

**Summary of Dissertation Recitals**

by

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of the requirements for the degree of  
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## **Dedication**

To Professor Christopher Harding,

For being my role model as a teacher and a musician

To my parents Kang-Hee Lee and Ki-Man Kim,

The strongest and gentlest souls who raised me in love and taught me to believe in God

## **Acknowledgements**

I am deeply grateful to Professor Christopher Harding for having supported me and encouraged me to continue my musical journey and pursue my dream. Without his help and teaching, this undertaking would hardly have been completed. I also would like to thank my dissertation committee for their kind, generous, inspirational spirits as well as their guidance for this work. Lastly, I owe my gratitude to my parents who always believe in me and fill my life with endless love.

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## Abstract

The three dissertation recitals present programs that feature a particular theme or subject. The first recital covers French music, including two brief pieces by Henry Février; the Piano Concerto in G Major and “*La Valse*” by Ravel; a suite of Poulenc; and two Barcarolles and a Nocturne by Fauré. The lecture-recital explores three piano pieces by Francis Poulenc which exemplify each of his three compositional periods, in order to explore his development as a composer. It also discusses remarkable events in Poulenc's life and other composers that had an impact on his musical output. The program presents the “*Suite pour piano*”, several pieces from “*Huit Nocturnes*”, and “*Mélancolie*.” The final recital features various works by composers that highlight their passion for their faith. The program presents two relatively short pieces initially composed by J. S. Bach and arranged by Wilhelm Kempff, Amy Beach's “*Out of the Depths*”, Messiaen's “Noël” from *Vingt Regards sur l'enfant-Jésus*, Beethoven's “Piano Sonata no. 31 in A-flat Major, Op.110” and three pieces from Franz Liszt's “*Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*.”

Tuesday, December 11, 2018, 7:30 p.m., School of Music, Theatre & Dance, Britton Recital Hall, The University of Michigan. Henry Février, *Guirlands, Impromptu*; Maurice Ravel, Piano Concerto in G Major and *La Valse*; Francis Poulenc, *Napoli* and *Suite pour le piano*; Gabriel Fauré, Barcarolle No. 4 in A-flat Major, Op. 44, Barcarolle no. 1 in A minor, Op.26, Nocturne no. 4 in E-flat Major, Op.36



Friday, March 29, 2019, 8:00 p.m., Walgreen Drama Center, Stamps Auditorium, The University of Michigan. Francis Poulenc and his pianistic language: Francis Poulenc *Suite pour piano*, FP 19; *Huit Nocturnes*, FP 56; *Mélancolie*, FP 105

Friday, May 10, 2019, 6:30 p.m., School of Music, Theatre & Dance, Britton Recital Hall, The University of Michigan. J. S. Bach, *Organ Chorale, Herzlich tut mich verlangen, BWV 727* (arr. Wilhelm Kempff); *Prelude to the Ratswahl Cantata Wir Danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir, BWV 29* (arr. Wilhelm Kempff); Amy March Cheney Beach, *Out of the Depths (Psalm 130)*; Olivier Messiaen, “Noël” from *Vingt Regards sur l’enfant-Jésus*; L. v. Beethoven Piano Sonata no. 31 in A-flat Major, Op.110; Franz Liszt, “*Invocation*”, “*Hymne de l’enfant à son réveil*,” “*Cantique d’amour*” from *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*

## Recital 1 Program



FIRST DISSERTATION RECITAL

### EUN YOUNG LEE, PIANO

JI-HYANG GWAK, PIANO

*Tuesday, December 11, 2018  
Moore Building, Britton Recital Hall  
7:30 PM*

**Guirlandes  
Impromptu**

Henry Février  
(1875–1957)

**Piano Concerto in G Major**  
Allegramente  
Adagio assai  
Presto

Maurice Ravel  
(1875–1937)

*Intermission*

**Napoli, suite pour le piano**  
Barcarolle  
Nocturne  
Caprice Italien

Francis Poulenc  
(1899–1963)

**Barcarolle no. 4 in A-flat Major, op. 44**  
**Barcarolle no. 1 in A Minor, op. 26**  
**Nocturne no. 4 in E-flat Major, op. 36**

Gabriel Fauré  
(1845–1924)

**La Valse**

Maurice Ravel

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## Recital 1 Program Notes

### A Glimpse of French Music

#### **Guirlandes Impromptu**

**Henry Février (1875-1957)**

Henry Février, a composer born in exactly same year as Maurice Ravel, wrote pieces in various musical genres including operas, chamber music, piano and voice duet, and solo piano pieces. He also studied at the Paris Conservatoire as a pupil of Gabriel Fauré like Ravel did. While his classmate Max d'Ollone won the First Grand Prix of Rome in 1897 (Ravel failed the competition three times in a row between 1901 and 1903), Henry Février hardly got noticed. However, on May 8, 1906, his first opera won the Salle Favart Prize, which was a distinguished honor for a young composer. The work was dedicated "To my dear teacher Gabriel Fauré". Since then, he has been primarily known for his operas and operettas, such as *Monna Vanna* (1909) and *Gismonda* (1919).

Although the number of his piano compositions is quite limited, and most of them are short in length, they show the obvious influence of Fauré's piano works, especially the latter's nocturnes and barcarolles. Both "*Guirlandes*" (1913) and the *Impromptu* (1927) contain the frequent use of chromatic passages, seventh and octave intervals in the melody, and two-measure units that eventually build a larger structure. "*Guirlandes*", meaning "garlands", is in a ternary form; the B section in the middle has a chant-like quality which makes a clear contrast to the other sections, making use of lots of sixteenth notes. The brief cadenza in the transition to the final section also hints of the influence of Fauré's barcarolles. The *Impromptu* is an extremely short piece in a binary form, based on a two measure units as well. After exploring gracious phrases and harmonies, it ends with broad glissandos, in the same way that *Guirlandes* does.

#### **Piano Concerto in G (1929-1931)**

**Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)**

Ravel's Piano Concerto in G major, an exceptional work written relatively late in his career, proves his brilliant skill in creating exotic colors, various textures, and structuring a large scale piece.

Marguerite Long, the pianist to whom Ravel dedicated the concerto, described this piece as “*a work of art in which fantasy, humor, and the picturesque frame one of the most touching melodies which has come from the human heart.*”<sup>1</sup>

Noticeably Ravel incorporates various musical style and genres in this piece, including classical era forms, contemporary French impressionism, and above all, American Jazz, which Ravel had experienced on a concert tour of the United States in 1928. Ravel stated that “*The most captivating part of jazz is its rich and diverting rhythm. ... Jazz is a very rich and vital source of inspiration for modern composers and I am astonished that so few Americans are influenced by it.*”<sup>2</sup>

### *I. Allegramente*

Ravel followed convention in the Piano Concerto by writing the first movement in sonata form. However, the orchestration and the tonal plan follow an unconventional path. He begins this piece with a whip-crack sound followed by a lively piccolo tune over a softly played roll by the drum, and harmonics by the cello and with the piano playing not the first theme but harp-like figuration composed of two different arpeggios, G and F#. It has been done many times before starting a concerto with a solo piano immediately. For instance, both the Piano Concerto No. 4, Op. 58, in G major (1805-6) and No. 5, Op. 73, in Eb major (1809) of Beethoven open the piece with piano, and a long orchestral exposition follows it afterward. However, this concerto's first movement lays its uniqueness in that the piano works as a part of the accompaniment at the beginning and does not state a main idea. Even after the first theme ends, the trumpet enters and repeats the first theme one more time, instead of a solo piano. Ravel's use of tonality here is also unconventional; in the Concerto Ravel does not use D-major section, which is dominant of G major, and a traditional tonality of the second theme of sonata form. Instead, he creates a sudden change from G major to B minor that interrupts the entire repetition of the first theme and leads the music to other climactic moments with tremendous excitement, by marks of fortissimo and stressing syncopations. Moreover, the use of a variety of modes, and the jazz-influenced elements shown in the second theme section where the orchestra enters shifting between major and minor modes by trombone glissandi, reveal Ravel's incredible ability to unite all these exotic, unfamiliar elements into his music.

### *II. Adagio assai*

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<sup>1</sup> Marguerite Long, *At the Piano with Ravel*, translated by Olive Senior-Ellis, edited by Professor Pierre Laumonier (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1973), pg. 42.

<sup>2</sup> M. Robert Rogers, "Jazz Influence on French Music", *The Musical Quarterly* Vol. 21, No. 1. (Jan., 1935), pp. 53-68.

Marguerite Long makes mention of the second movement:

*It is a difficult work especially in respect of the second movement where one has no respite. I told Ravel one day how anxious I was, after all the fantasy and brilliant orchestration of the first part, to be able to maintain the cantabile of the melody on the piano alone during such a long slow flowing phrase. . . 'That flowing phrase'! Ravel cried. 'How I worked over it bar by bar! It nearly killed me!'*<sup>3</sup>

The second movement, which finds its purity of beauty in simplicity, is in ternary form. Ravel again displays his masterful craft in this second movement. The composer starts this slow second movement *Adagio assai*, with a long piano solo, continuing for thirty-three measures. By playing all themes before the orchestra enters, the solo piano sets the mood for the entire movement, which is calm, heartfelt, and buoyant at the same time. After the long piano solo, a C-sharp from the solo flute breaks the silence of the orchestra, and the following woodwinds play the melody while the piano and the strings support. After the solos by the woodwinds, the piano returns to play the melody and is harmonically supported by the English horn, the clarinet, and the bassoon. As the music begins a different texture that arouses a spooky and unsteady atmosphere, the right hand for the first time starts to present a *long slow flowing phrase* of thirty-second notes in a form of an arpeggio, shaping the outlines of harmony by crossing related scales. It carries the music to the ending where the piano unfolds a long trill on B, and the piano and the strings from the orchestra begin to fade out through decrescendo gradually. The calm and still ending sets up the beginning of the third movement to be quite a surprise.

