", "La fille aux cheveux de lin", and "Flots, palmes, sables" feature in this programme, and will surely become staples in the repertoire once they are readily available in reliable editions.

We are grateful to Marie Rolf for her help in obtaining "Séguidille" and to Nigel Foster for his edition of Vasnier songs.



Gillian Keith has emerged as one of Canada's leading lyric sopranos. Her superb voice and musicianship are at home both on the opera stage and on the concert platform, making her one of the most stylish and versatile artists of her generation.

A past winner of the prestigious Kathleen Ferrier Award, she made her Royal Opera, Covent Garden debut as Zerbinetta in Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and has appeared in leading roles at opera houses around the world. As a concert artist she has a vast and varied repertoire, performing in festivals and venues great and small, far and wide.

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Editions: *Three Songs for Madame Vasinier* - London Song Festival Publications, edited by Nigel Foster ("Caprice", "Rondel Chinois", "La fille aux cheveux de lin"). *Quatre nouvelles mélodies* - Durand, edited by Denis Herlin ("L'Archet", "Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau", "Romance", "Les Elfes"). *Les papillons* - The New York Public Library, edited by Marie Rolf ("Les papillons"). "Flots, palmes, sables" - unpublished, edited by Ruben Lifschiz. *Séguidille* - Durand, edited by Marie Rolf. *Songs of Claude Debussy* - Hal Leonard Publishing Corporation, edited by James R. Briscoe (all remaining songs).

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Photo Joerg Muesenberg

Simon Lepper read music at King's College Cambridge. He is a professor of piano accompaniment at the Royal College of Music, London and is the official accompanist for the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Song Prize. Simon frequently performs on BBC Radio 3 and at the Wigmore Hall, London. His performances include Carnegie Hall, Auditorium du Louvre, Paris and the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam as well as the festivals of Ravinia, Edinburgh, Verbier and BBC Proms. He appears regularly with singers including Karen Cargill, Sally Matthews, Dame Felicity Palmer, Angelika Kirchschlager Elizabeth Watts, Stéphane Degout and Mark Padmore.

[www.simonlepper.com](http://www.simonlepper.com)

#### Fleur des blés ~ André Girod

Le long des blés que la brise / Fait onduler puis défrise  
En un désordre coquet, / J'ai trouvé de bonne prise  
De t'y cueillir un bouquet.

Mets-le vite à ton corsage ; / Il est fait à ton image  
En même temps que pour toi ... Ton petit doigt, je le gage,  
T'a déjà soufflé pourquoi :

Ces épis dorés, c'est l'onde / De ta chevelure blonde  
Toute d'or et de soleil ; / Ce coquelicot qui fronde,  
C'est ta bouche au sang vermeil.

Et ces blues, beau mystère ! / Points d'azur que rien n'altère,  
Ces blues ce sont tes yeux, / Si bleus qu'on dirait, sur terre,  
Deux éclats tombés des ciels.

#### Beau soir ~ Paul Bourget

Lorsque au soleil couchant les rivières sont roses,  
Et qu'un tiède frisson court sur les champs de blé,  
Un conseil d'être heureux semble sortir des choses  
Et monter vers le cœur troublé ;

Un conseil de goûter le charme d'être au monde,  
Cependant qu'on est jeune et que le soir est beau,  
Car nous nous en allons comme s'en va cette onde :  
Elle à la mer - nous au tombeau !

#### Jane ~ Leconte de Lisle

Je pâlis et tombe en langueur :  
Deux beaux yeux m'ont brisé le cœur.

Rose pourprée et tout humide,  
Ce n'était pas sa lèvre en feu ;  
C'étaient ses yeux d'un si beau bleu  
Sous l'or de sa tresse fluide.

Je pâlis et tombe en langueur :  
Deux beaux yeux m'ont brisé le cœur.

Toute mon âme fut ravie,  
Doux étaient son rire et sa voix ;  
Mais ses deux yeux bleus, je le vois  
Ont pris mes forces et ma vie.

