

L'heure exquisite

A photograph of a woman and a man in a music studio. The woman, on the left, has long dark hair and is wearing a black and white patterned cardigan over a light-colored top. She is smiling and looking towards the man, holding a sheet of music. The man, on the right, is wearing a dark sweater and is also smiling, looking at the woman. He is seated at a piano, with his hands resting on the keys. The background is dark with a red light source on the right. A red horizontal bar is positioned to the right of the title text.

Songs of Reynaldo Hahn

Anastasia Prokofieva Sergey Rybin



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REYNALDO HAYN (1874-1947)

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60'55

ANASTASIA PROKOFIEVA *soprano*

SERGEY RYBIN *piano*

The mélodies of Reynaldo Hahn

Born in Caracas of a Venezuelan mother and a German father (which is why the 'H' can be aspirated), Reynaldo Hahn was the youngest of twelve children. When he was only three, his family moved to Paris where, at the age of eleven, he entered the Conservatoire. He became an intimate friend of Proust and Sarah Bernhardt and, apart from some concertos, instrumental works, chamber music and ballets, wrote exclusively for the voice: 17 operas and some 125 songs. He often sang his mélodies to his own accompaniment, and there are plenty of recordings to judge him by. He had a most attractive, small baritone voice, and though he rarely appeared in concerts, he would delight in performing in the salons of the time with, in the words of his biographer Bernard Gavoty, “une cigarette interminable à la commissure des lèvres, non par ‘pose’, mais par le fait d’une habitude prise” (an interminable cigarette dangling from his lips, not as a ‘pose’ but out of habit) – as we observe in Jean Cocteau’s delightful drawing of Hahn singing and accompanying Chabrier’s ‘L’île heureuse’ in his *Portraits-Souvenirs*.

Aimons-nous... (1891) sets a poem by Théodore de Banville that Saint-Saëns was to compose the following year – one of his most celebrated – but Hahn’s version is in no way overshadowed. It does not appear in either of Heugel’s recueils and has for that reason, perhaps, been neglected. **À une étoile** sets twelve lines by Alfred de Musset that come from a longer poem, ‘Le saule’, which deals with the love of Tiburce for Georgina. De Musset was inspired by the Willow Song from Rossini’s *Otello*, the rendering of which by Malibran he greatly admired. The twelve lines come from the second of nine sections and describes how Tiburce sets out to meet his beloved. **Dans l’été** was composed to a poem by Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, known to lovers of the mélodie through songs by Bizet and Franck

Hahn’s *Études Latines*, settings of poems by Leconte de Lisle, were finished in Rome in 1900. He chose ten of Leconte de Lisle’s original eighteen, and fashioned from them a sensual cycle of mélodies quite unlike his other songs. The poems express the sybaritic pleasures of love, wine and sexual licence in ancient Greece, and in three of the songs (‘Lydie’, ‘Thaliarque’ and ‘A Phidyélé’) Hahn employs a chorus to comment on the text. **Tyndaris** conjures up a dream of distant antiquity by the simplest of musical means: a succession of arpeggios for the piano, over which the voice sings the sweetest of melodies. **Phyllis** closes the set. The poet exclaims in the

final line: ‘O belle fin de mes amours’ – not a cry of despair, but a celebration that he has found the woman of his dreams. Hahn’s marking is ‘sérieux et tendre’ and the whole song unfolds without interruption to an incantatory accompaniment. François Coppée, the poet of **Mai**, was a friend of Verlaine who honoured him with a dedicatory poem. Coppée’s reputation has now waned but several of his poems live on through the mélodies of composers such as Delibes, Duparc, Godard and Hahn. The latter’s waltz-like setting of ‘Mai’ is a delicious example of his ability to write light music.

Albert Willemetz (1887-1964) was a prolific lyricist with more than 3000 poems to his name which he wrote for musicals and revues. He worked with a number of important composers, including Messager and Honegger, and the songs that he inspired were sung by the likes of Josephine Baker, Maurice Chevalier, Billie Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Yvonne Printemps. It was Printemps who sang **Au fil de l’eau** and **Mon rêve était d’avoir...**, which ends this CD, in the 1934 French film of *La Dame aux Camélias*.

Nocturne sets a poem by Jean Lahor, one of the *noms de plume* of Dr Henri Cazalis, a much-travelled intellectual with a passionate interest in Buddhism and medicine. He wrote a great deal of verse, often melancholy in mood, and published some travel books and medical treatises. Duparc, who called his setting of the same poem ‘Extase’, drew inspiration from Wagner’s ‘Träume’, Hahn follows in the steps of Massenet, evident in the eccentric marking: *Extrêmement vague et doux (with the utmost haziness and sweetness)*. Victor Hugo, like Paul Verlaine, has inspired a multitude of fine melodies. **Quand la nuit n’est pas étoilée** opens the second recueil published by Heugel, and contains one of the composer’s most memorable mélodies. The song moves from the initial low tessitura of the opening verse to the soaring and expansive music of the last. **Nais** was published posthumously in 1955 as the fifth of *9 Mélodies Retrouvées*. The anonymous poem relates an incident between Nais and her lover Hylas. Bending over the river, she sees her mouth mirrored in the water; Hylas sees her, plucks a rose, kisses it and throws it into the river. It floats downstream until it reaches Nais’s lips mirrored in the water. ‘You cannot refuse this kiss’, Hylas exclaims, ‘since it is a flower that bestows it!’ Hahn’s crucial marking is *simplement*. **Rêverie** sets a famous poem by Victor Hugo who sent it as a letter on 22 May 1836 to Juliette Drouet. They had met when she acted in Hugo’s *Lucrèce Borgia* (1833); the friendship

