

A PERFORMER'S ANALYSIS OF MAURICE RAVEL'S *CHANSONS MADÉCASSES*

A LECTURE RECITAL, TOGETHER WITH THREE RECITALS

OF SELECTED WORKS OF B. BRITTEN, R. SCHUMANN,

S. BARBER, T. PASATIERI, F. POULENC, G. VERDI,

T. ARNE, AND OTHERS

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In his song cycle, *Chansons madécasses* (1926), a chamber work for voice, piano, flute, and cello, Maurice Ravel combines twentieth-century musical experimentation and exoticism with the late nineteenth-century style characteristics present in the vocal elements and instrumentation. Because early twentieth-century music appears to be closely connected to modern concerns, performers may tend to dismiss the style and technique of the early twentieth century as simply “old-fashioned” rather than examine and consider those elements as resources and valuable tools for interpreting and presenting authentic performances.

The focus of this research includes a discussion of the historical, social, and textual implications of the music and poetry; a formal musical analysis of the work, including comparisons of an early twentieth-century, mid-century, and late twentieth-century recordings with regard to the use of vibrato and portamento in the voice, cello, and flute; and an examination of *Chansons madécasses* for elements of authentic Malagasy music and poetry. The paper also suggests methodologies for performance practice which reflect the results of these analyses.

The beginnings of the rejection of traditional form — harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic structures — found in the early part of the century began to free composers and performers to explore musical presentations that gain their power not only from startling and unexpected elements of exoticism and interpretation but also from their romantic roots, which spurred the desire for a raw, even melodramatic, emotionalism. Ravel, without sacrificing the integrity of his

native language, is able to blend his text with his accompaniment in a way that uses both the poem and the music to advance the “plot” and emotion of the narration, producing what might be described as a near perfect union of form and theme, structure and idea.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary musicians would appear to be faced with few challenges in achieving historically informed performances of early twentieth-century music. There are, however, difficulties in this pursuit, which are no less challenging than the interpretation of music written before the twentieth century. With the relative closeness in time to the period, the often abundant availability of primary source material for reference, and the accessibility to early recordings of the music, performers are able to assimilate the necessary information of how the music may have been presented in its historical setting. We are tempted to view the more recent past as so accessible that our view can become distorted by the assumption that ease of this accessibility translates into performance practices which need little or no adjustment. Because early twentieth-century music appears to be closely connected to our modern sensibilities, we have a tendency to dismiss the style and technique of the early twentieth century as simply “old-fashioned” rather than examine and consider them as valuable tools for interpreting and presenting an historically informed performance.

Early twentieth-century music offers a unique combining of late nineteenth-century performance style elements, particularly those of vocal, string, and woodwind vibrato and portamento, and twentieth century compositional style elements, such as bitonality, declamation of text, and exoticism. Robert Philip, in his chapter “1900-1940” in *Performance Practice: Music after 1600* states, “Music which radically broke from conventional 19th-century

structures and forms of expression must have encouraged a questioning of conventional performance practice.”¹ A discussion of the music which falls within this period can give a comprehensive view of the style elements which are involved in performance. In order to discuss the aspects of historically informed performance practices of the more recent past, it is practical, for the purposes of this study, to focus on a particular musical genre. The genre I have selected for examination is the vocal chamber music of the early twentieth century, specifically Maurice Ravel’s vocal chamber work *Chansons madécasses*. In this composition, Ravel combines the compositional style of twentieth-century experimentation and exoticism with the late nineteenth-century style characteristics involved in the vocal writing, instrumentation, and scoring. In addition to an analysis of the instrumental and vocal components of nineteenth-century style and twentieth-century experimentalism found in the cycle, I also investigate the historical and textual background of the music and poetry which can also assist performers in making well-informed choices regarding the practices they incorporate into their presentation of the music.

¹Robert Philip, “1900-1940,” in *The Norton/Grove Handbooks in Music: Performance Practice, Music After 1600*, ed. Howard Mayer Brown and Stanley Sadie (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 479.

CHAPTER II

THE TEXT

Biography: Evariste-Desire de Parny

The late eighteenth-century Creole poet, Evariste-Desire de Parny (1753-1814), was the author of the poems Ravel used in *Chansons madécasses*. Parny was from the French colony of Réunion and a disciple of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Although he never traveled to Madagascar, he falsely claimed to have translated the poems of his *Chansons madécasses, traduites en français, suivies de poésies fugitives* from songs collected among the people of Madagascar. Gerald Larner in his book *Maurice Ravel* states, “Though not in fact collected from Madagascan natives as Parny claimed, his prose-poems do have an appealing exoticism about them and an interesting anti-colonial political sentiment too.”² The three poems, as titled by Ravel, are “Nahandove,” “Aoua!,” and “Il est doux.” These texts dwell upon love, war, and blissful idleness, and the poems express fanciful images of life among the Madagascans. The outer two poems are expressively erotic in character, while the middle poem is more dramatic, describing the effects of French colonialism upon the exotic and distant land and people of Madagascar. Arbie Orenstein in his biography *Ravel: Man and Musician* states, “The *Chansons madécasses* were written in India in 1784-85, and it appears that the *hain-tenys*, which are popular Madagascan poems,

²Gerald Larner, *Maurice Ravel* (London: Phaidon Press, 1996), 189.

served as the author's model."³ In the preface of the publication, appearing in 1787, the author (Parny) explains:

The isle of Madagascar is divided into an endless number of small territories which belong to as many princes. These princes are always battling one another, the purpose of these wars being to take prisoners in order to sell them to Europeans. Thus, without us, these people would be peaceful and happy. They are skillful, intelligent, kind, and in their treaties, they take all the precautions dictated by prudence and even shrewdness. The Madagascans are happy by nature. The men live in idleness and the women work. They are passionately fond of music and dance. I have collected and translated several songs, which may give an idea of their customs and habits. They possess no verse; the poetry is nothing but an elaborate prose. Their music is simple, gentle, and always melancholy.⁴

The Significance of French Colonialism upon Art and Literature

Non-western styles of writing and painting became popular tools for creating the effect of exoticism. The significance of these non-western influences was to sound alien without being authentically native. Edward Said, in his book *Culture and Imperialism* refers to this focus on non-western influences upon art as the "'Oriental Renaissance'--so called by its great modern historian Raymond Schwab--from the late eighteenth to the middle nineteenth century, when the cultural riches of India, China, Japan, Persia, and Islam were firmly deposited at the heart of European culture."⁵

The significance of nineteenth-century French colonialism in art and literature developed strongly as sociology, psychology, history, and anthropology flourished after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Many French geographical societies formed which further stimulated knowledge and exploration. Said comments, "Whole regions of the world were made the objects of learned colonial attention; Raymond Betts mentions that the *Revue internationale de sociologie* devoted

³Arbie Orenstein, *Ravel, Man and Musician* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 196.

⁴Ibid.; Parny quoted by Orenstein.

⁵Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 194-95.

annual surveys to Madagascar in 1900, Laos and Cambodia in 1908. Natives and their lands were not to be treated as entities that could be made French, but as possessions, the immutable characteristics of which required separation and subservience, even though this did not rule out the *mission civilisatrice*.”⁶ The French empire became, to the French, their identity, and the natives of these “possessions” found their situation extremely difficult and often rebelled.

Interpretation of the Poetry

The poem “Nahandove” is an intriguing piece for several reasons. First, it stands in contrast to most Romantic dramatic monologue poetry in that the speaker, the male lover, assumes the passive role, which is traditionally that of the female. For example, in the companion poems “Meeting at Night” and “Parting at Morning” by Robert Browning, it is the man who travels to meet his beloved under the cover of night. He is the aggressor, and, having enjoyed the encounter, it is he who departs to return to the world of men, leaving her to pine for him until his next visit. In “Nahandove” the male narrative persona is in the role of the lover awaiting the arrival of the breathless female, and, following their lovemaking, the female departs, leaving him alone to wait for her return.

In addition to the role reversal, the poem uses both sensual and sensuous imagery. The poem is set out-of-doors, and throughout the piece the narrator notes the details which engage the senses from the dew on his hair to the sound of his lover’s clothing as she arrives.

The conclusion of “Nahandove” implies a larger, more distressing world beyond the immediate moment of the lovers’ tryst. The narrator almost sighs with remorse following his beloved’s departure, back to her own world which lies beyond the isolated scene of their encounter. Further, the poem suggests the cyclic nature of secret love as the speaker finds himself

⁶Ibid., 170.

caught in a cycle of anticipation, then satisfaction, followed by remorse and longing which leads ultimately back to anticipation.

The poem opens with the anonymous speaker anticipating the arrival of his beloved Nahandove. He observes the beginnings of the night through observations involving the senses of sound, sight, and touch – as he speaks of the cry of the “bird nocturnal,” the vision of the full moon shining on his head, and the feel of the forming dew, moistening his hair. His heightened awareness of the sensual world foreshadows his encounter with Nahandove.

As an aroused lover anticipating the arrival of his beloved, the narrative persona observes the lateness of the hour and wonders what has detained the beautiful Nahandove. He has prepared their love bed, and, in describing the bed, he again engages the senses, as he describes a bed of leaves, flowers, and “herbs fragrant.” His preparations for her evoke touch and smell, and, perhaps, even taste. This wonderful bed, he proclaims, is worthy of the charms of his lover.

Through the first third of the poem the narrator repeats his beloved’s name, Nahandove, six times in a sort of incantation – a litany of love – as if evoking her presence through the repetition of her name. And suddenly she arrives, out of breath from rushing to meet him. As he seats her on his knees, he comments on the rustling of her dress covering her body, suggesting how cognizant he is of her sensual physicality. While she catches her breath, he holds her and comments on her bewitching beauty. As he holds her, the eroticism of the poem becomes more explicit in its movement toward sexual climax. The narrator presses his hand to her breast and is delighted by how alive she feels to him. Again, the poem evokes the senses with the sound of the rustling dress, the touch of her on his lap, and the “delicious” feel of her breast.

Nahandove smiles at him, one assumes in encouragement, and kisses him. At this point in the poem, an interesting reversal occurs in the roles of the lovers. She becomes the aggressor, the

traditional role of the male, and he becomes the submissive partner, in traditional role of the female. Her kisses “penetrate” his soul and her caresses burn all his senses. He pleads with her to stop or else he will “die” – a euphemism for sexual climax. The moment of bliss comes with his question to Nahandove of whether or not one can die “from voluptuousness,” and the “pleasure passes like a flash of lightning.”