Je pâlis et tombe en langueur :  
Deux beaux yeux m'ont brisé le cœur.

#### Flowers of the Wheat Fields

Among the wheat that the breeze / curls and then uncurls  
in coquettish disorder, / I took the notion  
to gather a bouquet for you.

Put it quickly in your bodice, / it was made in your image  
as it was made for you...  
I wager you already suspect why.

These golden ears are the waves / of your blond hair  
all golden and sunlight; / this scoffing poppy  
is your blood-red mouth.

And these cornflowers, lovely mystery! / Azure points impervious to change,  
these cornflowers are your eyes, / so blue that they are like  
two fragments of fallen sky.

#### Beautiful Evening

When the rivers turn pink in the setting sun,  
and a warm breeze passes over the wheat fields,  
a command to be happy seems to emanate from all things  
And mounts towards the unquiet heart.

A command to relish the charm of being alive  
while one is young and the evening is fine,  
for we are going as that stream goes:  
it to the sea - we to the tomb!

#### Jane

I grow pale and listless:  
my heart has been broken by two lovely eyes.

It was not her fiery lips,  
a moist crimson rose;  
it was her eyes of such a lovely blue  
beneath the gold of her flowing tresses.

I grow pale and listless:  
my heart has been broken by two lovely eyes.

All my soul was enraptured,  
her laugh and her voice were sweet;  
but her two blue eyes, I see,  
have sapped my strength and my life.

I grow pale and listless:  
my heart has been broken by two lovely eyes.

Hélas, la chose est bien certaine :  
Si Jane repousse mon vœu,  
Dans ses deux yeux d'un si beau bleu  
J'aurai puisé ma mort prochaine.

Je pâlis et tombe en langueur :  
Deux beaux yeux m'ont brisé le cœur.

#### Caprice ~ Théodore de Banville

Quand je baise, pâle de fièvre,  
Ta lèvre où court une chanson,  
Tu détournes les yeux, ta lèvre  
Reste froide comme un glaçon,  
Et, me repoussant de tes bras,  
Tu dis que je ne t'aime pas.

Mais si je dis : Ce long martyre  
M'a brisé, je romps mon lien !  
Tu réponds avec un sourire :  
Viens à mes pieds ! tu le sais bien,  
Ma chère âme, que c'est ton sort  
De m'adorer jusqu'à la mort.

#### Rondel chinois ~ Marius Dillard

#### Les papillons ~ Théophile Gautier

*Alas, it's all too true:  
If Jane rejects my suit,  
I will die from her two beautiful blue eyes.*

*I grow pale and listless:  
my heart has been broken by two lovely eyes.*

#### Caprice

*When, pale with fever, I kiss your lips  
from which a song springs forth,  
you avert your eyes, your lips  
remain cold as ice,  
and thrusting me from your arms  
you say I do not love you.*

*But if I say: this long martyrdom  
has destroyed me, I'm breaking my bonds!  
You reply with a smile:  
Kneel at my feet! You know full well,  
dear soul, that you are destined  
to adore me until death.*

#### Chinese Rondel

*On the lake, bordered by azaleas,  
waterlilies and bamboo,  
a mahogany junk  
with a finely-tapered prow passes by.*

*A Chinese girl sleeps, veiled  
in a cloud of crepe up to her neck,  
on the lake bordered with azaleas,  
waterlilies and bamboo.*

*On his lacy veranda  
a mandarin stands  
watching with his owl's eyes  
the lady passing by alone  
on the lake bordered by azaleas.*

#### The Butterflies

*Snow-white butterflies  
fly in swarms over the sea.  
Beautiful white butterflies, when may I  
follow the blue path in the sky?*

Savez-vous, ô belle des belles,  
Ma bayadère aux yeux de jais,  
S'ils me pouvaient prêter leurs ailes,  
Dites, savez-vous où j'irais ?