developed into a liaison and she remained devoted to him for the rest of her life, following him into exile and acting as his amanuensis. Hugo's poem has twelve verses, of which Hahn omits nos. 3, 10, 11 and 12. It was he who provided the title 'Rêverie' – most aptly, since his *andantino* setting is a masterpiece of languor. **A Chloris** is one of the finest examples of pastiche in the entire history of song. Hahn takes a love poem by Théophile de Viau, supplies it with a bass line of Bach's 'Air on a G-string', over which he embroiders for the singer an arabesque which is part conversation and part song – an embodiment of elegant seventeenth century courtly life. **Le rossignol des lilas** sets a poem by Léopold Dauphin, a song that boasts an irresistible melody that is always supported, quaver for quaver, by the piano.

Verlaine was also one of Hahn's favourite poets, and on a famous occasion at the house of Alphonse Daudet in 1893, Sybil Sanderson performed his Verlaine cycle, *Chansons grises* in front of the poet. Verlaine, who did not care for Fauré's settings of his poems, was greatly moved by Hahn's songs, and wept as he listened. **L'heure exquise** is the fifth song of *Chansons grises*, composed by Hahn in 1893. Fauré had just completed the *Cinq Mélodies 'de Venise'* to poems by Verlaine and had started *La Bonne Chanson*, the fifth song of which was 'La lune blanche'. The poet was at the height of his popularity with composers. Hahn renamed the poem 'L'heure exquise' and composed one of his serenest melodies, characterized by a seamless succession of arpeggiated chords. It should be heard in a remarkable performance recorded in 1929 by Ninon Vallin with Hahn himself at the piano (EMI Références). **L'énamourée** sets a poem by Banville in which the poet mourns by the side of his beloved's grave, imagining her to be still alive. The song on the page looks like a succession of sighs, interrupted by rests, as though the poet were sobbing gently as he seeks to restore her to life. It is the sort of song that Hahn excelled in performing, as we can hear in a recording he made, as singer and pianist, on 4 November 1919 (Rococo Records).

Catulle Mendès, the poet of **Chanson**, was once a revered figure in French poetry, and *Le Mouvement Poétique Français* (1903) is an indispensable guide to French poetry between 1867 and 1900. He was a prolific poet, set by Chabrier in 'Chanson pour Jeanne' and 'Lied', and Fauré in 'Dans la forêt de septembre'. 'Chanson', a somewhat saccharine love poem, is the fourth of the *9 Mélodies Retrouvées*, published posthumously in 1955.

L'incrédule appears as the twentieth poem in Verlaine's slim volume of *Chansons pour Elle*, inspired largely by Eugénie Krantz, the woman of easy virtue that he met at the beginning of the 1890s and who, despite many rows, lived with him sporadically during the final years of his life. Written five years before his death, many of these 25 poems are characterized by a wry tone. Each of the first three verses of 'L'incrédule' follow the same pattern. We are told of Eugénie's interests and beliefs (coffee grounds, fairy tales, religion ...) to which the poet then responds with his own feelings: he simply lives for her, a feeling wonderfully expressed by Hahn in phrases marked *plus expressif* and *più forte*. And the song ends with a sequence of 14 *marcati* that express his devotion. The song dates from 1893 and forms part of Heugel's first recueil of *20 Mélodies*. **Adieu!** was composed six years later to a poem by Stéphan Bordèse, published in *Chansons de Page*. The poet says farewell to spring, golden dreams, birdsong – for tomorrow he will have passed away. But as he dies, he will think of love – perhaps the woman who has predeceased him and now shines in the heavens as a star. The *andantino mélancholique* marking captures both the suffering and the devotion. **Ta main**, to words by Léon Guillot de Saix, is the penultimate song of the *9 Mélodies Retrouvées*. The poet imagines that the 'jeune fille aux lèvres roses' will soothe him during the long winter nights, as he raises her little hand to his lips – a sentimental but delightful trifle. With **Naguère, au temps des églantines** (1896) we return to Catulle Mendès: the poet describes his malaise as a child when the wild roses were blooming, and his present unhappiness in winter – but cannot fathom why he is so distressed. **Fêtes galantes** is a setting of a poem by Paul Verlaine that takes its name from the collection of verse with the same title. Since its publication in 1869, Verlaine's *Fêtes galantes* has proved a treasure trove for composers of mélodies: Fauré, Debussy, Ravel and Hahn all delighted in setting these poems which try to evoke a certain eighteenth-century atmosphere and capture the spirit of Watteau, Lancret and Fragonard. Elegant ladies and their suitors, together with the stylized figures of the *commedia dell'arte*, play out their *galantries* against a décor of moonlight, formal parcs and fountains. Hahn's song sets the poem that Verlaine entitled 'Mandoline', which attracted both Fauré and Debussy before Hahn approached the text in 1892. Fauré's setting reflects the Watteau-like elegance of the verse, while Debussy concentrates on the heightened atmosphere of amorous excitement. Hahn, who marks his song *allegretto*, seems to combine both these

