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THE SONGS FOR VOICE AND PIANO

BY ERNEST CHAUSSON

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

ERNEST CHAUSSON -- HIS LIFE AND MUSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Ernest A. Chausson is remembered in the world of music for his role in the development of the French art song and the renaissance of French music. He was born January 20, 1855.¹ He died in a freak bicycle accident on June 10, 1899,² when only forty-four years old. He had studied music seriously for only the last nineteen of those years. His father, Prosper Chausson, was a wealthy building contractor of Paris, France. He and his wife, Stephanie-Marcelline, born Levraux, were good, middle-class citizens. Neither had any special artistic inclination, but their son Ernest seemed to have many -- literature, art, music; in fact, all art fascinated and attracted him.

Chausson's parents lost two children before Ernest's birth. Their third-born, therefore, became the object of an overly protected childhood and lived largely in an "adult world." Public school gave

¹W. L. Hubbard, The American History and Encyclopedia of Music (Toledo-NewYork-Chicago, 1908), p. 133.

²Nicolas Slovinsky, Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians, 5th. ed. (New York, 1958), p. 279.

way to a private tutor, Brethaus-Laforgue, who was a lasting influence on his life. Perhaps because his tutor was a highly cultured man or perhaps he was innately endowed, Chausson became completely interested in the arts and devoted his brief adult life to them.

Little is known or can be documented about Chausson's childhood and adolescent years. His father wanted him to be a lawyer. He received a law degree from the University of Paris in 1877, but no record is available that he ever practiced this profession. He did try various artistic endeavors --sketching, oil painting, a literary project called "Jacques" and several musical compositions. This variety of talents and the economic ease which gave him sufficient leisure to exercise these talents made the definite choice of a profession very difficult for Chausson.³

Around 1879 when Chausson was twenty-four or twenty-five years old, he decided to give up everything but music, realizing a late start would mean a handicap in mastering technicalities imposed by this most difficult art. He enrolled in the Paris Conservatory and began serious study with the outstanding teacher Jules Massenet. During his first year, he concentrated on compositions for voice and piano. He soon chafed at the traditional curriculum of the conservatory and the academic restrictions imposed upon him.⁴

³Jean-Pierre Barricelli and Leo Weinstein, Ernest Chausson: The Composer's Life and Works (Norman, Okla., 1955), p. 9.

⁴David Ewen, Great Composers 1300-1900 (New York, 1966), p. 84.

Henri Duparc introduced Chausson to Cesar Franck, whose teaching activity was one of the factors that contributed to the eventual renaissance of French music. Franck encouraged his pupils to return to the tradition of the masters and the serious education of the public to symphonic and chamber works.⁵ Aside from their contributions to symphonic and chamber music, Franck and his disciples played an important role in the development of the French art song, the mélodie. In its close fusion of song, poetry, and instrumental commentary, the mélodie constitutes in many ways the French counterpart to the German Lied.⁶

Late in 1880, realizing the difficulty of studying with two teachers, Massenet and Franck, Chausson decided to study exclusively with Franck. Franck encouraged him to write compositions poetic in content, restrained in emotion, mystic in feeling, at times introspective, and always written with complete integrity.⁷ Like Franck, Chausson accepted obscurity and made no attempt to gain important performances or to court popularity. Although he composed relatively few works, they were musically significant. Chausson is often regarded as a pale imitation of his master, Franck. Certainly in matters of design and harmonic development there are clear resemblances, but Chausson

⁵Barricelli and Weinstein, Ernest Chausson, p. 17.

⁶Ibid., p. 9.

⁷Ewen, Great Composers, p. 84.

was somewhat less pontifical, somewhat clearer in vision, more ingenious and consequently fresher.⁸

He married Mademoiselle Jeanne Escudier in 1883. She was an accomplished pianist. His wife's interest in music gave him the encouragement and drive he needed, many times in the face of seeming defeat. His marital happiness and his life as a composer were temporarily and briefly interrupted by a call to military service, which he despised dreadfully because it limited his freedom. He returned to civilian life with renewed vigor and spent much of the next year in traveling in an around Paris.

Chausson's home became the central meeting place for the intellectuals of his day. It also served as a reunion place for Franck and his disciples. Several of the all-Franck concerts were staged in Chausson's home.

Raymond Bonheur, a fellow student at the Conservatory, introduced Chausson to Claude Debussy. Debussy took an immediate liking to Chausson, and in time a deep and lasting friendship united the two men. This is all the more interesting and surprising since the two had entirely different temperaments and also since Debussy had left Franck's class with a sneer. Chausson was kind to

⁸Percy M. Young, Biographical Dictionary of Composers, (New York, 1954), p. 82.

Debussy and is said to have bridged stylistically the gap between the generation of Massenet and Franck and that of Debussy.⁹

During 1888 and 1889, Chausson evolved, not miraculously, but painfully, from a writer of small-scale works to the composer of the Symphony in B-flat Major and of the Concerto for piano, violin, and string quartet. Actually, his production in 1887 and 1888 had been small: mostly songs including settings of Gautier's "La caravane" and Richepin's "Chansons de Miarka." He had also been at work on a song cycle of Bouchor's Poème de l'amour et de la mer. This was his most ambitious vocal effort to date, and a sign of his increasing self-confidence. One reason for this comparatively slim output was his preoccupation with his opera, Le Roi Arthur, which caused him more trouble than any other of his works. Not only did Chausson have to fight the influence of Wagner every step of the way, but his overpowering sense of self-criticism kept his ideas from asserting themselves.¹⁰

Chausson conducted the first performance of his symphony on April 18, 1891, a year after Franck's death. It was greeted enthusiastically by some, but most critics were not too interested and certainly not complimentary. The year 1892 was filled with travel to

⁹Arthur Jacobs, A New Dictionary of Music, (Chicago, 1958), p. 68.

¹⁰Barricelli and Weinstein, Ernest Chausson, pp. 37-38.

Italy, Belgium and other countries. By 1897, interest in Chausson and his works had begun to grow. His symphony and many of his other works were performed in some of the leading cities of Europe.

Early in June, 1899, Chausson left Paris for his country home at Limay. There he sketched his second symphony and was eager to begin thinking about the music for his new opera. He had completed the libretto. He had also completed the first two movements of the string quartet. In the country he could take long walks and he enjoyed bicycle riding. On June 10, 1899, Chausson went bicycle riding along a sloping road which he had used almost daily. At the bottom of the slope he lost control of the bicycle and smashed into a wall. He was killed instantly and with him many justified hopes of great works to come.

Chausson's sudden death left his family and friends stunned. At the funeral, they came together once more to say a last farewell to the man who had no personal enemies and whose tragic demise made them realize how much he had meant to them.¹¹ Pierre Louys expressed the feelings of Chausson's friends in a letter written to his widow:

There was never a more excellent man than your husband; I knew it and hardly ever proved to him how much I was struck each time by his frank look, his firm handshake, and by the admirable goodness which manifested

¹¹Ibid., pp. 104-105.

itself in all his gestures. At every moment of his life he needed to make people happy. Everybody loved him. At least, speaking for myself, I loved him very much, always believe me. And I have never told him so; we always think we have time and that we will always see again those who are young.¹²

Pierre de Bréville, in a memorial article published soon after Chausson's death, expressed his belief that Chausson's intelligence was reflected in the breadth and depth of the various subjects in which he was interested. Bréville could not fathom how one man, even having read the literature of all peoples, poets, and philosophers, could accomplish so much in so short a time. Bréville chastised the world for not giving Chausson his just recognition during his lifetime. Like his teacher, Franck, directors of concerts never thought about Chausson, theater managers never considered his opera, and the newspapers were many times unkind or silent. But this did not affect Chausson; he thrived on the success of his colleagues; he was always interested in presenting new talent. There was no one to whom he was unkind. "He was generous because he was in love with generosity."¹³

¹²Charles Oulmont, "Deux amis, Claude Debussy et Ernest Chausson," Mercure de France, CCLVI, 248-269.

¹³Ewen, Great Composers, p. 85.

CHAPTER II

THE SONGS OF ERNEST CHAUSSON

Ernest Chausson wrote less than a hundred songs during his lifetime, some of which were never published.¹⁴ Some are now out of print. Joseph Patelson Music Publishing House of New York has informed the author that their correspondence with the original publishers of Chausson's songs indicates that these songs are now permanently out of print, including Opus 17, Nos. 1 and 2 and Opus 34, No. 2.