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

#### Rondeau ~ Alfred de Musset

Fut-il jamais douceur de cœur pareille  
A voir Manon dans mes bras, sommeiller.  
Son front coquet parfume l'oreiller,  
Dans son beau sein, j'entends son cœur qui veille.  
Un songe passé, et s'en vient l'égayer.

Ainsi s'endort la fleur d'églantier  
Dans son calice enfermant une abeille.  
Moi, je la berce, un plus charmant métier,  
Fut-il jamais ?

Mais le jour vient, et l'aurore vermeille  
Effeuille au vent son printemps virginal  
Le peigne en main et la perle à l'oreille  
A son miroir, Manon va m'oublier.  
Hélas! l'amour sans lendemain ni veille  
Fut-il jamais ?

#### La fille aux cheveux de lin ~ Leconte de Lisle

Sur la luzerne en fleur assise,  
Qui chante dès le frais matin ?  
C'est la fille aux cheveux de lin,  
La belle aux lèvres de cerise.

L'amour, au clair soleil d'été,  
Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Ta bouche a des couleurs divines,  
Ma chère, et tente le baiser !  
Sur l'herbe en fleur veux-tu causer,  
Fille aux cils longs, aux boucles fines ?

L'amour, au clair soleil d'été,  
Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Ne dis pas non, fille cruelle !

*Do you know, oh fairest of the fair,  
my dancing-girl with jet-black eyes,  
if they were to lend me their wings,  
do you know where I would fly?*

*Without waiting for a single kiss from the roses,  
I'd fly across valleys and forests  
to alight on your half-closed lips,  
flower of my soul, and there I would die.*

#### Rondeau

*Was there ever a greater sweetness of heart  
than to see Manon in my arms, sleeping.  
Her pretty forehead perfumes the pillow,  
within her fair bosom I hear her watchful heart.  
A dream passes, and this makes her happy.*

*So sleeps the eglantine  
with a bee enclosed in its cup.  
As for me, I cradle her, was there ever a more  
charming occupation?*

*But day breaks, and the vermillion dawn scatters  
her virginal springtime to the winds.  
With a comb in her hand and a pearl in her ear,  
Manon will look into her mirror and forget me.  
Alas, was there ever love without yesterday or tomorrow?*

#### The Girl with the Flaxen Hair

*Seated among the flowering alfalfa,  
who is singing in the cool morning?  
It is the girl with the flaxen hair,  
the beauty with the cherry lips.*

*Love, with the clear sun of summertime,  
has sung with the lark.*

*Your mouth, my dear, has divine hues  
and tempts kisses!  
Would you like to chat here on the flowering grass,  
you with the long eyelashes and delicate curls?*

*Love, with the clear sun of summertime,  
has sung with the lark.*

*Do not say no, cruel girl!*

Ne dis pas oui ! J'entendrai mieux  
Le long regard de tes grands yeux  
Et ta bouche fine, ô ma belle !

Adieu les daims, adieu les lièvres  
Et les rouges perdrix ! Je veux  
Baiser le blond de tes cheveux,  
Presser la pourpre de tes lèvres !  
  
L'amour, au clair soleil d'été,  
Avec l'alouette a chanté.

#### Romance - Maurice Bouchor

Non, les baisers d'amour n'éveillent point les morts !  
Baise l'amour vivant de ta lèvre divine ;  
Et le dernier soupir que rendra ta poitrine  
Ne sera point chargé d'inutiles remords.  
  
On ne fait point l'amour dans le lit froid des morts !  
On ne se cherche pas des yeux dans la nuit noire.  
N'en crois pas là-dessus quelque ancienne histoire ;  
Sous terre on n'a pas plus d'amour que de remords.  
  
Viens, aime-moi d'amour, ne pensons pas aux morts !  
Ne montre pas le ciel de ta belle main blanche.  
Cueilles-en les beaux fruits de l'amour, sur la branche  
Où ne s'est pas glissé l'affreux ver du remords.