moods – you can hear the twanged note of the mandolin in the left hand of the treble clef in both the prelude and postlude, and the final word ‘brise’ is illustrated by two chromatic scales in contrary motion, creating an impression of emptiness and superficiality. **Fleur fanée** (1892) sets a poem by Léon Dièrx that was included, like ‘Fêtes galantes’ in the *Premier recueil* – a sure sign of the immediate popularity of the cantabile accompaniment: ‘en faisant toujours chanter l’accompagnement’ is Hahn’s instruction to the pianist. **Si mes vers avaient des ailes!..** was composed when Hahn was thirteen. It has become, rather unfairly, his most famous song – an accolade that should really be bestowed on one of his beautiful Verlaine settings. Victor Hugo, though, clearly inspired him, and in this delectable song from *Les Contemplations*, many of Hahn’s characteristics can be enjoyed: an undulating accompaniment, a conversational vocal line and a simplicity of utterance that is derived from the intimacy of speech.

Dictionaries of French literature tell us merely that Armand Silvestre, the poet of Hahn’s **J’ai caché dans la rose en pleurs**, was a minor Parnassian poet. In fact he was considerably more: a mathematician and lawyer by inclination, he embarked on a military career, and fought as a captain in the Franco-Prussian war. Like many a poet before and after him, he eked out a living as a civil servant, while attending all the time to his muse and writing in a great variety of genres. For his first book of verse, *Rimes neuves et vieilles* (1866), no less a figure than Georges Sand wrote a glowing preface which starts:

Voici de très beaux vers. Passant, arrête-toi et cueille ces fruits brillants, parfois étranges, toujours savoureux et d’une senteur énergique.

These are very beautiful poems. Passer-by, halt and gather these brilliant fruits which are sometimes strange, always delectable and intensely perfumed.

Between 1866 and his death in 1901, Silvestre published numerous volumes of poetry that were eagerly awaited by composers – especially Fauré and Massenet, whose three seminal cycles, *Poème d’avril*, *Poème d’hiver* and *Poème du souvenir* were among the earliest compositions of Silvestre’s verse. Hahn’s song, his only Silvestre setting, dates from 1903.

1 **Aimons-nous...**

Théodore Faullin de Banville (1823-1891)

Aimons-nous et dormons
Sans songer au reste du monde!
Ni le flot de la mer, ni l'ouragan des monts
Tant que nous nous aimons
Ne courbera ta tête blonde,
Car l'amour est plus fort
Que les Dieux et la Mort!

Le soleil s'éteindrait
Pour laisser ta blancheur plus pure,
Le vent qui jusqu'à terre incline la forêt,
En passant n'oserait
Jouer avec ta chevelure,
Tant que tu cacheras
Ta tête entre mes bras!

Et lorsque nos deux cœurs
S'en iront aux sphères heureuses
Où les célestes lis écloront sous nos pleurs,
Alors, comme deux fleurs,
Joignons nos lèvres amoureuses,
Et tâchons d'épuiser
La mort dans un baiser!

2 **À une étoile**

Louis Charles Alfred de Musset (1810-1857)

Étoile qui descend sur la verte colline,
Triste larme d'argent du manteau de la nuit,
Toi que regarde au loin le pâtre
qui chemine,
Tandis que pas à pas son long troupeau
le suit!
Étoile, où t'en vas-tu dans cette
nuit immense?

Let us love...

*Let us love and sleep
Without dreaming of the rest of the world!
Neither the sea's flow, nor the mountains' hurricane,
As long as we love each other,
Will harm your blonde head,
For love is stronger
Than the Gods and Death!*

*The sun would set
To leave your whiteness purer,
The wind that bends the forest to the ground,
In passing, would not dare
Play with your hair,
As long as you hide
Your head in my arms!*

*And when our two hearts
Will go to that happy place
Where celestial lilies will bloom under our tears,
Then, like two flowers,
Let us join our loving lips,
And let us try to exhaust
Death in a kiss!*

To a star

*Star descending on the green hill,
Sad tear of silver from the mantle of night,
You, who watch from afar the
shepherd walking,
While step by step his long flock
follows him!
Star, where are you going in this
immense night?*

Cherches-tu sur la rive un nid dans
les roseaux?
Où t'en vas-tu si belle, à l'heure
du silence,
Tomber comme une perle,
au sein profond des eaux?
Ah! si tu dois mourir, bel astre, et si ta tête
Va, dans la vaste mer plonger ses
blonds cheveux,
Avant de nous quitter, un seul instant arête,
Étoile, écoute-moi! ne descends pas des cieux!