The speaker describes in detail the sexual afterglow of his lover, as her “sweet” breathing slows, her eyes close, and her head bows. Once again, the poem engages the senses in the feel of her breath, the moisture of her eyes, and the sight of her head bending down gently as she falls into a state of “languor.” He tells Nahandove that she has never been so beautiful as she is in this moment of satisfaction following their encounter.

To this point, the poem has focused entirely on the immediacy of the rendezvous of the lovers; however, after Nahandove departs, the narrator experiences a contrasting sensation to his lovemaking. He describes himself as languishing “in regrets and desires.” In an unexpected turn, the poem now suggests a somber reality that lies beyond their lovemaking, a reality which evidently inhibits, restricts, or forbids their love – a reality of regrets and desires that exists beyond their love bed. Thus, the poem comes to a somewhat bittersweet conclusion with the narrator languishing alone until evening when Nahandove will return, implying that the poem will begin again through the cycle of his renewed anticipation of her arrival, their lovemaking, and her inevitable departure.

“Aoua!” is a political poem, protesting the abuses of European imperialism. The first line alerts one to the dramatic change in topic and tone presented by this second poem. The narrator, an islander, begins with an abrupt, opening warning, “Aoua! Aoua!” calling for his countrymen to heed his caution concerning the tyranny of the Europeans. The poem suggests the speaker’s

innocence by using the islander's non-English dialect with visually compelling imagistic symbols, such as in describing the white men's cannons as things where "thunder was enclosed / in bronze mouths" and the white men's occupation as planting "their banners on the shore." However, the speaker is not naive; he clearly understands the importance of freedom and the emptiness of the European's promises.

After his opening cry, the narrator describes the white men as always dwelling on the shore, suggesting both the temporary nature of their presence on the island and their unwillingness to assimilate into the local culture. Indeed, it becomes clear to the narrator that the white men's purposes are to supplant the island culture and religion with the European and to exploit the natives. The speaker reminds the reader of the first white settlers who sought to have the native women cultivate the rich land, who called for justice and goodness from the natives, and who spoke of becoming "brothers."

However, the narrator goes on to observe the hypocrisy of the whites who, while calling for brotherhood, built fortifications and brought in canons. These first white men also brought their priests, who gave the islanders a god they did not know. Eventually the natives came to understand that the priests required them to be obedient and to submit to slavery in the name of the European god. Thus, at the center point of the poem, the narrator describes the islanders' revolt, as they choose death over slavery. Because of the white men's superior arms, the "carnage was long and terrible," and the native attackers were "utterly exterminated." The stanza ends with the narrator repeating his cry, "Aoua! Aoua! Beware of the white men!"

In the final stanza the speaker reports that in the more recent years even stronger tyrants have come and dwelled on the shore. However, this time the heavens fought for the natives against the foreign invaders with rain, tempests, and poisonous winds. As a result, the white men

are there no more, and the islanders live on as free men, suggesting that even the natural world rises up against the white imperialism of Europe. Yet, with a final caution against the persistent greed of the European world, the poem concludes with the repeated warning “Aoua! Aoua! Beware of the white men, dwellers on the shore.”

“Il est doux de se coucher” is a celebration of exotic island life. The poem has a sense of immediacy to its pacing and descriptions that plunge the reader directly into a specifically captured moment in time which gradually dissolves into a dreamy revelry. One feels from the beginning of the poem the pleasure of the luxurious, unhurried life of the exotic land, as the narrator vividly expresses his contentment in the smallest sights and sounds of the fading day.

The poem opens with the speaker proclaiming that it is good to lounge in the shade of a leafy tree during the heat of the day, waiting for the cooling breezes of evening. As he rests under the tree, he hears the approach of some women, and he is delighted to hear their soothing song. One senses that, as he drowns under the tree, he moves into a dream state, for his mind wanders through a series of images. First, listening to the women’s singing, he thinks that their song is a repetition of a song sung by a some young girl. He imagines her braiding her hair or, perhaps, sitting by a rice patch, keeping birds away. Second, he falls deeper into his dream state for, in considering how pleasing the singing is to his “spirit,” the narrator’s train of thought drifts from singing to dancing, which he says “is almost as sweet as a kiss.” This image that comes to him of dancing is sensual. The slow steps of the dance imitating the “poses of pleasure,” which makes the imaginary dancer “surrender to voluptuous bliss.” At this point the narrator has fallen asleep, lost in his sensuous dream. Thus, in a reversal of the natural order – being awake during the day and asleep at night – the poem depicts the narrator falling asleep during the heat of the day and waking to work with the coming of night.

As the final stanza begins, the “evening wind awakens,” and the speaker, too, rouses from his dreams. He see the moon shining through the trees on the mountain, and returns to the practical concerns of life, telling himself or someone to “Go, and prepare the meal.” So, the poem concludes rather abruptly with his command to return to the mundane, the task of preparing the evening meal. The poem ends with the striking contrast between the pleasurable, shadowy dreams of the afternoon and the inescapable, ordinary tasks of life.

CHAPTER III

ELEMENTS OF LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

Vibrato and Portamento

The stylistic elements of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century music which relate to this work include the frequently debated issues of the use and application of vibrato and portamento, particularly of the strings, voice, and flute. According to Philip, by the 1920s the continuous use of vibrato was being increasingly advocated by teaching manuals.⁷ However, there was not a consensus on the employment of continuous vibrato in string and woodwind playing, or in singing. The topic of vibrato was particularly controversial among string players and singers. Two of the leading influences on cello performance in the early twentieth century were the teaching manual of Hugo Becker and Dagt Rynar and the writings of famed cellist Pablo Casals. Thus, the French style of flute playing was more a product of the twentieth-century style than the nineteenth-century style. Becker states, “The intensity and speed of the vibrato must be defined and applied solely in accordance with the specific emotional character.”⁸ The French style of flute playing, employing the metal flute, used a more consistent, but light vibrato, while the German tradition (including that of Britain) made use of wooden-flute playing with little or no vibrato and continued into the 1930's. Casals emphasizes, in his preface to *The Technique of*

⁷Philip, 462.

⁸Hugo Becker and Dagt Rynar, *Mechanik und Ästhetik des Violoncellspiels* (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1929), 199.

Violoncello Playing (1922) by Diran Alexanian, the importance of a flexible vibrato. Singers, however, followed more the rule of the string players by limiting use of vibrato to expressive purposes.

Considered by many to be good legato, portamento seemed to follow an individual statement of style rather than specific teachings. Casals refers to the need for a more selective use of portamento.⁹ Becker actually lists specific rules for employing portamento use in his manual. Philip writes, “Like string players, singers generally used heavier and more frequent portamentos in the early decades of the century than in later years, and the trend towards the ‘cleaner’ late 20th-century style was already discernable by the 1930s.”¹⁰ This trend toward faster and less frequently employed portamento took place gradually throughout the first half of the century. Although cautions against excessive use of portamenti were becoming more prevalent in the writings of the day, slow and frequent portamenti were still often performed as is demonstrated in recordings throughout the 1920's. The analysis of the recordings presented in Chapter IV demonstrates the development of vibrato and portamento throughout the twentieth century.

Melody, Harmony and Rhythm

Tempo rubato was another influential and controversial feature of early twentieth-century music, and by the 1930s it generally became less fashionable. Longer rehearsals became the trend, as well as a movement toward more literal interpretations of the rhythm. Clarity of detail in performances became enhanced by the availability of recordings. The music broke from traditional harmonies and melodies, often making the music extremely difficult to play, sing and

⁹Diran Alexanian, *Traité théorique et pratique du violoncelle*, (Paris: A.Z. Mathot, 2003), 96-97.

¹⁰Philip, 477.

coordinate. Examples of this break from tradition is heard throughout much of Ravel's music; however, the *Chansons madécasses* stands out in its obvious move toward the new sounds of the twentieth century. Atonal and bitonal harmonic sections, as well as unexpected intervallic leaps which challenge the ear to make sense of the melodic movement, are sounds more often encountered in the middle part of the century. The quasi-recitative sections present in each song not only create a speech-like presentation of the poetry but also set specific moods with unique effects, such as primitive-sounding percussive elements from the piano and cello as well as war cries from the voice.

CHAPTER IV

THE MUSIC

Biography: Maurice Ravel

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) entered Paris Conservatory as an adolescent to pursue piano studies. Later, he changed his path of study toward composition under the direction of teacher and composer Gabriel Fauré. Ravel was particularly influenced by Russian music, and in 1912 he completed *Daphnis et Chloé* and the *Ballets Russes* for Sergei Diaghilev. He even collaborated with Stravinsky to complete Mussorgsky's opera *Khovantchina*. His early works are often considered to be reflective of Debussy, and Ravel was further stimulated and influenced both by interaction with artists in other disciplines and by his extensive traveling in the 1920s. His later works, such as *Chansons madécasses*, demonstrate more variety in musical resources, including new directions in experimentation with tonality, dissonance, structure, and symmetry. He did much less composing after World War I, but still produced some very important works, such as *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, *Chansons madécasses*, and the popular *Bolero*. Ravel retired from composing in 1933 due to a degenerative nervous disorder.

Approximately forty percent of Ravel's compositions were written for voice. These works, thirty-nine mélodies in all, include some early songs such as *Un grand sommeil noir* (1895) and *Le Noël des jouets* (1905). They are wonderful demonstrations of Ravel's understanding of traditional French text setting with the accompaniment creating the mood of the text. *Schéhérazade* (1903) hinted at Ravel's forthcoming style of text-setting in its altering of

traditionally accepted sung diction by eliding some of the mute “e” endings. Arbie Orenstein in *The Vocal Works of Maurice Ravel* states, “In composing the *Histoires naturelles* (1906), Ravel formulated a fresh direction for French vocal art--melody was to descend from its lofty pedestal and modestly assume the tone of everyday conversation. This principle was used extensively throughout the *L’heure Espagnole* (1907), and the composer specifically indicated that the final scene of *L’Enfant et les Sortilèges* (1925) ‘should not be sung: the musical notation is put in only as a guide to the declamation.’”¹¹ A literal interpretation of the text was what drove the prewar pieces, particularly *Histoires Naturelles*. Using a more declamatory style of text-setting, *Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé* (1913) foreshadows the postwar pieces such as *Chansons madécasses*, which became even more linear. “Thus, generally speaking, the homophonic, richer harmonic prewar period was coupled with a declamation in which melody was subservient to the word, while the more linear postwar compositions showed an approach to declamation wherein the word was subservient to the melodic line.”¹²

Maurice Ravel’s song cycle *Chanson madécasses* was commissioned in April 1925 by the American patron Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge. Mrs. Coolidge requested a song cycle for voice, accompanied by flute, cello and piano. The composer selected what might have been considered an unusual text by Evariste Parry. According to the liner notes by Roland-Manuel (translated by J. H. Brumfitt) from the 1932 recording with Ravel conducting, Ravel purchased the Parry poems at a second-hand bookstore early in 1926. Roland-Manuel maintains that Ravel was actually looking through the pages of Parry’s poetry when he received the cablegram from Kindler stating

¹¹Arbie Orenstein, “The Vocal Works of Maurice Ravel” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1968), 150.