#### L'archet - Charles Cros

Elle avait de beaux cheveux, blonds  
Comme une moisson d'août, si longs  
Qu'ils lui tombaient jusqu'aux talons.  
  
Elle avait une voix étrange,  
Musicale, de fée ou d'ange,  
Des yeux verts sous leur noire frange.

Lui, ne craignait pas de rival,  
Quand il traversait mont ou val,  
En l'emportant sur son cheval.

Mais l'amour la prit si fort au cœur,  
Que pour un sourire moqueur,  
Il lui vint un mal de langueur.

*Do not say yes! I would rather listen  
to the long look of your wide-open eyes  
and your delicate mouth, my lovely one!*

*Farewell deer, farewell hares  
And russet partridges! I want  
to kiss the blond of your hair,  
and press the purple of your lips!*

*Love, with the clear sun of summertime,  
has sung with the lark.*

#### Romance

*No, love's kisses do not wake the dead!  
Kiss a living love with your divine lips;  
and the last sigh from your bosom  
will never be heavy with futile regrets.*  
  
*There is no lovemaking in death's cold bed!  
One does not seek out someone's eyes in the black night.  
Don't believe some old story when it comes to that;  
beneath the earth there is no love, just as there is no regret.*  
  
*Come, make love to me, let us not think of the dead!  
Don't point heavenward with your lovely white hand.  
Gather the fine fruits of love on the branch,  
where the fearful worm of remorse has not yet crawled.*

#### The Bow

*She had beautiful hair,  
blond like an August harvest,  
so long that it fell to her heels.*  
  
*She had a strange voice,  
musical, like a fairy or an angel,  
green eyes under dark lashes.*

*He feared no rival,  
as he crossed mountain or valley,  
bearing her on his steed.*

*But love grasped her heart so strongly,  
that, for a mocking smile,  
she fell ill with languor.*

Et dans ses dernières caresses :  
"Fais un archet avec mes tresses,  
Pour charmer tes autres maîtresses."

Puis, dans un long baiser nerveux,  
Elle mourut.  
Il fit selon ses voeux,  
Il fit l'archet de ses cheveux.

#### Flots, palmes, sables - Armand Renaud

Loin des yeux du monde, / La mer est profonde,  
Les palmiers sont hauts, / Les sables sont chauds.

S'il te faut les endroits calmes  
Où tout chante et tout bénit,  
Viens au fond du bois des palmes,  
Avec moi, choisir un nid,  
Un nid où, morts pour la foule,  
Nous vivrons pour l'eau qui coule,  
Pour le ramier qui roucoule  
A l'heure où le jour finit.

Loin des yeux du monde / La mer est profonde,  
Les palmiers sont hauts, / Les sables sont chauds.

S'il te faut les endroits mornes  
Où le corps est châtié,  
Allons au désert sans bornes,  
Sous le ciel sans pitié ;  
T'ayant là, je serai forte.  
Mourir ! mourir ! que m'importe  
Si je partage, étant morte,  
Ton sépulcre par moitié.

Loin des yeux du monde / La mer est profonde,  
Les palmiers sont hauts, / Les sables sont chauds.

#### Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau - Maurice Bouchor

On entend un chant sur l'eau / Dans la brume :  
Ce doit être un matelot  
Qui veut se jeter à l'eau / Pour la lune.

La lune éclaire le flot / Qui sanglote,  
Le matelot tombe à l'eau ...  
On entend traîner sur l'eau / Quelques notes.