*Are you looking for a nest on the shore among
the reeds?
Where are you going so beautiful, in the hour
of silence,
Falling like a pearl,
into the deep breast of the waters?
Ah! If you have to die, beautiful star, and if your head
Is going to plunge its blond hair into the
vast sea,
Before leaving us, stop for a single moment,
Listen to me, star! Do not descend from heaven!*

3 Dans l'été

Marceline Desbordes-Valmore (1786-1859)

Un danger circule à l'ombre,
Au chant de l'oiseau
Qui descend, quand il fait sombre,
Se plaindre au roseau;
Alors tout ce qui respire
Se prend à rêver
Et le ruisseau qui soupire
Semble l'éprouver.
Partout les nids et les ailes
Tremblent doucement,
Dénonçant, des tourterelles,
L'entretien charmant.
L'été brûle avec mystère
Dans les lits en fleurs
Des seuls amants de la terre
Sans haine et sans peur.
Été, si, trop jeune encore
Pour fuir un danger,
L'enfant rêveur que j'adore
S'attarde au verger,

In summer

*Danger moves in the shadow,
At the song of the bird
That descends, when it is dark,
To complain in the reeds;
Then all that breathes
Takes to dreaming
And the sighing brook
Seems to experience it.
Everywhere nests and wings
Tremble softly,
Reporting the turtle doves'
Charming conversation.
Summer burns with mystery
In the blossoming beds
Of lonely earthly lovers
Without hate and without fear.
Summer, if, still too young
To escape danger,
The dreaming child I love
Lingers in the orchard,*

Laisse dans l'errante nue
Ton charme cruel
Et garde l'âme ingénue
Du plaisir mortel.

*In naked wandering, abandon
Your cruel charm
And guard the naive soul
From deadly pleasure.*

4 **Tyndaris**

Charles-Marie-René Leconte de Lisle (1818-1894)

Ô blanche Tyndaris, les Dieux me sont amis:
Ils aiment les Muses Latines;
Et l'aneth, et le myrte et le thym des collines
Croissent aux prés qu'ils m'ont soumis.

*Oh white Tyndaris, the Gods are friends to me:
They love the Latin Muses;
And dill, and myrtle and thyme from the hills
Grow in the meadows they gave me.*

Viens! mes ramiers chéris, aux
voluptés plaintives,
Ici se plaisent à gémir;
Et sous l'épais feuillage il est doux de dormir
Au bruit des sources fugitives.

*Come! my cherished doves, in
plaintive pleasures,
Moan here happily;
And under thick foliage it is sweet to sleep
To the sound of fleeing springs.*

5 **Mai**

François Coppée (1842-1908)

Depuis un mois, chère exilée,
Loin de mes yeux tu t'en allas,
Et j'ai vu fleurir des lilas
Avec ma peine inconsolée.

*It has been a month, dear exile,
Since you left my sight,
And I have seen the lilacs blossom
With my inconsolable pain.*

Seul, je fuis ce ciel clair et beau
Dont l'ardent effluve me trouble,
Car l'horreur de l'exil se double
De la splendeur du renouveau.

*Alone, I flee this clear and beautiful sky
Whose fiery perfume disturbs me,
For the horror of separation doubles
In revival's splendour.*

En vain le soleil a souri,
Au printemps je ferme ma porte,
Et veux seulement qu'on m'apporte
Un rameau de lilas fleuri!

*The sun smiled in vain,
I close my door on Spring,
And only want to be brought
A branch of flowering lilac!*

Car l'amour dont mon âme est pleine
Y trouve parmi ses douleurs
Ton regard, dans ces chères fleurs,
Et dans leur parfum ton haleine!

*For the love which fills my soul
Finds among its pains
Your glance, in these dear flowers,
And in their perfume your breath!*

6 **Au fil de l'eau**

Albert Willemetz (1887-1964)

Ne file pas si vite,
Ô mon joli bateau,
Ne file pas si vite
Au fil de l'eau,

De la rive qui passe,
On tente d'approcher,
Mais la branche se casse,
Dès qu'on veut s'accrocher.

Au beau pays du rêve,
On se croit arrivé,
Le courant vous enlève
Et vous fait dériver.

7 **Nocturne**

Henri Cazalis (1840-1909)

Sur ton sein pâle mon cœur dort
D'un sommeil doux comme la mort:
Mort exquise... Mort parfumée!
Au souffle de la bien aimée,
Sur ton sein pâle... mon cœur dort...

8 **Quand la nuit n'est pas étoilée**

Victor Marie Hugo (1802-1885)

Quand la nuit n'est pas étoilée,
Viens te bercer aux flot des mers;
Comme la mort, elle est voilée,
Comme la vie, ils sont amers.

L'ombre et l'abîme ont un mystère
Que nul mortel ne pénétra.
C'est Dieu qui leur dit de se taire
Jusqu'au jour où tout parlera.

With the water's flow

*Do not go so fast,
Oh my pretty boat,
Do not go so fast
With the water's flow,*

*The shore that passes,
We try to approach,
But the branch breaks,
As soon as we try to hang on.*

*In the beautiful country of dreams,
We think we have arrived,
The current takes you away
And sets you adrift.*

Nocturne

*On your pale breast my heart sleeps
A sleep as sweet as death:
Exquisite death... Death scented!
By the breath of the beloved,
On your pale breast... my heart sleeps...*

When the night is starless

*When the night is starless,
Come rock on the sea's waves;
Like death, the night is veiled,
Like life, the waves are bitter.*

*The shadows and the abyss hold a mystery
That no mortal can penetrate.
God tells them to be silent
Until the day when everyone will speak.*

D'autres yeux de ces flots sans nombre
Ont vainement cherché le fond;
D'autres yeux se sont emplis d'ombre
A contempler ce ciel profond.

