THE COMPOSER AS READER: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TWO SETTINGS OF PAUL VERLAINE'S "GREEN"

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Introduction

Claude Debussy and Gabriel Fauré are two of the most prolific and well-known composers of French art song in the late nineteenth-century. Their connections to the literary world, particularly that of the nineteenth-century poets, extends from an appreciation for particular poets and works, to personal relationships with the authors themselves. Both Debussy and Fauré were inspired by the Symbolist poet Paul Verlaine, and set many of his poems in their collections of songs. The two composers have set many of the same poems by Verlaine. A study of their settings of the same text may illuminate some details about Verlaine and his text that may have been previously overlooked, as well as some similarities and differences in the styles of the two composers.

In order to perform an analysis of these works, we must consider the lens through which we view the analysis. This lens could be national or political, from the viewpoint of a comparison and investigation of the influences of music from other parts of Europe, a more personal lens, through which these pieces are viewed as embodiments of the individual composers' ideas and philosophies about music and the compositional process, or, in the case of the art song, a literary lens, through which we can view these pieces as intrinsically tied to the text which comprises a large part of the work itself.

The primary intention of this present analysis is to compare two vocal works by two different composers, Debussy and Fauré; which used the same text, Paul Verlaine's "Green" from his collection *Romances sans Paroles* (published 1873). These two pieces are Debussy's "Green," the first of his "Aquarelles" from the collection *Ariettes Oubliées,* L.60 no.5 (published in 1888), and Fauré's "Green," from *De Venise,* Op.58 no.3 (published in 1891). An intensive investigation of the text is necessary, and will provide a source for some of the unifying

characteristics between the two pieces. As this is a text-based analysis, the lens through which we can most clearly view these two specific pieces in terms of compositional style as a tool for poetic interpretation is a literary one.

The association of Paul Verlaine with the Symbolist movement, as well as the importance of the role of the reader in the poetic process (a significant component of literary Symbolism), create a condition where the composer, regardless of his personal artistic stance, is a participant in a Symbolist work. In this condition, the composer acts as the "reader" of the text and the musical setting becomes a means through which the listener is able to understand the poem from the composer's point of view.

Understanding the composer's point of view, in this case, should not be taken too literally as a clear message sent from the composer and received by the listener exactly as the composer intended it to be received. To take this literally would raise some very difficult dilemmas about assuming the intentions of the composer as well as the complexities of musical perception. This analysis is not concerned with speculating about how Debussy and Fauré intended the audience to understand their works, but rather how the musical decisions that the two composers made may be linked to particular elements of the text and how those decisions yielded two unique musical works. Thus, the idea of the composer's reading expressed through music should be viewed more as a metaphor for what some claim is an essential component of Symbolist poetry: the reader participates in the writing process through reading the text. Or, put another way, the reader completes the poem by interpreting the text. This is the means for comparison of these two pieces, and may a possible answer to the question: *how does each composer interpret or complete the poem via the composition of his own musical "reading"?*

This analysis is conducted using the text/music connection (the "literary lens") as the means for understanding the musical structures that are present in the two pieces. The analytic tools that are used in order to discover these musical structures are many. Some are drawn from scholarly analyses of pieces from the same time period or other works by Debussy. As there have been few formal analyses performed on the works of Fauré, I will implement some of the same analytic devices used by other analysts on Debussy's works in order to obtain a clear comparison of results while simultaneously uncovering their effectiveness when applied to the music of Fauré. Whether or not the same analytic methods yeild similar results (or are effective at all) when applied to Fauré's piece may lend some insight into his musical style as well. Due to the often problematic nature posed by analyzing Debussy's and Fauré's music, particularly in terms of harmony, some of these analytic tools will be less effective than others. Because there are few if any theories that can provide complete and accurate representations of the pitch-related aspects of these works, various analytic methods are combined.

Some of the analytic tools that will be employed in this analysis are functional/tonal harmonic theory, the recently published transformational theory of Richard Cohn from his book *Audacious Euphony: Chromaticism and the Triad's Second Nature* (2012), pitch-class set theory, and the form-based ideas of Richard S. Parks from his book *The Music of Claude Debussy* (1989). The analysis of these two songs from the viewpoint of the composer as reader presents some interesting links between music and text as well as the compositional similarities and differences between the two composers. The comparison of these two pieces using multiple means of analysis will, without a doubt, raise some interesting questions as well, and may illuminate some pathways for further study of musical and literary Symbolism and French song in the late nineteenth-century.

Fauré and Debussy in Context

Though Debussy and Fauré were two of the most significant and influential composers in France in the late nineteenth-century, their lives and careers differed greatly. Their distinct musical personalities have lent them unique reputations. There are multiple reasons why Debussy has received more attention from theorists and musicologists than Fauré, many of which are likely related to the artistic ideals of the two composers and their assumed levels of compositional ingenuity. Several unifying characteristics place the two composers as contemporaries within the musical and artistic trends of late ninteenth-century France as well.

We should not let the fact that Debussy is favored in academic study undercut Fauré's significance as a composer, teacher, and creative visionary. Fauré impression on Western music, particularly in France, is significant . As Paul Landormy and Herter Norton write, "In France, Fauré is considered by the initiate as one of the most eminent among the composers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and they do not hesitate to place him almost – if not exactly – on the same level with Debussy."[1] In 1924, after returning to the United States from studying in Paris, Aaron Copland wrote, "Perhaps no other composer has ever been so generally ignored outside his own country, while at the same time, enjoying an unquestionably eminent reputation at home. It is no exaggeration to say that in France, the enlightened musical public considers him the greatest living composer."[2]

Debussy's fame with the musical public outside of France is often attributed to his many musical innovations, particularly in his use of harmony and pitch collections other than the tonal diatonic collection. Though Fauré's stylistic maturity is said to have developed over a longer

[1]Paul Landormy and M. D. Herter Norton, "Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)." *The Musical Quarterly,* 17, no. 3 (1931), 300.
[2]Aaron Copland, "Gabriel Fauré, a Neglected Master." *The Musical Quarterly*, 75, no. 4 (1991), 48.

period of time than Debussy's, most of his music is characterized by his progressive handling of harmony and tonality. Jean-Michel Nectoux explains that "Without completely destroying the sense of tonality, and with a sure intuitive awareness of what limits ought to be retained, he freed himself from its restrictions."[3] Though Debussy's handling of tonality is frequently described in a similar way, his liberation from tonal restrictions is often considered to be more drastic.

In discussing the compositional styles of Fauré and (most especially) Debussy, it is necessary to mention their frequent and often controversial associations with the term *Impressionism*. Although the term, when applied to music, is most often associated with Debussy, it is speculated that it was first use in a musical context was in attempt to describe the music of Fauré, Duparc, Chabrier, and Chausson.[4] The term *Impressionism*, originally used to describe the works of painters like Claude Monet, has a long and complex history in its application to music. Edward J. Dent's definition of musical impressionism cites musical phenomena with which it is associated, including an ill-defined and fragmentary melodic line, an objective to produce a general timbral effect rather than a clear succession of notes; and harmonies which may have formerly been considered dissonant, but are considered consonant within the late nineteenth-century context.[5] Although Dent's definition may be a fairly accurate description of the musical traits to which the term *Impressionism* is often ascribed, it has not been used systematically or consistently, and is likely a poor term by which to define the music of Debussy or Fauré. In addition to its inconsistent usage, it is more frequently associated with Debussy's orchestral works than his vocal works, and to works that appear after the premier of

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[3] Jean-Michel Nectoux, "Fauré, Gabriel (Urbain)." *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed September 20, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/09366.

[4] Ronald L. Byrnside, "Musical Impressionism: the Early History of the Term," *The Musical Quarterly* 64, no. 4, (1980), 523.

[5] Edward J. Dent, "Impressionism," A. Eaglefield Hull, ed., *A Dictionary of Modern Music and Musicians* (london, 1924), quoted in Ronald L. Byrnside, "Musical Impressionism: the Early History of the Term," *The Musical Quarterly* 64, no. 4, (1980), 526.

Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune in 1894. For these reasons, it seems an inappropriate term to apply to either of the settings of "Green." Another term, *Symbolism*, which is borrowed from the literary world may be much more appropriately incorporated into the discussion of these pieces.

French *Symbolism* was first a poetic movement that began in 1886 with the publication of Jean Moréas's "Le Symbolisme" in *Le Figaro littéraire*. The term *Symbolism* was later attributed to French music composed around the same time that exhibited many of the characteristics that had come to define the movement; such as the use of metaphor and allusion, as opposed to literal imagery. Although there are common characteristics of Symbolist writing and music, it may be difficult to find agreement on any concise definition; as Patrick McGuiness explains, "It was commonplace, even among Symbolists themselves, to claim that there were as many Symbolisms as there were Symbolists, and the critic looking for a stable literary doctrine, or even a set of agreed on principles would be disappointed."[6]

Symbolism in literature and music may seem contradictory to more abstract definitions of the term. McGuiness explains the significant difference between the ordinary and literary definitions of the term by stating that:

> 'Symbolism' in its ordinary usage refers to the system of association whereby something concrete 'stand for' something abstract . . . the mark of a successful symbol in the ordinary sense is that this process should be instantaneous, even automatic, and that it should go unnoticed. . . Symbol*ist* writing is a different matter. Indeed [Tancrède de] Visan suggests that it is the opposite: cryptic, elusive, suggestive, the poetry, prose, and theatre produced under the aegis of the

[6] Patrick McGuinness, "Symbolism." in *The Cambridge History of French Literature*. First edition. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 479.

> Symbolist movement strives to be anything but an automatic transaction between writer and reader, or between playwright and spectator. Instead, that space opened up in the poem between its words and images and the way they are interpreted is where what we might call the 'poetry' takes place.[7]

Symbolism in music functions in a similar manner. Symbol*ist* music is intended to suggest images or ideas to be interpreted by the listener, as opposed to imitative sounds that suggest specific, clearly defined and automatically identifiable idea the way a symbol would in the usual sense.

The identification of Debussy and other nineteenth-century French composers as Symbolists meant to disclose another side of an ongoing debate regarding this music. In the context of these two pieces, the Symbolist stance seems a reasonable one to take; not only were the two pieces composed prior to the popularization of musical Impressionism, but Paul Verlaine, the author of the text, is considered one of the primary proponents of French Symbolism.

McGuiness cites the two poets most often associated with the Symbolist movement as Mallarmé and Verlaine, who he refers to as "a sort of absentee father who, when interviewed, always claimed not to know what 'Symbolisme' meant."[8] The analogy of "fatherhood" is an appropriate one to explain Verlaine's association to Symbolism, as his writing was not affected by the movement so much as it affected the writing of younger Symbolist poets. The impact of Verlaine's writing was fairly significant in the music world as well. His poems were set by several of the most prolific composers of *Mélodie* at the time, including Debussy and Fauré. In

[7] *Ibid.*, 482-3.
[8] *Ibid.*, 479.

fact, Nectoux claims that Fauré's second stylistic period, which is marked by a "sprightly yet melancholy temper," was concomitant with his discovery of Verlaine's poetry.[9] Further, Edward Lockspieser writes that, "The inspiration of the finest songs of Debussy. . . and also those of Fauré, derives not from earlier musical forms, but from the peculiarly musical quality of French Symbolist poetry, in particular the poetry of Verlaine,"[10] Lockspieser adds the very bold claim that, "Verlaine presides over the entire development of the Mélodie."[11]

Despite Verlaine's strong influence on Fauré's and Debussy's songs, he had no personal input in their compositional process, nor did he ever hear their settings of his poems.[12] The nature of one of the primary components of Symbolism, however, creates a means for binding the musical works to the text from which they are derived: interpretation. McGuinness writes that, "The Symbolists may not have agreed on much, but they were agreed that. . . a poem should open up meanings and engineer their simultaneous coexistence, and that the reader should have as much of a role in the creation of the poem as the poet."[13] In this condition, the poet and the reader, or in this case the composer acting as the reader, complete the poem together through the process of symbol and interpretation. The Symbolist song, then, could be regarded as a collaborative work between the poet and the composer; and the Symbolist poem set multiple times by multiple composers should result in multiple coexisting meanings.

Paul Verlaine, *Romances sans Paroles*

Paul Verlaine wrote his collection of poems *Romances sans paroles* (Songs without Words) in 1873 during a rather tumultuous time in his life. His poem "Green," the first poem from the group of poems *Aquarelles* (Watercolors), was written to his wife, Mathilde, after

[9] Nectoux, "Faure, Gabriel (Urbain)," 7.
[10] Edward Lockspieser, "The French Song in the 19th Century." *The Musical Quarterly*, 26, no. 2 (1940), 196.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Ibid.*, 197.
[13] McGuinness, "Symbolism," 484.

recently leaving her for a life of adventure and debauchery with the infamous young poet, Rimbaud. Verlaine's relationship with his wife, Mathilde Mauté, could be described as tense, at best. At the time that he was writing his *Romances sans paroles*, Verlaine had left his home in Paris with Mathilde and run off with Rimbaud, with whom he had recently become very well acquainted. Disastrous as their marriage ultimately turned out to be, as A.E. Carter writes, Verlaine's first encounter with Mathilde left quite a different impression. Carter writes, "To Verlaine, with the years of coarse debauchery behind him, she appeared like virginity itself – untouched and unsullied."[14] Despite his running away with Rimbaud, Verlaine came back to Paris to be with Mathilde on a few occasions; and the *Aquarelles* were written just before one such occaision.

The content of "Green" may seem an unlikely dedication to a woman from whom Verlaine was estranged and with whom he had had a very unhappy marriage, however this image of purity sparked by their first meeting, may very well be present in the poem, particularly from the point of view of a departed lover wishing to return home; this and his somewhat mixed emotions about the wife who awaited his return. Mathilde Mauté was known as a woman obsessed with the Paris aristocracy andobtaining and maintaining a high social status. Verlaine, on the other hand, was little concerned with image or affluence. Mathilde's status and purity, particularly in contrast to Verlaine, may be present in such images within the poem as "*vos deux mains blanches*" ("your two white hands") or the speaker of the poem resting at her feet (for the full poem and English translation, see the next section titled, **Verlaine's "Green": Form and Analysis**). The context of Verlaine's life at the time of the poem's composition can color our interpretation of the poem in many interesting ways. In this study, however, we will consider interpretations of the poem

[14] A.E. Carter, *Verlaine: A Study in Parallels*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press,1969), 46.

which are based mostly on what is provided within the text; the way that Debussy and Fauré no doubt created their interpretations of “Green”.

Verlaine’s “Green”: Form and Analysis

I. Green*

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

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

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

-Paul Verlaine

I. Green

Here are fruits, flowers, leaves and branches,
And then, here is my heart which beats only for you.
Do not tear it apart with your two white hands,
And to your so lovely eyes, may this humble gift seem sweet.

I come, still covered with dew,
Which the morning wind turns to frost on my brow.
Allow my fatigue, resting at your feet
To dream of the dear moments that will soothe it.

On your young bosom let me lay my head,
Still filled with the sound of your last kisses;
Let it be soothed after the good storm,
And let me sleep a little, since you are resting.

-Paul Verlaine
Translation by: Lauren Valerie Coons

Verlaine's symbolism in "Green" may stem from multiple sources, including the *amour courtois* of the Toubadours and Trouvères and symbols and metaphors from the natural world. The form of the poem itself displays meter and rhyme schemes which are quite typical of much of the French poetry written around the same time. The form, meter, and rhyme scheme translate quite well into song, and, given the allusion to the *Romances* indicated in the title, were probably meant to suggest song as well.