*And in her final caresses, (she said):  
"make a bow from my hair,  
to charm your other mistresses."*

*Then, with a long trembling kiss,  
she died.  
He did what she wished.  
He made a bow from her hair.*

#### Waves, palms, sands

*Far from the eyes of the world / the sea is deep,  
the palm trees are high, / the sands are hot.*

*If you desire tranquil places  
where everything sings and is showered in blessing,  
come into the palm grove,  
and with me, choose a nest,  
a nest where, dead to the world,  
we will live for the flowing water,  
for the wood dove that coos  
at the end of the day.*

*Far from the eyes of the world / the sea is deep,  
the palm trees are high, / the sands are hot.*

*If you desire dreary places  
where the body is chastised,  
let us go to the boundless desert,  
beneath the pitiless sun;  
having you there, I would be strong.  
Dying! Dying! what would it matter  
if, when dead,  
I shared your tomb.*

*Far from the eyes of the world / the sea is deep,  
the palm trees are high, / the sands are hot.*

*The Sailor Who Falls into the Water  
A song is heard on the water / through the mist:  
it must be a sailor  
longing to throw himself into the water / for the moon.*

*The moon illuminates the sobbing waves,  
the sailor falls into the water ...  
A few notes are heard / drifting back across the water.*

### **Les elfes ~ Leconte de Lisle**

Couronnés de thym et de marjolaine,  
Les Elfes joyeux dansent sur la plaine.

Du sentier des bois aux daims familier,  
Sur un noir cheval, sort un chevalier.  
Son éperon d'or brille en la nuit brune ;  
Et, quand il traverse un rayon de lune,  
On voit resplendir, d'un reflet changeant,  
Sur sa chevelure un casque d'argent.

Couronnés de thym et de marjolaine,  
Les Elfes joyeux dansent sur la plaine.

Ils l'entourent tous d'un essaim léger  
Qui dans l'air muet semble voltiger.  
- Hardi chevalier, par la nuit serine,  
Où vas-tu si tard ? dit la jeune Reine.  
De mauvais esprits hantent les forêts ;  
Viens danser plutôt sur les gazons frais. -

Couronnés de thym et de marjolaine,  
Les Elfes joyeux dansent sur la plaine.

- Non ! ma fiancée aux yeux clairs et doux  
M'attend, et demain nous serons époux.  
Laissez-moi passer, Elfes des prairies. -  
Et sous l'éperon le noir cheval part.  
Il court, il bondit et va sans retard ;  
Mais le chevalier frissonne et se penche ;  
Il voit sur la route une forme blanche  
Qui marche sans bruit et lui tend les bras :  
- Elfe, esprit, démon, ne m'arrête pas ! -

Ne m'arrête pas, fantôme odieux !  
Je vais épouser ma belle aux doux yeux.  
- Ô mon cher époux, la tombe éternelle  
Sera notre lit de noce, dit-elle.  
Je suis morte ! - Et lui, la voyant ainsi,  
D'angoisse et d'amour tombe mort aussi.

Couronnés de thym et de marjolaine,  
Les Elfes joyeux dansent sur la plaine.

### **The Elves**

*Crowned with thyme and marjoram,  
The joyful elves dance in the meadow.*

*On a forest path trodden by deer,  
A knight rides out on a black horse.  
His golden spur shines in the dark night  
and, as he passes through a ray of moonlight,  
the gleam of a silver helmet on his head  
is seen shining in the flickering light.*

*Crowned with thyme and marjoram,  
The joyful elves dance in the meadow.*  
*They surround him all in a gentle swarm  
which seems to flutter in the silent air.  
"Bold knight, on this serene night,  
Where are you going so late?" says the young Queen.  
"Evil spirits haunt these forests;  
Come dance instead on the fresh grass."*

*Crowned with thyme and marjoram,  
The joyful elves dance in the meadow.*

*"No! My betrothed with her clear, sweet eyes  
waits for me, and tomorrow we will be married.  
Let me pass, elves of the prairies."  
And at the touch of the spur, the black horse departs.  
It runs, it leaps, and gallops like the wind;  
but the knight shudders as he leans forward;  
he sees a white figure on the road  
walking silently with its arms outstretched;  
"Elf, spirit, demon do not stop me!"*