In this chapter his available published songs for solo voice and piano--Opera 2, 8, 13, 14, 24, 27, 28, 32, 34 and 36--are analyzed and discussed. The "Poem de l'amour et de la mer" (1882-92) and the "Chanson perpétuelle" (1898) are not treated in this because they were originally composed for voice and orchestra.¹⁵

"Sept mélodies," Opus 2

Opus 2, a group of seven songs for voice and piano, was published in 1882 and includes "Nanny," "Le charme," "Les papillons,"

¹⁴Gustav Ferrari, "Chausson," Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, II, (New York, 1954), 192.

¹⁵Ibid.

"La dernière feuille," "Sérénade Italienne," "Hébé," and "Le colibri."¹⁶

For texts, Chausson used short lyric poems by Leconte de Lisle, Silvester, Gautier, Bourget and Ackerman. The formal treatment of these songs is similar. Five of the songs (Numbers 1, 4, 5, 6, 7) are ternary structures; one ("Les papillons") is a bar form; and one (Le charme") is composed of three varied strophes.

The first song of Opus 2, "Nanny," is a lament. The first ten lines of this thirteen-line poem call upon the various elements of nature to weep over the departed lover. Only in the final three lines of the poem is the cause of sadness revealed. The sweetheart, Nanny, is gone, never to return.

The key of D major pervades the forty-one measure song. Gently-rustling keyboard figuration is always present, consisting of triplets and quadruplets in cross-rhythms.

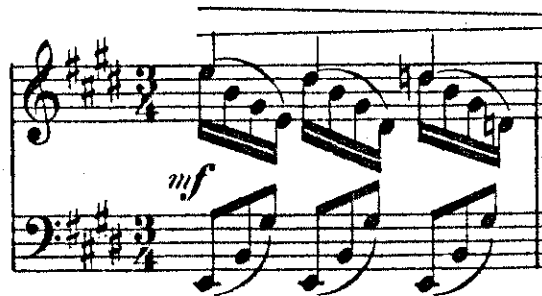


Fig. 1 - "Nanny," Op. 2, No. 1, measure 1

Chromatic alteration of the vocal line and chromatic harmonic progression is in evidence. Chausson has used a traditional device to depict sorrow and weeping, a chromatically descending melodic line.

¹⁶Ibid., 193.

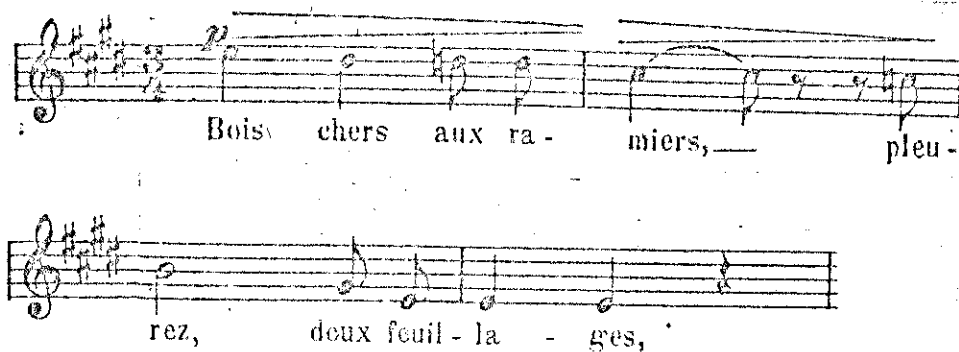


Fig. 2 - "Nanny," Op. 2., No. 1, measures 3-6

"Le charme," Op. 2, No. 2, written to a poem by Silvestre, is a scant twenty-eight measures. The time-signature alternates between 4/4 and 2/4. The texture is relatively thin. The vocal melody is duplicated in the piano part, and the bass line often functions as a duet in parallel sixths with the voice. There is a marked emphasis upon the text by a strict syllabic musical treatment, and there is a conservatism of musical style which allows the listener's attention to focus upon the text.

Silvestre's poem is simple and regular in form consisting of three four-line sentences and depicts the quandries of a lover who was unable to identify his emotions of love until he beheld his beloved's first tear. This is expressed in the final line of the poem, "Et je n'ai su que je t'aimais, qu'en voyant ta première larme (and I only realized that I loved you when I saw your first tear)".¹⁷ As in "Nanny," the composer has emphasized the most significant portion of the poem by

¹⁷Ernest Chausson, "Le Charme," Mélodies pour Chant et Piano (Paris, n.d.), p. 6.

a change of texture and alteration in the character of the vocal part. The last two lines of text are presented by quarter notes with longer note values interspersed, whereas prior to this line the unit of movement has been the eighth note. There is a striking shift in vocal tessitura for these last two lines of text. Whereas the voice has been largely confined to E flat¹ to E flat² to this point, the vocal part descends into the lower octave for the last phrase.

The most notable feature of "Les Papillons," Op. 2, No. 3, is the perpetual movement of the accompaniment depicting the fluttering of butterfly wings. This active musical device is continued for eight measures with the accompaniment rising into the upper register until the cadence is reached further depicting the rising and soaring of the butterflies.

The vocal line consists of short-phrases frequently separated by rests. One factor contributing to the various phrase-lengths is the manner in which Chausson emphasizes particular words of the text through the use of longer note values. This technique is seen in measures forty-three and forty-four when the composer apparently is illustrating the expansiveness of the landscape at the words "vallons et forêts (valleys and forests)".

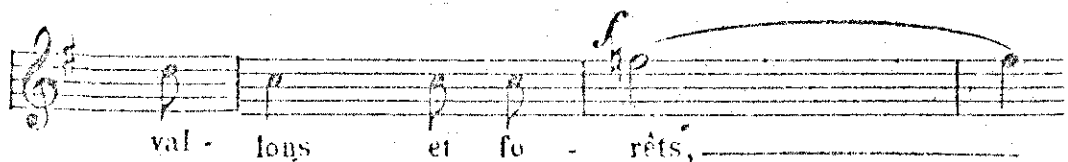


Fig. 3 - "Les Papillons," Op. 2, No. 3, measures 44-47

The final cadence is made especially strong as sixteenth-note pattern is momentarily suspended and the voice articulates its final phrase in the lower register accompanied by sustained chords.

"La dernière," Op. 2, No. 4, has a particularly bleak, stark, and brief introduction which expresses the loneliness suggested in Gautier's poem. The lover compares his void to the bleak and blighted forest and a forgotten leaf. The autumn wind covers his grief so it cannot be heard.

The declamatory vocal phrases are presented in short lines with a chordal accompaniment. The piano sustains movement through the use of sequential material. This movement, however, is suspended following the phrase "Ne permet pas de l'écouter (does not allow it to be heard)."¹⁸

In the following line tone painting is evident in the words "la feuille tombe (the leaf falls)" as the composer allows the voice part to descend.

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, written in a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics 'la feuille tombe' are written below the notes. The middle and bottom staves are the piano accompaniment, with the middle staff in a treble clef and the bottom staff in a bass clef. The piano part features sustained chords and a descending melodic line in the bass register.

Fig. 4 - "La dernière feuille," Op. 2, No. 4, measures 37-38

¹⁸Chausson, "La dernière feuille," *Melodies*, p. 13.

A particularly lyrical text was selected for the "Sérénade Italienne," Op. 2, No. 5. The mention of the sea, the boat, and the stars of night lends itself to descriptive music. The rocking triplets seem to suggest the movement of the boat and waves. Chausson interprets with increased intensity that portion of the poem in which the lovers realize the freedom with which they may express their souls to one another. The mood is accomplished by the use of smaller note values. This agitation is allowed to gradually subside as the poet's thoughts return to nature.

The vocal phrases are long and form undulating melodic arcs. Occasional chromatic alterations add interest to the vocal line.

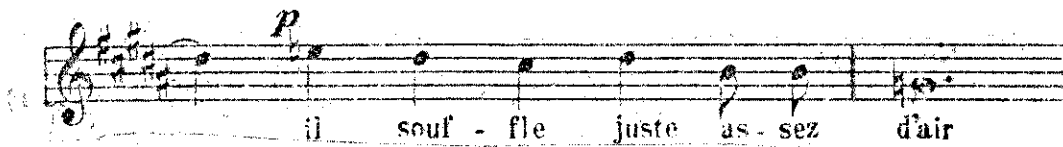


Fig. 5 - "Sérénade Italienne," Op. 2, No. 5 - measures 8-9

The attributes undoubtedly prompted Cooper to observe that "the 'Sérénade Italienne' shows both a dramatic sense and a real feeling for the voice."¹⁹

"Hébé," Op. 2, No. 6, written in the phrygian mode, is a song about a Greek cupbearer to the gods with a text based on Greek mythology. There is a one-measure introduction which establishes the modal character and anticipates the vocal melody. The vocal phrase

¹⁹ Martin Cooper, *French Music* (London, 1951), p. 63.

lengths are irregular. However, the basic phrase-length is two measures. The compass of the voice is confined to a major 7th. There is an exotic charm in "Hébé" which seems to originate with the modal orientation. The absence of the traditional tonic finally allows considerable freedom of movement within the vocal phrase.