In his book, *Claude Debussy and the Poets*, Arthur B. Wenk gives an analysis of Debussy's setting of "Green" as well as an analysis of the text.[15] Wenk's poetic analysis is based on the feelings of "new love" as well as natural imagery and the literary influences of *amour courtois*. He states that:

> In *Green* Verlaine expresses the confusion of feelings attending a new love, the ambivalent sensations of eagerness and diffidence, of intimacy and detachment. From the first line, where the natural order of growth from branch to leaf to flower to fruit has been compressed into a single poetic instant, Verlaine plays with the relation between literature and life. Writing in a tone which stands "à mi-chemin de l'ironie et du sentiment" the poet draws on and mixes together elements of several literary traditions. The literature of *amour courtois* centers on the beautiful, virtuous woman, a woman beyond reach whom the lover wins through braving some ordeal or bringing back some inaccessible trophy (in *Green*

[15] Wenk provides some analytic examples from Fauré's setting as well.

> the triumph over the usual succession of the seasons). The lover presents his heart, the seat of emotions, to the lady, often with the complaint that she will not accept the body as well. The tradition of *amour courtois* is further reflected in the conventional "mains blanches" (the woman's hands are always white); in the elevated, archaic language of the petition "souffrez que ma fatigue," where the personification increases the distance between convention and actual feeling; and in the opening line, which suggests the metaphor of a love which grows, blossoms, and bears fruit.[16]

Wenk's speculation that Verlaine is referencing *amour courtois* in this poem is a plausible one. This argument may be strengthened as well as opened up to alternate interpretations if we compare the different styles of *amour courtois* of the troubadours and trouvères.

The distinguishing characteristics between the songs of the troubadours and trouvères create two very different viewpoints of love and romance. Either of these styles of song can be interpreted within "Green," but they present two very different poems. It is from these different styles and viewpoints that we may begin to see the types of interpretations that shape these two unique settings of the poem.

In her essay, *Medieval lyric: the trouvères*, Elizabeth W. Poe defines some crucial stylistic distinctions between the songs of the troubadours and trouvères. In her discussion of the troubadours, Poe states that, "In general, the love celebrated by the troubadours was opportunistic. It was also highly erotic. On the lips of the troubadours neutral words like *joven*

[16] Arthur B. Wenk, *Claude Debussy and the Poets*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 51.

('youth') and *joi* ('joy') carried a sexual charge."[17] This "future joy" can be perceived most strongly in the first stanza, where the speaker of the poem is presenting his prospective love with his "humble gift." The natural imagery of fruits, flowers, leaves, and branches may also be associated with this *joi*, symbols of growth, or with sexuality as this new growth might also be associated with fertility.

If Verlaine intended to express ideas of "future joy" in this poem, it may have been an expression of hope as he planned to return home to Mathilde. An expression of fertility may have also been an allusion to Mathilde, who had birthed his son no more than a few years prior to the composition of the poem. Another theme of the troubadour songs is the apparent superiority and higher social position of the object of the singer's obsession. This may be a reference to Mathilde as well, and her obsession with maintaining her high class status. This may also provide another explanation for the woman's "white hands" in the first stanza; a comparison of Mathilde's purity with Verlaine's more "soiled" life and status as he sits below her at her feet.

In the second and third stanzas, however, this feeling of joy and new growth may be overshadowed by bittersweet dreams of the past as well as the fatigue of the intensity and sacrifice of the affair. This interpretation may be more in line with the songs of the trouvères, as Poe explains, "The troubadour's obsession with future *joi* is overshadowed in the lyrics of the *trouvères* by a preoccupation with present suffering."[18]

The "present suffering" in the songs of the trouvères signals a change from the physical, often sensual, realm of the troubadours to a realm that is more psychological. Poe explains that the trouvère, "feels powerless not because of any inferiority in his social position but rather

[17] Elizabeth W. Poe, "Medieval Lyric: the Trouvères." *The Cambridge History of French Literature*, First editition. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 72.
[18] *Ibic.*

because he finds himself caught in the prison of love."[19] This creates a somewhat darker interpretation of the text. The speakers fatigue and bittersweet dreaming is part of a deep inner turmoil. Rather than a pleading for acceptance from a woman of high status, the poem becomes a cry for acceptance and release from his inner "prison." This interpretation might be signaled further by the line "*Ne le déchirez pas avec vos deux mains blanches*," where upon giving the woman his heart, he begs her not to "tear it apart." This interpretation also creates a very different message to Mathilde. Verlaine may be referencing their violent history and his inability to appease her.

Wenk's analysis of the feelings of "eagerness and diffidence, of intimacy and detachment,"[20] may only tell one of the stories of this poem. Though it is possible that the imagery was derived from the tradition of *amour courtois*, even subtle distinctions in the tradition allow for multiple simultaneous readings, multiple "finishings," of Verlaine's poem. An examination of the more objective structural components of the text will provide a unified starting place from which to view the two readings, as the formal structures of both songs are quite unambiguously linked to the structure of the poem.

Verlaine's green is comprised of three quatrains (stanzas of four lines each), with the rhyme scheme ABAB (in which the first and third lines share an end rhyme and the last syllable, as do the second and fourth lines). Metrically, the poem is set in iambic hexameter, or what is commonly referred to as Alexandrine. The Alexandrine meter is encountered quite often in French poetry, and is used in "Green" in a very typical way. The twelve-syllable line is broken up into two six-syllable sections, separated by a comma or a brief pause between the two six-syllable groups, as in the second line of the first stanza:

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[19] *Ibic.*
[20] Wenk, *Claude Debussy and the Poets*, 50.

Et puis voici mon coeur, | qui ne bat que pour vous

And then, here is my heart | which beats only for you

As we will see, in both the Debussy and the Fauré settings, the three stanzas translate well into a simple binary form, and the division of the twelve-syllable lines as well as the simple ABAB rhyme scheme, create cues for musical segmentation. The similar form and segmentation of the two songs, which are aligned with the form of the text, create a base of similarity between the two pieces from which we can explore the differences that emerge. Although the two pieces are quite similar on a high structural level, the ways in which this form is realized are quite distinct. As we move from the uppermost global level and move down to the lower, more local levels of the pieces, more of the dissimilarities between the two readings of "Green" are realized.

Analytic Tools and Processes

The aim of this analysis is to provide accurate representations and explanations of musical aspects that point to possible interpretations of the text. These accurate representations are meant to show elements in the music in a way that they are likely to be heard. Multiple analytic theories and devices will be used to this aim. The musical parameters that are being addressed are issues of time (meter and rhythm), issues of pitch structure (pitch collection, harmony, melody, pitch-space, voice-leading), and formal structure, which is, in many ways, a result of the aforementioned aspects as well as the formal structure of the text. Some of these musical parameters are more easily defined in this music than others. The music of Debussy, in particular, has been the subject of much debate, especially in terms of harmony and pitch

structure. Because the purpose of this analysis is not to take a side in the debate of tonality vs. atonality, or any other opinion about pitch structures in these pieces, multiple viewpoints are explored in order to provide reasonable possible explanations for these structures. Since there has been little formal analysis done on the music of Fauré, I use the same analytic tools, as well as some others in the analysis of his setting.

The analytic tools that I use to examine the pitch structures in this analysis come from tonal harmonic theories, pitch-class set theory, and some recent transformational theories. Pitch-class set theory is used here in a traditional way, primarily to identify musical structures and to connect them to other musical structures to which they may be related. The neo-Riemannian theory used is from Richard Cohn's *Audacious Euphony*, and is used to show an additional harmonic viewpoint. Cohn's theory is designed to show transformations between adjacent triads in a harmonic space, and is aimed toward music of the late nineteenth-century which is primarily triadic, but may not be easily explainable through tonal harmonic means. This is a quality often associated with the music of both Debussy and Fauré. In the analysis of Faurés setting, I use Robert Morris's transformational theory of voice-leading from his 1998 Essay "Voice-leading Spaces."