### III. *Presto*

The third movement is a flashy, splendid piece, showing a very percussive character throughout with its fast tempo, *Presto*, in 2/2 and making a wonderful contrast to the second movement which has the quality of a calm and peaceful lullaby. It opens with a rhythmic, fanfare-like announcement of a four-measure gesture, marked *fortissimo* and *staccato*, that consists of four chords played by the brass, the bassoons, the viola, and cello. After the four measures, the piano comes in to play some strictly controlled but wildly oscillating and interlocking sixteenth note chords, which also brings a percussive character. The second section starts with a descending succession of three triads in eighth notes that deliver a jazzy feeling through the syncopated off-beat accents. Ravel pushes the music to its extreme excitement through this march-like subject along with other musical tools; by exploring diverse keys, modes, and instrumentation including timpani and drums. At the end, after an extended chromatic scale and another long chromatic

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<sup>3</sup> Marguerite Long, *At the Piano with Ravel*, translated by Olive Senior-Ellis, edited by Professor Pierre Laumonier (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1973), pg. 49

broken-octave scale in the piano, Ravel creates another chromatic texture to build to the final climax. In m. 288, on the second beat, the bassoon starts a rapid ascending chromatic scale from D#, and the piano doubles it, but with wide leaps of minor ninths, covering more than five octaves for seven measures, concluding on the tonic G. Ravel closes the third movement in exactly the same manner he opened it, by bringing back the fanfare-like subject at the beginning both in the piano and the orchestra.

## **Napoli; Suite pour le piano**

**Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)**

Poulenc conceived of the Napoli suite after a trip to Italy in 1922. The first two movements were both written in 1922, the last movement was composed in 1925.

### **Barcarolle**

Although the opening movement is titled “Barcarolle”, it does not show many typical elements of the genre, exemplified for example by Chopin’s Barcarolle, such as an ABA ternary form. The movement progresses through three statements of the opening melody, stated in the right hand. At the opening, the left hand accompaniment is in 6/8, which is the basic meter for a barcarolle, but it comes across a little awkwardly, crossing over very broad leaps, creating a dissonant minor tenth from D to E#. When the second statement of the theme occurs, the music unfolds with harmonically richer sound with four-voice chords in the right hand and a major tenth arpeggio figuration in the left. The third statement of the theme pushes the original D-E# dissonance in the left hand to D-F#, and moves the melody an octave higher in order to create a more extreme effect of distance.

### **Nocturne**

The second movement also has a traditional title: “Nocturne”. It seems to follow the conventions of the genre by using ABA form, but the harmonic language of the A section that blurs the key, and the extreme dissonance of the B section played with some violent fortissimos, push the movement’s character out of one typical nocturne. The final A section is identical to the first statement. It closes the piece with a one-measure codetta that implies a chromatically spread E-flat major chord.

### **Caprice Italian**

Poulenc wrote about his excitement and satisfaction with this movement in September 1925: *I finished a long piano piece, Caprice Italian, in the genre of the Bourrée fantasque [of Chabrier] ... I’m very pleased*

*with it. I believe in any case that it has a nice effect, for I played it to Lucien [Daudet], who cried out: what development, what blossoming!!<sup>4</sup>*

The movement is composed of an unusual ABC form, using a sequence of themes from the beginning. Employing highly sectional structure, the B section is completely different from the other two sections; it is much more lyrical and calms down the mood of the piece. Exotic sounds and rhythms are also hinted at in this section. The final section starts with the restatement of the opening theme and brings a sense of uncontrolled excitement, which carries the movement to a virtuosic conclusion.

## **Barcarolle and Nocturne**

**Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)**

Gabriel Fauré, a teacher of Maurice Ravel and Henry Février, was a composer who wrote in a variety of genres: songs, chamber music, orchestral pieces, choral works, and piano works. When it comes to Fauré's music, the thirteen nocturnes and thirteen barcarolles are considered essential pieces in order to witness his stylistic development and evolution, since they were composed throughout nearly the entirety of Fauré's composing career.

**Barcarolle No.4 in Ab major, op. 44 (1886)**

**Barcarolle No.1 in A minor, op. 26 (published in 1881)**

According to Maurice Brown, the author of the article concerning the term "Barcarolle" in *Grove Music Online*, the title refers to music describing "the songs of Venetian gondoliers as they propel their boats through the water"; it has essential features such as a compound meter (usually 6/8), as well as a gentle rocking "accompanying" rhythm that imitates the movement of a boat on the water. It also mostly has a ternary form. These features are remarkably well reflected in Fauré's Barcarolles, mingled with his own harmonic colors.

The fourth Barcarolle starts with a two-bar introduction in the left hand. It immediately shows the movement of a boat on the water in 6/8 meter and establishes the mood of the Barcarolle. After exploring a vocal duet in the first section, the middle section turns to the tonic minor and a melancholy atmosphere that recalls the opening of the first Barcarolle in A minor. The music starts the final section playing the same two-voice duet theme from the first A section. The thinner texture coming from the sudden absence of constant sixteenth-note motion gives more color to articulation and sound.

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<sup>4</sup> Poulenc: letter to Valentine Hugo [September 25, 1925]; Correspondence (Chimenes), 263-64.

The first Barcarolle was published in 1881. The precise date of composition is uncertain since the manuscript has disappeared. The shape of the main melody of this piece in the alto register remarkably resembles his vocal duet works, but it is constantly accompanied by the gently rocking ‘Barcarolle’ motion in 6/8. The piece is centered around A minor, but it turns into the relative major for the second section. Through some Lisztian “cadenza-like” virtuosic phrases, the music moves to a restatement of the opening section. Fauré twisted this last section by placing the second theme before the first theme in order to add more variety in the music. The beautiful coda remains on the tonic for an ostinato effect, eventually moving the piece into the major tonality at the end.

#### **Nocturne No. 4 in Eb major, op. 36 (1884)**

The fourth Nocturne of Fauré is suggested to have been composed in 1884. It is considered one of the last pieces in his early period (1875-1884). Fauré incontrovertibly inherited the tradition of the nocturne form (ABA) from Field and Chopin, but in this fourth Nocturne, he differentiated it from theirs and his own earlier nocturnes by using more major-minor seventh chords, active ninth chords, tonic pedal points that reveal his training as an organist, and a lot of Neapolitan chords. Along with his early barcarolles, the repeat of two-bar units from the very beginning is very noticeable, and it eventually organizes larger dimensions of form. This two-bar unit structure is also heard in Henry Février’s piano pieces quite obviously, marking him as one of Fauré’s pupils.

#### **La Valse (1919-1920)**

#### **Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)**

*La valse*, completed in 1919 and 1920, was a result of over fourteen years of gestation. The waltz was highly popular in the Viennese salons by the end of the 18th century and spread out to other countries during the 19th century. “Waltz King” Johann Strauss Jr. (1825-1899), who wrote over 400 waltzes during his lifetime, was a primary contributor to the huge popularity of the waltz in Vienna during the 19th century. From his interest in this dance and admiration for Strauss’s music, Maurice Ravel started conceptualizing *La valse* as an orchestral work in 1906, with a different title, *Wien (Vienna)*: “*I had intended this as a kind of apotheosis of the Viennese waltz, in my mind, with the impression of a fantastic and fatal whirling.*”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Maurice Ravel, “An Autobiographical Sketch,” found in Arbie Orenstein, *A Ravel Reader: Correspondence, Articles, Interviews*, rev. ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2003), 32.



From the winter of 1919 to the spring of 1920, Ravel completed three versions of *La Valse*: the first for solo piano, then for two pianos, and finally for orchestra. The orchestra version was originally commissioned as a ballet piece by Serge Diaghilev. However, after listening to the piece, Diaghilev rejected to stage it because “*The music was self-sufficient and therefore could not work with dance: there was no space or need for dance.*”<sup>6</sup> The first public performance of the two-piano version took place in Vienna with Ravel and Alfredo Casella in October 1920.<sup>7</sup> The orchestral version premiered on December 12, 1920, in Paris with the Lamoureux Orchestra, conducted by Camille Chevillard with great success. After several attempts, it was finally produced as a ballet in Paris in 1929 by Ida Rubinstein’s troupe with Bronislava Nijinska’s choreography.<sup>8</sup> There seems to be no documentation on the premiere of the solo piano version.<sup>9</sup>

The exact number of waltz themes in *La Valse* is controversial. Laurence Davies, in his book *Ravel Orchestral Music*, states that “...*there are at least eight major themes in La Valse....*”<sup>10</sup> However, Arbie Orenstein, offers a different idea in his book *Ravel: Man and Musician*, saying only “*one particular theme undergoes a transformation...*”<sup>11</sup>

The beginning opens quietly, creating a vague impression. The left hand repeats dissonant chords in the lowest range of piano, alluding to Ravel’s description about the piece: “the fantastic whirl of destiny”, and also creating the image of “gradually dispersing clouds” mentioned in the preface to the score. The soft, scattered melodic fragments of the right hand slowly come to life, building the main waltz theme. The waltz explores restless mood changes, from elegant to sensual, breathless, and tragic, and the music finally gallops towards an explosive climax.

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<sup>6</sup> Deborah Mawer, *The Ballets of Maurice Ravel: Creation and Interpretation*, (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006) 152.

<sup>7</sup> Arbie Orenstein, *Ravel: Man and Musician*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 76, 235.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 80

<sup>9</sup> Ji Young Chung, (2009). *An interpretation of the solo version of maurice ravel's "La valse": Insights from george balanchine's choreography* (Order No. 3352829), 48

<sup>10</sup> Davies, *op. cit.*, 40.