Toi, demande au monde nocturne
De la paix pour ton cœur désert!
Demande une goutte à cette urne!
Demande un chant à ce concert!

Plane au-dessus des autres femmes,
Et laisse errer tes yeux si beaux
Entre le ciel où sont les âmes
Et la terre où sont tes tombeaux!

*Other eyes have vainly searched
The depth of these countless waves;
Other eyes have filled with shadow
Contemplating this deep sky.*

*Ask the nocturnal world
For peace for your forsaken heart!
Ask for a drop from this urn!
Ask for a song at this concert!*

*Soar above other women,
And let your beautiful eyes roam
Between heaven where the souls are
And the earth where your tombs are!*

9 **Naïs**

René-François Sully-Prudhomme (1839-1907)

Naïs, vierge blonde à l'œil noir,
Au bord du fleuve agenouillée,
Y mire sa bouche mouillée
Par le mobile et frais miroir.

Hylas la voit, cueille une rose,
La baise, la porte à son cœur,
La pénètre de sa langueur
Et sur l'eau qui s'enfuit la pose.

De tous les écueils triomphant
La fleur va rapide et légère,
Puis, odorante messagère,
S'arrête aux lèvres de l'enfant.

Ah! Souris, ou du moins, pardonne,
Vierge, à ce timide baiser,
Tu ne peux pas le refuser:
C'est une fleur qui te le donne.

Nais

*Naïs, the blonde, black-eyed virgin,
Kneeling at the edge of the river,
Looks at her moist lips
In the moving and fresh mirror.*

*Hylas sees her, picks a rose,
Kisses it, carries it on his heart,
Fills it with his languor
And places it on the running water.*

*Triumphant, through all obstacles,
The flower goes fast and light,
Then, the fragrant messenger
Stops at the child's lips.*

*Ah! Smile, or at least, forgive,
Virgin, this shy kiss,
You cannot refuse it:
It is given to you by a flower.*

10 **Rêverie***Victor Marie Hugo*

Puisqu'ici-bas toute âme
 Donne à quelqu'un
 Sa musique, sa flamme,
 Ou son parfum;

Puisqu'ici toute chose
 Donne toujours
 Son épine ou sa rose
 A ses amours;

Puisque l'air à la branche
 Donne l'oiseau,
 Que l'aube à la pervenche
 Donne un peu d'eau,

Puisque, lorsqu'elle arrive
 S'y reposer,
 L'onde amère à la rive
 Donne un baiser...

Je te donne, à cette heure,
 Penché sur toi,
 La chose la meilleure
 Que j'aie en moi...

Reçois donc ma pensée,
 Triste d'ailleurs,
 Qui comme une rosée
 T'arrive en pleurs...

Reçois mes vœux sans nombre,
 Ô! mes amours!
 Reçois la flamme et l'ombre
 De tous mes jours,

Mes transports pleins d'ivresses,
 Pur de soupçons,
 Et toutes les caresses
 De mes chansons!

Reverie

*Since down here every soul
 Gives someone
 Its music, its fire,
 Or its perfume;*

*Since here all things
 Always give
 Their thorns or their roses
 To their loves;*

*Since the air gives
 The bird to the branch,
 And the dawn gives
 A little water to the periwinkle.*

*Since when it arrives
 To rest there,
 The bitter wave
 Gives a kiss to the shore...*

*I give you, at this hour,
 Bending over you,
 The best thing
 I have in me...*

*Accept, then, my thought,
 Although it is sad,
 Which like the dew
 Comes to you in tears...*

*Accept my countless vows,
 O! My loves!
 Accept the flame and the shade
 Of all my days,*

*My intoxicated rapture,
 Free from suspicion,
 And all the caresses
 Of my songs!*

11 **À Chloris**

Théophile de Viau (1590-1626)

S'il est vrai, Chloris, que tu m'aimes,
(Mais j'entends, que tu m'aimes bien),
Je ne crois pas que les rois mêmes
Aient un bonheur pareil au mien.

Que la mort serait importune
À venir changer ma fortune
A la félicité des cieus!

Tout ce qu'on dit de l'ambrosie
Ne touche point ma fantaisie
Au prix des grâces de tes yeux.

12 **Le rossignol des lilas**

Léopold Dauphin (1847-?)

Ô premier rossignol qui viens
Dans les lilas, sous ma fenêtre,
Ta voix m'est douce à reconnaître!
Nul accent n'est semblable au tien!

Fidèle aux amoureux liens,
Trille encor, divin petit être!
Ô premier rossignol qui viens
Dans les lilas, sous ma fenêtre!

Nocturne ou matinal, combien
Ton hymne à l'amour me pénètre!
Tant d'ardeur fait en moi renaitre
L'écho de mes avrils anciens,
Ô premier rossignol qui viens!