¹²*Ibid.*, 150-51.

Mrs. Coolidge's request for a song cycle.¹³ So, it might not be so unusual that he would select a text that he was currently interested in for this musical contemplation. Furthermore, if he had a sufficient knowledge of Malagasy music, he might have been inclined to combine these exotic forces of music and poetry.

Elements of Malagasy Music Present in Paris (1900-03)
as Found in *Chansons madécasses*

Although scholarly consensus has concluded that Ravel merely imagined the sounds of the Malagasy musical character, Richard James, in his article "Ravel's *Chansons madécasses*: Ethnic Fantasy or Ethnic Borrowing?" suggests, with substantial documentation, that Ravel had likely been directly exposed to Malagasy music in Paris where many African natives, Madagascans among them, trained in the French arts and sciences. The *Exposition universelle de 1900* in Paris also offered accessible performances of traditional Malagasy music. Ravel may have readily discerned that the instrument combination requested by Mrs. Coolidge would equate nicely (without being overtly equal) with the musical instruments from the Madagascan heritage. James states that "it is likely that he was quite well aware of Madagascar, thus increasing the likelihood that he would have taken advantage of opportunities to hear the music of that country."¹⁴

Although Hans Heinz Stuckenschmidt, author of *Maurice Ravel: Variations on His Life*, disagrees with Orenstein on the notion of Ravel's being an avid follower of political developments, it is quite likely, given his background in ethnic music, that Ravel would have been

¹³Roland-Manuel, *Madeleine Grey* (Great Recordings of the Century), trans. J.H. Brumfitt (England, Columbia Gramophone Company, Limited, 1932), 5.

¹⁴Richard James, "Ravel's *Chansons madécasses*: Ethnic Fantasy or Ethnic Borrowing?," *The Music Quarterly* 82 (June 1998): 380.

interested in the exotic music of a country such as Madagascar. Further, James writes, “We know, then, that Ravel had daily chances during the summer of 1900 to hear Malagasy music and that a very talented Malagasy musician attended the Conservatoire from 1900 to about 1903, precisely the period during which Ravel, having been officially dropped from the Conservatoire, was nevertheless auditing Fauré’s composition class there.”¹⁵

There were no recordings of Malagasy music until after Ravel’s death, and there is still the question of whether or not the Malagasy music heard by Ravel in France was truly native or a western-influenced version of the native sound. Nevertheless, whatever the case may have been, there are certainly distinct elements of Malagasy music in the song cycle. The poetry by Parny, while not an actual translation of authentic Malagasy poems, is most probably based on authentic Malagasy poetry. In short, for the purpose of authentic interpretation, it is important that the performers understand the true nature of what Ravel was basing his composition upon — not just what was authentically native.

Richard James discusses extensively the most noticeable elements of the Malagasy music found in Ravel’s work. James bases his work on his examination of the three major authorities on Malagasy music, Sichel, Tiersot, and Leblond. He confirms the linear melodic texture, occasional bitonality between vocal and instrumental parts, repetitions of small motivic units, ostinati with little pedal point or arpeggiation, and the declamation of a prose text as being the most obvious connections Ravel made to this cycle.¹⁶

While there are several stylistic elements of the Malagasy music present in *Chansons madécasses*, it must be noted that there are also characteristics of the style and composition which

¹⁵Ibid., 382.

¹⁶Ibid., 367-69.

do not appear in Ravel's cycle. These include the extensive use of third intervals and parallel third intervals (probably coincidental with Western music) and the falling contour shape of the melodic vocal part which is found in Malagasy music. Further, Ravel uses undulating melodic lines of limited range which, while effectively evoking a "native" sound, are not known to be Madagascan in character.

Performance and Reception

Ravel was late with his commission, and only one song, the dramatic middle song "Aoua!" was completed by the beginning of May. "Aoua!" created quite a reaction when performed in a private concert at the Hôtel Majestic in Paris. It was considered to be artistically very effective, but the text proclaiming "Do not trust the whites!" provoked a political reaction.¹¹

The anti-imperialistic view was considered to be unpatriotic of Ravel. Ravel requested the deadline for the cycle to be postponed until the end of the year, but he managed to be late again because two months of travel delayed him even further. He did not complete the work until April, 1926.

Jane Bathori sang the first performance of the entire cycle at the American Embassy in Rome on May 8, 1926. It was published later that year by Durand and was illustrated by three wood block prints by Jean-Luc Moreau. Lerner observed, "Stylistically, nothing could be less appropriate than these messy, murky post-Gauguin images of bare-breasted exotic maidens. Ravel's settings are full of light, and, in 'Nahandove' and 'Il est doux' at least, they are most delicately coloured. His contrapuntal lines are so precisely and so sparingly drawn and his harmonies so economical, moreover, that they exclude conventional images of voluptuousness."¹⁷ Although narrators of the texts are masculine, the work is most often sung by women. In a letter

¹⁷Lerner, 192.

to Arbie Orenstein on September 3, 1965, Martial Singher, a professional singer and teacher, told Orenstein that he was the first male singer to perform *Chansons madécasses* (1939 at Salle Gaveau). Singher wrote, “I had remarked to Ravel that the texts of those songs were certainly meant for a man. He confirmed (this must have happened about 1935) that he had in mind a male voice when writing them, but that only women singers, with strong musical backgrounds had been interested by them.”¹⁸ Both Pierre Bernac and Dietrich Fischer-Diskau also performed the cycle.

Score Study: Analysis for Performance Interpretation

The musical analysis of *Chansons madécasses* (app. C) reveals a very mature level of experimentation not only in regard to the text setting of the vocal line but also with regard to the instrumentation. For example, there are sections in which modal harmonies are implied but not fully realized. In “Nahandove,” mm. 29-32, the F-sharp in the flute part gives this section a Lydian flavor, but F-naturals appear in the cello and right-hand piano accompaniment (ex. 1).

Example 1. “Nahandove” mm.29-32

The image displays a musical score for the song "Nahandove" from the cycle *Chansons madécasses*, measures 29-32. The score is arranged in four systems. The first system contains two staves: a flute part in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment part in the lower staff. The flute part features a melodic line with a prominent F-sharp, which imparts a Lydian flavor. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving lines in both hands. The second system features a vocal line in a single staff with the lyrics: "Nahan.do . . . ve, la bel.le Nahan . do . . . ve!". The third system continues the piano accompaniment. The fourth system shows the final measures of the piano accompaniment.

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¹⁸Arbie Orenstein, ed., *A Ravel Reader: Correspondence, Articles, Interviews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 507.

Bitonality appears in mm. 46-48 (ex. 2) via the accidentals because the key signatures remain deceptively the same in all instrument parts.

Example 2. “Nahandove” mm. 46-48

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Nahandove" from Ravel's *Chansons madécasses*, measures 46-48. The score is arranged in four systems. The first system is for the flageolet (OTTAVINO), marked *p*. The second system is for the voice, with lyrics: "trent jusqu'à la me; tes caresses brûlent tous mes sens: ar-rê-te, ou je vais mourir. Meurt-". The third system is for the piano accompaniment, with a *mf* dynamic marking. The score illustrates bitonality through the use of different accidentals in the different parts, despite the key signatures appearing to be the same.

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The last song exhibits points of atonality, and beginning in m. 20, the voice part remains tonal while juxtaposed with atonal accompaniment (ex. 3). Arbie Orenstein, in *Ravel: Man and Musician* comments, “The linear orientation of the *Chansons madécasses* is coupled with the element of primitivism, which may be observed in the local color of the poems as well as in the extensive use of repetition in the accompaniments. . . . The songs are unified to some extent by the use of common material in ‘Nahandove’ and ‘Il est doux,’ whose voluptuous moods are not unrelated, and a number of novel timbres are elicited from the instruments.”¹⁹

¹⁹Orenstein, *Ravel*, 196.

Example 3: “Il est doux” mm. 20-21

The image shows a musical score for the piece "Il est doux" from Debussy's opera "Pelléas et Mélisande". It consists of three systems of staves. The top system is the vocal line, starting with a *Ritardando* marking and a *mf* dynamic, followed by a *Tempo 1°* marking. The middle system is the vocal line with French lyrics: "Ô reprends ha - lei - ne, ma jeune a - mi - e; re - po - se - toi sur mes genoux..." It also features *Ritardando* and *Tempo 1°* markings, with a *p* dynamic at the end. The bottom system is the piano accompaniment, starting with a *poco dim.* marking and a *mf* dynamic, and ending with a *Tempo 1°* marking. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

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Ravel specifically employs flute and cello techniques specifically employed to create new “native” sounds, as well as set a mood. Examples include the *quasi tromba* in “Aoua!,” mm. 38 and following, where the flute is to sound as a brass bugle call or warning of the influx of the strangers to the land (ex. 4).

Example 4. "Aoua!" mm. 38-41

Quasi tromba

ff

f

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In "Il est doux," mm. 36-39 (ex. 5), the flute again sets a eerie, hollow mood with the straight-tone drone of three descending pitches.

Example 5. "Il est doux" mm. 36-39

arco

p

*

8

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The pizzicato of the cello in the opening measures of “Aoua!” also emulates a percussive drum or crash which serves to emphasize the war cry of the singer with a thunderous pounding (ex. 6).

Example 6. “Aoua!” mm. 1-3

The musical score for "Aoua!" mm. 1-3 is presented in four staves. The top staff is for Flauto (Flute), marked *Andante* and *ff*, with a melodic line featuring slurs and accents. The second staff is for Violoncello (Cello), marked *ff* and *pizz.* (pizzicato), showing a rhythmic accompaniment of chords. The third staff is for Canto (Singer), marked *Andante* and *ff*, with the lyrics "Aoua!" and "Méfiez-vous des blancs, habi." written below the notes. The bottom staff is for Piano, marked *Andante* and *ff*, with a tempo marking of $\text{♩} = 60$ and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piano accompaniment features a complex rhythmic pattern with slurs and accents, and includes dynamic markings like *ff* and *ff*. The score is in 3/4 time and consists of three measures.