<sup>11</sup> Orenstein, *op. cit.*, 189.

## Recital 2 Program



SECOND DISSERTATION RECITAL

### EUN YOUNG LEE, PIANO

*Friday, March 29, 2019*

*Walgreen Drama Center, Stamps Auditorium*

*8:00 PM*

**Suite pour piano, FP 19** (1920)

Presto  
Andante  
Vif

Francis Poulenc  
(1899–1963)

**Huit Nocturnes, FP 56** (1929–1938)

I. Sans trainer  
IV. Bal fantôme. Lent, très las et piano  
V. Phalènes. Presto misterioso  
VI. Très calme mais sans trainer  
VII. Assez allant  
VIII. Très modéré

**Mélancolie, FP 105** (1940)

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## Recital 2 Lecture Script

The lecture recital discusses Francis Poulenc's Piano music. It covers the main characteristics presented in his piano music overall and analyzes three solo piano pieces: the *Suite pour piano*, several of the *Nocturnes*, and a piece called "Mélancolie", which contain the representative stylistic characteristics of his early, middle, and late periods, respectively. We can witness how his compositional technique and his musical world evolved from one period to another through comparing them.

### I. Overview of Poulenc's music

Poulenc's compositional career spanned almost fifty years, from his first work, *Rapsodie negre* in 1917, to his last work, the *Sonata for oboe and piano* which was finished in 1962, a few months before his death. His works cover diverse genres, including chamber music, choral pieces, operas, ballets, orchestral concert music, French art songs, and solo piano works.

Although his output includes a vast array of genres, he had a particular fondness for two instruments. Those are the piano, and the voice. Poulenc's fascination with the voice was undeniable, over half of his published works were for voice with other instruments or in numerous combinations of the voice itself. He composed not only songs, but operas, and choral works as well. This may be due to his friendship with contemporary writers in Paris and a deep interest in poetry and literature that he had exhibited since childhood. The recital partnership that he had with singer Pierrec Bernac significantly contributed to raising Poulenc's reputation internationally.

However, there is no doubt that the piano took a central role in his musical career. Poulenc's musical education and his career as a composer were built based on piano, and his profound and intimate connection to the piano continued throughout his entire life. Besides the piano solo pieces, he composed a number of chamber and orchestral works that involve piano.

### A. Eclectic aspect

Poulenc was a musician who adopted musical ideas from other composers freely and naturally, as the composers from 18th centuries did, while developing his own distinct personal aesthetic and musical style. Many times he referred to himself as “wildly eclectic,” and stated his views on eclecticism;

*“It seems silly to me; “How, in order to be original, can I avoid imitating anyone? I wish to be able to employ a chord of Wagner, Debussy, Schumann, or even of Franck (whom he disliked) if it more clearly expresses the nuance that I wish to render.”*

However, no one would think he was a mere imitator, even though he acknowledged that he received enormous influence from other artists. It is because he kept evolving his music by adding his unique artistic aesthetic in it rather than just following the fashion of the time or borrowing the traits of successful composers. Also, except in the cases of Stravinsky and Satie, Poulenc’s borrowings always occurred underneath the surface, subtly and secretly.

### B. Tradition

Besides using his contemporaries' ideas, Poulenc also loved following the musical tradition handed down to him from the 18th and 19th century, and altering them in his own way, varying the genre, form structure, and harmonic language. He also preferred to use traditional instruments and was never attracted to experimental electronic devices or medieval and Renaissance instruments like many of his contemporaries.

### C. Genres / short length

His choice of genres was traditional as well. As I mentioned already, he composed in numerous genres, and they mostly stayed within traditional boundaries. Film music might be the only genre that had not existed in his previous works. Other genres in which he wrote include several orchestra pieces, five concertos for keyboard instruments, chamber music, works for piano and two pianos, along with choral music and art songs.

In general, his compositions tend to be short, compared to such contemporaries as Prokofiev. This compactness seems to be derived from Satie and Milhaud who were his musical models and

good colleagues. He composed only one full-length opera; his chamber works on average take 15 to 20 minutes, and except for two sonatas and one set of variations, most of his piano pieces were written as miniatures that often work as short pieces in a set or a series, like the Improvisations for piano and the Nocturnes.

#### D. Harmony

Poulenc never considered himself a harmonic innovator. He stuck with a method employing the chords and harmonic progressions passed down to him from earlier composers. The majority of Poulenc's music is undeniably tonal. Even though he did not always apply key signatures in his music due to frequent modulations, his works almost always leave a feeling of staying in a key. Poulenc admitted this and said that "I certainly know that I am not among the musicians who will have been harmonic innovators, like Igor, Ravel or Debussy, but I think there is a place for new music which is happy to use the chords of others."

#### E. Form structure

In terms of form structure, Poulenc chose to remain conservative again and followed a neo-classic tendency, utilizing the conventions of the early eighteenth century.

The form Poulenc favored for his instrumental music was the modified ternary form, which is ABA'. In his modified ternary form, the return of the A section usually became shorter by the omission of a theme or altered by melodic change.

Poulenc also often used rondo forms for instrumental music, especially as the last movement of a multi-movement work. His works written in rondo form tend to be compact rather than broadly stretched out, staying in ABACA or ABACABA.

One of the compositional procedures Poulenc employed many times, particularly in his early and late years was Cellular writing. Poulenc used a one- or two-measure motive as a cell, that is, short phrases repeated at the same or different pitch levels. Poulenc usually used this procedure for slow pieces or slow movements, altering and varying short motives freely to make them return later in the piece. Moreover, he also used a technique called 'recall,' which uses thematic material from the previous movements and has them appear in the final movement. Poulenc rarely suggested the theme from the earlier movements vaguely or subtly. It is typically a direct and

obvious restatement so that the audience can easily hear the reference. This method can be found in many of Poulenc's instrumental works, including the Suite pour piano and the Nocturnes I'll be presenting today.

## II. Piano

### A. Overview of Piano music

Poulenc once stated about his piano works: "It is paradoxical, but true, that my piano music is the least representative genre in my output." Clearly, he seems to be very judgmental when it comes to his piano music. However, it was not only him who harshly criticized his piano works. Many music critics denounced Poulenc's solo piano pieces for their light weight and modest dimensions, while some piano virtuosi such as Ricardo Viñes and Arthur Rubinstein championed his works. Poulenc also gave his opinion on the debate between those groups: "I feel, quite sincerely, that my piano music is neither as good as some virtuosi contend nor as bad as some critics think it is. The truth lies somewhere between these two opinions." He also explained the reason why his piano solo music was criticized for being less personal and artificial; he said many of his piano pieces had failed because he knew how to write for the piano too well. Although he began to be innovative when composing piano accompaniments for songs, or piano parts in orchestra or chamber ensemble, he ended up employing facile figurations and an improvisatory method when working on solo piano pieces. In other words, his ability as an outstanding pianist as well as his vast knowledge of the piano literature drove him to facile borrowing, ironically. As a result, his piano works, particularly the ones written early in his career, became highly virtuosic and straightforward.

#### 1. Poulenc as a pianist

As he claimed, he was a highly eminent pianist in his time. When he was still early in his career, after three years of lessons with Ricardo Vines, Poulenc emerged as not only a composer but also an excellent pianist although he never intended to build a career as a touring soloist. Since piano was the most familiar instrument to him, compositions for piano naturally followed. As well as performing his own piano solo compositions, he was fascinated and thrilled to perform the solo

and four-hands piano music of Satie, and critics referred to him as the best interpreter of Satie's music.

He also was well known as an astonishing accompanist for his twenty years of collaboration with the singer Pierre Bernac and the concert tours with him. Several of his contemporaries left a description about Poulenc as a performer, such as Robert de Fragny in 1946: "And Francis Poulenc, seated at the keyboard, is a veritable one-man orchestra. He plays, he sings, he mimes; he is, at the same time, sound-effects man, stage director, and chorister, all with equal enthusiasm."

Therefore, his claim that his piano music was an easy result of his excellent pianistic skill and extensive knowledge of music literature seems to make sense in some way. Nonetheless, it is certain that his piano pieces, even the early ones, achieved an exceptional level of clarity and simplicity, which were quite rare qualities at his time. Also, the farther he progressed in his career, the more mature his piano works became, since Poulenc's musical world expanded to a much more sophisticated realm late in his life.

## 2. Piano music genre

Poulenc composed many and diverse solo piano works, but most of them are short pieces that can be called "miniatures," which take from one to five minutes. He liked assembling these miniatures in groups, such as three *Mouvements perpétuels*, *Impromptus*, or *Nocturnes*. He also wrote two sonatas, one set of variations, and several suites.

When it comes to the title, Poulenc favored pre-existing nineteenth-century titles such as "Nocturne," "Intermezzo," "Impromptu," and "Improvisation," as well as dance titles, such as *Bourree* and *Valse*.

## 3. Texture

When it comes to the texture of his music, Poulenc's piano music generally shows two different aspects which are contrary to each other. First, Poulenc wanted to draw percussive features out of the piano; this might be the influence of Stravinsky and Prokofiev and is especially noticeable from his young period pieces. For this reason, the works of this period end up lacking in a contour of a melody. Nevertheless, he never lost his distinctive musical personality, which he

manifested through infusing that percussive rhythm with an ambiguous color, possibly affected by Debussy and Scriabin. Example 1 on the hand-out, Measures 123-133, from the 3rd movement of Napoli suite, is an excellent example that shows this sound.