*"Do not stop me, odious phantom!  
I go to marry my sweet-eyed love."  
"Oh my dear bridegroom, the eternal tomb  
shall be our nuptial bed," says she.  
"I am dead!" And he, seeing her this way,  
also falls dead from grief and love.*

*Crowned with thyme and marjoram,  
The joyful elves dance in the meadow.*

### **Séguidille ~ Théophile Gautier**

Un jupon serré sur les hanches,  
Un peigne énorme sur son chignon,  
Jambe nerveuse et pied mignon,  
Œil de feu, teint pâle et dents blanches ;

Alza ! ola !

Voilà / La véritable Manola.

Gestes hardis, libre parole,  
Sel et piment à pleine main,  
Oubli parfait du lendemain,  
Amour fantasque et grâce folle.

Chanter, danser aux son des castagnettes,  
Et, dans les courses de taureaux,  
Juger les coups des toreros,  
Tout en fumant des cigarettes.

Alza ! ola !

Voilà / La véritable Manola.

### **Ariettes oubliées ~ Paul Verlaine**

**C'est l'extase**

C'est l'extase langoureuse,  
C'est la fatigue amoureuse,  
C'est tous les frissons des bois  
Parmi l'étreinte des brises,  
C'est, vers les ramures grises,  
Le choeur des petites voix.

O le frêle et frais murmure !  
Cela gazouille et susurre,  
Cela ressemble au cri doux  
Que l'herbe agitée expire ...  
Tu dirais, sous l'eau qui vire,  
Le roulis sourd des cailloux.

Cette âme qui se lamente  
En cette plainte dormante  
C'est la nôtre, n'est-ce pas ?  
La mienne, dis, et la tienne,  
Dont s'exhale l'humble antiphon  
Par ce tiède soir, tout bas ?

### **Seguidilla**

*Skirt drawn tight across the hips,  
huge comb in her chignon,  
nervous leg and charming foot,  
fiery eye, pale skin, white teeth;  
Alza! Ola!*

*Behold Manola herself.*

*Bold gestures, bold words,  
handfuls of salt and pimento,  
perfect forgetfulness of the morrow,  
temperamental love and mad grace.*

*Singing, dancing to the sound of castanets  
and, at the bullfights,  
analyzing the torreadors' feats,  
while smoking cigarettes.*

*Alza! Ola!*  
*Behold Manola herself.*

### **Forgotten Airs**

**This is the Langorous Ecstasy**

*This is the langorous ecstasy,  
this is the fatigue of love,  
this is all the woods' trembling  
as the breezes embrace them,  
this is the choir of faint voices  
in the grey branches.*

*O, frail, fresh murmuring,  
it bubbles and whispers!  
It is like the soft cry  
the ruffled grass emits ...  
You would say, like the soundless movement  
of pebbles beneath the swirling water.*

*This soul that laments itself  
in such sleepy strain,  
isn't it ours?  
It is mine, isn't it, and yours,  
being breathed out in a humble antiphon  
on this warm evening, so softly?*

### **Il pleure dans mon cœur**

Il pleure dans mon cœur / Comme il pleut sur la ville,  
Quelle est cette langueur / Qui pénètre mon cœur ?

Ô bruit doux de la pluie / Par terre et sur les toits !  
Pour un cœur qui s'ennuie, / Ô le bruit de la pluie !

Il pleure sans raison / Dans ce cœur qui s'éccueille.  
Quoi ! nulle trahison ? / Ce deuil est sans raison.

C'est bien la pire peine / De ne savoir pourquoi,  
Sans amour et sans haine, / Mon cœur a tant de peine !

### **L'ombre des arbres**

L'ombre des arbres dans la rivière embrumée  
Meurt comme de la fumée,  
Tandis qu'en l'air, parmi les ramures réelles  
Se plaignent les tourterelles.