The texture of the keyboard part is thin and for the first four phrases of the text is rather closely spaced. With the beginning of the fifth line of the text, an arpeggiated keyboard texture appears. The vocal melody is duplicated most of the time in the piano part. However, this is often concealed by the fact that it appears sometimes in an inner voice and appears with a varied rhythm.

Leconte de Lisle's poem, "Le colibri," Op. 2, No. 7, tells of a bird which leaves its nest to kill itself feasting upon the nectar of the flowers. There is a four-measure chordal introduction. The vocal phrases initially are short and are not duplicated in the accompaniment. Strong countermelodies appear in the piano part beginning with measure eight. This chordal texture and countermelodic treatment continues until the words "Vers la fleur dorée, il descend se pose (toward the golden flower he alights)"²⁰ appear in the text. Here the keyboard part is composed of descending arpeggio patterns illustrating the descending movement of the colibri toward the flower. The next change of texture occurs beneath the words "Qu'il meurt (he dies);"²¹

²⁰Chausson, "Le colibri," Melodies, p. 24.

²¹Ibid., p. 24 - 25.

at which point the same chord is repeated for two measures in quarter-note values and the movement of the vocal line is suspended for five counts. A resumption of the chordal texture and countermelodies bring this song to its conclusion.

"Quatre mélodies," Opus 8

The four songs of Opus 8 are settings of poems by Maurice Bouchor. All are through-composed and although there are no cyclical characteristics in evidence there is a uniformity of musical treatment that gives this group more cohesiveness than Opus 2.

The two-measure introduction to "Nocturne," Op. 8, No. 1, establishes a keyboard texture which pervades the entire song, supplying an element of continuity.

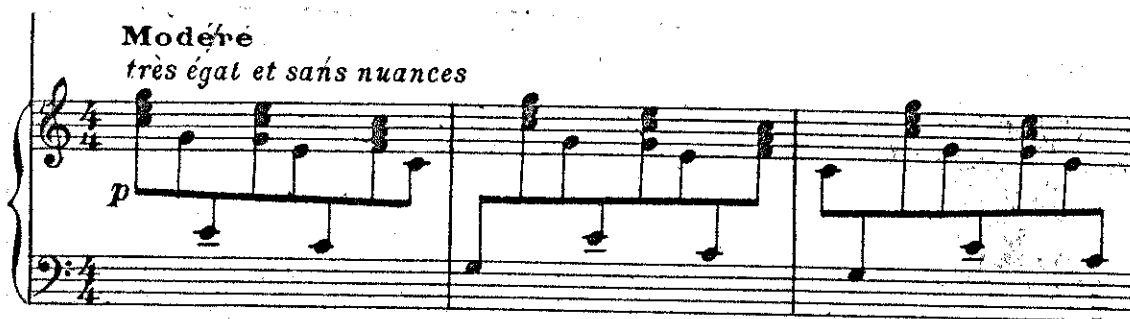


Fig. 6 - "Nocturne," Op. 8, No. 1 - measures 1 - 3

The text of Bouchor's first poem expresses the futility of a lover, aware of his beloved's ensuing death, who avows that they shall die together. The text is delivered in a syllabic manner, and the diatonic progress of the vocal line clarifies the modulations.

The song progresses at a moderate pace and dynamic markings are conservative, maintaining piano throughout until the last eight measures where mezzo-piano is employed.

The recitative-like treatment of the opening phrases of "Amour d'Anton," Op. 8, No. 2, and the sparse appearance of the piano part give this song a distinctiveness. The opening sentence "Mon amour d'anton vous souvenez-vous? (my love of yesteryear, do you remember?)"²² is articulated in a speech-like manner, preserving the tonic accent. The first phrase, a simple detached idea, appears on repeated notes in a descending direction. The second phrase is a question, and the ascending direction expresses this interrogative. The vocal line then becomes more melodic moving conjunctly.

Following the two brief vocal phrases which appear as recitative, the piano part sets up a repeated note pattern in a generally four-part texture. However, strands of melodic material do appear in the texture.

The poem consists of five questions, followed by a summary statement. The poet addresses the questions to the beloved, and in each case asks if she remembers aspects of their life together. The final statement suggests that the whole affair is part of the dead past. Toward the end of each of these five questions, the vocal line rises.

²²Ernest Chausson, "Amour d'Anton," Vingt Mélodies, p. 5.

In the final statement the vocal line proceeds to a strong resolution in the lower compass of the voice.

The vocal range of "Printemps triste," Op. 8, No. 3, is an octave and a third. As in the case of the songs of Opus 2, the textual treatment is largely syllabic, and repeated notes often appear. The vocal line moves independent of the accompaniment. Counterpoints often appear in contrary motion and the texture is unfailingly thick. The piano part is widely spaced over the keyboard, at times sounding simultaneously in sixteenth notes. The first thirteen measures are in 4/4 time, followed by twelve measures of 9/8 time, before the resumption of the final 4/4. This second appearance of 4/4 is greatly complicated, however, by the fact that a polyrhythmic arrangement is used. The voice part and the left hand of the piano part are in 4/4, and the right hand is notated 12/8.

The image shows a musical score for the song "Printemps triste," Op. 8, No. 3, measures 26-27. The score is written for voice and piano. The vocal line is in 4/4 time, and the piano accompaniment is in 12/8 time. The lyrics are: "Et tou_jours les fleurs, et toujours le ciel, Et". The piano part features a complex polyrhythmic texture with the right hand in 12/8 and the left hand in 4/4. The score includes a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) and various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and accidentals.

Fig. 7 - "Printemps triste," Op 8, No. 3 - measures 26-27

The texture of the first thirteen measures is constant in that both hands are playing sixteenth notes. During these initial measures the poetry expresses elements of nature which remind the speaker or singer of his beloved and their lives together. With the appearance of 9/8 signature, the texture is markedly different. The keyboard part consists of repeated chords in a triplet conformation, in which the melodic line is uppermost. Possibly the composer's motivation for the thinner, sparser keyboard texture has been his desire to interpret that part of the text which speaks of the beloved's absence and the poet's loneliness. This thought is summarized in the line, "I mourn, and know not what to say."

The poem turns again to nature and memories it recalls. As the aspects of nature reappear, the poet is again returned to a melancholy state. Chausson resumes his agitated treatment of the piano part in measure twenty-six, by once again using the 4/4 meter in sixteenth notes, and adding the 12/8 cross-rhythms. This polyrhythmic treatment increases the intensity, thickens the texture, and propels the music toward the grand climax on the words, "Emportant bien loin toutes mes pensées... (carrying far away all my thoughts...)"²³ Up to this point the piano part has not expressed a particularly directional tendency. Rather it has articulated a rippling effect in which

²³Chausson, "Printemps triste," Vingt mélodies, p. 13.

contrary motion predominates. Here a notable change occurs. As the text sustains the word "pensées (thoughts)", which is the longest note yet to appear in the vocal line, there is a descending arpeggio in the piano part. The piano begins a downward progression continuing until the voice re-enters. The effect of this descending passage is intensified by the prominence of a descending chromatic melodic line.

Fig. 8 - "Printemps triste," Op. 8, No. 3 - measures 34-36

At the end of this descending passage the texture once again thins. The voice re-enters with the words, "Qu'elles aillent donc sur l'aile du vent Jusques a toi ces colombes blessées! (If they would only fly on the wings of the wind to you, these wounded doves!)",²⁴

²⁴Ibid., p. 14.

over descending sixteenth-note arpeggios. This closing material rounds out the poetic thought and serves as a brief musical coda.

While the text of "Nos souvenirs," Op. 8, No. 4, has much in common with the preceding songs, the musical treatment is markedly different from the other songs in this opus. The text with its recollections of past love returning as if on fluttering wings is not unlike that of "Printemps triste" where nature recalled thoughts of the beloved. On the other hand the tonal organization of "Nos souvenirs" is simpler than the songs previously discussed. There is less chromaticism; the texture is thin and widely spaced. In the beginning the hands are three octaves apart; a rocking motion in an eighth-note figuration is maintained for sixteen measures. In the middle section of the song, cross-rhythms appear in a two-against-three arrangement. In addition one of the distinctive features of "Nos souvenirs" is the thirteen-measure piano epilogue. Epilogues have not appeared heretofore. This passage contains a thicker texture and melodic material not appearing in the body of the song.