**Example 1) Francis Poulenc, mm.123-133, 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, Napoli Suite**

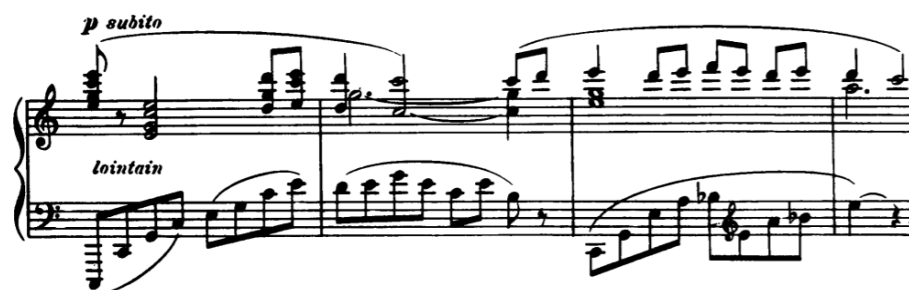


Poulenc employs short and strong successive 16th notes that remind us of the writing of Prokofiev, but he immediately brings some exotic color and contrasting figurations to it so that the wildness could be balanced with the blurred and bizarre atmosphere that the composer desired. Besides, he also used the pattern of a short melodic phrase over an agile ostinato accompaniment, which sounds highly percussive again. This pattern dominates the first and third movement of the Suite pour Piano.

Secondly, he used a texture that stems from nineteenth-century salon music, which has a lyrical and tuneful theme supported by broken-chord accompaniments, and less frequently, by chordal accompaniments. This type of texture is pronounced quite clearly in his works written after 1930. A memorable melody played by the right hand over an arpeggiated accompaniment is the dominant texture in the first Nocturne, as well as the 7th Nocturne and Mélancolie. The broad arpeggios spanning over two octaves are visible from Example 2, and we can see that they all support the themes to make them flow more easily.



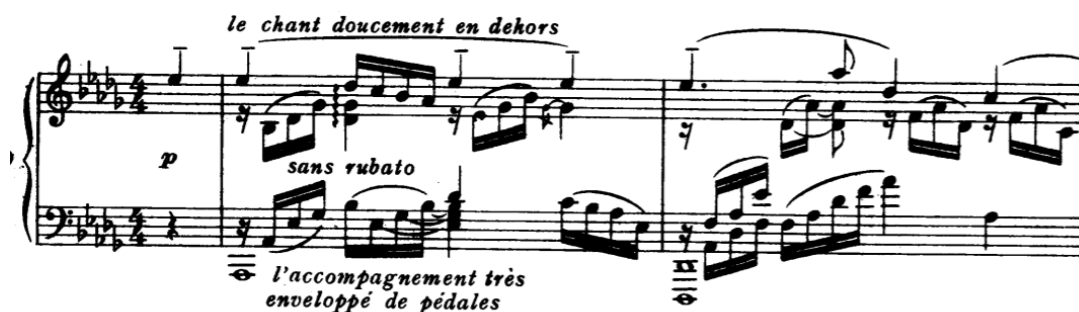
Example 2.1) Francis Poulenc, mm.16-19, Nocturne no.1



Example 2.2) Francis Poulenc, m.12, Nocturne no.7



Example 2.3) Francis Poulenc, mm.1-2, Mélancolie



Considering all these factors, it would be safe to say that Poulenc's approach to piano music was quite conservative. Although he succeeded in setting himself apart from other composers by compounding diverse ideas in his way and successfully appealing to audiences, he primarily wanted to keep and use the techniques that he inherited from earlier composers: Chopin, Schumann, and Satie, instead of experimenting with new sonorities of the piano, as his contemporaries Messiaen and Bartok did.

#### 4. Pedal

There is one more thing which would be worth pointing out: his use of pedal. Poulenc left advice for those who would perform his music; "*One can never use enough pedal, do you hear me! Never enough! Never enough! In a fast movement, I often rely on the pedal for the realization of*

*a harmonic passage that could not be rendered entirely in writing.*" This quote sounds like he was genuinely enthusiastic about pedal and wanted the performer to use it as much as possible. However, ironically, and interesting enough, one of the marks that very regularly appear in his score is 'sec,' or 'sans pedale' which mean 'dry' and 'no pedal.' Those marks are found especially many times from his early period works. It is probably because 'clarity' was the musical essence Poulenc was aiming for as a young composer who was exhausted with the prevalent "Debussyism" at that time. In the last movement of the Napoli Suite, 'Caprice Italian' written in 1925, in over 20 places he used signs suggesting no pedal, although it is a virtuosic piece containing quite a thick texture with many chords. On the other hand, in other measures in which he didn't put 'sans pedale' or 'sec,' he left most of them with no indication for pedal, or occasionally he would mark '2 pedales', suggesting the use of the una corda and damper pedals together. Hence, we could presume that Poulenc expected the performers to apply enough pedal for his pieces in general, but he was sure to write down his specific opinion when he felt the necessity for it.

## B. Period characteristics and analysis of each piece

There is no firm guideline about how to divide Poulenc's musical career specifically, and many musicologists have a different view about it. This study follows the opinion of Keith William Daniel, author of the book 'Francis Poulenc; A Study of His Artistic Development and His Musical Style'. He divided Poulenc's piano works into three distinct periods based on mood and dominant stylistic characteristics.

### 1. Early period (1916~1921)

Before examining the first piece, Suite Pour Piano, two subjects might need to be discussed; Erik Satie and Les Six, two main influences that left a significant impact on Poulenc's early music. Poulenc's contact with Satie's music was initiated by Poulenc's piano teacher, Ricardo Vines. Poulenc relished Satie's musical world, and by 1916, when he decided to become a composer, he was introduced to Satie in person, through Vines as well. Satie, who rejected the mainstream of Paris musical establishment, was an eccentric figure and a mentor to several rising young composers in Paris. Poulenc described Satie's influence on him as *"immediate and wide, on both*

*the spiritual and musical planes*" and in 1954 stated his long-lasting admiration towards Satie by saying *"his music remains for me one of the most valuable treasures in all of music."*

Between 1917 and 1920, cellist Félix Delgrange presented concerts of music by young composers. The composers included Poulenc, Auric, Durey, Honegger, Darius Milhaud and Germaine Tailleferre, who became known collectively as "Les Six." After one of their concerts, the critic Henri Collet published an article titled, "The Five Russians, the Six Frenchmen, and Satie." Although they had a private name for the group, Les Nouveaux Jeunes, they ended up being known with this simple and memorable name in the artistic world.

Two figures worked as spiritual guides for Les six: Erik Satie and artist Jean Cocteau. Cocteau strongly advised Les Six to quit following the German Romantics and French Impressionists, and he expressed his explicit rejection of Debussy and Wagner, which pressured Poulenc to deny his love for Debussy in his early career. In 1954, Poulenc confessed his embarrassment and regret about that by saying *"Debussy has always remained the musician whom I prefer after Mozart."*

#### a. Suite pour Piano

Suite pour piano is a composition reflecting the apparent impact that Poulenc received from Satie and his association with Les Six. The composition was completed during Poulenc's military duty, in 1920, with the dedication to Poulenc's teacher Vines. The piece consists of three short movements in a fast-slow-fast pattern that reminds us of a Sonata. Although it is titled a Suite, none of the movements employs a particular dance rhythm.

#### i. 1<sup>st</sup> movement

The first movement, an alla breve presto in C major, is in the simple ternary form of ABA. However, in the middle section, Poulenc chose to keep and rearrange the themes from the first section and have them played in the tonic minor instead of developing those themes.

**Example 3.1) Francis Poulenc, mm.1-4, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, Suite pour piano**



Example 3.2) Francis Poulenc, mm. 40-43, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, Suite pour piano



From the Example 3, you can see that measure 40-43 is an exact repetition of measure 1-4 but in tonic minor, which is C minor. The second theme of the first section is from measure 25 to 28, Poulenc brings the rhythmic figuration of the left-hand part of it to measure 62-67, and uses it as a retransition to go back to the opening theme.(Example 4)

Example 4.1) Francis Poulenc, mm.25-28, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, Suite pour piano



Example 4.2) Francis Poulenc, mm. 64-67, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, Suite pour piano



The last A' Section is identical to the first A section, except brief two measures of tonic-dominant at the end to close the movement on a C major triad, but with an added d natural note that sounds like a 9th chord.(Example 5)

Example 5) mm. 111- 112, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, Suite pour piano



- Satie's influence

In the first movement, Poulenc's writing shows a bare, linear texture which is the obvious influence of Satie. Along with the clarity achieved throughout by a consistent dominance of right-hand melody over simple accompaniments, a great deal of repetition that we can see from this movement is also the result of Poulenc's preference for Satie's music. Poulenc admitted that the work is "so unashamedly Satie," and its bareness and bland melodies attest to this claim.

- Stravinsky's influence

There was another composer who was a musical role model for Poulenc: Igor Stravinsky. They met in 1916 for the first time and immediately became good friends. Stravinsky was so impressed with Poulenc's compositional efforts that he even issued many of Poulenc's early works from his own publisher. As for Poulenc, he idolized Stravinsky from the start and even called himself 'a spiritual son' of Stravinsky. Naturally, his music, especially early on, contains traits suggestive of Stravinsky. The use of ostinato patterns and percussive sounds spread throughout the entire first movement belong to those traits. (Example. No.2)

- leap

One more compositional technique that is prevalent in Poulenc's music in general— and also shown in the first movement is a shape that departs from a given note, goes down or up by a wide leap, and eventually returns to that note or its neighbors by a leap again. From Example no.6, you can see that the left hand has a downward leap of an octave and returns to its upper neighbor note. Since the tempo marking for the movement is presto, it is a considerable challenge for the performer. You can find very similar figurations from the first movement of Napoli Suite, which was composed in 1922.