To Chloris

*If it is true, Chloris, that you love me,
(And I hear you love me dearly)
I do not believe that even the kings themselves
Know happiness equal to mine.*

*Even death would be unwelcome
To change my fate
For heaven's bliss!*

*All that is said about ambrosia
Does not touch my imagination at all
If the price were the favour of your eyes.*

The nightingale of lilacs

*O first nightingale who comes
Into the lilacs, under my window,
Your voice is sweet to recognize!
No accent is like yours!*

*Faithful to loving bonds,
Trill again, divine little being!
O first nightingale who comes
Into the lilacs, under my window!*

*At night or in the morning, how
Your hymn of love penetrates me!
Such ardour reawakens in me
The echo of ancient Aprils,
Oh first nightingale who comes!*

13 **L'heure exquise**

Paul Verlaine (1844-1896)

La lune blanche
Luit dans les bois;
De chaque branche
Part une voix
Sous la ramée...
Ô bien aimée.

L'étang reflète,
Profond miroir,
La silhouette
Du saule noir
Où le vent pleure...
Rêvons! c'est l'heure...

Un vaste et tendre
Apaînement
Semble descendre
Du firmament
Que l'astre irise...
C'est l'heure exquise.

14 **L'énamourée**

Théodore Faullin de Banville

Ils se disent, ma colombe,
Que tu rêves, morte encore,
Sous la pierre d'une tombe;
Mais pour l'âme qui t'adore,
Tu t'éveilles, ranimée,
Ô pensive bien-aimée!

Par les blanches nuits d'étoiles,
Dans la brise qui murmure,
Je caresse tes longs voiles,
Ta mouvante chevelure,
Et tes ailes demi-closes
Qui voltigent sur les roses.

The white moon

*The white moon
Shines in the woods;
From every branch
Comes a voice
Beneath the arbour...
Oh my beloved.*

*The pond reflects,
Like a deep mirror
The silhouette
Of the black willow
Where the wind weeps...
Let us dream! It is time...*

*A vast and tender
Calm
Seems to descend
From heaven
That the moon illuminates...
It is the exquisite hour.*

The enamoured

*They say, my dove,
That, still dead, you dream,
Under the tombstone;
But for the soul who adores you,
You awaken, reanimated,
Oh thoughtful beloved!*

*Through sleepless starry nights,
In the murmuring breeze,
I caress your long veils,
Your moving hair,
And your half-closed wings
That flutter among the roses.*

Ô délices, je respire
Tes divines tresses blondes;
Ta voix pure, cette lyre,
Suit la vague sur les ondes,
Et, suave, les effleure,
Comme un cygne qui se pleure!

15 **Chanson**

Catulle Mendès (1841-1909)

Si ton front est comme un roseau
Qui s'effare dès qu'un oiseau
Le touche,
Mon baiser se fera moins prompt
Pour ne pas étonner ce front
Farouche!

Si tes yeux, ces lacs lumineux,
N'aiment pas qu'un soir triste en eux
Se mire,
Pour ne pas assombrir tes yeux,
Je prendrai le masque joyeux
Du rire !

Mais si ton cœur las est pareil
Au lys qui, brûlant au soleil
Ses charmes,
Penche, de rosée altéré,
Sans feindre, hélas! j'y verserai
Des larmes.

*Oh delights, I breathe
Your divine blonde tresses;
Your pure voice, like a lyre,
Follows the tide on the waves,
And, gently, touches them,
Like a swan crying!*

Song

*If your brow is like a reed
That is alarmed as soon as a bird
Touches it,
My kiss will be lest swift
So as not to startle
This fierce brow!*

*If your eyes, these luminous lakes,
Do not like it when a sad evening
Is reflected in them,
So as not to darken your eyes,
I will wear the happy mask
Of laughter!*

*But if your weary heart is like
The lily that, burning
Its charms in the sun,
Leans, affected by the dew,
Without pretence, alas! I will shed
Tears.*

16 **L'incrédule**

Paul Verlaine

Tu crois au marc de café,
Aux présages, aux grands jeux...
Moi, je ne crois qu'en tes grands yeux.

Tu crois aux contes de fées,
Aux jours néfastes, aux songes...
Moi, je ne crois qu'en tes mensonges!

Tu crois en un vague Dieu,
En quelque saint spécial,
En tel "Ave" contre tel mal...

Je ne crois qu'aux heures bleues
Et roses, que tu m'épanches
Dans la volupté des nuits blanches...

Et si profonde est ma foi,
Envers tout ce que je croi,
Que je ne vis plus que pour toi!

17 **Adieu**

Stéphan Bordèse (1847-?)

Adieu, gai printemps,
Adieu, rêves d'or!
Au chant des oiseaux mon âme s'endort...
Demain je serai bien loin de la vie
Dans ce calme heureux que mon âme envie.

Adieu, gai printemps,
Saison des amours,
Pour les bien-heureux fleuris-toi toujours;
Où moi j'ai cueilli la fleur de souffrance
Laisse-les cueillir celle d'espérance!