"Quatre mélodies," Opus 13

All four songs comprising Opus 13 are through-composed, displaying harmonic richness and frequent modulations. In "Apaisement," Op. 13, No. 1, which is translated "peace," the mood is well portrayed musically. Barricelli says, "[The] poem is like a murmur,

the murmur of a slow dream that analyzes a semi-conscious, semi-ecstatic emotion . . . unmoving, lingering quality."²⁵ The keyboard texture is sparse and sustained. A series of suspensions accompanied by a tonic-dominant pedal continues for eighteen measures. In keeping with the mood of the poem the accompanimental texture trails off in an ascending arpeggio of single quarter notes. As the arpeggio reaches its tonic cadence, the voice re-enters, unaccompanied, singing the line, "O bien-aimée (O beloved),"²⁶ the first mention of a person other than the speaker. The intimacy of the statement is enhanced by the absence of accompaniment. The remainder of the poem describes the nocturnal setting. After mention of the sweetheart, the accompaniment is heard again, and leads ultimately to the tonic, E minor, where the sustained texture is resumed.

The musical setting of the last phrase of the text, "C'est l'heure exquise (it is the exquisite hour),"²⁷ is set. To a sustained widely-spaced accompaniment as the voice soars upwards to a pianissimo g^2 on the word exquise and is sustained for four measures. This is the first example thus far encountered where Chausson assigns two notes to a single syllable.

²⁵Barricelli and Weinstein, Ernest Chausson, p. 126.

²⁶Ernest Chausson, "Appaisement," Mémoires, p. 27.

²⁷Ibid., p. 28.

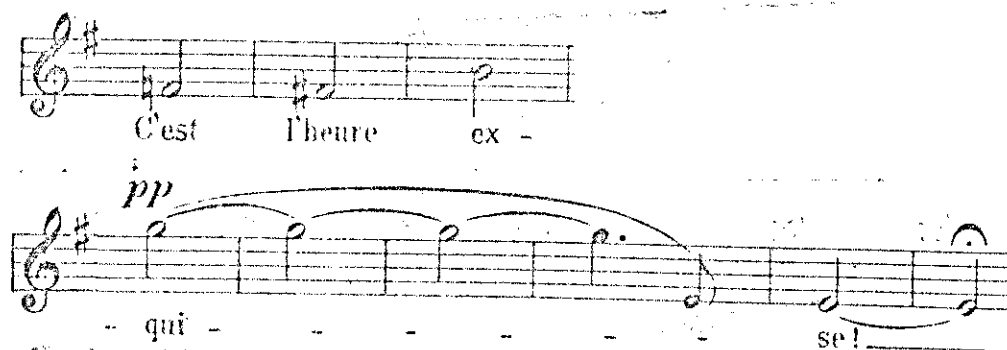


Fig. 9 - "Apaisement," Op. 13, No. 1 - measures 80-88

In "Sérénade," Op. 13, No. 2, Chausson has constructed phrases of unusual length, melodic independence, and wide range. The lyricism inherent in these vocal phrases is attributable to the distinctive interval relationships, and the juxtaposition of steps and skips. Henri Cazalis, whose pseudonym is Jean Lahor, has provided highly personal poetry.²⁸ The introspective poem compares the physical beauty of the beloved to the surrounding peace and silence found while dreaming of the islands on an evening, thrilling and clear.

The piano part is dominated by a homogenous texture involving broken chord configurations. However, a melodic line is present in the uppermost part, sustained above the moving inside notes and serving as a countermelody. A tonic pedal in the bass is sustained for four measures of the introduction, establishing the C major tonality. Compared with songs thus far discussed, there seems to be less effort at tone painting and other strong relationships between text and music.

²⁸ Philip L. Miller, The Ring of Words, (New York, 1966), p. 307.

However, the upward leap of a seventh on the phrase "caressant l'air" (adorning the sky)²⁹ is mildly suggestive.

Fig. 10 - "Sérénade," Op. 13, No. 2 - measures 42-43

A similar instance is observed on the phrase "frissonnant et clair!" (fresh and clear)³⁰ at the close of the song. Here the voice leaps upward an augmented ninth, requiring the voice to sustain a high $g\sharp^2$ for four counts.

Villiers de l'Isle-Adam supplied the melancholy text for "L'Aveu," Op. 13, No. 3. The poem speaks of the lover having lost all things in life; only to regain them as he is hidden in her "pale bosom." One feature which marks the song as distinctive from others of this opus is that it does not end in the tonic key, D minor, but in its relative major. Although the form is through-composed, it is sectional

²⁹Chausson, "Sérénade," *Mélodies*, p. 31.

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 32.

and makes use of a variety of keyboard textures and tempos. There is an alternation of slow and fast tempos (slow-fast-slow-fast). In each case the slow tempo is in the tonic key.

The opening vocal line is anticipated melodically by the piano introduction. As the voice enters, the piano doubles this melody and offers a sparse harmonic background. In anticipation of the more animated text, "Donne tes lèvres, Leur haleine, Ce sera le souffle des bois (Give me your lips, your breath which is like the winds of the forest)", Chausson uses a 6/8 rhythm, marked Plus vite (faster) to express the mood.³¹

With the return of the slow D minor tempo the same music is heard again which served as the introduction to the song. When the voice part enters, however, it presents new material, all of which underscores the heavy sombre tone of the words. The closing phrase of this final last section shows a close relationship between the text and music. As the words "Ce sera le calme des nuits (It will be the calm of the night)" appear, the vocal line begins a gradual descent accompanied by an extended diminuendo, ending the song in quiet resignation.³²

The piano part of "La cigale," Op. 13, No. 4, is dominated by such devices as broken chord figures, arpeggios, and various

³¹Chausson, "L'Aveu", Mélodies, p. 33-34.

³²Ibid., p. 36.

rhythmic subdivisions of the beat. The text of this song represents a bit of light-hearted moralizing upon the virtues of the easy-going life of the grasshopper, and the pleasure his song can bring to one who takes time to consider the creature. Thin texture and slow harmonic rhythm contribute to the lightness of mood.

There are two melodic passages for the voice which show strong motivations. In the line "T'écoute de loin annoncer l'été (you hear from afar the announcement of Summertime),"³² the idea of proclaiming from a distance is depicted musically by a line which ascends scale-wise an interval of a ninth, accompanied by crescendo. The other passage is the final text phrase, "N'ayant chair ni sang, vis semblable aux Dieux (has neither flesh nor blood, seeming like unto Gods)."³³ Here the author likens the life and ways of the lowly grasshopper to the gods. Here, too, the ascending scale line occurs, again extending over the interval of a ninth, and leading to a vocal climax on $\underline{b^2}$.

"La caravane," Opus 14

The highly dramatic and demanding text for the single song, "La caravane," which comprises Opus 14, was written by Theophile Gautier. Written in 1887, Chausson has achieved a strong relationship between music and poetry.

³³Chausson, "La cigale," Mélodies, p. 39.

³⁴Ibid., p. 41.

The piano introduces the song with a low E pedal point which is reiterated on the first count of each of eight measures. The second measure presents a recurring rhythmic motive and appears in forty-three of the one hundred-and-one measures of the song. This motive possesses a strong melodic character. The basic structure is maintained even though there are intervallic alterations. It is apparent that the restatement of this material is a strongly unifying factor in this extended through-composed song.



Fig. 11 - "La Caravane," Op. 14 - measures 1-4

The textual motivation for the musical composition through measure sixty-eight depicts constant travel and searching of the human caravan. It appears that the motive is related to the ideas expressed in the text, for at the point where the oasis is reached and rest is achieved, the composer abandons the motive and it does not appear again.

With the appearance of the text phrase "C'est un bois de cyprès seme de blanches pierres (It is a cypress wood sown with

white tombstones)"³⁵ the music takes on the appearance of a recitative with widely-spaced sustained chords beneath a declamatory vocal line. Though the music accompanying the poem to this point is heavy and in the minor mode, the moment repose is indicated the movement of the vocal part is reduced, the texture of the keyboard thins, and the prevailing key is E major.

After the conclusion of the vocal part, the piano has eleven measures of epilogue which have the characteristic appearance of the composer's songs previously studied, i.e. arpeggiated chords in the right hand over slow-moving notes in the left. These closing measures for the piano are puzzling in one sense. They seem to have no unifying force in the song in that there is no restatement of any harmonic, rhythmic, or melodic material. The explanation, however, is perhaps found in the new tone of the last four lines of the poem. Here the text ceases description and expresses an invitation to the travelers to lie down and sleep. Servières has referred to this as a symphonic poem.³⁶ The expansive musical treatment certainly suggests this possibility, and in fact a later orchestral version by the composer exists.³⁷

³⁵Chausson, "La caravane," Mémoires, p. 45.