Richard S. Parks uses observations about Debussy's body of work to create a generalized method for examining his music. Although this is not necessarily a formal theory of analysis, Parks's ideas provide a very useful structure from which to form an analysis that is based on evidence from the repertoire. This structure is form-based, meaning that the elements that comprise the piece (pitch, time, and other elements such as timbre and orchestration), and the moments of change in these elements make up the form of the music. I use ideas from this form-based structure to organize the information of the analysis for both Debussy's and Fauré's

settings of “Green”. Because the large-scale global form of the two pieces is quite similar, this provides a stable condition from which to draw out the differences in the two pieces.

Another significant element of this analysis is emotional affect, which is used to link musical phenomena to linguistic phenomena. This is a very important element when viewing these pieces as “readings” of a symbolist work. Since we cannot literally get into the mind of the composer through his music, this provides a means for drawing conclusions about how the composer may have associated musical phenomena with his personal understanding of the text. Because this study does not intend to delve deeply into psychology or the neurological phenomena of musical and linguistic perception, this type of analysis is used on a simplistic level, which consists of observations about affect. Affect, here, is defined as a combination of positive or negative valence and low or high arousal.

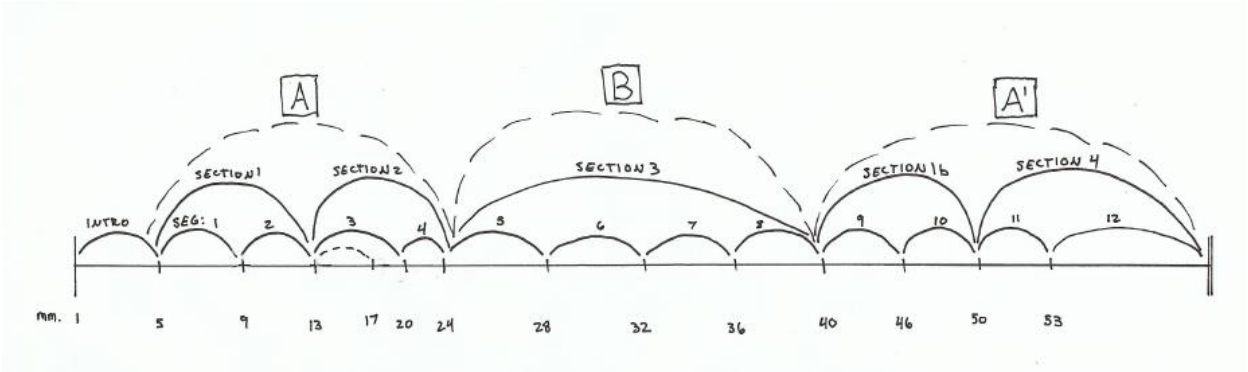
There is not, as of yet, a complete published analysis of Fauré’s “Green.” On the other hand, the only published formal analysis of Debussy’s “Green” comes from Arthur Wenk’s *Claude Debussy and the Poets*, which is meant to be a musicological study more than a deep theoretical analysis. Wenk acknowledges the Fauré setting as well, and makes some mention of certain musical aspects within the piece as a means of comparison with Debussy’s setting. I use Wenk’s analysis as a starting point, from which the results of my own analysis will agree, disagree, or build upon some of his observations.

Claude Debussy, *Ariettes Oubliées* no. 5, "Green"

Debussy's "Green" expresses a bittersweet blend of the fatigue and inner turmoil, the excitement and humble sweetness expressed by the poem's speaker. Perhaps drawn from the trouvères' style of *amour courtois*, the composer demonstrates the exhaustion of a lover who has given everything in order to please the object of his affection as well as the excited desperation of one who is "caught in love's prison." Debussy achieves this musical interpretation through the use of contrasting motivic gestures (presented here as 'melodic ideas' and 'motivic cells'); a form that is locally complex, yet quite simple on a larger scale; and a harmonic vocabulary of "extended tonality," that hints at familiar tonal structures and syntax, while introducing elements which are generally considered foreign to the tonal vocabulary. Debussy's piece hangs on a delicate balance of expectedness and unexpectedness, of simplicity and complexity, which allows for the simultaneous expression of and sweetness and distress.

On a global level, the piece presents a simple two-part song form, where the First section, "A" begins after a four-measure introduction by the piano and concludes at m. 24. The "B" section is clearly indicated by a double barline and change of key signature at m. 24, and concludes at m. 40 where another double bar and the recurrence of the original key signature signal the return of the "A"material, which is slightly altered for the conclusion (the last two lines of text), beginning in m. 50. **Figure 1** shows a diagram of the formal structure of the entire piece.

Figure 1 Form diagram of Debussy's "Green"



The text dictates the large-scale formal divisions. At this level, the form is very straightforward. On the local level, the continuity of divisions of musical material in association with phrases of text continues. It is on this local level that we see Debussy's combination of unity and variety that give the piece much of its character. Divisions of form and segmentation are marked in the first annotated score in **Appendix A**.

The local segmentation is a product of distinct motivic ideas in the piano and vocal parts. A simplification of the vocal melodic line reveal two distinct melodic ideas. The first melodic idea begins in m. 5 (marked in the first annotated score in **Appendix A**). This idea is marked by a duplet rhythm with rhythmic accents of longer durations (quarter note and dotted-quarter note) and an arching melodic contour. The second melodic idea is contrasting with the first, consisting of an eighth note rhythm with three eighth-notes to the dotted-quarter unit (no longer in duplets) and a less directional motion. The second melodic idea tends to be fairly static or unidirectional. These two melodic ideas sometimes occur as two halves of a phrase of text, as in mm. 9-11.

The contrasting melodic ideas provide both structure and meaning to the vocal line. In the A section of the piece, the alternation of the two ideas is consistent with the ABAB rhyme scheme

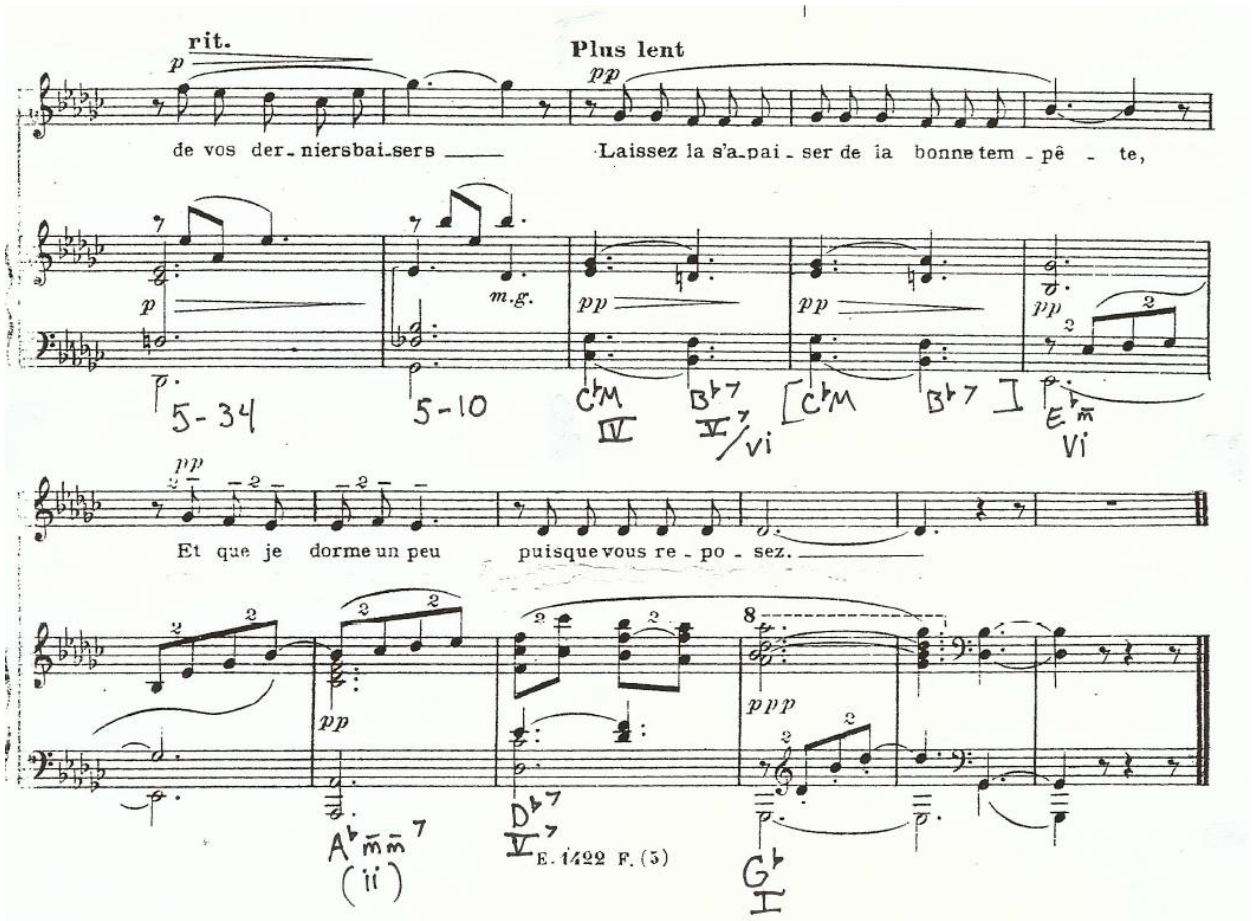
of the text. In mm. 28-30, the second melodic idea functions instead as a means of expressing the intensity and obsession of the speaker in the second stanza. The repetition of notes and staccato articulation apply this meaning to the line "*Que le vent du matin vient glacer à mon front*" ("Which the morning wind turns to frost on my brow"), implying the harsh conditions that the speaker has withstood as well as painting the idea of "frost" by "freezing" the motion of the line. In the conclusion of the poem, in mm. 50-52 and 55-56, the second melodic idea functions in yet another way. Coupled with the change of register (a drop of an octave in m. 50 and the repetition of the lowest note, D-flat$_4$, in m. 55) the melodic idea now serves to express the weary sleepiness of the speaker and the resting of the woman in the concluding phrase, "*Puisque vous reposez.*"