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The overall structure of the entire cycle is based on the paragraph division of the poetry, the instruments representative of characters, as well as emotion. The first song in the cycle, “Nahandove,” portrays a sensual love affair in which the male character (narrator) is describing his physical adoration of the woman Nahandove. This poem is divided into four sections: the first section references the narrator’s anticipation of the moment when his lover will arrive. The second section is the preparation of the place where they will make love. Section three is the love-making and departure. Section four is the anticipation of Nahandove returning again to her lover later in the evening. Each section musically evokes a different mood or character set forth

by the poetry. The entire opening section of this first song is sung with only cello accompaniment which is representative of the man's emotions throughout the song. The character of Nahandove is clearly portrayed in the flute part as demonstrated in mm. 1-3 (ex. 7). Here, the flute makes another entrance in m. 28 just as the narrator (male character) is excitedly voicing the text "it is she, it is she!" (ex. 8)

Example 7. "Nahandove" mm. 1-3

The musical score for "Nahandove" mm. 1-3 is presented in four staves. The top staff is for the Flute (FLAUTO), marked "Andante quasi allegretto". The second staff is for the Violoncello (VIOLONCELLO), marked "p espressivo". The third staff is for the Canto (CANTO), marked "Andante quasi allegretto", with the lyrics "Nahan.do . . . ve, ô bel . le Nahan . do . . . ve! l'oiseau noc .". The bottom staff is for the Piano (PIANO), marked "Andante quasi allegretto" with a tempo marking of ♩ = 400. The score is in 6/8 time and features a melodic line in the cello and a more active line in the flute.

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Example 8. “Nahandove” mm. 25-28

FLAUTO

ment de la pa-gne qui l'enve-lop-pe: c'est el-le, c'est el-le, c'est el-le, c'est

p subito

p subito

f

f

f

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The introduction begins with only the cello and voice parts. Orenstein in *The Vocal Works of Maurice Ravel* observes “The initial figure of the cello will evoke the young Nahandove, as will the opening rhythmic pattern in the vocal line which reappears periodically.”²⁰ Here the man, subdued but anxious, is calling her name, wondering why she has not arrived with the moonlight. Throughout the entire song, each time he calls her name, the vocal line repeats the same or a similar transposed melodic and rhythmic sequence as in mm. 69-71 (ex. 9).

²⁰Orenstein, “The Vocal Works,” 196.

Example 9. "Nahandove" mm. 69-71

bel - le, Nahan.do - ve, ó bel - le Nahan - do - ve!

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However, with the exception of this repeated melody at the mention of her name, the vocal line is almost exclusively in recitative style. When the male character hears Nahandove arriving the “rapid breathing” is further characterized by “più animato” and the piano accompaniment enters at m. 19 (ex. 10).

Example 10. "Nahandove" mm. 19-21

Più animato

Più animato

1 Più animato ♩ = 138

pp

El. le vient. J'ai

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Then, as he becomes certain it is she, he repeats “it is she, it is she, it is she, Nahandove,” and the cello part begins an arpeggiated ascent which is joined by the flute part-- both echoing the flute motives heard in the opening measures of the song as he calls her name. The texture in mm. 29-32 is thick as all four members of the quartet are engaged, and the melody recalled here when he speaks her name reaches the highest transposition of the entire song (ex. 1). The piano now has full, thickly textured chords which move back and forth in a syncopated rhythm. There follows a ritardando which begins the subsiding of the frantic moment of love making. And now the remainder of the song is derived from the opening motives of the piece as he reflects upon the moment of her arrival. At the kiss and caress (mm. 45-47-“set all my senses on fire!”), the cello part becomes prominent again and is promptly joined by the flute part (ex. 2). As the pitch begins to rise and they seek their pleasure, the flute again subsides and appears to be left with only the wide leaps of a minor seventh interval at mm. 49-51 (ex. 11).

Example 11. “Nahandove” mm. 49-51

The musical score for Example 11, "Nahandove" mm. 49-51, is presented in four staves. The top two staves are for the vocal line, and the bottom two are for the piano accompaniment. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line includes the lyrics: "-on de volupté, Nahan - do - ve, ô bel - le Nahan - do - ve?". The piano accompaniment features thick, syncopated chords. The score is marked with "Accele -" at the end of each system.

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As they recover from their passion, the flute part is still present; however, it is much subdued in rhythm and pitch. She begins to leave him for the evening, and the flute again recalls the opening motives of the song while he calls out her name (ex. 12).

Example 12. “Nahandove” mm. 68-71

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is for the flute, marked *espressivo*, with a series of slurs over a descending melodic line. The middle staff is the vocal line with the lyrics: "tu ne fus si belle, Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!". The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment, showing a cello part with a series of repeated whole-step intervals and a flute part with a running sixteenth-note pattern.

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The cello plays a longing series of repeated whole-step intervals to end the piece as the flute simply flutters away with a running sixteenth-note pattern as Nahandove disappears into the night. With both flute and cello sounding D-sharp as their final pitch, the cello plays out the last note representative of longing.

“Aoua!” is in marked contrast to “Nahandove” with regard to subject matter. However, both pieces reflect their own sense of passion. Ravel titled this song “Aoua!” Parny did not include the term “Aoua!” in his poem--it was added by Ravel as a war cry to reflect the native’s passion for freedom. This startling *ff* cry has a very dramatic upon the listener as it opens the song. The piano and cello play dissonant, percussive chords which follow each cry of “Aoua!” and the flute also creates a loud, high-pitched rhythmic motive reminiscent of an evocative attack—all of which combine to make an effective exotic primitive war-like prelude to the subject

of this poem. The only time the vocal line tessitura reaches and remains above a comfortable medium range is for the cries of “Aoua!” and the warning statement which follows the cry. The anti-colonial sentiment here, as seen through the eyes of the natives of Madagascar, describes a battle that ensued when the island was first invaded. Ultimately, the natives gruesomely slaughter the invaders, and later nature drives other invaders away. Orenstein discusses the “novel timbres” particularly utilized in this song: piano evokes gong (ex. 13), flute evokes trumpet call, piano ostinato (bare major sevenths) suggests the beating of a drum (ex. 4).²¹

Example 13. “Aoua!” m. 6

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²¹Ibid., 197.

At m. 6, the piano part begins with an ostinato pattern reminiscent of rumbling, and the text now reveals the story of what happened in the past when the “white men descended upon this land.” Here, the cello plays open fifth intervals (considered to be an exotic/oriental tonality), over the piano ostinato, once again representing the solidarity of the natives. As the text refers to the promises of the white men, the flute descant disappears. The piano becomes even more percussive as the text names things associated with the white men--entrenchments, menacing fort, thunder (“bronze mouths” of cannons). There is an abrupt change of texture and rhythmic movement in the cello and flute parts where the poem refers to possible slavery and the natives’ preference for death over captivity. The cello deserts the ostinato of open fifth intervals which have been so consistent within the preceding measures, and now displays a wide-leap ascending pattern followed by a quick arpeggiated run (ex. 14).

Example 14. “Aoua!” mm. 32-33

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The flute melodically extends the cello part as they join together in a duet which is representative of the rebellion. This creates yet another percussive effect which reflects the declamatory text stating the refusal of the natives to comply with the white men. These “rebellion motives” continue to play, as the poem describes the carnage--long, terrible, lightning, destroyed armies--yet the natives defeated, the white men exterminated. Again, we immediately hear the war cries of “Aoua!, Aoua!” and the warning “Beware of the white men!!” The cry itself is accompanied by a full, heavily textured sound (all instruments fully engaged). However, the warning is presented without accompaniment, and to be sung ferociously with much intensity and fortissimo. Then at m. 38, there begins another change of mood and instrumentation. The flute is marked “quasi tromba,” and the piano repeats the same chordal and rhythmic pattern begun in mm. 38-41 (ex. 4) for the entire next section of the song with only a few variations and transposed pitches at the soft cry of “Aoua!, aoua!” This section of the poem refers to the more recent attempted invasion of the “new tyrants.” The flute reappears, but the dynamics are much more subdued, and the repetitive pitches are in a lower range which can be considered less threatening. To portray the emphatic description of nature rising up against the white men (rain and wind) the flute ascends and trills while the piano (*sf*) resounds again with the percussive pounding. As the winds die down, the vocal line becomes an unaccompanied statement of “we live free,” followed by the now *pp* war cry and the warning statement with only a thin outline of piano accompaniment. The natives are relaxed--there is no real threat now. The last word “shore” harmonically resolves into the final statement of accompaniment. The flute, cello, and piano now play together in recurring motives and mood reminiscent of the beginning of the poem in mm. 68-71 (ex. 12). This recalling of earlier statements in the accompaniment evokes the first invasion, and the final

dissonant cadence reminds us of the violent mood and tension so passionately revealed throughout the entire piece.

The final poem of the set, “Il est doux,” while similar in tone and mood to “Nahandove,” offers a more sparse texture in its telling of this dream-fantasy. Rollo Myers, in his book *Ravel: Life and Works*, describes this song as being “predominantly atmospheric.”²² The narrator is lying under a tree, waiting to be cooled by the coming of evening with the setting of the sun. The flute begins alone with a solitary, melancholy introduction. The cello part and two brief *pp* piano motives further depict the plaintive atmosphere introducing the major seventh interval which will be implemented throughout the piece. In this final song, Ravel chooses to take the time (five measures in fact) to set the mood for this dream sequence. This introduction is made has even more impact on the listener because the first two songs have no true introduction at all. The voice enters with the same solitary, dreamy quality of tone established by the flute, but with a sparse accompaniment. The vocal line is recitative-like, staying within a compact range to further enhance the relaxed atmospheric quality. In the second section women approach in the dream. The flute part disappears, and only a sustained dissonant interval of a minor second in the piano part accompanies the vocal line, as the singer in the same recitative style, speaks of the soothing voices of the women. As the text recalls the simple song of a young girl, there is a trill in the cello part, as the man imagines her chasing the birds away from a rice patch. The cello continues to trill for two measures, then fades out in a syncopated repetition of the single pitch. This pitch is held over into the next section, beginning in m. 25, which begins with voice alone stating the text “the singing is pleasing to my spirit” (ex. 15).

²²Rollo Meyers, *Ravel: Life and Works* (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1960), 149.

Example 15. “Il est doux” mm. 22-25

The musical score consists of three systems. The top system is the vocal line, marked 'Andante', with lyrics: 'riz, elle chasse les oiseaux a. - vi. des. Le chant plaît à mon'. The middle system is the piano accompaniment, also marked 'Andante', with a metronome marking of quarter note = 66. The bottom system is the cello part, marked 'Andante', featuring a sustained quartal harmony with a ritardando marking.