Combien, ô voyageur, ce paysage blême  
Te mira blême toi-même,  
Et que tristes pleuraient dans les hautes feuillées,  
Tes espérances noyées.

### **Chevaux de bois**

Tournez, tournez, bons chevaux de bois,  
Tournez cent tours, tournez mille tours,  
Tournez souvent et tournez toujours,  
Tournez, tournez au son des hautbois.

L'enfant tout rouge et la mère blanche,  
Le gars en noir et la fille en rose,  
L'une à la chose et l'autre à la pose,  
Chacun se paie un sou de dimanche.

Tournez, tournez, chevaux de leur cœur,  
Tandis qu'autour de tous vos tournois  
Clignote l'œil du filou sournois,  
Tournez au son du piston vainqueur !

C'est étonnant comme ça vous soûle  
D'aller ainsi dans ce cirque bête :  
Rien dans le ventre et mal dans la tête,  
Du mal en masse et du bien en foule.

Tournez, dadas, sans qu'il soit besoin  
D'user jamais de nuls épérons

### ***It Weeps in my Heart***

*There is weeping in my heart / just as the rain weeps on the town,  
what is this languor / that penetrates my heart?*

*O soft patter of the rain / on the ground and on the roofs!  
For a heart that is tired, / O the sound of the rain!*

*There is weeping without reason / in this heart which disgusts itself.  
What, no betrayal? / There is no explanation for this grief.*

*Truly the worst pain / is not knowing why,  
without love and without hatred, / my heart is so sad.*

### ***The Shadow of the Trees***

*The shadow of the trees in the misty river  
fades away like smoke,  
while in the air, among the real branches,  
the turtledoves are lamenting.*

*How often, o traveller, this pallid landscape  
reflected your own wanness,  
and how sadly your drowned expectations  
wept among the high branches.*

### ***Merry-Go-Round Horses***

*Turn, turn, good merry-go-round horses,  
turn a hundred times, turn a thousand times,  
turn often and turn forever,  
turn, turn to the sound of the oboes.*

*The ruddy child and the pale mother,  
the fellow in black and the girl in pink,  
one is lustful, the other posing,  
each one pays his Sunday penny.*

*Turn, turn, horses of their hearts,  
while as you turn  
the sly pickpocket winks,  
turn to the sound of the triumphant pistons.*

*It's astounding how it intoxicates you  
to go around this way in a stupid circle,  
nothing in your tummy and an ache in your head,  
feeling sick but having so much fun.*

*Turn, hobby horses, without ever needing  
to use spurs*

### **Pour commander à vos galops ronds :**

Tournez, tournez, sans espoir de foin.

Et dépêchez, chevaux de leur âme :

Déjà voici que sonne à la soupe  
La nuit qui tombe et chasse la troupe  
De gais buveurs que leur soif affame.

Tournez, tournez ! Le ciel en velours  
D'astres en or se vêt lentement.

L'église tinte un glas tristement.  
Tournez au son joyeux des tambours !

### ***Green***

*Voici des fruits, des fleurs, des feuilles et des branches,  
Et puis voici mon cœur qui ne bat que pour vous.  
Ne le déchirez pas avec vos deux mains blanches,  
Et qu'à vos yeux si beaux l'humble présent soit doux.*

J'arrive tout couvert encore de rosée  
Que le vent du matin vient glacer à mon front.  
Souffrez que ma fatigue, à vos pieds reposée,  
Rêve des chers instants qui la délasseront.

Sur votre jeune sein laissez rouler ma tête  
Toute sonore encore de vos derniers baisers ;  
Laissez-la s'apaiser de la bonne tempête,  
Et que je dorme un peu puisque vous reposez.