³⁶Georges Servières, "Lieder Français, Ernest Chausson," Le Guide Musical, VII, (December 19, 1897). 843-46.

³⁷Barricelli and Weinstein, Ernest Chausson, p. 127.

"Serres chaudes," Opus 24

"Serres chaudes," Opus 24, is a group of five songs written between 1893 and 1896 that use as texts the mysterious and dreamy poems of Maurice Maeterlinck.³⁸ Debussy praised these songs when he said, "These melodies are little dramas with impassioned metaphysics; Chausson's music comments it without making it dull."³⁹

The musical setting of the first song in this group, "Serre chaude," Op. 24, No. 1, possesses such features as accompaniment patterns based upon melodic-rhythmic sequences, interspersed recitative passages and duplication of vocal line in the keyboard part. There is a close relationship between text and the contour of the vocal line in the phrase "un jour de soleil (a day of sunshine)"⁴⁰ where the voice executes an upward leap of a fifth on the word soleil.

The musical score shows three staves. The top staff is the vocal line in G major, with lyrics: "ther un jour de soleil". The middle staff is the piano accompaniment, featuring a sixteenth-note accompaniment pattern. The bottom staff is the bass line. The tempo marking is "1er mouvt".

Fig. 12 - "Serre chaude," Op. 24, No. 1 - measures 62-63

³⁸Ferrari, "Chausson," p. 193.

³⁹Barricelli and Weinstein, Ernest Chausson, p. 122.

⁴⁰Chausson, "Serre chaude," Vingt mélodies, p. 31.

An alternate note e does exist, but the requirements of the text indicate that the A is preferable.

The text does not present a clear sequence of ideas. Symbolism is evident as the poet is seemingly striving to draw some analogies:

"a princess who is hungry," "the ennui of Sailor in the desert," "a dashing hunter becomes nurse," etc. The obscurity of these musings is explained in the lines "Oh! Nothing is in its place."⁴¹

The agitated keyboard part is comprised of a consistent use of sixteenth-note broken chord figures. There are instances of counter-melodies in the accompaniment.



Fig. 13 - "Serre chaude," Op. 24, No 1 - measures 21-22

This consistency is however interrupted by an abrupt change in accompaniment texture of the last stanza of the text. The piano part becomes chordal with the half-note now being the unit of the beat. This occurs following the words "My God, My God" (extending over five measures),⁴² the shift from the descriptive character of text is

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 25-32.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 31-32.

to the question "When will we have the rain and the snow - and the wind in the hot house?" Here the vocal line offers an independent, lyrical melody and the accompaniment closes the song with three measures of material which progress steadily to a clear cadence in B major.

The poem is filled with strong symbolism. It is a marked feature of the text chosen for "Serre d'ennui" - i. e. "Oh this blue boredom in the heart! moonlight that weeps - " There are repeated keyboard patterns which appear in various keys. The three-note right hand pattern creates and maintains motion through the use of the large descending interval.

The musical score for measures 1-3 of "Serre d'ennui" is presented in a grand staff. The tempo is marked "Modéré" and the dynamics start with a piano (*p*) marking. The right hand (treble clef) plays a descending three-note pattern (G4, A4, B4) which is repeated in each measure. The left hand (bass clef) provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4.

Fig. 14 - "Serre d'ennui," Op. 24, No. 2 - measures 1-3

The vocal line is predominantly of scale-wise construction, covers a wide range, and articulates long phrases which express the quiet sadness of the text.

There are intermittent passages comprised of sustained chords offering relief from the otherwise active accompaniment. At these points the interest is concentrated in the voice part and its expression of the words. An example of this texture change occurs with the

appearance of the word "immoblement (motionless)."⁴³ Here the piano sustains a single chord while the voice sings the first four syllables of this descriptive word.

The musical score for measures 26-27 of "Serre d'ennui" shows a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in G major and contains the lyrics "Im - mo - bi - le - ment". The piano accompaniment consists of a sustained chord in the right hand and a single note in the left hand.

Fig. 15 - "Serre d'ennui," Op. 24, No. 2 - measures 26-27

The original texture is resumed following this phrase, but strong counterpoint occurs beneath the text phrase "En mêlant la lune et le ciel (mingling of moon and sky)."⁴⁴ Here the score shows this mingling of two elements by presenting two independent melodies, one in the left hand of the keyboard part and the other in the vocal line.

The musical score for measures 36-37 of "Serre d'ennui" shows a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in G major and contains the lyrics "En mé - lant la lune et le ciel En un san -". The piano accompaniment features two independent melodies: one in the left hand and one in the right hand.

Fig. 16 - "Serre d'ennui," Op. 24, No. 2 - measures 36-37

⁴³Chausson, "Serre d'ennui," Vingt mélodies, p. 35.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 36.

Once more the device of simplifying the keyboard texture is used for the purpose of emphasizing words. This occurs in the last line, "Monotonement comme un rêve" (monotonous as a dream),⁴⁵ which lends a note of finality and resolution to the song.

The vague symbolism of "Lassitude," Op. 24, No. 3, is reflected in the musical treatment. The languor of the poetry is supported by the composer's musical instructions: calme (calm), très lié (very legato). While there is solid harmonic support for the diatonic vocal line, there is, nevertheless, some chromatic alteration. On the other hand the composer has avoided strong dynamic contrasts. Only one time is piano and mezzo piano violated in favor of mezzo forte, and here only for one measure. It is significant that the keyboard texture at this point is at its highest pitch level because it underscores the dramatic climax when the text describes the singer's futility and dilemma and compares his lips to eyes, blind and cold. Other musical details supporting the mood of weariness are the F#-minor tonality; the somber lower registers of the piano; and the low F# pedal around which the harmony pivots. The vocal range is from C#¹ to F#². The greatest moment of climax in the vocal part is at the words "Indifferent et sans une flamme d'envie (Indifferent and without a spark of envy)."⁴⁶ The text is given prominence by having the voice sustain a high

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶ Chausson, "Lassitude," Vingt mélodies, p. 39.

tessitura accompanied by chords in the piano part which rise progressively by half steps in a series of crescendi.

In "Fauves las," Op. 24, No. 4, the passions of the poet refer to his emotions as: "Sins like yellow dogs, cross-eyed hyenas of my hatreds, lambs of temptations." Although the texture may appear thin, the sustaining pedal creates a thickness nonetheless. Whereas the keyboard part duplicates the vocal line much of the time, these duplications are often concealed within the texture and the left hand often presents melodic material of its own.

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics under the vocal line are: "et les yeux mi-clos Par-mi les". The piano part consists of a dense texture of notes, with a descending arpeggio in the right hand and a melodic line in the left hand. The score is for measures 7-8.

Fig. 17 - "Fauves las," Op. 24, No. 4 - measures 7-8

Pedal point is often used, sometimes in the lowest part, sometimes in an upper voice. Arpeggios are introduced in the song's final measures. A significant thinning of texture takes place following these descending arpeggios to the text phrase "Lentes une a una (slowly one by one)."⁴⁷ At this point, the composer discards the thick harmony

⁴⁷Chausson, "Fauves las," Vingt mélodies, pp.44-45.

in preference to a single \underline{F} which appears in a figuration spanning two octaves.

Fig. 18 - "Fauves las," Op. 24, No. 4 - measures 31-32

From here to the close of the song the slow-paced harmony and this thin texture depict the moving away slowly of the "lambs of temptation."

"Oraison," Op. 24, No. 5, is a song of entirely different order than anything examined thus far. The text is a prayer of supplication. The structure is through-composed but it possesses remarkable unity. This unity can be attributed to the constant reiteration of a three-measure musical idea in the piano part.

Fig. 19 - "Oraison," Op. 24, No. 5 - measure 1-3

This musical idea is repeated not only in its original form but is transposed to various keys. After four statements the figure is abbreviated to a two-measure unit before once more returning to the original three-measure form. The time signature is $2/2$ and the basic unity of movement is a quarter note. This quarter-note movement appears usually in an inside part, and serves as the rhythmic motivation of the phrase. The suggestion of organ texture is imploring the Almighty to see the misery, the weariness and solitude of the singer, petitioning the Lord for illumination and joy.

The style of the vocal line is similar to recitative, and the vocal line and the piano part cadence simultaneously in the opening section. Beginning with measure thirteen the vocal phrase begins at mid-point of the preceding instrumental phrase and ends in the middle of the next instrumental phrase, resulting in overlapping of movement.