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As the cello sounds a sustained quartal harmony accompanied by a ritard, a musical “slowing down” from the kiss (“dancing for me is almost as sweet as a kiss”), the man begins to speak of dancing. Immediately there is an obvious change of mood as the dream seems to move toward romantic fantasy. Here, in mm. 30-35, the composer uses the cello’s pizzicati to imitate primitive drum sounds, developing a more steady rhythmic pace with the piano also being a part of the percussion. The flute, now more steady as well, is playing slow, trill-like motives, perhaps as a reflection of the “surrender to voluptuous bliss” (ex. 16).

Example 16. "Il est doux" mm. 30-35

Tempo 1°
OTTAVINO

pizz. pp

Tempo 1°

Tempo 1°

3

Que vos pas soient lents, qu'ils i -

mi - tent les at - ti - tu - des du plai - sir et l'a - ban - don de la vo - lup - té.

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The vocal line remains in recitative style throughout the entire piece. The texture of the accompaniment thins until only the cello part remains which sounds the interval of a fourth alone in the low register to evoke the setting of the sun. In the final section, beginning at m. 40, the cello and piano simply sustain the open fifth interval while the entrance of the voice is representative of the awakening of the evening wind (ex. 17).

Example 17. "Il est doux" mm. 40-44

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The very unusual final phrase of this poem is sung without accompaniment and is an unexpected statement of everyday activity which abruptly interrupts the dream. "Go, and prepare the meal"--the dream/fantasy is over. It is time for real life--work and duty. It should be noted that the cello's motive and the text in this final song are both reminiscent of the opening motive and text in the first song. The mirrored ideas, both textual and musical, of the first and third songs give an overall sense of ABA form.

Performance Analysis: Recordings, Recommendations, and Observations

Another resource which must be reviewed in pursuing an historically informed performance of music from the early twentieth century is that available through recordings of the music. While our sometimes biased judgement of recordings can lead to as much confusion as conclusion, the importance of this kind of primary source cannot be ignored. My analysis here will comment on the issues of vibrato, portamento, color, rubati, dynamics, and diction.

Recorded performances of the following singers will be discussed: Madeleine Grey from 1932²³ (with Ravel conducting), Gerard Souzay from 1958,²⁴ and Jessye Norman from 1985.²⁵ These recordings were selected for analysis because they are representative of the early, middle, and late century.

In the Grey and Norman recordings, the instrumental vibrato and portamento reflect the accepted performance practices of their respective parts of the century. These recordings demonstrate a marked increase in the use of vibrato and a marked decrease in the use of portamento during this period. The Madeleine Grey performance is typical of the period in its treatment of vibrato and portamento. The vibrato in the cello and voice frequently appear only on sustained notes, particularly at phrase endings, and on high notes with dramatic emphasis. In the first song, “Nahandove,” portamento is employed in the voice at least twenty-seven times by Grey, while in the third recording, Jessye Norman elects to use portamento only six times. Although Norman chooses to utilize more continuous vibrato throughout the songs, her performance is still very expressive, due in large part to her exceptional articulation and dynamic contrasts. In the earlier recording, the flutists employ some use of vibrato (the French school), while the cellists are more selective in their use of vibrato as well as portamento. Overall, the use of vibrato is much more evident in voice, strings, and flute in the 1985 recording. The Grey recording from 1932 exhibits much less vibrato but far more portamento. Although extensive use of portamento is not as fashionable today, clearly it was considered a desirable type of legato

²³Madeleine Grey (*Great Recordings of the Century: Madeleine Grey*), Angel COLC-152, 1932, LP.

²⁴Gerard Souzay, *Gerard Souzay*, EMI Pathé Marconi S.A. CDM 7 6311 2, 1989, compact disc.

²⁵Jessye Norman, *L'incomparable*, MPO France CDM 7692562, 1987, compact disc.

singing in the early part of the twentieth century. Thus, use of this technique should be incorporated into an historically informed performance.

Rubati, tempo, and dynamics should be carefully followed as indicated by the composer.

Ravel was noted for being specific in his written direction. Madeleine Grey shared this anecdotal story in an unpublished interview for *Le Guide musical*:

He was terribly demanding to work with, because his scores left nothing to chance. Some years later, 1937, the year of his death, when he was very ill and could no longer sign his name, I had put his *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée* into my annual recital, even though it was written for a man's voice. So I wanted to have the composer's opinion and, with Poulenc as my accompanist, went to sing the three songs to him. When I had finished I asked if he had any observations to make. At first it seemed as though he did not have, but then, as though coming out of a dream, he pointed with his index finger to a bar at the end of the 'Chansons à boire' where I had made a slight *rallentando* that was not in the score. Given his condition, Poulenc and I were both astonished.³⁷

While consideration of tempo in recordings is always questionable due to time constraints often imposed by the technical production involved, the Gerard Souzay recording has a noticeably faster tempo throughout the entire work. Souzay also utilizes a continuous and rapid vibrato with little or no hint of straight-tone singing, as well as very little use of portamento, both of which were popular techniques in the later half of the twentieth century.

Jessye Norman elects to use much more variation of color in her voice throughout the work, which produces an effective and overall dramatic experience for the listener. The Madeleine Grey recording has little color variation in the voice, and she utilizes vibrato only for particular points of emphasis. While the more consistent use of a straight-tone technique in performing this work may have been fashionable in the early part of the twentieth century, it is a technique which can plague the singer with intonation problems. In all of the recordings, as well

³⁷Roger Nichols, *Ravel Remembered* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1987), 84-85.

as a live performance which I observed, the singers who consistently utilized straight tone all struggled with intonation at some point in the work. There are, however, instances where the singer, flutist, and cellist must utilize straight tone for effective communication of the text, and it is important for them to choose carefully where and when straight tone will be employed.

The French diction used throughout this work also requires thoughtful consideration from the singer – particularly with regard to the mute “e” endings. I particularly favor the choices of Madeleine Grey, since Ravel was present for the recording. Ms. Grey was careful to include the schwa everywhere Ravel notated a separate syllable. Others, including Gerard Souzay and Jessye Norman, have also elected to adhere to the precedent set forth by Ms. Grey.

Having examined the historical and literary considerations in performing *Chansons madécasses*, thoughtful attention should also be given to the specific technical issues, discussed below.

Song One: “Nahandove”

While the overall emotional and sensual text of this song allows for a more consistent vibrato, the recitative-like sections, which here require rapid articulation, are more convincing and effective when there is no vibrato present except at the phrase end or on sustained syllables. For this reason, my recommendations for the use of straight-tone technique in this song specifically include mm. 6, 12-15, 21-25, 35, 75-77 (ex. 18).

Example 18. "Nahandove"

m. 6

Two staves of musical notation. The top staff is in bass clef with a treble clef sign above it, and the bottom staff is in treble clef. Both are in 6/8 time. The music features a melodic line with a slur and a bass line with eighth notes.

tête, et la rosée naissante humecte mes che .

m.12

Two staves of musical notation. The top staff is in bass clef with a treble clef sign above it, and the bottom staff is in treble clef. Both are in 6/8 time. The music features a melodic line with a slur and a bass line with eighth notes.

Le lit de feuil . les est pré - pa .

mm. 13-15

Two staves of musical notation. The top staff is in bass clef with a treble clef sign above it, and the bottom staff is in treble clef. Both are in 6/8 time. The music features a melodic line with a slur and a bass line with eighth notes. Dynamics include *p* and *pp*.

.ré; je l'ai par-se-mé de fleurs et d'herbes o. do.ri. fé-rantes, il est di-gne de tes char-mes, Nahan .

m. 21

Three staves of musical notation. The top staff is empty. The middle staff is in treble clef with a treble clef sign above it, and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Both are in 6/8 time. The music features a melodic line with a slur and a bass line with eighth notes.

El. le vient. J'ai

mm. 22-24

re.connu la res.pi.ra.ti.on pré.ci.pi.tée que donne u.ne mar.che ra.pi.de; J'entends le froisse.

The musical score for measures 22-24 consists of three systems. The top system is a vocal line in treble clef with a long slur over the first two measures. The lyrics are: "re.connu la res.pi.ra.ti.on pré.ci.pi.tée que donne u.ne mar.che ra.pi.de; J'entends le froisse." The middle system is the piano accompaniment, with the right hand playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and the left hand playing a bass line. The bottom system is the piano accompaniment, with the right hand playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and the left hand playing a bass line.

m. 25

FLAUTO

.ment de la pa.gne qui l'enve.

The musical score for measure 25 consists of three systems. The top system is a flute line in treble clef, with the word "FLAUTO" written above it. The middle system is the piano accompaniment, with the right hand playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and the left hand playing a bass line. The bottom system is the piano accompaniment, with the right hand playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and the left hand playing a bass line.

m. 35

Tempo 1^o

Tempo 1^o

p

p

mi . e; re . po . se . toi sur mes genoux..

Tempo 1^o

mm. 75-77

Andante

Andante

p

Andante

Tu pars, et je vais languir dans les regrets et les desirs; je languirai jusqu'au soir; tu reviendras ce soir,

Rall.

Andante

Rall.

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Although a historically accurate presentation would include more portamento than most contemporary singers are comfortable using, particular instances of portamento should be included in this song. Singers should be aware of text and music which allow for artistic and tasteful portamenti. Examples in the first song would include, but not be limited to, mm. 13-14 (fleurs et d'herbes) (ex. 18); m. 34 (reprends haleine); mm. 37-38 (enchanteur); m. 39 (est vif); m. 40 (la main); m. 43 (belle Nahandove); m. 45 (pénètrent); mm. 56-57 (s'afaiblit); m. 61 (mollement); m. 63 (s'éteignent); m. 65 (languueur); m. 67 (Jamais) (ex. 19).