### ***Spleen***

*Les roses étaient toutes rouges,  
Et les lierres étaient tout noirs.*

*Chère, pour peu que tu te bouges,  
Renaissent tous mes désespoirs.*

*Le ciel était trop bleu, trop tendre,  
La mer trop verte et l'air trop doux.*

*Je crains toujours, - ce qu'est d'attendre !  
Quelque fuite atroce de vous.*

*Du houx à la feuille vernie  
Et du luisant buis je suis las,*

*Et de la campagne infinie  
Et de tout, fors de vous, hélas !*

### ***to command you to gallop around.***

*Turn, turn, with no hope of hay.*

*And hurry, horses of their souls.*

*The supper bell already rings.*

*Night is falling and chases the troop  
of merry drinkers, famished by their thirst.*

*Turn, turn! The velvet sky  
is slowly clothed in golden stars.*

*The church bell sadly tolls the knell.  
Turn, to the joyous sound of the drums.*

### ***Green***

*Here are fruits, flowers, leaves, and branches,  
And here is my heart that beats only for you.  
Do not tear it out with your two white hands,  
and may the humble offering be favourable to your lovely eyes.*

*I come to you still covered with the dew  
that the morning wind has just chilled on my brow.  
Let me lay my fatigue at your feet,  
and dream of the dear moments that will soothe it.*

*On your young breast, let me lay my head,  
still resounding with your last kisses;  
let it calm itself after the storm,  
and let me sleep a little since you too are resting.*

### ***Spleen***

*The roses were all red,  
the ivy was black.*

*Dear, you need only move  
for all my despair to be reborn.*

*The sky was too blue, too tender,  
the sea too green and the air too mild.*

*I am still afraid - it was to be expected! -  
of the awful thought that you might run away.*

*I am tired of the holly with burnished leaves  
and of shiny boxwood,*

*And of the infinite landscape  
and of everything, save of you, alas!*

# Debussy

- |                       |                                    |      |                                     |      |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------|------|-------------------------------------|------|
| <b>[1]</b>            | Fleur des blés                     | 2:02 | André Girod                         |      |
| <b>[2]</b>            | Beau soir                          | 2:16 | Paul Bourget                        |      |
| <b>[3]</b>            | Jane                               | 2:58 | Leconte de Lisle                    |      |
| <b>[4]</b>            | Caprice                            | 1:54 | Théodore de Banville                |      |
| <b>[5]</b>            | Rondel chinois                     | 2:55 | Marius Dillard                      |      |
| <b>[6]</b>            | Les papillons                      | 1:44 | Théophile Gautier                   |      |
| <b>[7]</b>            | Rondeau                            | 2:54 | Alfred de Musset                    |      |
| <b>[8]</b>            | La fille aux cheveux de lin        | 3:59 | Leconte de Lisle                    |      |
| <b>[9]</b>            | Romance (Non, les baisers d'amour) | 1:37 | Maurice Bouchor                     |      |
| <b>[10]</b>           | L'archet                           | 3:02 | Charles Cros                        |      |
| <b>[11]</b>           | Flots, palmes, sables              | 4:59 | Armand Renaud                       |      |
| <b>[12]</b>           | Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau       | 1:14 | Maurice Bouchor                     |      |
| <b>[13]</b>           | Les elfes                          | 7:43 | Leconte de Lisle                    |      |
| <b>[14]</b>           | Séguidille                         | 4:22 | Théophile Gautier                   |      |
| <br>Ariettes oubliées |                                    |      | Paul Verlaine                       |      |
| <b>[15]</b>           | C'est l'extase                     | 2:42 | <b>[16]</b> Il pleure dans mon cœur | 3:05 |
| <b>[17]</b>           | L'ombre des arbres                 | 2:27 | <b>[18]</b> Chevaux de bois         | 3:16 |
| <b>[19]</b>           | Green                              | 2:10 | <b>[20]</b> Spleen                  | 2:20 |

## Songs For His Muse

Gillian Keith *soprano*  
 Simon Lepper *piano*



with  
 Cecilia Maria de Sultana  
*harp*

Recording engineer and producer: John Taylor  
 Booklet Notes: Marie Rolf

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