The unbeliever

*You believe in coffee grounds,
In omens, in tarot cards...
I only believe in your big eyes.*

*You believe in fairy tales,
In unlucky days, in dreams...
I only believe in your lies!*

*You believe in a vague God,
In some special saint,
In certain prayers against certain ills...*

*I only believe in blue and pink hours
that you lavish on me
In the voluptuousness of sleepless nights...*

*And so deep is my faith,
In everything I believe,
That I only live for you!*

Farewell

*Farewell, cheerful spring,
Farewell, dreams of gold!
My soul falls asleep to birdsong...
Tomorrow I will be far from life
In that happy calm which my soul craves.*

*Farewell, cheerful spring,
Season of love,
Bloom always for the blessed ones;
Where I plucked the flower of suffering
Let them pick one of hope!*

Adieu, gai printemps,
Je ferme les yeux en rêvant
D'amour! peut-on mourir mieux?
Adieu, gai printemps, mon regard se voile
Et déjà mon âme adore une étoile...

18 **Phyllis**

Charles-Marie-René Leconte de Lisle

Depuis neuf ans et plus dans l'amphore scellée,
Mon vin des coteaux d'Albe a lentement mûri.
Il faut ceindre d'acanthé et de myrte fleuri,
Phyllis, ta tresse déroulée.

L'anis brûle à l'autel et, d'un pied diligent,
Tous viennent couronnés de verveine pieuse,
Et mon humble maison étincelle, joyeuse,
Aux reflet des coupes d'argent.

Ô Phyllis, c'est le jour de Vénus, et je t'aime!
Entends-moi! Téléphus brûle et
souponne ailleurs!

Il t'oublie, et je t'aime, et nos jours
les meilleurs

Vont rentrer dans la nuit suprême.

C'est toi qui fleuriras en mes derniers
beaux jours.

Je ne changerai plus, voici la saison mûre.
Chante! Les vers sont doux quand ta voix
les murmure,

Ô belle fin de mes amours!

*Farewell, cheerful spring,
I close my eyes, dreaming
Of love! Is there a better way to die?
Farewell, cheerful spring, my sight is veiled
And already my soul loves a star..*

Phyllis

*For nine years and more in the sealed amphora
My wine from the Alban hills has slowly matured.
We must dress your unrolled tresses
With acanthus and myrtle flowers, Phyllis.*

*Anise burns at the altar and, on diligent feet,
All come, crowned with pious verbena,
And my humble home sparkles happily
With the reflection of silver cups.*

*Oh Phyllis, it's the day of Venus, and I love you!
Listen! Telephus burns and
sighs elsewhere!*

*He has forgotten you, and I love you, and our
best days*

Will return in an ultimate night.

*It is you who will blossom in my last
beautiful days.*

*I will not change any more, this is the ripe season.
Sing! Verses are sweet when murmured by
your voice,*

Oh beautiful end of my loves!

19 **Ta main***Léon Guillot de Saix (1885-1964)*

Jeune fille aux lèvres roses,
 Au regard si doux, si clair
 Je t'admire, ô sœur des roses!
 Comme ton parfum m'est cher!

En hiver longue est la veille;
 Que ne puis-je, à ton côté,
 Dans ta chambre, ô ma merveille,
 Me ravir de ta beauté.

Que ta main soit sous mes lèvres
 La promesse de demain
 Elle apaisera mes fièvres,
 Ta petite et blanche main...

20 **Naguère, au temps des églantines***Catulle Mendès*

Naguère, au temps des églantines,
 J'avais des peines enfantines:

Mon cœur se gonflait sans raison
 Sous les lilas en floraison.

À respirer les chauds calices
 Je goûtais d'amères délices;

Sous les étoiles, pâle et coi,
 Je pleurais sans savoir pourquoi.

Et maintenant, je pleure encore
 Le long des soirs, comme à l'aurore;

En hiver, sur le banc grésil,
 Sur les roses pendant avril.

Mes larmes tombent à tout heure
 Mais je sais bien pourquoi je pleure!

Your hand

*Young girl with pink lips,
 With eyes, so sweet, so clear
 I admire you, oh sister of roses!
 As your perfume is dear to me!*

*In winter the evening is long;
 When I cannot, by your side,
 In your room, oh my darling,
 Delight in your beauty.*

*May your hand be on my lips
 The promise of tomorrow
 Will calm my fevers,
 Your little white hand...*

Once, at the time of the wild roses

*Once, at the time of the wild roses,
 I felt childish pain:*

*My heart swelled without reason
 Under the blossoming lilacs.*

*To breathe the hot chalices
 I tasted bitter joys;*

*Under the stars, pale and quiet,
 I cried without knowing why.*

*And now, I'm still crying
 All evening long, just like at dawn;*

*In winter, onto the sleet,
 Onto the roses during April.*

*My tears fall all the time
 But I know why I cry.*

21 **Fêtes galantes***Paul Verlaine*

Les donneurs de sérénades
 Et les belles écouteuses
 Échangent des propos fades
 Sous les ramures chanteuses.

C'est Tircis et c'est Aminte,
 Et c'est l'éternel Clitandre,
 Et c'est Damis, qui, pour mainte
 Cruelle, fait maint vers tendre.