**Example 6.1) Francis Poulenc, mm.12-15, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, Suite pour piano**



Example 6.2) Francis Poulenc, mm.1-4, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, Napoli Suite



ii. Andante

The 2nd movement, Andante is a brief movement of 23 measures, in B flat major. Both hands play continuously flowing 16th notes, exploring several meter changes.

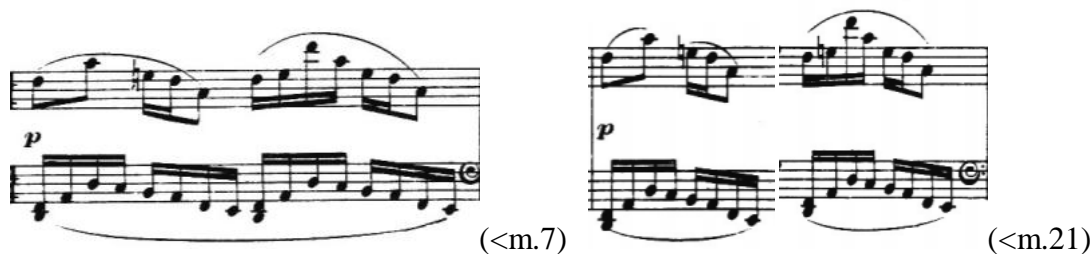
- Cellular writing

The Andante is a movement that shows another hall-mark of Poulenc's style, and Satie's as well, which we can call Cellular construction. Rather than building a particular form for the movement, he chose to organize the piece through short melodic cells, that are arrayed and often repeated in an erratic order. This procedure leads the music to the whimsical and bizarre atmosphere. For example, the bass line in measure 1 is repeated in measures 2, 7, and 21. Measures 7 and 8 come back in measure 21 and 22, around the end of the movement

Example 7.1) Francis Poulenc, mm. 1-2, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, Suite pour piano

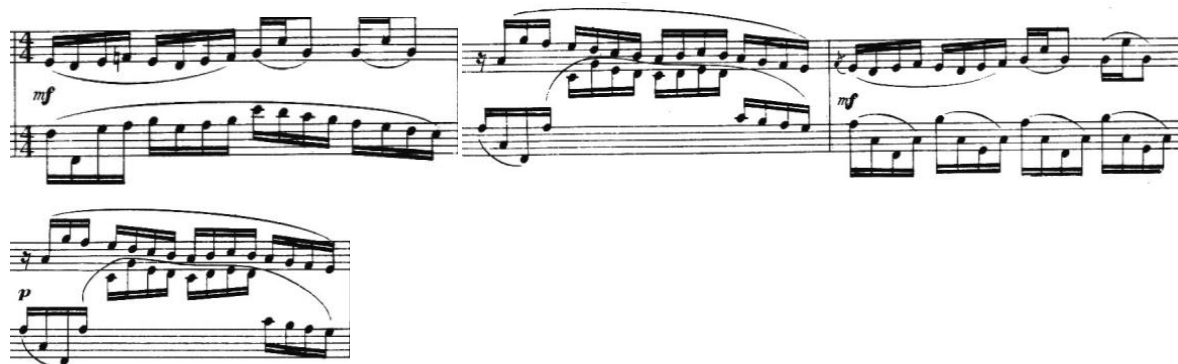


Example 7.2) Francis Poulenc, m.7, m.21, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, Suite pour piano



Measures 9 and 10 are immediately played one more time with slightly altered notes in measures 11 and 12, but Poulenc put a “piano” sign only in measure 12 to create a subito piano effect.

**Example 8) Francis Poulenc, mm. 9-12, 2<sup>nd</sup> movement, Suite pour piano**



Due to this irregularity, the second movement could be challenging and confusing for performers who try to memorize it in spite of the short length.

iii. VIF

The last movement, Vif which means Animated or “Fast” is in a modified ternary form, but it is also built based on a cell-repetition idea. Specifically, there is a 4-measure motive from measure 1 to 4 which occurs four times throughout the piece, two times in the A section and two times in the return section. And each time the motive comes back, it leads the music to a different idea.

● recalls

Another unique technique Poulenc used in the third movement is 'recall,' which borrows thematic material from the previous movements for the final movement. You can hear that measures 42-45 and 56-59 are the return of the theme of the first movement, in g Dorian mode. Poulenc was proficient at this compositional method and utilized it many times, not only for piano pieces but his song cycles as well.

**Example 9.1) Francis Poulenc, mm.1-4, 1<sup>st</sup> movement, Suite pour piano**



Example 9.2) Francis Poulenc, mm. 42-45, 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, Suite pour piano



- Wrong-note dissonance

Along with the first movement, the last movement exhibits the direct influence of Satie and Stravinsky. Besides the ostinato melodic and accompaniment pattern, the piece possesses one more characteristic in common with Stravinsky's: its use of 'wrong-note' dissonance. It means to place a dissonance or even entire measures that seem to be in the wrong key in the middle of the phrase to interrupt the flow of music and give a little bit of bewilderment to the audience. We can find it in the A' section, measures 82 and 83.

Example 10) Francis Poulenc, mm. 80-83, 3<sup>rd</sup> movement, Suite pour piano



- Dynamic contrast

The broad dynamic range spanning from pianississimo to fortissimo, with sudden dynamic changes is also worthy of mention since they are from Poulenc's intention to surprise his audiences by creating barer and more primitive sounds.

2. The second period, 1922-1939,

During this period, Poulenc tried to back away from the profound influences of Satie and Stravinsky, turning in a more romantic direction, prominently influenced by Chopin and Schumann. All the traditional pianistic capabilities exhibited by those composers were exploited and experimented in this period. As a result, elements such as a florid, brilliant style, widely unfolding arpeggiation, dense harmonies emphasizing seventh chords, and flowing melodic lines dominated Poulenc's compositions.



#### a. 8 Nocturnes

Poulenc composed the first nocturne in 1929 and the other seven between 1933 and 1938. The years from 1932 to 1934 would be Poulenc's most prolific time in the piano genre; the first ten pieces from the Improvisations were also composed between 1932 and 1934.

As in the case of Preludes, Impromptus, and Novelettes, he again decided to give an abstract title favored by Chopin and other romantic composers to these pieces. It can be questioned why Poulenc named the pieces 'Nocturnes' because his nocturnes seem to share few things in common with Chopin's Nocturnes, with the exception of the use of ternary form or modified ternary form for each movement and arpeggiated figures that are especially noticeable in no.1 and no.7. He once talked about this choice, saying that he tended to use abstract titles such as Nocturne or Prelude because piano music does not evoke any image for him.

#### i. Nocturne No.1

- Form / modulation

The first nocturne is in a modified ternary form, but the feeling of the traditional ternary form is weakened because of Poulenc's placement of the theme in several different keys. In other words, several free modulations take place through thematic development. The main melody at the opening, a singing legato line, occurs five times in C major, D major, G major, A-flat major, and finally back to C major. The last theme has a shape that requires hand-crossing and three staves to notate.

- Texture

As you can see from Example no. 2, melody over a chordal or arpeggiated accompaniment is the dominant texture in the first Nocturne. In this piece, the melodic line belongs nearly solely to the right hand. The arpeggiated figures tend to be long enough to cover more than two octaves, and include major and minor sevenths (ex no.2, measure 16-19). This broken-chord motion with a constant flow of eighth notes creates a smooth but straight-forward feeling in the piece.

- coda

The coda, with the mark of 'le double plus lent' which means to play twice as slow, is set apart from the rest of the piece in terms of atmosphere, rhythm, and harmony. The serene chordal passage is built on successive Dominant-Tonic resolutions in C-sharp major and concludes the

movement on the tonic 9th chord. (Example.11) Poulenc incorporates the procedure 'recall' again as he did in Suite pour Piano, and takes this coda passage to conclude the final nocturne of the set.

**Example 11) Francis Poulenc, Coda, Nocturne no.1**



ii. Nocturne no.4

- Chopin's influence

The fourth Nocturne, completed in 1934, is subtitled "Bal fantome" and carries an atmospheric quotation by the writer Julien Green, to whom the work is dedicated. The influence of Chopin is apparent; this melancholy and nostalgic piece strongly recalls the Chopin Prelude Op. 28, No. 7 and the Mazurka Op.7 No.2. (Example.12) As we see, the rhythmic quality and the form of the nocturne strongly resemble those of Chopin. However, the rich chromatic harmonies and the thin, mysterious melodic style are undoubtedly characteristic of Poulenc.

**Example 12.1) Frédéric Chopin, mm.1-4, Prelude Op. 28, no. 7**



**Example 12.2) Frédéric Chopin, mm.1-4, Mazurka Op.7 no.2**



Example 12.3) Francis Poulenc, mm.1-4, Nocturne no.4



- cadence

Cadential practice is one of those that show personal aspects of Poulenc's harmonic style. Given to tonal language, he primarily used half and full cadences, and diminished sevenths or dominants prepare full cadences to the tonic in many cases; these dominant chords are frequently ninths or thirteenths. We can find this cadence from the fourth Nocturne as well, from bars 15-16, where there is a double appoggiatura (only one resolve, the other dissolves) on the tonic chord. (Example.13) This dominant to tonic motion with a 9-8 appoggiatura to tonic resolution is the most typical full cadence found in all of Poulenc's instrumental genres.

Example 13) Francis Poulenc, mm.15-16, Nocturne no.4



*(the dominant-tonic motion with a 9-8 appoggiatura)*

iii. Nocturne no. 5

The fifth nocturne; Phalenes, meaning Moths, is not dated but suggested to be composed in 1934 as well. This is the fastest and most virtuosic movement (along with no.2) in the set of Nocturnes, having an extreme and sudden dynamic change that he often used during the earlier period.