La lune é - teinte et l'au - be - noi - re; Et fé - con.

Fig. 20 - "Oraison," Op. 24, No. 5 - measures 17-20

This results in greater sense of movement. The song is a set of vocal variations above a relatively constant series of instrumental phrases.

The tonality is E-flat minor and this key is maintained more constantly than in many of Chausson's songs.

The composer allows the voice to develop several powerful climaxes. One occurs in measures ten to twelve with the words "Et sur une morte (and the sun on a dead person),"⁴⁸ where the voice sustains a high tessitura above a forte dynamic marking. This moment of climax is approached by a series of ascending phrases and the energy expressed in this climax is allowed to subside by a slowly descending series of vocal phrases. The first half of the song comprises a ten-measure crescendo which is followed by a ten-measure diminuendo. A similar dynamic arrangement is presented in the second half of "Oraison." The final climax is subtle in that it is sustained, the tessitura is more consistently high, and there are no wide leaps in the vocal line. The text in this climactic phrase "Eclairer mon âme lasse (lighten the weariness of my soul)"⁴⁹ leads the music in a gradual downward progression to a decisive tonic cadence portraying rest and resolution.

The five songs of Opus 24 constitute Chausson's first song cycle. The earlier songs had all been unrelated compositions. Although the tonalities of "Serres chaudes" are not closely related, there is a continuity of mood, a consistency of poetic style and musical

⁴⁸Chausson, "Oraison," Vingt mélodies, p. 46.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 48.

texture, and finally quotations of material from the first song of the cycle (Figure 21) in the last song (Figure 22) which gives a roundness and unity to the over-all form of this group of songs.

Plus lent (grave)

Quand au - rons - nous la pluie Et la

Fig. 21 - "Serre chaude," Op. 24, No. 1 - measures 70-72

Pas trop lent

CHANT

mp

Voussavez, Seigneur, ma mi - sè - re! Voyez

Pas trop lent

PIANO

mp

Fig. 22 - "Oraison," Op. 24, No. 5 - measures 1-4

Martin Cooper recognized this characteristic in this statement, "The 'Serres chaudes' (Opus 24), finally, allow but rare

moments of calm and relaxation, as the texture becomes so heavy that it has been described as an unrelieved elegiac atmosphere."⁵⁰

"Trois Lieder," Opus 27

The three songs of Opus 27 are to poems by Camille Mauclair. The first, "Les heures," Op. 27, No. 1, is a study in melancholy resignation. The tone of the poem is mystical and describes the presence of death and the waning hours of life.

Chausson writes the song with the use of a recurrent rhythmic figure on the octave A in the right hand (Figure 23). This ostinato figure is present throughout. Other material in the piano part is limited to single-note countermelodies in the left hand and occasional notes which fill out the rather sparse harmony. The inclusion of melodic material in inner voices is apparent.

The musical score for "Les heures" consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, starting with a rest in measure 1 and a melodic line in measure 2. The middle staff is the right-hand piano part, featuring a continuous ostinato figure of eighth notes on the octave A. The bottom staff is the left-hand piano part, consisting of single-note countermelodies. The tempo is "Lent et résigné" and the mood is "doux". The dynamic is "p". The lyrics are "Les pâ-les heu - res, sous la lu - ne,".

Fig. 23 - "Les heures," Op. 27, No. 1 - measures 1-2

⁵⁰Cooper, French Music, p. 63.

The repeated rhythmic figure with the slow-paced melody of the left hand has such an unchanging regularity that perhaps it suggests the passing of time, the clicking of a clock, or the swinging of a pendulum. This device together with the D minor tonality lends a haunting element to the song. Within the short twenty-one measure span of this song Chausson has effectively expressed the text using minimum means. The range is limited to one octave; the tempo indication is Lent et r sign  (slow and resigned); and the dynamic level is pianissimo throughout. The most noteworthy feature of the vocal line is the speech-like declamation which is preserved with great care.

"About it Mauclair himself declared: 'How he has enriched with all his genius this humble, little plaint, and how powerful the music is!'"⁵¹

The second song of the set, "Ballade," Op. 27, No. 2, abounds in imagery. It is a seascape, with references to ships, birds, and cottages along the shore. Metaphors which liken the ships' sails to wings attending angels add an element of impressionism. Chausson sets the mood of the song by establishing a rhythmic pattern which is repeated in various keys. This pattern is characterized by subtle syncopation and is created in a four-part keyboard texture. The syncopation results when the uppermost of these four parts has

⁵¹Camille Mauclair, La Religion de la Musique, p. 74, cited in Jean-Pierre Barricelli and Leo Weinstein, Ernest Chausson, (Norman, Okla., 1955), p. 124.

rests on counts one and four (ordinarily the strong beats of the 6/4 measure) followed by half notes.

Calmé *p*

Quand les an-ges se sont per-dus Qui s'en ve-naient sur la mer

Fig. 24 - "Ballade," Op. 27, No. 2 - measures 1-4

This keyboard texture continues for twenty-six measures. In measure twenty-seven the text phrase, "Et ils ont dit qu'etaient perdus, Les anges attendus (and they who are lost, say the angels wait),"⁵² Chausson has responded to the text by a sudden change in keyboard texture. In measures twenty-seven through thirty the keyboard sustains only two chords through these measures while the voice delivers the words in a declamatory manner.

⁵² Chausson, "Ballade," *Vingt mélodies*, p. 53.

The image shows two systems of musical notation. The first system, marked *mf*, includes a vocal line with the lyrics "Et ils ont dit qu'étaient per - dus — Les" and a piano accompaniment with sustained chords. The second system, marked *p*, includes a vocal line with the lyrics "an - ges at - ten - dus." and a piano accompaniment with moving lines.

Fig. 25 - "Ballade," Op. 27, No. 2 - measures 27-31

At the conclusion of this text the piano returns to its original texture for six measures. The second keyboard texture (see Figure 25) returns when a similar text appears "Et ils ont dit qu'étaient perdus, les vaisseaux attendus (and they who are lost say, the ships wait)."⁵³ Not only is the keyboard texture the same but the contour of the vocal line is also similar. Although the second phrase is at a higher pitch level, the dominating skips of an upward fifth and downward fourth are the same. The rhythm in the first measure of each of these phrases

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 54.

is treated differently. This rhythmic feature contradicts the established subdivision of the measure by six equal notes. This has the effect of demanding the listener's attention by way of contradicting the established rhythmic subdivision into six equal counts.

At measure forty-one there is a return to the original keyboard texture which continues until the text speaks of the mingling of the various elements of the seascape--wings of veils, ships' sails, and angels. Here the accompaniment takes on an entirely new appearance characterized by descending arpeggios. Perhaps the composer's purpose was to depict the fluttering motion of the angel's wings and the ship's sails.

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is a vocal line in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. The lyrics are "Et mê - lant les ai - les, les voi - les,". The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment, also in G major and 3/4 time. It features descending arpeggios in the right hand and a steady bass line in the left hand.

Fig. 26 - "Ballade," Op. 27, No. 2 - measures 54-55

The third of the three Maclair poems, "Les Couronnes," Op. 27, No. 3, tells of a young girl who holds three wreaths: one is symbolic of her soul; one is to amuse her; and the third represents the one she loves--a handsome knight. She is pictured standing

sadly, and as she realizes that he no longer passes by, she allows the wreaths to fall.

"In 'Les couronnes,' Op. 27, No. 3, Chausson tried to parallel the gracious naiveté of the text by adopting the free gait of a popular song. To be sure, however his 'popular song' exhibits careful workmanship and a rich flow of nuances."⁵⁴ The song is unpretentious; the music is thin-textured, slow, melancholic. The tempo marking is calme (calm). The character of the vocal line is more declamatory than melodic and covers a compass of an octave and a third. It is scalewise in its movement, and the phrases are not fragmented but appear as clear units.

The texture of the accompaniment is varied, predominantly chordal with hands widely separated. There are instances of melodic material in the keyboard part. The most interesting rhythmic detail is syncopation. All of these elements appear in the piano interlude.



Fig. 27 - "Les Couronnes," Op. 27, No. 3 - measures 30-33

⁵⁴Barricelli and Weinstein, Ernest Chausson, pp. 124-125.

The emotional climax of the song is reached on the words "Beau chevalier! (Handsome prince!)." ⁵⁵ This phrase appears twice and each time is separated from surrounding vocal material by the piano part. The connecting piano music functions to build intensity toward this text phrase. This is achieved through sequential phrases consisting of syncopation, rising pitch register, and shortened note values. This climactic piano music reaches its apex in the interlude where the aforementioned musical details are repeated at higher pitch levels.