Example 19. "Nahandove"

m. 34

reprends ha - lei - ne, ma jeune a

The musical score for measure 34 consists of four staves. The top staff is the vocal line, starting with a melisma on the word 'reprends' indicated by a slur and a fermata. The second staff is the piano accompaniment, featuring a melisma on the word 'ha' with a slur and a fermata. The third staff continues the vocal line with the lyrics 'lei - ne, ma jeune a'. The fourth staff continues the piano accompaniment with a melisma on 'a'.

mm. 37-38

Que ton regard est en - chan - teur, que le mouve - ment de ton

The musical score for measures 37-38 consists of four staves. The top staff is the vocal line, starting with a melisma on 'en - chan - teur' indicated by a slur and a fermata. The second staff is the piano accompaniment, featuring a melisma on 'en - chan - teur' with a slur and a fermata. The third staff continues the vocal line with the lyrics 'que le mouve - ment de ton'. The fourth staff continues the piano accompaniment with a melisma on 'ton'.

m. 39

sein est vif et dé.li.cieux

m. 40

sous la main qui le pres .

m. 43

. .ve, ô bel.le Nahando . ve!

m. 45

Tesbaisers pène .

mm. 56-57

. lei . ne . . saf . fai . blit,

m. 61

mol.le.ment, et

m. 63

... ports sé. toi . . .

m. 65

lan - gueur

m. 67

calando
calando
Ja. mais
calando

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Color, rubati, and dynamics must also be thoughtfully considered throughout this song. For example, there is a new tempo and pace set forth at m. 19, and, when the voice enters at m. 21, there should be more energy and a breathlessness in the voice as the text describes rapid breathing and hurried excitement building to the arrival of the lover (ex. 10). Be careful to note the *p subito* in m. 26 which crescendos to *f* in m. 28 (ex. 8). It is difficult for the performers to coordinate the *ritardando* at m. 33, and these measures must be given careful attention and rehearsal (ex. 14). Also, the *piu lento* at m. 41 needs to be carefully rehearsed so that the [s] of “presse” lines up with the g-sharp in the piano part (ex. 4). The next section of the poem reflects the kissing and caressing of the lovers and requires a more intense, dark tone color in the voice in order to express effectively the passion of the senses being “set on fire.” The final section of this song expresses a more contemplative mood with the realization of the lover’s departing. The vocal color here should be more restrained until the *rallentando* at m. 77, when the narrator anticipates her return in the evening (ex. 18).

The diction in this piece follows the basic and accepted rules for singing in French. However, it should be noted that the name “Nahandove” is not French and should have an

aspirated “h.” Also, the “an” should be pronounced [an] instead of the French nasalized [ɑ̃].

Although Ravel’s score indicates a note to be sung on the mute syllables, several of the recordings discussed above opted to leave off the schwa ending of the word “presse” and elongate the [s].

Song Two: “Aoua!”

One of the most challenging technical maneuvers of *Chansons madécasses* is the opening unprepared pitch of this second song which is on a high “g” and is marked *ff*. In an interview Madeleine Grey commented about how Ravel himself aided in handling this particularly difficult entrance: “He accompanied like a composer, that’s to say well, but he did have his little foibles. For example in ‘Aoua!’, the second of the *Chansons madécasses*, which starts on a high, unprepared G, he used to say, ‘I’ll give you the note surreptitiously; I’ll pretend to be rubbing a bit of dirt off the key like this . . .’ and he did, at every concert.”³⁸ It is likely that the recorded performances took advantage of the situation and had the note given to them. In June Card’s live performance, she did not require a preparation of the pitch. It is certainly dramatically effective to begin the second song without the preparation. I recommend that the singer accomplish this with the necessary extensive rehearsal if possible.

The first five measures of this song are an intense warning of the arrival of the “white man” and require an almost shrill tone color in the voice, which is heightened by the high tessitura of the entire phrase. In contrast to this opening warning yell, the first real section begins in m. 6 and is marked *pp* (ex. 13). When the voice enters, the poetry is describing the history of the previous invasion of the “white men.” The text and music call for a darker vocal color, and, as the story progresses, the sequential repetition of the music intensifies by transposing upward each

³⁸Ibid., 164.

successive phrase. In mm. 30-34 it is important to maintain a consistent tempo in order to keep the ensemble together (ex. 20).

Example 20. "Aoua!" mm. 30-34

FLAUTO *mf* *cresc.*

sempre cresc.

- va - ge: plu.tôt la mort! Le car - na - ge fut long et ter -

B ♩ = 76 *sempre cresc.*

- ri - ble; mais, mal.gré la fou.dre qu'ils vo.mis - saient, et qui é - cra.sait des armées en -

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While there is a dynamic crescendo occurring here, the real intensity and feeling of *accelerando* lies in the rapidly increasing amount of words per measure. The diction in these measures, particularly 32-34, requires a very relaxed jaw, allowing for the articulation to occur mostly with the tongue and lips. Because of the rhythmic challenge of singing these measures, the performer must be careful to avoid inaccurate syllabic stress within these phrases. The spoken/sung stresses in French should naturally occur at the end of each phrase.

The dark picture painted by the text of “Aoua!” affords opportunity for the use of a more consistent straight-tone technique. The dramatic emphasis of the opening yell, which is reiterated at the end of each section, requires vibrato to represent the emotion of the cry. Because of the gruesome violence of the invasion and war described in the text, straight-tone technique should specifically be employed in the opening section of this song. The next section, beginning in mm. 38-41 (ex. 4), has specific stress marks written into the score, which demand a more consistent vibrato in order to denote those stresses. The final yell and warning are now marked *pp* since

nature has won freedom for the natives. However, the tone should remain dark and intense as it is still an urgent warning.

Song Three: “Il est doux”

The stark nature, sparse accompaniment, and exposed vocal lines of the opening section of the third song make for what Robert Gartside refers to as “some of the most difficult – save for some of the music of Bela Bartok – entrances in song literature.”³⁹ The vocal entrances in mm. 14 and 16 are unprepared and virtually impossible to hear (ex. 21).

Example 21. “Il est doux” mm. 14 and 16

Fem. mes, approchez.

Tandis que je me repose i. ci sous un

p

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To assist the singer in hearing the pitch in m. 16, the pianist may play the note slightly ahead of the singer’s entrance. Another intonation challenge occurs in the next section, mm. 25-29, where the entrance is prepared, but the lack of any real accompaniment and the Mixolydian scale make it

³⁹Robert Gartside, *Interpreting the Songs of Maurice Ravel* (New York: Leyerle Publications, 1992), 113.

difficult for the singer to stay in tune. The singer must be particularly careful to sing the b-sharp (not b-natural) in m. 28 (ex. 22).

Example 22. "Il est doux" mm. 25-29

The image shows a musical score for the song "Il est doux" (Example 22), measures 25-29. The score is in 3/4 time and marked Andante. It consists of three systems. The first system shows the vocal line with lyrics: "chant plaît à mon". The second system shows the vocal line with lyrics: "à . me; la dan. se est pour moi — presqu'aussi dou . ce qu'un bai. ser. —". The third system shows the piano accompaniment. The score includes markings for "senza Sordina" and "Rit." (ritardando). The piano part has a tempo marking of "Andante ♩ = 66".

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The poetry and dreamy quality of the modal harmonies and sparse accompaniment in the music of this song allow for a more consistent vibrato and numerous opportunities for the use of portamento. Particular moments where the exposed vocal line and text are enhanced by the use of portamento include mm. 11-12 (amène la fraîcheur); m. 18 (mon oreille); m. 19 (prolongé) (ex. 23); m. 27 (pour moi) (ex. 22); mm. 33-34 (plaisir) (ex. 16); mm. 41-42 (se lève) (ex. 17); mm. 46-47 (la montagne) (ex. 23).

Example 23. "Il est doux"

mm. 11-12

ten-dre que le vent du soir _____ a-mène la fraîcheur.

mm. 18-19

oc-cupez mon o-reil-le ___ par vos ac-cens pro-longés; ré-pé.

mm. 46-47



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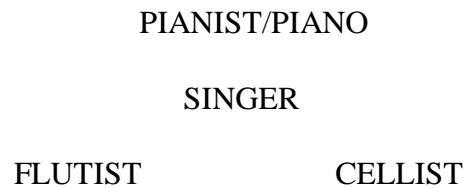
Having left the dancing and kissing of the previous section, the poetry now moves slowly toward “voluptuous bliss,” and a more legato, straight-tone technique is appropriate for the emotion described in the poetry at mm. 31-35. The triplets (mm. 33-34) in the vocal line must be very accurate here in order to keep the ensemble together (ex. 16). There is a recurring melodic motive sounded in each instrument of the quartet (g-natural, f-sharp, d-sharp) throughout this section. The text and music are more dramatic when straight tone is employed in all voicings of this motive, including the flute and cello in mm. 36-39 (ex. 5). In the final section, as the narrator is waking from his dream, the text begins with a reference to “awakening wind” as the narrator is waking from his dream. Here, a consistently sounded vocal vibrato is an effective dramatic tool for eliciting the image of rippling wind. At the final phrase, the tone color should brighten for the effect of awakening back to reality.

In conclusion, a successful performance of these challenging pieces requires that the musicians sing and play with advanced technical expertise. The dissonant harmonies, wide intervallic leaps, and difficult rhythms demand tremendous vocal flexibility. Thus, this work is

most appropriate for professional singers or those who are in advanced vocal study. The tessitura of *Chansons madécasses* lies mostly in the middle and lower range, making it ideal for lower voices to perform, but difficult for higher, lighter voices to manage. However, because there are certain passages which require the singer to produce strong, sustained high notes with dynamic fluctuation, the work is best suited for mezzo-sopranos and baritones who have a strong and flexible upper tessitura.

Bryan Simms acknowledged, “Ravel considered his *Chansons Madécasses* (Madagascar Songs, 1926) to be among his greatest works”⁴⁰ Ravel refers to this work as a “quartet” with the vocal line being one of four co-equal parts. Consideration of this idea of “quartet” was thoughtfully displayed in a recent live performance of this work by soprano June Card. The performers were grouped on stage so that each instrument and voice were visually presented as an equal in the ensemble (see diagram 1).

Diagram 1



Robert Gartside truly captured the spirit of Ravel’s songs when he wrote, “Ravel was able to set widely diverse types of poetry and produce songs of equally diverse content and meaning. He could set the almost excessive refinement of a poem by Mallarmé as successfully as the

⁴⁰Bryan Simms, *Music of the Twentieth Century: Style and Structure* (New York: Shirmer, 1986), 179.

vehemence of *Aoua!* by Parny; the sensuousness of the same poet's *Nahandove*; the deeply religious fervor of the Jewish *Kaddish* or the wry humor of his own *Nicolette*. His was the art of the miniaturist, the craftsman."⁴¹ Indeed, Ravel's craft of the art song is finely detailed work. He himself stated, "My objective, therefore is technical perfection Art, no doubt, has other effects, but the artist should have no other aim."⁴² Thus, to present a work as musically challenging as *Chanson madécasses*, performers must become consummate artists, striving for historical accuracy, dramatic realization, and technical clarity.

⁴¹Ibid., 17-18.

⁴²As quoted by Orenstein in *Ravel: Man and Musician*, 118. Translated from Roland-Manuel, "Lettres de Maurice Ravel et documents inédits," *Revue de Musicologie* (July 1956).