- Main ideas

Two main ideas, or sections, comprise this piece. The first section, from the beginning to measure 16, is filled with detached, dry sounds and highly busy rhythmic figures. The second one, from measure 17 to 34, carries slightly lyric melodies on the top but keeps some rhythmic qualities of the first section at the same time. Poulenc combines the two ideas for the closing

section and concludes the piece on a B flat seven chord although this nocturne is composed in D minor. On top of that, he changes the A natural of the B flat seven chord to A flat, which leaves a bizarre feeling. (Ex no.14)

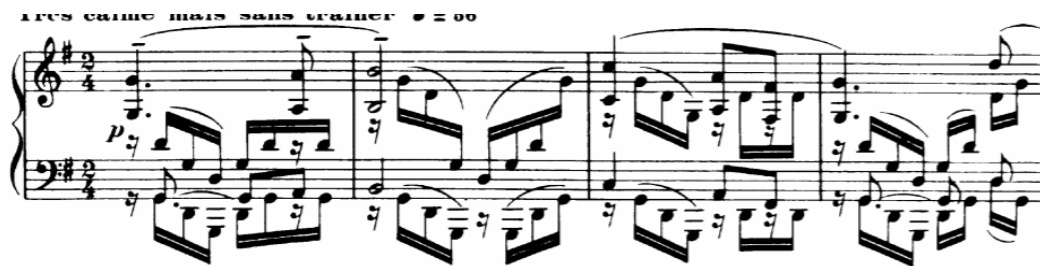
**Example 14) Francis Poulenc, mm.54-55, Nocturne no.5**



iv. Nocturne no. 6

Another piece completed in 1934, the Nocturne no.6 is marked 'very calm but without dragging' and exhibits a restless quality with fluid 16 notes. It has the thickest texture out of all the nocturnes, but the melody line still has the priority. The use of “parallelism” prevails in this Nocturne, the opening phrase shows an octave melody accompanied by parallel arpeggios in both hands, and the same pattern comes back repeatedly later in the movement. (Example no.15) It is full of abundant chromatic figuration, especially in the middle of the piece. (Example no.16)

**Example 15) Francis Poulenc, mm.1-4, Nocturne no.6**



**Example 16) Francis Poulenc, mm. 45-46, Nocturne no.6**



The music explores various ideas which were stated earlier, and quietly arrives at the end on a G minor chord.

v. Nocturne no.7

The Nocturne no.7 in E-flat major was composed in 1935. Marked *Assez allant*, meaning “rather going”, it is another tuneful nocturne that resembles the first one. The first and last sections are composed of moving 16th notes which give a forceful forward direction to the piece, as well as the melody of right-hand. To check the arpeggiated figure, please refer back to Example no.2.

The middle section has a contrasting color to the other two sections, it sounds more serious and the texture is heavier. It exhibits fast modulation from B-flat minor to C minor, A minor, and B minor, and eventually comes back to E-flat major by enharmonic modulation.

The closing chord is a g-minor seven, the minor three (iii) chord of E flat major.

**Example 17) Francis Poulenc, mm. 33-34, Nocturne no.7**



This shows one of the Poulenc's important writing concepts: that no matter how ambiguous or colorful the harmonies at the ending, or cadence, the sense of tonality has to be clarified and pronounced well.

vi. Nocturne no.8

● 1936

Many critics agree that 1936 was the year that Poulenc found a new musical path, by taking a step towards a more serious direction. In 1936, he had a pilgrimage trip to the shrine of Rocamadour, which was followed by his religious reawakening. This experience let him reveal the seriousness of his personality and helped him add new dimensions and greater depth to his music. I believe the last nocturne, written in 1938, reflects this musical change that happened to him. The calm, peaceful chordal figurations that cover the whole nocturne reach such a high level of transparency and purity, showing a religious undertone that reminds us of choral music. The influence of his choral music on this piece is detected by the stricter voice-leading in both hands and the less functional bass line.

Example 18) Francis Poulenc, mm. 1-4, Nocturne no.8

Très modéré ♩ = 72

*p*

*Mettre beaucoup de pédale (le chant doucement en dehors, les batteries très discrètes)*

● cycle

The year Poulenc returned to the Nocturne was 1938, 3 years after the composition of Nocturne no.7. After his successful experiment of song cycles, he decided to conclude the set of Nocturnes with a final Nocturne, “pour servir de coda au cycle,” meaning 'to serve as a coda to the cycle'. He achieves this purpose by bringing the coda from the first Nocturne to the ending of this piece. Let me play the coda from the first nocturne and the last nocturne. (Example.no.19)

Example 19.1) Francis Poulenc, Coda, Nocturne no.1

Example 19.2) Francis Poulenc, mm. 30-32, Nocturne no.8

As we have seen, the eight Nocturnes are not extravagant pieces, they are brief and idiomatic, even informal in some way. There are no displays of meaningless show-off elements, nor is there any excessive use of unnecessary dissonance. I think these nocturnes really represent his personality, which is genuine and likable.

### 3. The last period (1939-1959)

The third and final period, 1939-1959, is marked by increased lyricism and a less virtuosic approach. From the 1940s, Poulenc clearly lost interest in the solo piano as an instrument of virtuosity. W. Kent Werner points out that “bravura and brilliance have all but disappeared from Poulenc’s keyboard style” and we can find Fauré-like melodic lines and graceful, charming, lyrical quality from Poulenc's last works. This is surely a different musical realm from that which the youthful Poulenc aimed for because there was no more intention or effort to shock the audience or draw their attention. It would be safe to say that the 1940s were Poulenc's most romantic decade. He pursued his own musical personality more deeply, and other composers’ influences began to fade. They still existed but are dissolved and mixed with Poulenc's own qualities, so it becomes almost impossible to find them.

#### a. Mélancolie

Mélancolie, written in 1940 and dedicated to Poulenc's dear friend Raymond Destouches, is unquestionably the model of everything we discussed in his late period, especially for its flowing, arpeggiated character, and its singing quality and strong late-romantic influence.

#### ● Form

Poulenc's longest single movement piano work, Mélancolie has an ABA' and coda structure, but it doesn't convey a strong feeling of unity.

There are two reasons for this: first, the fluidity of modulation. The opening theme is repeated four times in total, from D flat major, to D major, C major, and G flat major.

Example 20) Francis Poulenc, mm.1-4, 15-16, 79-80, 87-88, *Mélancolie*

The image displays four systems of musical notation for Francis Poulenc's *Mélancolie*. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The first system is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic and includes the instruction *le chant doucement en dehors* above the treble staff and *sans rubato* below the bass staff. A note below the bass staff reads *l'accompagnement très enveloppé de pédales*. The second system is marked *Tempo*. The third system is marked *Tempo I!* and *p très calme*. The fourth system continues the piece with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The notation includes various rhythmic values, slurs, and dynamic markings.

Plus, two times of key change happen in the middle section as well. This great deal of modulation is one of Poulenc's musical signatures. Poulenc establishes and changes tonal centers with great fluidity, and he often does not suggest an apparent movement from one key to another. As a result, key structures in his music frequently sound wandering and seem less architecturally designed.

The second reason is that the middle B section of *Mélancolie* is rather more additive than developmental. Instead of using and developing the materials from the A section, Poulenc chose to make the B section an array of new ideas. For instance, from Example 21, you can hear that measures 30-35 are in complete contrast to the earlier section, with a new rhythmic figure



composed of one 8th and two 16th notes in the left hand, and the triads of the right-hand. Poulenc also put the marking 'tres egal et estompe' which means very equal and blurred, to create a different color.

Example 21) Francis Poulenc, mm. 30-35, *Mélancolie*

Un peu plus vite

*très égal et estompé*

● coda

In the coda, Poulenc puts the instruction to strictly maintain the tempo until the end, but he carefully builds in his own ritardando by increasing note values. The final chord is a beautiful but bizarre D-flat major chord, with a lowered sixth on top, which is B double flat. The chord leaves absolute transparency and a feeling of ambiguity at the same time.

Example 22) Francis Poulenc, mm. 106-109, *Mélancolie*

8-----, Sans ralentir

*p* *pp* *pppp* *tenu*

Talence Juin } 1940  
Brive Août

### III. Conclusion

We have taken a look at Poulenc's stylistic change and development as a composer, concentrating on his piano works. Poulenc is a composer who doesn't show an abrupt shift in his writing style. Yes, he turned his music to a more mature, religious, and serious direction as he aged, but there was no sudden abandon of his entire youthful technique. He also didn't try something completely different from what he had been doing, such as serialism or electronic music. All we can witness is how gradually he deepened his musical world, and how consistently he developed his compositional language. Throughout his entire career, his music always remained accessible, not too complicated or condensing. It's also not overly dramatic like some 19th-century pieces with a large scale. I think this genuineness and consistency are the essence of his music that has appealed to many audiences and musicians, including myself.