An example of tone painting is to be observed in his setting of the final text phrase "A laissé tomber les couronnes (let the wreaths fall)." ⁵⁶ Here the vocal line descends by scale steps from C² to E flat¹ and this descending passage is underscored by the appearance of longer note values.

In discussing the three songs in Opus 27 Georges Servières observes that these melodies "are perfect in form and possess an inexactness which contrasts with the feeling of definiteness that the older lieder by the same composer express." ⁵⁷

⁵⁵Chausson, "Les couronnes," Vingt mélodies, p. 57.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 58.

⁵⁷Georges Servières, "Lieder Français, Ernest Chausson," Le Guide Musical, VII. (December 19, 1897), 843-46.

"Chansons de Shakespeare," Opus 28

Poems by Shakespeare, translated into French by Bouchor comprise the texts for the three songs of "Chansons de Shakespeare," Opus 28, written between 1890 and 1897.⁵⁸

The song, "Chanson d'Ophélie," Op. 28, No. 1, in E minor, is only twenty-one measures long and resembles an opera scene. The text, from Hamlet, is much like a recitative and the form of the song is through-composed. The vocal range is an octave and a third. True to Chausson's practice, the declamation preserves with remarkable accuracy the speech accent. The chief musical element functioning to unify the song is the scale-wise movement of the piano part. This is seen in the very first measures when the piano sounds a major third and this interval moves by scalesteps for seven measures in a descending phrase.

Lent *p*

Il est mort ay-ant bien souff-ert, Ma-da-me;

Fig. 28 - "Chanson d'Ophélie," Op. 28, No. 1 - measures 1-4

⁵⁸Ferrari, "Chausson," p. 192.

This scale-wise movement is continued, sometimes in a single note arrangement and sometimes in multiple parts. There is little melodic character to the vocal line. Tone painting is evidenced in the song by the constant use of descending phrase lines in the piano part conveying the idea of death and the grave. The brief, touching text "discloses poignantly ... as the bereaved heroine likens 'his' death to that of a thousand flowers which have drunk the tears of a sincere love."⁵⁹

In "Chansom d'Amour," Op. 28, No. 2, with text from Measure For Measure, Chausson returns in "Chanson d'amour" to a style feature common to his earlier songs, that of varying the subdivisions of the beat. This gradual increase in the number of subdivisions of the count seems to coincide with the increase in dramatic tension of the text and the overall musical plan. The song begins in D minor in a 2/4 measure marked Modéré. The accompaniment is chordal and rather widely spaced resulting in a thin texture. The vocal part in this first section covers a wide range (one octave) from F¹ to F², considering the brevity of this passage. The vocal material has strong melodic character and the words admonish the lover to take away those lips whose kisses would conceal truth. As the text becomes more insistent, the composer introduces a sixteenth note configuration which intensifies the tension of the text. The count is further

⁵⁹ Barricelli and Weinstein, Ernest Chausson, p. 129.

subdivided into six notes per count and finally to eight, building toward the final text phrase "Sceaux d'amour qui furent posés En vain sur tes yeux ta bouche (Seals of love which were placed in vain on your eyes and your mouth)."⁶⁰ The intensity thus created is allowed to subside and the song closes with a four-bar postlude, the main function of which is to diminish to pianissimo and affirm the tonic D minor tonality.

The key of "Chanson de Clown," Op. 28, No. 3, is E minor. It not only begins in this key but the beginning and ending of the major sections are in E minor. The text is a lament of a person who is anticipating death and does not want friends to weep over him. The morbid element is apparent in the poem extracted from Twelfth Night and the mood is retained in the Bouchor version. This text setting is declamatory and is particularly persuasive in the first score "Fuis, mon âme, fuis! Je meurs sous les traits de la plus cruelle des vierges (Flee! I die under the darts of the most cruel of virgins)."⁶¹ The setting apart of the first word, "Fuis," on a single high note gives the word an element of command. This is followed by a second command more persuasive than the first, with the words "Viens, O mort! (Come, O death!)"⁶² where the word of command is on a yet

⁶⁰Chausson, "Chanson d'amour," Vingt mélodies, p. 66.

⁶¹Chausson, "Chanson de clown," Vingt mélodies, p. 59.

⁶²Ibid., p. 59.

higher pitch. The piano part is chordal throughout and contains no melodic material and little rhythmic variety. The dynamic level varies from pianissimo to forte but changes of tempo and dynamic level are widely separated so that there is no great contrast. Tempo moderato is maintained throughout.

The vocal line abounds in chromatic alterations. The vocal part of "Chanson de clown" is notated in the F clef, which seems curious in view of the fact that the other two songs in the set are in the usual G clef. In fact, this is the only instance of the use of this clef for voice in all of Chausson's songs, suggesting that it was intended for male voice exclusively. Certainly the text requires a male point of view.

These haunting settings of forlorn love and death are particularly poignant in that they lie so close to Chausson's own demise. Each song possesses a "'passed' quality, passed in time and in hope."⁶³

"Deux poèmes," Opus 34

The two poems which comprise Opus 34 are by Paul Verlaine. No. 2 of this set, "Le chevalier malheur" is not available (see page 8). No. 1, "La chanson bien douce," written in 1898,⁶³ is a poem expressing in a light tone the virtues of kindness of speech.

⁶³Ferrari, "Chausson," p. 193.

The poet admonishes the reader to listen to the wise song, the sweet song: that words expressing bitterness and hatred die with the one who utters them, and that words of kindness are eternal.

"La chanson bien douce" shows several notable characteristics: broken chord accompaniment, ostinato-like repetitions, consistent sixteenth-note divisions of the count, and syllabic declamation of the text. Because of these above mentioned accompanying devices and the use of pedal, the keyboard texture is quite thick, and there is an unrelenting motion created by the consistent use of sixteenth notes. A musical element which sustains movement and interest is the melodic content of the keyboard part. This at times doubles with the vocal part, and often is highly independent.

There are no prominent examples of tone painting in this song. The rippling sixteenth-note accompaniment is suggestive of that line of text which compares song to a ripple of water over moss. This rippling accompaniment ceases only with the last two phrases of the song, "The soul that suffers without anger and as its meaning is clear." These serve as a summary to the preceding lines of the poem. The composer allows the listener's attention to focus on this text phrase by offering no distraction from the piano part.

Fig. 29 - "La chanson bien douce," Op. 34, No. 1 - measures 51-53

With the final text phrase "Écoutez la chanson bien sage (listen to the very wise song)"⁶⁴ attention is directed backward to the initial admonition of the text and the composer returns to the rippling accompaniment for the closing section.

"Deux mélodies," Opus 36

The two melodies in Opus 36 composed one year prior to Chausson's death, are "Cantique à l'épouse" and "Dans la forêt du charme de l'enchantement." Albert Jounet has furnished the poem for

⁶⁴ Chausson, "La chanson bien douce," Vingt mélodies, p. 75.

"Cantique à l'épouse," Op. 36, No. 1. The poet addresses his spouse and compares her features to various elements of nature. He compares their love to the vastness of the valleys and forests. The très calme tempo marking with piano dynamic marking throughout depicts the serenity of the text.

The texture from the beginning is thick and the harmony is chromatic. The accompanimental texture is consistent for fifteen measures until the words "o plutôt ne chante pas (or perhaps do not sing)"⁶⁵ seem to evoke a change of texture. Chausson introduces a melodic line in the piano part which prepares the way for this change in the accompanimental texture.

The image shows a musical score for three staves. The top staff is the vocal line, with lyrics 'ro - se - ou plu - tôt - ne chante'. The middle and bottom staves are the piano accompaniment. The piano part is divided into two sections by a vertical line. The first section has a thick, chromatic texture with many notes and chords. The second section has a thinner texture with fewer notes and a more melodic line in the piano part.

Fig. 30 - "Cantique à l'épouse," Op. 36, No. 1 - measures 16-18

A thinner texture accompanies the following lines in which the poet asks

⁶⁵ Chausson, "Cantique à l'épouse," Vingt mélodies, p. 77.

the beloved to rest on his bosom. The composer responds with a thinner texture to the text which expresses such emotions as quietness, happiness, and melancholy. Once more strong melodic features appear in the piano part serving as a bridge between the material previously discussed and the closing section which speaks of the profound, religious, mystical grandeur of love. The closing lines of the poem compare the love of two married people with elements of nature and profound silence.

With the occurrence of the word "pensées (thoughts)" there appears in the uppermost part of the piano a highly independent melody which expresses deep serenity.