Leurs courtes vestes de soie,
 Leurs longues robes à queues,
 Leur élégance, leur joie
 Et leurs molles ombres bleues

Tourbillonnent dans l'extase
 D'une lune rose et grise,
 Et la mandoline jase
 Parmi les frissons de brise.

22 **Fleur fanée***Léon Dierx (1838-1912)*

Cette fleur, autrefois donnée,
 A gardé l'odeur d'un beau sein,
 Il s'en échappe tout l'essaim
 Des souvenirs d'une autre année
 Où la blancheur au pur dessin
 Charma quelque âme fortunée.
 Heureuse fut la matinée,
 Qui t'embaumait, ô fleur fanée,
 A qui le temps, doux assassin,
 Fit une mort si fortunée.
 Il n'a tué que ton dessin,
 Non les rêves de cette année,

Courtship parties

*The serenaders
 And the beautiful listeners
 Exchange sweet nothings
 Under singing branches.*

*There's Tircis and Aminte,
 And the eternal Clitandre,
 And Damis, who, for many a
 Cruel woman, has penned many a tender verse.*

*Their short silk coats,
 Their long trailing dresses,
 Their elegance, their joy
 And their soft blue shadows*

*Whirl in the ecstasy
 Of a pink and grey moon,
 And the mandolin chatters
 Amid the quivering of the breeze.*

Faded flower

*This flower, once given,
 Has kept the scent of a beautiful breast,
 It escapes the whole swarm
 Of memories of another year
 Where the whiteness of a pure picture
 Charmed some fortunate soul.
 Happy was the morning,
 That perfumed you, oh faded flower,
 To whom time, the sweet assassin,
 Made so fortunate a death.
 He only killed your picture,
 Not this year's dreams*

Dont, sur toi, flotte tout l'essaim.
Et j'y sens, autour d'un beau sein,
L'odeur d'amour, par toi donnée,
Ô fleur, que je garde à dessein!

23 **Si mes vers avaient des ailes!..**

Victor Marie Hugo

Mes vers fuiraient, doux et frères,
Vers votre jardin si beau,
Si mes vers avaient des ailes,
Des ailes comme l'oiseau.

Ils voleraient, étincelles,
Vers votre foyer qui rit,
Si mes vers avaient des ailes,
Des ailes comme l'esprit.

Près de vous, purs et fidèles,
Ils accouraient, nuit et jour,
Si mes vers avaient des ailes,
Des ailes comme l'amour!

24 **J'ai caché dans la rose en pleurs**

Armand Silvestre (1837-1901)

J'ai caché dans la rose en pleurs
Les larmes qu'il faut qu'on ignore
Pour que la rosée et l'aurore
Les confondent avec les leurs.

Puissent-elles à ses couleurs
Apporter plus d'éclat encore,
Et puisse ta main que j'adore
La trouver belle entre les fleurs.

Entre toutes, la rose est celle
Dont l'âme jalouse recèle
Le mieux ses parfums au soleil

*Which, on you, float all in a swarm.
And I feel there, around a beautiful breast,
The scent of love, given by you,
Oh flower, which I deliberately keep!*

If my verses had wings!..

*My verses would flee, sweet and frail,
To your garden so beautiful,
If my verses had wings,
Wings like the bird.*

*They would fly, as sparks,
To your laughing home,
If my verses had wings,
Wings like the spirit.*

*To you, pure and faithful,
They would run, night and day,
If my verses had wings,
Wings like love!*

I hid in the crying rose

*I hid in the crying rose
Tears that must go unheeded
So that dew and dawn
Mix them with their own.*

*May they bring to its colours
Yet more brilliance,
And may your hand that I love
Find it beautiful among the flowers.*

*Of all, the rose is the one
Whose jealous soul harbours
The best of its perfumes in the sun*

Et de qui la lèvre embaumée
Garde le plus d'ombre enfermée,
Sous son beau sourire vermeil.

25 **Mon rêve était d'avoir...**

Albert Willemetz

Mon rêve était d'avoir un amant qui serait
Confiant, soumis, discret...
Un amant qui ferait,
Sans demander de compte,
Tout ce que je voudrais.
Mon rêve était d'avoir un amant qui croirait
Ce que je lui dirais
Et se contenterait,
Sans regret et sans honte,
De l'amour qu'il aurait!

Et comme les présents viennent souvent gâter
Le Bonheur quand on aime,
Il saurait accepter
D'être aimé pour lui même,
Me laissant le loisir
De tout dire et tout faire.
Il n'aurait qu'un désir,
C'est celui de me plaire!
Mais hélas! où trouver cet amant exemplaire
Qui saurait me comprendre et
que j'adorerais?

*And whose perfumed lips
Keep the most shade locked up,
Under its beautiful vermilion smile.*

My dream was to have...

*My dream was to have a lover who would be
Trusting, obedient, discreet...
A lover who would do,
Without keeping score,
All I would like.
My dream was to have a lover who would believe
What I would say to him
And would be happy,
Without regret and without shame,
With the love he would have!*

*And as gifts often spoil
Happiness when we love,
He would accept
To be loved for himself,
Leaving me free
To say everything and do everything
He would have only one desire,
Which is to please me!
But alas! Where can one find this exemplary lover
Who would understand me and whom
I would adore?*

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