The conclusion of the piece, in mm. 50-58, is likely the most harmonically simple section. As will be discussed further later on, the harmonic language is built on a functional tonal structure, but exhibits some elaboration or expansion of that structure through the use of harmonies with greater cardinalities and some ambiguous harmonic progressions. The last eight measures of the piece, however exhibit a very unambiguous cadence in the key of G-flat major. **Figure 2** shows the cadential progression that harmonizes the last two lines of text.

The two harmonies that appear before the C-flat major harmony (IV in the key of G-flat major) are forms of two significant pentachords which will be discussed later on. The motion from these pentachords which do not function tonally to the predominant harmony which eventually leads to a cadence in G-flat major signals an abrupt switch in the last two lines. Any ambiguity in the pitch language is now removed, and the "repose" of the conclusion happens uninhibited. The sense of closure and repose in the final measures is connected to the textural changes in the piano and vocal parts as well. In m. 50, the piano texture becomes simple and

slow. Motivic cell A returns in m. 55, reconciling the conclusion of the piece with the opening material.

Figure 2 Concluding cadential progression mm. 48-58



The changes in the motivic cells of the piano part are coincident with the phrase boundaries of the text (motivic cells are marked in the second annotated score in **Appendix A**). These cells typically last for two measures that are immediately repeated. They each contain their own musical "DNA" of sorts, which consists of all of the relevant musical parameters: rhythm, harmony, register/pitch space, and harmonic and rhythmic density. The A and A' sections share motivic cells (with the exception of some new material beginning in m. 50) while the B section

contains its own set of motivic cells. The striking change in successive cells serves denotes clear segmentation boundaries.

Parks defines form-defining parameters as levels of discontinuity in meter, tempo, successive attacks, harmonic density, harmonic resources, motivic resources, repetition, textural quality, orchestration, register, and loudness.[21] These parameters, with the exception of orchestration and loudness (which ranges only from piano to pianissimo), define the characteristics of the motivic cells which, in turn, define the form. Parks also notes that the recurrence of earlier material can also signal the end of a previous structural unit and the beginning of a new one, as in the repetition of motivic cell A in mm. 20-24.

Debussy's rhythmic language in "Green" is a significant contributor to the song's sense of weariness and delirium. The use of the duplet, a defining feature of the first melodic idea and motivic cell A, creates a sense of metrical ambiguity. This two-against-three rhythm creates a sense of continuous motion in the melody and motivic cell A that increases the contrast of the arrival of motivic cell B. The arrival of motivic cell B has a harmonic significance as well, which will be described in greater detail later on. The continuous motion and metric ambiguity emphasize the weary, love-struck desperation of the speaker and the sense of urgency and anxiety that it creates.

The harmonic rhythm of the piece may be provide some insight into Debussy's reading of the text, and indicates a contrast in mood between the A and B sections of the two-part form. **Appendix B** shows a diagram of the harmonic rhythm throughout the piece. The rate of harmonic change is generally very slow, with only two occasions in which the harmony changes more than once in a measure (mm. 27 and 31). The harmonic rhythm of the A section is

[21] Richard S. Parks, *The Music of Claude Debussy*. (Yale University Press, 1989), 207.

extremely slow, with the first harmony lasting for eight measures, and subsequent harmonies usually occupying a complete measure. This further emphasizes the state of weariness and fatigue. In the B section (second stanza of text), Debussy employs text painting in the piano.The quick arpeggiations of motivic cell D and the quick rising and falling scaler passage of motivic cell E illustrate "*le vent du matin*" ("the morning wind") as well as "*la bonne tempête*" ("the good storm") that make up the last stanza. Debussy pairs these motivic gestures with the increase in harmonic rhythm in order to increase the energy and motion of the B section. The harmonic rhythm of the piece also serves the harmonic hierarchy that helps to structure the pitch content.

As previously mentioned, Debussy's personal and creative approach to harmony and pitch collection necessitates the examination of those two elements on a piece-by-piece basis. The pitch language of "Green" can be explained as an extension of functional tonality. This extension is defined by the use of a functional harmonic syntax (which is based on the tonic-predominant-dominant phrase model) as the starting point from which Debussy enriches the harmonic vocabulary with chromaticism and pc-sets which are foreign to the functional/tonal vocabulary.

Wenk performs his analysis under the assumption that this piece (as well as Fauré's piece) is tonal. He explains the A section of the piece as "an elaboration of the familar II-V-I cadential formula," in which "the song opens not in G-flat major, the key of the piece, but in an extended prolongation of A-flat minor."[22] If we take this analysis as a starting point of harmonic structure, rather than an accurate and comprehensive explanation of the sounding tones, we can begin to form the extended tonal structure of the piece and find text-expressive reasons for that structure.

There are three crucial harmonic elements that comprise the A section of the piece. The first is the A-flat minor triad that occupies the first eight measures. The second is a pair of closely-related pentachords, one of which is especially significant because of its inherent symmetry. The

[22] Wenk, *Claude Debussy and the Poets*, 54-55.

third element is what Wenk labels a German sixth chord in mm. 13 and 15, the harmony that defines motivic cell C. These three elements are labeled in the first annotated score in **Appendix A**.

The expansion of the minor ii of G-flat adds another level of musical ambiguity, this time to the mode of the piece. The dominating presence of the minor over the major mode within the piece colors the mood of the poem a bit darker than we would expect from the *joi* that Poe describes in the troubadours' brand of *amour courtois*.[23] This may indicate then, the alternative "present suffering," associated with the song of the trouvères.

The pentachords that Debussy uses push this piece past the realm of functional tonal harmony and represent the composer's characteristic affection for symmetry. The most significant use of pentachords is as the harmony of motivic cell B (mm. 9-10). The first pentachord is a member of set-class 5-34 (02469). The 5-34 pentachord then moves to another closely related pentachord, a member of set-class 5-31 (01369) via a sort of "neighboring motion". In this case, the downward neighboring motion occurs in the upper four voices as the bass leaps up a perfect fourth. The appearance of the 5-34 pentachords at the line "*Et puis voice mon coer, qui ne bat que pour vous*," ("and here too is my heart, which beats only for you") is significant, as this is the point at which the speaker presents his love with the gift of his heart and reveals the extent of his affection and dependency on her. The alternation of the symmetrical 5-34 pentachord with the more dissonant 5-31 pentachord demonstrates the tension and unease that underlies his commitment.