For me, listening to Poulenc's music and playing it is like having a conversation with him. I think I can find the reason why I feel that way from Poulenc's own words describing his music. He said, "*My music is my portrait.*"

## Recital 3 Program



THIRD DISSERTATION RECITAL

### EUN YOUNG LEE, PIANO

*Friday, May 10, 2019  
Moore Building, Britton Recital Hall  
6:30 PM*

**Organ Chorale, Herzlich tut mich verlangen, BWV 727** Johann Sebastian Bach  
(1685–1750)  
*arr. Wilhelm Kempff*

**Out of the Depths (Psalm 130)** Amy Marcy Cheney Beach  
(1867–1944)

**Vingt Regards sur l'enfant-Jésus** Olivier Messiaen  
XIII. Noël (1908–1992)

**Piano Sonata no. 31 in A-flat Major, op. 110** Ludwig van Beethoven  
I. Moderato cantabile molto espressivo (1770–1827)  
II. Allegro molto  
III. Adagio ma non troppo—Fuga: Allegro ma non troppo

*Intermission*

**Harmonies poétiques et religieuses** Franz Liszt  
I. Invocation (1811–1886)  
VI. Hymne de l'enfant à son réveil  
X. Cantique d'amour

**Prelude to the Ratswahl Cantata, Wir danken dir,  
Gott, wir danken dir, BWV 29** Johann Sebastian Bach  
*arr. Wilhelm Kempff*

*smt.d.umich.edu @umichsmt.d #umicharts #umichsmt.d*



## Recital 3 Program Notes

### Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

*"Where there is devotional music, God is always at hand with His gracious presence"* –J. S. Bach  
Johann Sebastian Bach, recognized as one of the greatest Western composers in history, was a church musician from first to last. Except for the only secular position he ever held, Kapellmeister of the court of Prince Leopold from 1717 to 1723, he spent his entire life building a career as a church musician in Germany: as an organist, a conductor, a music director, a teacher, and a composer who wrote in a staggeringly wide variety of genres including chorales, cantatas, masses, oratorios, passions, concerti, and solo works.

For the two centuries prior, the legacy of Martin Luther had profoundly impacted religious practice in Germany, which emphasized a living, personal, Bible-based Christianity.<sup>12</sup> As a sincere Lutheran, Bach also agreed with Luther's convictions about music, claiming that *"Music's only purpose should be for the glory of God and the recreation of the human spirit."*<sup>13</sup> Bach frequently initialed his blank manuscript pages with the marking, "J.J" meaning *Jesu Juva* - "Help me, Jesus"<sup>14</sup> or "I.N.J," *In Nomine Jesu* - "In the name of Jesus"<sup>15</sup>. Also, at the end of the manuscripts, he also wrote the letters "S. D. G," *Soli Deo Gloria* - "To God alone, the glory"<sup>16</sup>. These markings related to his faith are shown not only from sacred music but from his secular music as well. For example, his *Little Clavier Book* was written "In the Name of Jesus" like many of his other compositions. Also, at the beginning of his *Little Organ Book*, he wrote the dedication *"to God alone the praise be given for what's herein to man's use written."*<sup>17</sup>

As a faithful Lutheran, Bach often read the Bible and other religious materials. His personal library, inventoried at his death, contained eighty-three books, and besides the Bible, there were Martin Luther's collected works and dozens of books by his disciples in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.<sup>18</sup> He also left notes on his thoughts about connections between his faith and his art. He inserted a marginal note

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<sup>12</sup> Patrick Kavanaugh, *Spiritual Lives of the Great Composers* (Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 19

<sup>13</sup> Robert W. S. Mendl, *The Divine Quest in Music* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), 59

<sup>14</sup> Friedrich Blume, *Two Centuries of Bach, an Account of Changing Tastes* (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), 14

<sup>15</sup> Max Hinrichen, *Hinrichen's Musical Year Book*, vol. 7 (London: Hinrichen Editions Ltd., 1952), 263

<sup>16</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach* (New York: Dover Publications, 1911), 166-7

<sup>17</sup> Charles Sanford Terry, *The Music of Bach, an Introduction* (New York, Dover Publications, 1963), 17

<sup>18</sup> Gerhard Herz, "Bach's Religion," *Journal of Renaissance and Baroque Music* 1, no. 2 (June 1946): 132-133

in his biblical commentary after 1 Chronicles, "*Splendid proof that...music was instituted by the Spirit of God through David.*"<sup>19</sup>

Bach's eyes began failing toward the end of his life, and by age sixty-five he was completely blind. In his final year, 1750, he composed his last work, which was dictated from his bed; a chorale prelude entitled *Vor deinen Thron tret' ich hiermit* (Before Thy Throne I stand).<sup>20</sup>

A chorale prelude is a short liturgical composition for organ using a hymn tune. It was the basis of polyphonic settings for the choir or cantatas and reached its culmination in the works of J.S. Bach. "***Herzlich tut mich verlangen***" (I am anxiously longing) is a German hymn, with lyrics written in 1611 by Christoph Knoll, using a melody adapted from a secular song by Hans Leo Hassler. It is a prayer for a blessed death.

*I am anxiously longing  
For a blessed end;  
For griefs are round me thronging,  
And trials will not cease.  
O fain would I be hasting  
From here, the dark world of gloom,  
To gladness everlasting;  
O Jesus, quickly come!*

Bach used the hymn not only in his chorale prelude 727 but also for his Weimar cantata *Komm, du süße Todesstunde*, BWV 161. Its Phrygian mode and ambiguous harmonies contribute to the effect of sadness. The last piece of the program, ***Prelude to the Ratswahal Cantata, Wir danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir (We thank you, God, we thank you)***, BWV 29, is a sacred cantata by Johann Sebastian Bach. He composed it in Leipzig in 1731 for Ratswechsel, the annual inauguration of a new town council. Bach scored the work in eight movements for four vocal soloists (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass), a four-part choir, and a Baroque orchestra including an organ and basso continuo. This is one of few sacred cantatas by Bach that open with an orchestral Sinfonia with no voice parts. The solo organ becomes a concerto soloist carrying the main melodic line with virtuosic passages, and the full orchestra adds an accompaniment to it.

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<sup>19</sup> Robin Leaver, *J. S. Bach As Preacher* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1982), 13

<sup>20</sup> Philipp Spitta, *Johann Sebastian Bach* (New York: Dover Publications, 1951), 275

## **Amy Marcy Cheney Beach (1867-1944)**

One of the best-known of women composers of her time, Amy Beach was the first successful American female composer of large-scale art music. She was also the first American woman to compose and publish a symphony: her "Gaelic" Symphony was premiered by the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1896 and published in the same year. Choral compositions and church music form an especially important part of her compositional activity. Her choral compositions include a complete Mass, several cantatas, both sacred and secular, and many smaller choral pieces for various combinations of voices.

During the years of her adolescence and early married life, while her concert career was beginning, Beach was also a very religious woman and closely connected to the church. However, her affiliation with a particular church started after the death of her husband,<sup>21</sup> in the fall of 1930, when she became the virtual composer-in-residence at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in New York.

Throughout her life, Beach wrote more than 150 numbered works ranging from chamber and orchestral works to church music and songs. Beach herself enjoyed her church music composition perhaps most of all, saying at one time: *I think my church music appeals to me more than anything I have done. I have written the anthems and oratorios and a whole Episcopal service with great joy, and they have become a part of me more than anything I have done, I am sure.*<sup>22</sup>

Her early church works show the influence of Wagner and Brahms, but in her later years, she moved from a late-romantic style to more chromatic, experimental, and dissonant writing. **Out of the Depths**, inspired by Psalm 130 from the Bible, clearly shows this chromatic feature throughout the entire piece. A descending chromatic line from the opening measure works as a motive or short melodic theme which recurs in the middle section and at the end. The sufficient number of seventh chords and other chromatically altered chords further reveal her attempt to explore various sound colors. Also, as a skillful Choral music composer who was exceptional at text-painting, she used a broad range of dynamic spanning from fortissimo(ff) to pianississimo(ppp), in order to portray the different kinds of 'crying' that we find in Psalm 130 (Out of the depths, I cry to you, Lord) such as a screaming or sobbing.

## **Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)**

Olivier Messiaen, one of France's most celebrated musicians, also regarded as one of the most original voices in French music since Debussy, also has been one of the most frequently recognized Christian

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<sup>21</sup> Jean Reigles, *The Choral Music of Amy Beach*, PhD diss., Texas Tech University, 1996, p.19

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.17

composers of all time. His religious beliefs directly affected his musical philosophy and composition output. For instance, explaining the diversity existing in his musical style, he once said "*God for me is manifest, and my conception of sacred music derives from this conviction. God being present in all things, music dealing with religious subjects can and must be extremely varied.*"<sup>23</sup>

Born and raised in a devout Catholic family, Messiaen asserted, however, that God's truth abounded through all of Christianity. He emphasized that the point of Christian faith is Jesus Christ: "*I'm a Christian. In saying this, I'm not thinking about differences between Orthodox Christians, Protestants, Catholics - and a Christian is a person who understands that God came.*"<sup>24</sup>

***Vingt regards sur l'enfant-Jésus***, meaning "Twenty gazes upon the infant Jesus," is a suite of twenty pieces for solo piano. Written in 1944, the piece was initially commissioned for radio broadcast as twelve short piano pieces to complement the reading of poems by Maurice Toesca. Instead, it became a monumental work of approximately two hours duration, Messiaen's longest up to that time.<sup>25</sup>

The thirteenth piece, "**Noel**", is particularly representative of Messiaen's fascination with numbers. The significance of the number thirteen stems from the fact that "the star which led the Wise Men to the manger appeared thirteen days after the birth of Christ."<sup>26</sup> The piece begins with the joyous Christmas ringing bells in the upper register and clusters at the very bottom of the keyboard. The middle level is a sustained triad with an augmented fourth. In addition to the bell sound, a special xylophone effect is required for passages of fast, repeated notes. The quiet, tender middle section reflects the adoration of the Christ-Child, while the eternal nature of God is represented again by extended silences. A varied return of the opening material and a brief recall of the middle section close the piece.