APPENDIX A

POETIC TRANSLATIONS OF THE TEXT

Poems by Evariste-Desire de Parny

Translated by Steven Ledbetter

(Used with permission)

I. Nahandove

Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!
L'oiseau nocturne a commencé ses cris,
la pleine lune brille sur ma tête,
et la rosée naissante humecte mes cheveux.
Voici l'heure; qui peut t'arrêter,
Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!

Le lit de feuilles est préparé;
je l'ai parsemé de fleurs
et d'herbes odoriférantes;
il est digne de tes charmes,
Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!

Elle vient.
J'ai reconnu la respiration précipitée
que donne une marche rapide;
j'entends le froissement de la pagne
qui l'enveloppe; c'est elle,
c'est Nahandove, la belle Nahandove.

Ô reprends haleine, ma jeune amie;
repose-toi sur mes genoux.
Que ton regard est enchanteur!
Que le mouvement de ton sein est vif
et délicieux sous la main qui le presse!
Tu souris, Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!

Tes baisers pénètrent jusqu'à l'âme;
tes caresses brûlent tous mes sens;
arrête, ou je vais mourir.
Meurt-on de volupté,
Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!

Le plaisir passe comme un éclair.
Ta douce haleine s'affaiblit,
tes yeux humides se referment,
ta tête se penche mollement,
et tes transports s'éteignent dans la langueur.
Jamais tu ne fus si belle,
Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!

...Tu pars, et je vais languir
dans les regrets et les desirs.
Je languirai jusqu'au soir.
Tu reviendras ce soir,
Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove!

I. Nahandove

Nahandove, o fair Nahandove!
The night bird has begun its cries,
the full moon illumines my head,
and the early dew moistens my hair.
This is the hour; who can be keep you away,
Nahandove, o fair Nahandove!

The bed of leaves is ready;
I have strewn it with flowers
and with aromatic herbs;
it is worthy of your charms,
Nahandove, o fair Nahandove!

She comes.
I recognized the rapid breathing
of hurried walking;
I hear the rustling of the cloth
that covers her; it is she,
it is Nahandove, the fair Nahandove.

O take breath, my young love,
rest on my lap.
How enchanting is your glance!
How lively and delicious is the movement
of your breast under the hand that presses it!
You smile, Nahandove, fair Nahandove!

Your kisses penetrate to the soul;
your caresses set all my senses on fire!
Stop, or I shall die.
Can one die of voluptuous pleasure,
Nahandove, o fair Nahandove?

The pleasure passes in an instant.
Your sweet panting grows gentler,
your moist eyes close again,
your head droops wearily,
and your rapture yields to languor;
Never were you so beautiful,
Nahandove, o fair Nahandove!

...You leave me, and I shall languish
amid regrets and desires.
I shall languish until evening.
You'll come back this evening,
Nahandove, o fair Nahandove!

II. Méfiez-vous des blancs

Aoua! Aoua!
Méfiez-vous des blancs,
habitans du rivage.
Du temps de nos pères,
des blancs descendirent dans cette île.
On leur dit: Voilà des terres,
que vos femmes les cultivent;
soyez justes, soyez bons,
et devenez nos frères.

Les blancs promirent, et cependant
ils faisoient des retranchemens.
Un fort menaçant s'éleva;
le tonnerre fut renfermé
dans des bouches d'airain;
leurs prêtres voulurent nous donner un Dieu
que nous ne connoissons pas;
ils parlèrent enfin d'obéissance
et d'esclavage.
Plutôt la mort!
Le carnage fut long et terrible;
mais malgré la foudre qu'ils vomissoient
et qui écrasait des armées entières,
ils furent tous exterminés.
Aoua! Aoua!
Méfiez-vous des blancs!

Nous avons vu de nouveaux tyrans,
plus forts et plus nombreux,
planter leur pavillon sur le rivage.
Le ciel a combattu pour nous.
Il a fait tomber sur eux les pluies,
les tempêtes et les vents empoisonnés.
Ils ne sont plus, et nous vivons,
et nous vivons libres.

Aoua! Aoua!
Méfiez-vous des blancs,
habitans du rivage.

II. Beware of the white men

Aoua! Aoua!
Beware of the white men,
dwellers on the shore.
In our fathers' time
white men descended upon this island.
One of them said: Here is land,
let your wives cultivate it;
be just, be good,
and become our brothers.

The white men promised, and meanwhile
they were building entrenchments.
A menacing fort arose;
thunder was enclosed
in bronze mouths.
Their priests wanted to give us a god
we do not know;
finally they spoke of obedience
and slavery.
Rather death!
The carnage was long and terrible,
yet for all the lightning bolts they spat forth,
which destroyed entire armies,
they were utterly exterminated.
Aoua! Aoua!
Beware of the white men!

We have seen new tyrants,
stronger, and more numerous,
plant their banners on the shore.
Heaven fought for us.
It dropped rains upon them,
and tempests and poisonous winds.
They are no more, and we live on,
and we live free.

Aoua! Aoua!
Beware of the white men,
dwellers on the shore.

III. Il est doux de se coucher

Il est doux de se coucher, durant la chaleur,
sous un arbre touffu, et d'attendre
que le vent du soir amène la fraîcheur.

Femmes, approchez.
Tandis que je me repose ici
sous un arbre touffu, occupez mon oreille
par vos accents prolongés.
répétez la chanson de la jeune fille,
lorsque ses doigts tressent la natte,
ou lorsqu'assise auprès du riz,
elle chasse les oiseaux avides.

La chant plaît à mon âme.
La danse est pour moi presque aussi douce
qu'un baiser. Que vos pas soient lents;
qu'ils imitent les attitudes du plaisir
et l'abandon de la volupté.

Le vent du soir se lève;
le lune commence à briller au travers
les arbres de la montagne.
Allez, et préparez le repas.

III. It is good to lie down

It is good to lie down in the heat of the day,
under a leafy tree, and to wait
until the evening wind brings freshness.

Women, approach.
While I rest here
under a leafy tree, delight my ear
with your soothing voices.
Repeat the song of the young girl
while she braids her hair
or, while sitting by the rice patch,
chases the greedy birds away.

The singing is pleasing to my spirit.
Dancing for me is almost as sweet
as a kiss. Step slowly;
imitate the poses of pleasure
and the surrender to voluptuous bliss.

The evening wind awakens;
the moon begins to shine through
the trees on the mountain.
Go, and prepare the meal.

APPENDIX B

PHONETIC TRANSCRIPTION (IPA) of *CHANSONS MADÉCASSES*

Nahandove [nahandovə]

Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove! L'oiseau nocturne a commencé ses cris,
[nahandovə o bɛlə nahandovə lwazo nɔtyrñ a kɔmɑ̃se se kri

la pleine lune brille sur ma tête,
la plɛnə lynə brijə syr ma tɛt

et la rosée naissante humecte mes cheveux.
e la roze nɛsɑ̃t̃ ymɛktə me ʃɛvø

Voici l'heure: qui peut t'arrêter, Nahandove,
vwasi lɔrə ki pø tarɛtə nahandovə

ô belle Nahandove? Le lit de feuilles est préparé
o bɛlə nahandovə lə li də fɑ̃jə ze prepare

je l'ai parsemé de fleurs et d'herbes odoriférantes,
jə le parsəme də flo r ze dɛrbə zɔdɔrifɛrɑ̃tə

il est digne de tes charmes Nahandove,
il ɛ dijnə də te ʃarmə nahandovə

o belle Nahandove! Elle vient.
o bɛlə nahandovə ɛlə vjɛ̃

J'ai reconnu la respiration précipitée que donne une marche rapide:
ʒe rəkɔny la rɛspirasjɔ̃ presipite kə dɔn ynə marʃə rapidə

J'entends le froissement de la pagne qui l'enveloppe:
ʒɑ̃tɑ̃ lə frwasəmɑ̃ də la pajə ki lɑ̃ vɛlɔpə

c'est elle,.... C'est Nahandove.... O, reprends haleine,
sɛt ɛlə se nahandovə o rɛprɑ̃ zalɛnə

ma jeune amie: repose-toi sur mes genoux.
ma ʒø na miə rəpozə twa syr me ʒənu

Que ton regard est enchanteur, que le mouvement
kə tō rəgar et ʔfātər kə lə muvəmā

de ton sein est vif et délicieux sous la main
də to sɛ ne vif e delisjə su la mɛ

qui le presse! Tu souris, Nahandov,....
ki lə prɛsə ty suri nahandovə

Tes baisers pénètrent jusqu'a l'âme;
te beze penɛtrə ʒyska lamə

tes caresses brûlent tous mes sens:
te karɛsə brylə tu mɛ sās

arrête ou je vais mourir. Meurt-on de volupté,
arɛt u ʒə vɛ murir mɔrtō də vɔlypte

Nahandove?... Le plaisir passe comme un éclair:
nahandovə lə plɛzir pasə kə mɔ nekler

ta douce haleine s'affaiblit, tes yeux humides se referment,
ta dus alɛnə safɛbli te zjə zymidə sə rɛfɛrmə

ta tête se penche mollement et tes transports
ta tɛtə sə pāʃə mɔləmā le te trāspɔr

s'éteignent dans la langueur, Jamais tu ne fus si belle,
setɛʃnə dā la lāgɔər ʒamɛ ty nɛ fy si bɛlə

Nahandove.... Tu pars, et je vais languir
nahandovə ty par e ʒə vɛ lāgir

dans les regrets et les désirs;
dā le rəgrɛ ze le dezir

je languirai jusqu'au soir;
ʒə lāgire ʒysko swar

tu reviendras ce soir, Nahandove....?
ty rəvjɛdra sə swar]

Aoua! [auwa]

Aoua! Méfiez-vous des blancs, habitants du rivage.
[auwa mefʃe vu dɛ blɑ́ abitɑ́ dy rivaʒə]

Du tems de nos père, des blancs descendirent dans cette île;
dy tɑ́ də no pɛrə de blɑ́ desɑ́ dirə dɑ́ sɛ tilə

on leur dit: Voilà des terres; que vos femmes les cultivent.
ɑ́ lœr di vwala de tɛrə kə vo famə le kyltivə

Soyez justes, soyez bons, et devenez nos frères.
swaje ʒystə swaje bɑ́ |e dəvəne no frɛrə