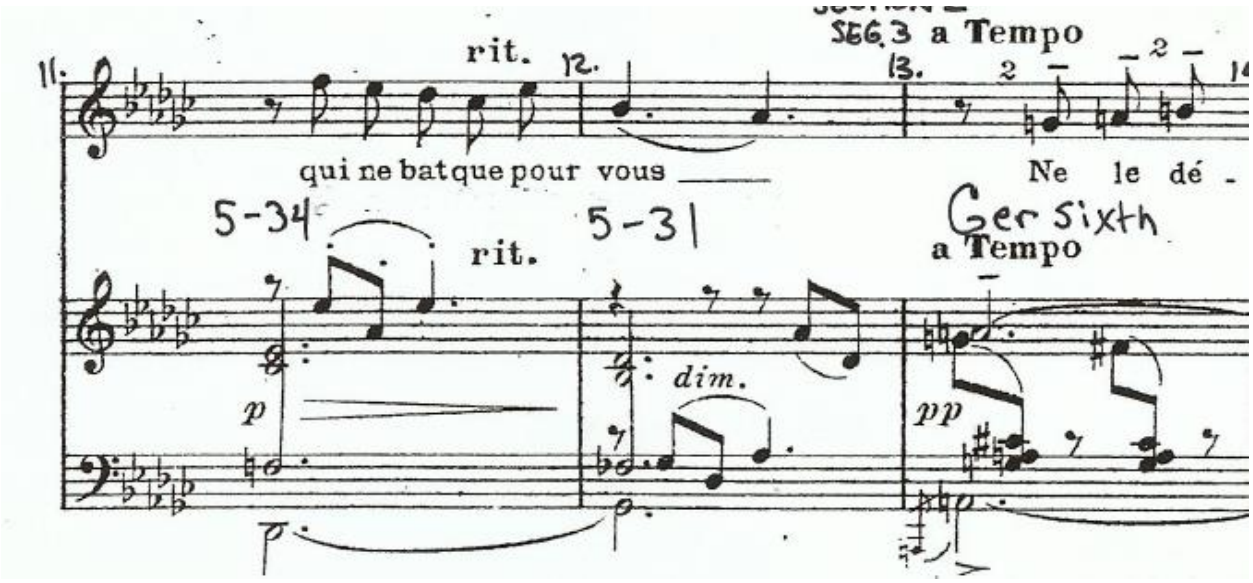
If we attempt to reduce the 5-34 pentachord to a triad or seventh chord, we are left with several equally valid possibilities: an A-flat minor triad (ii), a D-flat major triad (V), a D-flat

[23] This is not intended as assumption about the use of modes or modal preferences in medieval music, but a comparison of common current ideas about mode and affect in contrast to the troubadours' characteristic *joi*.

dominant seventh, or an F half-diminished seventh. These may allow for multiple possible hearings simultaneous within the same harmony, the same way that a symbol in Symbolist poetry allows for multiple possible interpretations. It is also possible, however, to hear this harmony as the pitch-class set whose intervallic content includes that of all of the above mentioned reductions.

Part of the significance of the 5-34 pentachord, is its symmetry, which allows multiple possibilities for harmonic succession following the symmetrical harmony. Because it contains other triadic and seventh-chord subsets, the resolution of this chord has multiple possibilities. This is significant because it gives the composer many choices as far as the harmonic direction that will follow it. In this piece, the 5-43 pentachord leads to a closely-related pentachord (usually 5-31) and progresses to another harmony within a close voice-leading proximity. An example of this is the 5-34/5-31 pentachord set in motivic cell C that leads to the augmented sixth chord in mm. 11-13. **Figure 3** shows these three measures. Notice that at least three of the voices move by step from the 5-43 pentachord, to 5-31, and again to the German sixth.

Figure 3 Resolution of symmetrical pentachord on mm. 11-13

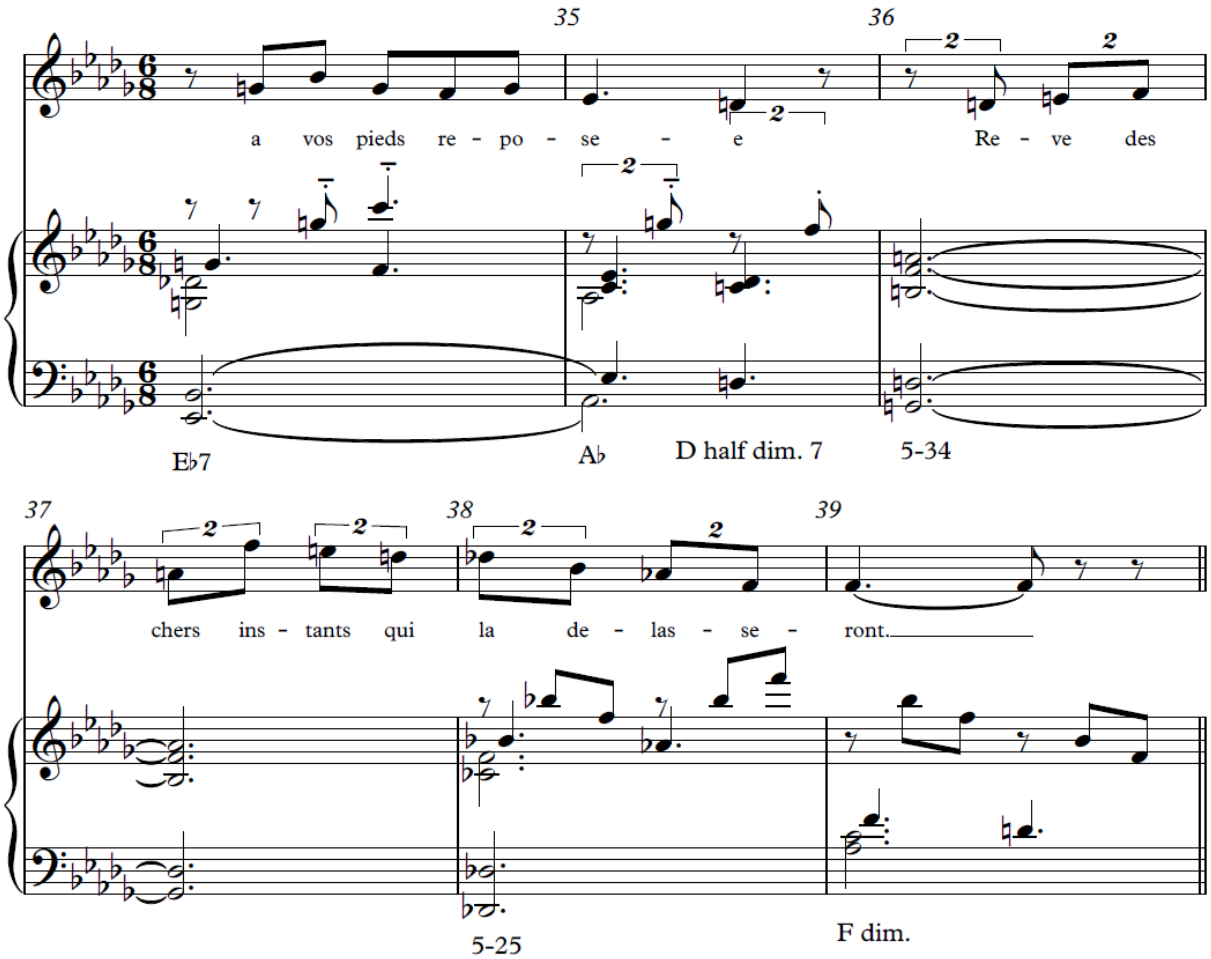


Another occurrence of the same kind of 5-34 resolution occurs in mm. 36-39. This time the pentachord motion acts as a transition back to the opening A-flat minor material that starts the return section of the binary form. In this case, the 5-34 pentachord resolves to a 5-25 pentachord, which then leads to an F-diminished triad, another symmetrical chord. The F-diminished triad is not a chord within close voice-leading proximity to the 5-25 pentachord, but a subset of it. In this case, Debussy has chosen to use the symmetrical diminished triad as a sort of "pivot" back to the A-flat minor harmony of the next section, which shares two common tones with the F-diminished triad. This progression is shown in **Figure 4** below.