The image shows a musical score for three parts: voice and piano. The voice part is on a single staff with lyrics: "pen - sées Comme une vallée immen -". The piano part consists of two staves (treble and bass clef). A specific melodic line in the upper register of the piano part is highlighted with a bracket and a curved line, showing a descending sequence of eighth notes.

Fig. 31 - "Cantique à l'épouse," Op. 36, No. 1 - measures 44-46

This melodic idea is characterized by a descending arrangement of eighth notes. Although at no point in the remaining measures is there an exact repetition of this melody, similar groupings of eighth notes are prevalent in the entire closing section, which sustain the attitude of calm until the final cadence.

"Dans la forêt du charme et de l'enchantement," Op. 36, No. 2, is the setting of a twelve-line poem by Jean Moréas. The text abounds in references to the supernatural → fairies, gnomes and their magic rites. The poet recalls dreams of this wondrous forest of enchantment, and although he realizes that this place exists only in his dreams, he yearns for it. This element of magic and enchantment is expressed musically by an unrelenting piano accompaniment marked pas vite (rather fast). The perpetual movement, the piano marking, and the rapid light articulation of the thirty-second note groupings, are maintained throughout the song, losing some momentum only in the last eight measures.

The song begins and ends in the key of G minor, but the key center shifts constantly throughout the song. The text is presented in a crisp, light declamatory manner with several examples of tone painting. One example occurs when the singer realizes that these wonders exist only in his dreams and he cries: "Hélas! (Alas!)." ⁶⁶ Here the singer is required to sustain the second syllable for two full measures on the highest notes of the song. The text to this point has been declaimed in the lower part of the vocal range.

Another instance where the composer seems to illustrate the text is on the words "je le pleure (I weep for them)" ⁶⁷ where the voice

⁶⁶Chausson, "Dans la forêt," Vingt mélodies, p. 84.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 86.

descends a diminished fifth to the song's lowest note portraying falling tears or extreme sadness and heaviness.

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

The foregoing study of the songs of Ernest Chausson makes it possible to offer some generalizations with respect to his compositional style. There are certain musical devices peculiar to Chausson which have their origins in his musical environment and the influences of his time. Rhythmic diversity, harmonic richness, free modulations, varied textures and free formal structures comprise his musical language. The study of his songs has revealed specific observations in many of these areas.

The manner in which Chausson subdivides counts within the measures may be observed in almost any one of the songs herein examined. In "Chanson d'amour" the composer breaks down the measures into progressively smaller time units. This process develops as the dramatic tension increases. Cross-rhythms are frequently encountered as the 5/5 in "Le colibri" and the 2/1 in "Apaisement." Polyrhythm is noted in "Printemps triste" where the voice and left hand perform in 4/4 and the right hand in 12/8 (Figure 9). There is at least one example of hemiola. This occurs in "La cigale," measure forty-four, where in a 6/8 meter the voice moves in three-quarter notes while the piano arpeggiates in six-eighth notes. Ostinato-like rhythmic figures abound in these songs. An excellent

example of this technique is to be seen in "Les papillons" (Figure 4) and in "Les heures" (Figure 1). Harmonic complexity is one of Chausson's distinguishing characteristics. He was never happy about his own musical development and as early as 1889 he could write of his own songs: "The mere creme of music! Harmonic clashes that may well be pretty but are intoxicating and inervating and lead to impotence".⁶⁸

Chromaticisms abound, being observed in purely melodic context as well as in an harmonic frame of reference. The use of shifting harmonies about a sustained pedal, sometimes in the lowest part and sometimes in an upper voice, are often to be seen. The introduction to "La Caravane" is an excellent example of a traditional usage of pedal point (i.e. in the lowest voice, Figure 1). An example of pedal point in an inner voice may be seen in "Fauves las" (Figure 29).

Modulations to distantly related keys have a particular fascination to Chausson. Examples of these are to be seen in "Nocturne." Although the composer has been criticized for having over-loaded his musical material with modulations, his fluency of harmonic treatment is effective. In Cooper's book the following statement is interesting: "These perpetually intertwining modulations, which come and go, writhe and seem to be either fortuitous or merely clumsy, do nevertheless end by creating a web of sound which ... taken all in all,

⁶⁸Barricelli and Weinstein, Ernest Chausson, p. 64.

lends itself better than any other to the expression of melancholy and meditation."⁶⁹

The variety of textures in Chausson's songs has its basis in rhythmic diversity, for whenever a composer presents a variety of rhythmic subdivisions within a small span, the result is complex texture. Other factors contributing to this are counterpoint and imitation. There are several passages where contrasts of textures are to be observed: "Serre d'ennui" (Figure 24), "Ballade" (Figures 25 and 26) and "La chanson bien douce" (Figure 29) show this detail.

The recitative technique as observed in the initial phrases of "Amour d'Anton" have a decisive effect upon texture, where the accompaniment is sustained and quiet, and the vocal line declamatory and non-lyrical.

It is not unusual to encounter passages and even entire songs which are so active and unpianistic as to resemble an orchestral reduction. The extended song "Chanson perpétuelle" demonstrates this. The effects of contrapuntal writing upon texture may be seen in "Chanson perpétuelle" (Figure 2).

With respect to Chausson's treatment of the voice, a considerable conservatism with respect to ranges is a feature. In general the demands range from near an octave to an octave and a fifth. "Hébé" requires a range of only a Major 7th, whereas "La cigale" requires an octave and a fifth. An interesting feature in "Nanny" is the manner in which

⁶⁹Cooper, French Music, p. 65.

the composer confines the singer to a range of an octave until the very last phrase. Here for expressive purposes the voice descends below its previously defined lower extremity.

There is a variety in phrase lengths. Whereas it is not unusual to find extended lyrical phrases, Chausson frequently fragments a text phrase by the insertion of rests for expressive purposes. "Les papillons" offers several examples of this technique. The long phrase may be observed in "Serenade Italienne." Figure 15 shows a phrase from "Apaisement" which offers a special challenge to the singer, not only for its length, but its dynamic requirements.

A compositional detail which is often cited as a major factor with respect to the merits of a composer's vocal works is the mutual independence of the vocal and piano parts. At this point Chausson follows a middle course. There are passages in which the vocal melody is doubled, note for note, in the accompaniment. The vocal part achieves considerable independence in "Printemps triste" and in "Serenade."

With regard to form, Chausson obviously preferred the through-composed. It appears that Chausson was responding to texts he had chosen. On the other hand it is possible that a growing reliance upon this form was a manifestation of maturity, for only his earliest songs conform to strophic and three-part arrangements.

Sometimes a song is introduced by piano music, sometimes not. There are instances of keyboard interludes and epilogues, but frequently the piano does nothing more than to briefly establish a pitch center. There are instances where the piano introduction anticipates the vocal melody. This is the case in "Nanny," "L'aveu" and "La cigale." Epilogues have several functions. The closing piano music in "La caravane" has no relationship to what has gone before. Its function is apparently that of a commentary on the final lines of poetry. The postlude of "Chanson d'amour," only four bars in length, functions to re-establish the tonic key.

Chausson frequently responds to particularly picturesque words and phrases of texts by assigning to them musical illustration or descriptions. This might be called "tone painting." Some examples of this technique are butterflies in "Les papillons," the falling leaf in "La dernière feuille," the waves in "Sérénade Italienne," and the falling wreaths in "Les couronnes." Another type of musical illustration, one which is more related to declamation than description, is seen in "Sérénade" (Figure 17). Two similar examples are to be seen in "La cigale," in the announcement of spring, and in the final phrase where the voice ascends to B^2 on the word "Dieux (Gods)."

Stevens observes that Chausson's songs exhibit first the influence of Franck and the German song writers, later the influence

of Debussy.⁷⁰ This analysis confirms the observation. The chromaticism and clarity of form in Opus 2 contrast starkly with the moody austere settings of the late Opera 24, 28, 34 and 36. While, as Cooper states, Chausson never departs from the Franck-Wagnerian harmonic framework,⁷¹ one notes in his last songs a transparency of texture and a lightness of musical style that is new. It may be that he was prompted by the allusive nature of the poetry, or perhaps Chausson heeded the advice of his friend Debussy:

You bring such heavy pressure to bear on your musical ideas that they dare not present themselves in their natural guises, for fear of not being suitably dressed . . . a theory I would like to see you lose in your preoccupation with the inner parts.⁷²

In a word, Chausson, who turned to composition late and self-consciously, had at last found his voice.

⁷⁰Cecil Forsyth, "France," A History of Song, edited by Denis Stevens (New York, 1961), p. 214.

⁷¹Cooper, French Music, p. 66.

⁷²Ibid., p. 64.

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