Les blancs promirent et cependant ils faisaient
le blɑ́ promirə |e sɔpɑ́dɑ́ il fəɛ

des retranchements, un fort menaçant s'éleva;
de rɔtrɑ́ʃəmɑ́ ɑ́fɔr mənəsə seləva

le tonnerre fut renfermé dans des bouches d'airain;
lə tɔnɛrə fy rɑ́fɛrme dɑ́ de buʃə dɛrɛ

leurs prêtres voulurent nous donner un Dieu
lœr prɛtrə vulyrə nu dɔne rɑ́ djø

que nous ne connaissons pas;
kə nu nə kɔnɛsɔ́ pa

ils parlèrent enfin d'obéissance et d'esclavage:
il parlɛrə tɑ́fɛ́ dɔ beisɑ́sə |e dɛsklavagə

plutôt la mort! Le carnage fut long et terrible;
plyto la mɔr lə karnagə fy lɔ́ |e tɛriblə

mais malgré la foudre qu'ils vomissaient,
mɛ malgre la fudrə kil vomisɛ

et qui écrasait des armées entières,
e ki ekrazɛ de zarme ʒɑ́tjɛrə

ils furent tous exterminés. ...
il fyrə tus ɛkstɛrmine

Nous avons vu de nouveaux tyrans, plus forts et plus nombreux,
nu zavõ vy dθ nuvo tirã ply fõr ze ply nõbrø

planter leur pavillon sur le rivage:
plãte lõr pavijõ syr lθ rivaʒθ

le ciel a combattu pour nous;
lθ sjɛla kõbaty pur nu

il a fait tomber sur eux les pluies,
il a fɛ tobe syr ø lɛ plɥi

les tempêtes et les vents empoisonnés.
lɛ tãpɛtθ |e le vã zãpwasõne

Ils ne sont plus, et nous vivons libres. ...
il nθ sõ ply |e nu vivõ librθ]

Il est doux de se coucher [il ε du dθ sθ ku ʃe]

Il est doux de se coucher durant la chaleur sous un arbre touffu,
[il e du dθ sθ kuʃe dyr̃ la ʃa lɔr su z̃narbrθ tufy

et d'attendre que le vent du soir amène la fraîcheur.
e dat̃adrθ kθ lθ ṽ dy swaramɛnθ la frɛʃɔr

Femmes, approchez. Tandis que je me repose ici
famθ aproʃe t̃adi kθ zθ mθ rəpo zisi

sous un arbre touffu,
su z̃narbrθ tufy

occupez mon oreille par vos accens prolongés;
okype m̃ nɔrɛjθ par vo zaks̃ prol̃zɛ

répétez la chansons de la jeune fille,
repete la ʃ̃s̃ dθ la z̃nθ fijθ

lorsque ses doigts tressent la natte,
lɔrskθ se dwa trɛsθ la nat

ou lorsqu'assise auprès du riz,
u lɔrskosi zoprɛ dy ri

elle chasse les oiseaux avides.
ɛlθ ʃasθ le zwazo zavidθ

Le chant plait à mon âme;
lθ ʃ̃ plɛt a m̃ namθ

le danse est pour moi presque aussi douce qu'un baiser.
lθ d̃ se pur mwa prɛskosi dusθ kœ beze

Que vos pas soient lents,
kθ vo pa swa l̃

qu'ils imitent les attitudes du plaisir
kil zimitθ le zatitydθ dy plezir

et l'abandon de la volupté. Le vent du soir se lève;
e labɑ̃do də la vɔlypte lə vɑ̃ dy swar sə lɛvø

la lune commence à briller au travers
la lynø kɔmɑ̃sa brije |o travɛr

des arbres de la montagne. Allez, et préparez le repas.
de zarbrø də la mɔtajø ale |e prepare lə rɛpa]

*In French texts which are musically set to be sung more like spoken French, small two or three letter words use closed [e].

APPENDIX C
STRUCTURAL/HARMONIC OVERVIEW
OF *CHANSONS MADÉCASSES* BY MAURICE RAVEL

"NAHANDOVE"

Sections	Measures	Key Areas/Harmony	Melody/Motives	Rhythm/Tempo
A*	1-19	a aeolian	voice/cello independent, contrapuntal lines a motive (cello first four notes of piece) male character theme	a motive in rhythmic repetition voice in spoken recitative-like rhythms
B	19-33	quartal harmonies a dorian mm. 28-33 thick texture alternating g and f seventh chords	b motive in flute m. 28 (female character motive) melody-motives a and b join and repeat m. 29	syncopation in piano part at "piu animato" rhythmic motives a and b join and repeat m. 29
C	33-44	e minor	a motive in cello m. 41 polychord m. 43 parallel fifths motive b	syncopation tempo 1 mm. 41-42 slow rit with motive a
D	45-51	vocal line d-sharp minor	flute-large leaps mm. 44-45 cello motive a parallel fifths continue in keyboard melody mm. 51-52 flute re-enters mm. 81-83 motive a returns in cello part mm. 68-72 and mm. 79-80	accelerando to tempo 1 keyboard has repeated rhythmic motives mm. 51-52

Sections	Measures	Key Areas/Harmony	Melody/Motives	Rhythm/Tempo
E	52-74	b minor-vague but with c-natural m. 67 pedal point on b	keyboard has main melodic motive mm. 51-52 motive a in cello returns mm. 68-72	accelerando ostinato motive in piano part repeated
F	75-84	a major and f-sharp minor (a lydian)	motive a in cello mm. 79-80 flute returns mm. 81-83 right-hand piano – motive b tonicizes a in left-hand piano	andante with rallentando to tempo 1

"AQUA!"

Sections	Measures	Key Areas/Harmony	Melody/Motives	Rhythm/Tempo
Intro	1-5	varying key signatures in all parts -- only a guide does not always indicate bitonality voice tonicizes g	flute has motive a (descending minor third of opening)	andante <i>ff</i>
A	6-37	voice tonicizes d-sharp (with an a-sharp) mixolydian with a-natural bass - g-sharp to d-sharp, then a to e	flute m. 6 a motive, but with different character each part has own melodic pattern repeated mm. 35-37 similar to intro	ostinato pattern in piano each part has own rhythmic motive repeated agitation builds to accelerando and crescendo in m. 37
B	38-58	f in bass stabilizes the section voice begins in g-sharp minor	piano accents in m. 38 with dissonant major seventh intervals	m. 38-58 quasi trumpet in the flute m. 38 fast, pounding percussive accents
C	59-71	m. 63 opening vocal line, text repeats from intro section, but with unresolved dissonance	intro repeated but melody is transposed down an octave mm. 68-70 from mm. 8-10	adagio <i>pp</i>

"IL EST DOUX"

Sections	Measures	Key Areas/Harmony	Melody/Motives	Rhythm/Tempo
Intro	1-8	flute/cello intro atonality-many varying key areas in all the parts flute has quartal harmonies similar to song 1	opening motive of flute repeated	lento <i>p</i>
A	9-13	b-flat minor -- vague	flute plays opening intro motive over the vocal line	<i>p</i>
B	14-24	mm. 17-22 tonal vocal line with atonal accompaniment	recitative-like melodic contour	rapidly changing meters
C	25-39	atonality not really c-sharp major or a-sharp minor (a-sharp mixolydian) mm. 25-29 voice almost alone	recitative-like melody contour melodic motives in each part repeat	andante with rit at end m. 29 tempo 1 m. 30 each part has own rhythmic pattern making dance-like combination
D	40-50	d-flat tonal center and ending d-flat pedal point	recitative-like melodic contour last phrase voice alone	andante quasi-allegretto

* Most sections follow paragraph breaks in the poetry.

APPENDIX D
RECITAL PROGRAMS

Three Songs, Opus 45 Samuel Barber
1. *Now Have I Fed and Eaten up the Rose* (1910-1981)
2. *A Green Lowland of Pianos*
3. *O Boundless, Boundless Evening*

Three Poems of James Agee Thomas Pasatieri
How Many Little Children Sleep (b. 1945)
A Lullaby
Sonnet

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presents

A Doctoral Recital

DIANA LEA ELLIS, *soprano*

assisted by

David Cloutier, *piano/harpsichord* • Kimberly D. Friddell, *flute*

Monday, August 9, 1999

8:00 pm

Concert Hall

I

Nymphs and Shepherds Thomas Arne
Thou Soft Flowing Avon (1710-1778)
O How Great is the Vexation

The Warning James Hook
The Turtle Dove Coos Round My Cot (1746-1827)
The Lad Wha Lilts Sae Sweetly

II

Mignon's Lieder from Goethe's WILHELM MEISTER Robert Schumann
Kennst du das Land (1810-1856)
Nur wer die Sehnsucht kennt
Heiss' mich nicht reden
So lasst mich scheinen

III

Chansons de Bilitis Claude Debussy
La Flûte de Pan (1862-1928)
La Chevelure
Le Tombeau des Naiades

IV

At Last to be Identified Richard Pearson Thomas
Doubt me! My Dim Companion! (b. 1957)
There's a certain slant of light
What if I say I shall not wait!
Wild Nights — Wild Nights!
I never saw a Moor

V

Nina's Aria, THE SEAGULL Thomas Pasatieri
(b. 1945)

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A Doctoral Recital

DIANA LEA ELLIS, mezzo-soprano

assisted by

David Cloutier, piano • Dan Mitchell, guitar

Monday, January 28, 2002

5:00 pm

Concert Hall

PROGRAM

- Sei Romanze (1838) Giuseppe Verdi
Non t'accostare all'urna (1813-1901)
More, Elisa, lo stanco poeta
In solitaria stanza
Nell'orror di notte oscura
Perduta ho la pace
Deh, pietoso, oh Addolorata
- Chants populaires (1910) Maurice Ravel
Chanson espagnole (1875-1937)
Chanson italienne
Chanson française
Chanson hébraïque
- A Charm of Lullabies, Op. 41 (1947) Benjamin Britten
A Cradle Song (1913-1976)
The Highland Balou
Sephestia's Lullaby
A Charm
The Nurse's Song

Simple Songs (1982) David Leisner
Exultation (b. 1953)
Beauty
Madness
Letter
Humility
Simplicity

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Four hundred fifth program of the 2003-2004 season.

A Doctoral Lecture Recital

DIANA LEA ELLIS, mezzo-soprano

assisted by

David Cloutier, piano • Stacy Weill, cello • Lorie Scott, flute

Monday, February 23, 2004

6:30 pm

Recital Hall

**A PERFORMER'S ANALYSIS OF
MAURICE RAVEL'S *CHANSONS MADÉCASSES***

PROGRAM

Chansons madécasses (1926) Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
Nahandove, ô belle Nahandove
Aoua!
Il est doux de se coucher

Presented in partial fulfillment of the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts
MUGC 6954.716

Steinway is the piano of choice for the College of Music.

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