The appearance of the 5-34 pentachord progression in m. 36 occurs just after the E-flat7 harmony in m. 34, which could be heard as the dominant of the A-flat minor return in m. 40. The interruption of the pentachord progression perhaps thwarts the expectation of leading directly back to A-flat minor and leaves an important impression on the line of text which it sets as well.

Just as the first appearance of the 5-34 progression in m. 9 gives the sense that the second line of text is some kind of significant turning point; the progression shown in **Figure 4** highlights the poem's transition from the physical to the mental realm of the speaker. Up until this point in the poem, the imagery has been either natural or physical. The line, "*Rêve des chers instants qui la délasseront"* ("to dream of the dear moments that will soothe it"), takes us into the mind of the speaker. The return of the original material of the A section in m. 40 then signals a return back to the physical realm.

Figure 4 Resolution of symmetrical pentachord in mm. 36-39



The German sixth chord that characterizes motivic cell C adds an additional level of chromaticism and harmonic interest that causes the listener to question the tonality of the piece until the D-flat to G-flat cadential motion at the end of the A section. Wenk explains the appearance of this chord as a complication of the resolution of the dominant to the tonic at the end of the A section.[24]This occurrence of this complication just after the striking pentachords allows us to expect the unexpected in the sense that the dominant to tonic resolution may not be a likely prediction for what is to come next. The resolution of the D-flat major to G-flat major

[24] *Ibid.*, 52.

harmonies then gives us some unexpected relief from the tension experiences previously. Wenk addresses the connection of consonance, dissonance and expectedness in our understanding of the poetic affect. He explains that, "consonant chords may represent normality or repose, while dissonant chords tend to suggest disturbance or tension."[25]

Wenk explains harmonic progression within Debussy's "Green" as a matter of fulfillment or frustration of our expectations as well. He associates this fulfillment of expectations with the "youthful fervor of the lover," that he attributes to "strong harmonic progressions moving by perfect fifth."[26] This perfect fifth motion is somewhat clouded by the presence of the "unusual" harmonies mentioned above. We can clearly see this motion, however, if we reduce the harmonies to major and minor triads and place them in the harmonic space of the tonnetz. This type of reduction and use of the tonnetz to show the harmonic space of a piece comes from Richard Cohn's theory in *Audacious Euphony: Chromaticism and the Triad's Second Nature*.[27]

Figure 5 shows the triadic reduction of the piece, broken into formal segments, in the space of the tonnetz.[28] The horizontal alignment of the triads shows the perfect fifth motion that Wenk describes. This motion is often symbolic of functional tonality. In this case, the tonnetz provides an image of the underlying harmonic structure that stems from tonality, but is extended, or transformed through the use of chromatic harmonies and closely-related pentachords.

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[25] Ibid.

[26] *Ibid.*, 52.

[27] In his 2012 book, Audacious Euphony: Chromaticism and the Triad's Second Nature , Richard Cohn proposes a theory that can be used in the analysis of mid-nineteenth through early twentieth Century music. Cohn's theory is designed to show transformations between adjacent triads in a harmonic space. The harmonic space is a species of pitch-class space which represents pitch-classes as triadic (or possibly seventh-chord) harmonic sets; these are represented graphically by the tonnetz. Transformations show the type of motion in one, two, or three of the members of a major or minor triad that create the next adjacent major or minor triad. These transformations are R (relative), N (nebenverwandt), S (slide), L (leittonwechsel), P (parallel), H (hexatonic pole). For further definitions of these transformations, see Cohn, 2012: 29, 31, 61-62, 64.

[28] The 5-34 pentachord was reduced to a D-flat major triad and the 5-31 pentachord was reduced to a G-flat major triad for the purpose of this graphical representation. This reduction shows a perfect fifth intervallic relationship within the two pentachords and fits the key of the presumed underlying tonal structure of the piece.