## **Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)**

Despite the fact that all his biographers agree that Beethoven was intensely spiritual,<sup>27</sup> and a claim of Beethoven's close friend Anton Felix Schindler saying "*Beethoven's entire life is proof that he was truly religious at heart*",<sup>28</sup> it is not an easy task to discern Beethoven's beliefs. Although Beethoven was born in

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<sup>23</sup> Kavanaugh, *Spiritual Lives of the Great Composers*, 199

<sup>24</sup> Almut Robler, *Contributions to the Spiritual World of Olivier Messiaen* (Duisburg: Gilles and Francke, 1986), 96.

<sup>25</sup> Morris, Betty Ann Walker. *Symbolism and meaning in Vingt regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus by Olivier Messiaen*, a lecture recital, together with three recitals of selected works. dissertation, August 1978; Denton, Texas.

(<https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc332544/>; accessed May 7, 2019), University of North Texas Libraries, Digital Library, <https://digital.library.unt.edu/>;

<sup>26</sup> Wayne Shumaker, *The Occult Sciences in the Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1972), 139

<sup>27</sup> Elliott Frbes, *Thayer's Life of Beethoven* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 482

<sup>28</sup> Anton Felix Schindler, *Beethoven As I Knew Him* (London: Faber & Faber, 1966), 365.

a Roman Catholic family, he never practiced this faith.<sup>29</sup> He had a marked suspicion of priests and avoided going to church.<sup>30</sup> His brash and tempered personality left his life in loneliness although he had many devoted friends. However, evidence of his serious and sincere approach to faith is found from his letters to friends, diaries, conversation books containing dozens of devout references to God, and his compositions. The pain of increasing deafness especially affected his maturity and beliefs: from his famous Heiligenstadt Testament, the composer confesses "*Almighty God, you look down into my innermost soul, you see into my heart and you know that it is filled with love for humanity and a desire to do good.*"<sup>31</sup> Along with the notable Christian masterpieces such as the oratorio *Christ on the Mount of Olives* and *Mass in C*, Beethoven composed one of the greatest sacred works of history, the *Missa Solemnis*. For this composition, in which he wrote "From the heart-may it go to the heart"<sup>32</sup> at the top of the score, occupied Beethoven in several years for his research, studying the history of church music, gathering hymn manuscripts from local monasteries,<sup>33</sup> and obtaining a new and more accurate translation of the Latin so that every word would be fully understood.<sup>34</sup> Beethoven composed this piece from 1819 to 1823, while simultaneously working on the last three sonatas (1820-1822).

The *Missa Solemnis* was largely completed by 1822, but Beethoven broke off work on the mass to compose his trilogy of piano sonatas, combining sketches for the sonatas with those of the mass. This explains why certain religious overtones are noticed and mentioned from these last sonatas.

**Piano Sonata No. 31 in A ♭ major, Op. 110**, completed in 1821, reveals several characteristics of his later work, particularly his increased usage of vocal elements in his instrumental compositions. This aspect appears not only through the vocal forms such as recitativo and the arioso used in the third movement, but also from the opening material of the first movement, which starts with four note chords that resemble a German religious Cantata. After an initial theme followed by a pause on the dominant seventh, the opening is extended in a cantabile theme. The initial theme is restated at the beginning of the development section as well as in the recapitulation, combined with the arpeggiated transition motif. The humorous second movement, scherzo, is constructed on a vile folk-song: "Ich bin lüderlich, du bist lüderlich" (I'm a bum, you're a bum). The purpose of using the folk song can be interpreted as a method to express the message that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) and we are all in need of the salvation of Christ. The third movement is one of Beethoven's most complex and original structures. It alternates two slow arioso sections with two faster fugues. According to an analysis

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<sup>29</sup> Georgy R. Marek, *Beethoven, Biography of a Genius* (London: William Kimber, 1969), 179

<sup>30</sup> Robert W. S. Mendl, *The Divine Quest in Music* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), 91

<sup>31</sup> Maynard Solomon, *Beethoven Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 218

<sup>32</sup> Marek, *Beethoven, Biography*, 561

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 93

<sup>34</sup> John N. Burk, *The Life and Works of Beethoven* (New York: Random House, 1943), 206



of pianist Alfred Brendel, there are six sections – recitative, arioso, first fugue, arioso, fugue inversion, and homophonic conclusion. After a sorrowful, tragic melody and recitative the music moves to an Arioso dolente that has the evident vocal quality with the mark of Klagender Gesang, meaning tearful song. The Arioso gives way to a three-voice fugue, which certainly has the character of a Choral. The opening theme of the first movement reoccurs and works as the Fugue's subject (the motif A ♭ –D ♭ –B ♭ –E ♭ ). The subject rises gradually in a chain of fourths (A ♭ -D ♭ ; B ♭ - E ♭ ; C - F). After a massive climax, the harmony moves to a half-step down to G minor, leading into a reprise of the Arioso dolente marked "ermattet" (exhausted). The second arioso is concluded on a series of G Major chords, that leads to a return of the fugue. Vincent d'Indy, a French composer, commented that the return of the fugue is *"...but now Will asserts itself against the forces of annihilation, and a dynamic succession of tonic chords ushers in the key of G major...It is the resurrection!"*

The second fugue starts with its theme turned upside down. After each voice states the subject, the mood immediately becomes restless, rushing to a triumphant climax, where the music reaches its conclusion filled with joy and happiness for the victory over adversity.

## **Franz Liszt (1811-1886)**

Although there is no doubt that Franz Liszt was a fervent believer in God all his life, his multifaceted personality and outrageous lifestyle resist a simple analysis of his spirituality. Born in a devout Catholic family, young Liszt was eager to enter the priesthood to become a priest, and he frequently begged his parents to enroll him in seminary.<sup>35</sup> However, his father encouraged him to build a musical career instead, saying *"You belong to music, not to religion. Love God, be good and honest, and you will reach the highest summits in art, a vocation for which the natural gifts Providence has bestowed upon you have destined you."*<sup>36</sup> When his young ambition to become a priest was thwarted, Liszt found music as a way to express his faith. He believed he had a calling to compose church music: in a letter to his friend, in 1856, he claimed *"I have taken a serious stand as a religious, Catholic composer. Among the composers I know, none has a more intense and deeper feeling for religious music than your humble servant."*<sup>37</sup> Liszt composed many works of sacred music, both Choral (such as his setting of five psalms, masses, and Oratorio) and in such piano pieces including the Harmonies poetiques et religieuses.

Despite this religious enthusiasm which lasted all his life, Liszt participated in successive love affairs throughout most of his adult life, including a relationship with the Countess Marie d'Agoult and the

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<sup>35</sup> Earnest Newman, *The Man Liszt* (New York, Taplinger, 1935), 29-30

<sup>36</sup> Raphael Ledos De Beaufort, *The Abbe Liszt, The Story of His Life* (London: Ward & Downey, 1886), 101

<sup>37</sup> Claude Rostrand, *Liszt* (London: Calder & Boyars, 1972), 150.

Princess Carolyne Sayn-Wittegenstein. He was never married, even after living for years with one lover and fathering several children. Liszt showed no outward sign of embarrassment or guilt over his affairs, and he appeared rather indifferent to the opinions of others.<sup>38</sup>

On April 25, 1865, he entered the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi in Rome and became the Abbé Liszt. He mentioned later in his life, "If it had not been for music I should have devoted myself entirely to the church and would have become a Franciscan."<sup>39</sup> After a few years of isolation, Liszt began to travel, teach piano, and occasionally perform again, but all the gains of his concerts went to charity.

**Harmonies poétiques et religieuses** (Poetic and Religious Harmonies), S.173, is a cycle of piano pieces in ten movements. Liszt took the title from a book of poems by the French poet Alphonse de Lamartine. For the first piece of the set, **Invocation**, Liszt prefaces it with some lines from a Lamartine poem of the same name:

*Rise up, the voice of my soul,  
With the dawn, with the night!  
Leap up like the flame,  
Spread abroad like the noise!  
Float on the wing of the clouds,  
Mingle with the winds, with storms,  
With thunder, and the tumult of the waves.  
Rise up in the silence  
At the hour when, in the shade of evening,  
The lamp of night sways,  
When the priest puts out the censer;  
Rise up by the waves  
In these deep solitary places  
Where God reveals himself to faith!*

It begins with a serene theme in E major supported by bold triplets in the bass and gradually rises as if longing for heaven. The whole texture moves to a higher pitch and pauses. This sequence separated by pauses occurs many times, and each time it goes into a different tonality. Finally, majestic chords state the main theme as an answer, and then the music explores a divine high register. It is followed by triplets

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<sup>38</sup> William Wallace, Liszt (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1927) 102

<sup>39</sup> James Huneker Franz Liszt (New York: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1924) 98.

building the sonority of a powerful, rich sound. In the end, the initial theme is repeated in a serene mood in the key of E, which Liszt frequently used for his spiritual and transcendent pieces.

**Hymne de l'enfant à son réveil**, meaning 'child's hymn on awaking', is a transcription of Liszt's Choral piece written in 1846. This movement is peaceful and melodic, describing the purity of children. The thematic structure is binary, and two sections are repeated alternately with some variations. This piece is one that undergoes a significant transformation of harmonies: the opening section starts with A-flat major, moving to F minor, D-flat major, A-flat minor, and E-flat major.

The closing movement, **Cantique d'amour** (Hymn of love) finally returns to E major, the key that began the cycle. After a six-measure introduction, the theme comes in the middle line, surrounded by the accompaniment of both hands that Liszt marked quasi Arpa (like a harp). After exploring the highly chromatic middle section, The opening theme returns with more virtuosity that presents chords and octaves, and even a short cadenza (m.107) that reaches the most dramatic moment of the section. At the Coda, E major is even more emphasized by an E pedal-tone in the bass and repeated tonic chords in the right hand, and the composer finally brings the cycle to a grand, magnificent conclusion.

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