Figure 5.1 Debussy's "Green," A section represented on the tonnetz

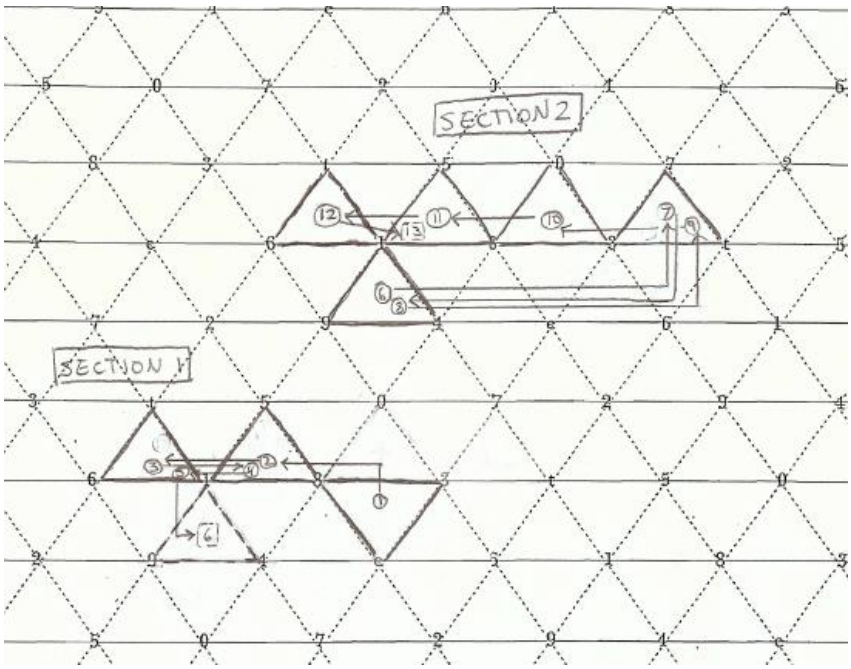


Figure 5.2 Debussy's "Green," B section represented on the tonnetz

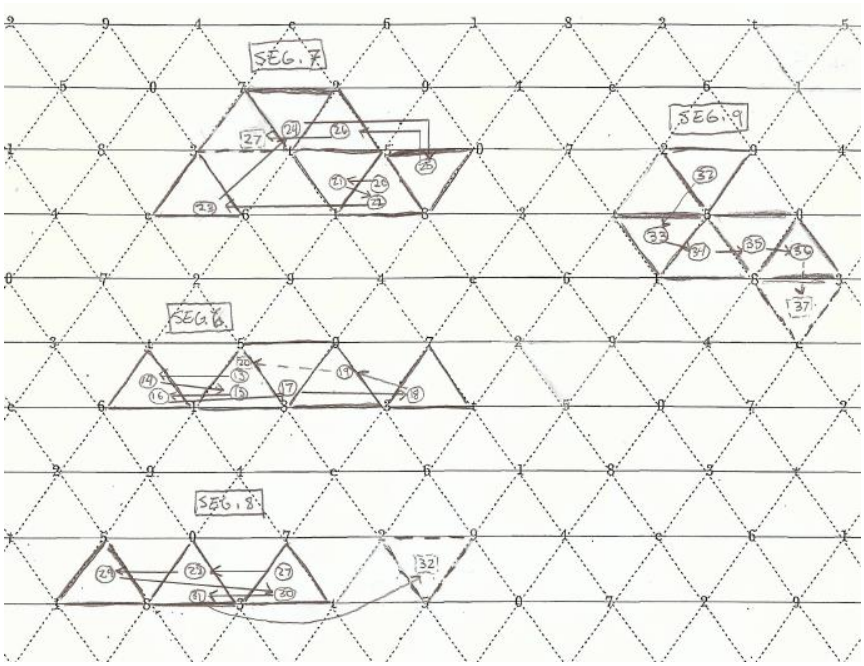
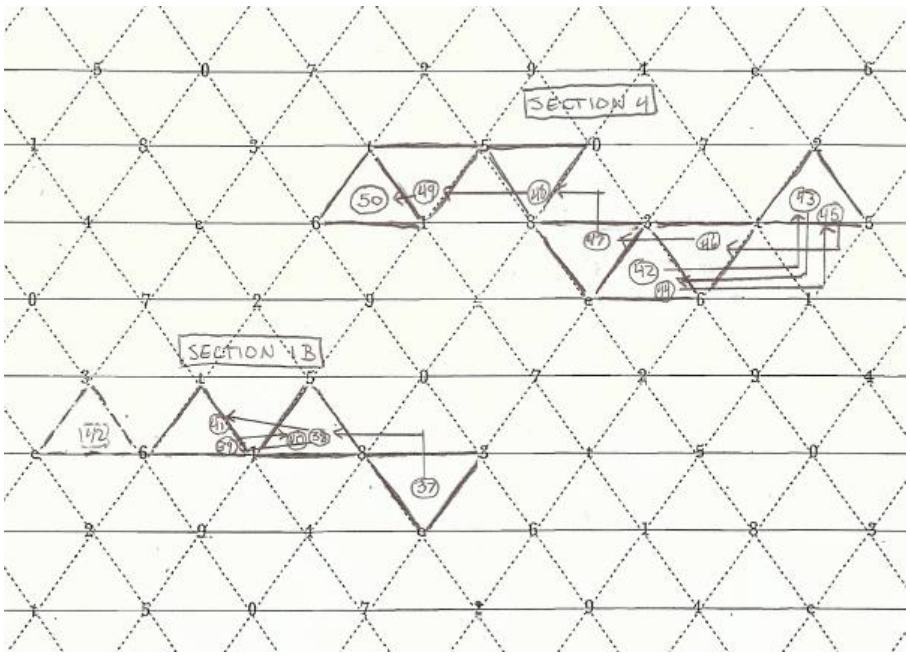


Figure 5.3 Debussy's "Green," A' section represented on the tonnetz



Cohn defines several transformations which can occur between adjacent triads, and which can all be represented on the space of the tonnetz. In the case of Debussy's "Green," the only present transformations are the L (leittonwechsel), R (relative), and P (parallel) transformations. The R transformation transforms a triad to the relative major or minor triad and the P transformation to the parallel major or minor. The L transformation retains two common tones that form a major third. The triads that are related by chains of L and R occur on the same horizontal plane and are fifth-related.

The high number of fifth relations, as seen in the tonnetz, appears to confirm Wenk's statement about the fifth-related tonality of the piece. I am willing to argue, however, that these fifth relations are only the underlying structure upon which Debussy builds a much more complex pitch structure. The strong tonal implications found in the last eight measures of the piece might be a moment of "expectedness," as Wenk suggests is perceived by the fifth-related

tonal progressions. The cadential progression in those measures may signal the repose of the speaker after finally completing his objective to be with his beloved; what Wenk calls the "fulfilled expectations."

Whether the ending signals fulfillment or just a general sense of repose, there is a clear sense of tonal closure that is quite contrasting to many of the other sections of the piece. The changing motivic cells, the uncertain possibilities of the symmetrical pentachors, and the long tonicization of the A-flat minor harmony may invoke a sense of weariness and fatigue, tenderness and turmoil, reminiscent of the songs of the trouvères. As we will see, Fauré's "Green" shares many common characteristics with Debussy's, but tells quite a different story.

Gabriel Fauré, *De Venise,* Op.58 no.3, "Green"

Fauré's "Green" exemplifies the "sprightly yet melancholic" characteristics of his second stylistic period, as defined by Jean-Michel Nectoux.[29] His piece also offers a contrasting reading to Debussy's which was published three years earlier. In spite of the differences, Fauré's and Debussy's works share many similar characteristics, particularly the text-derived global form. Fauré creates a similar contrast of material and mood between the A and B sections of the binary form (which is a usual characteristic of the form in general), but the mood with which he begins the piece is quite different from the weary inner turmoil of Debussy's setting. Wenk gives a brief comparison of Fauré's piece in his analysis. He states:

> Fauré also employs the principles of harmony to suggest both the fervor and the fearfulness of the young lover. The rapid harmonic changes, up to half a dozen chords in

[29] Nectoux, "Fauré, Gabriel (Urbain)," 7.

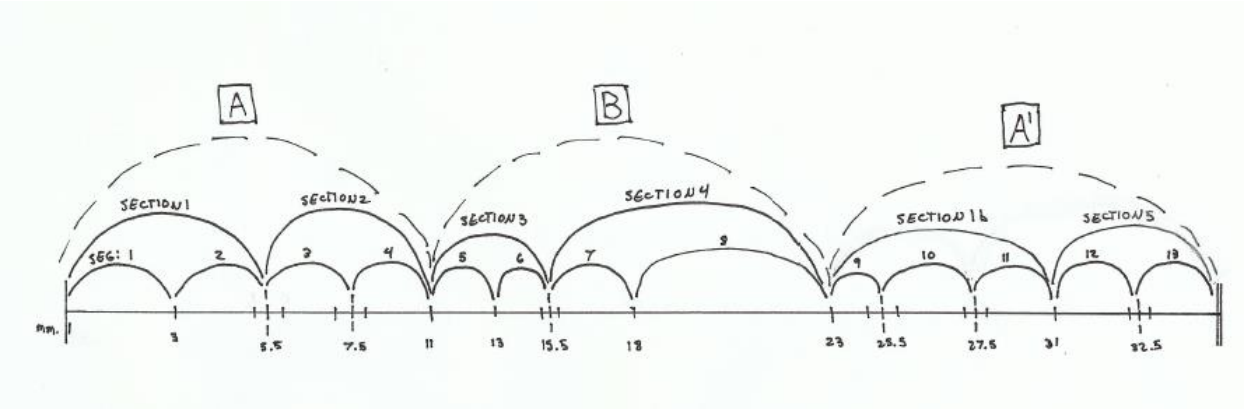
> a single measure, suggest exuberance and confusion. Unlike the youth in Debussy's setting, the speaker here tosses off his heart in a flurry of sixteenth notes as if it were scarcely more important than the fruit and flowers, a gesture as casual as the "et puis" of Verlaine's text.[30]

The very quick harmonic rhythm, the sharp articulations of the accompaniment, and the even motor rhythm that occurs throughout the piece are some of the most striking differences when compared to Debussy's setting. Fauré's piece has an air of playfulness, of the future optimism that Poe associates with the songs of the troubadours. The dense and sometimes chromatic harmonies obscure the apparent *joi* portrayed by the other elements of the piece, giving it a sense of something more complex than a simple proclamation of adoration. In fact, this harmony leads the listener to wonder whether the quick, staccato repetitions of the piano chords are suggesting optimism or anxiety. Nonetheless, this interpretation is marked by high energy, as opposed to the fatigue of Debussy's setting.

The two-part song form functions in a manner typical of nineteenth-century art song; however, the change of pitch collection in the B section is less easily discernable than Debussy's B section. Still, it is apparent that a change is taking place, and the section function like a chromatic whirlwind that leads from the A section to the climax in m. 18. **Figure 6** shows a diagram of the form for the entire piece.

[30] *Ibid.*, 56.

Figure 6 Form diagram of Fauré's "Green"



The pitch language of Fauré's setting is highly chromatic and harmonically dense. At least half of the harmonies in the piece are tetrachords which appear as various types of seventh chords. Not all of the triads that appear within the piece are major and minor triads. In fact, there are some occurrences of augmented and diminished triads as well. It is still possible to analyze the piece as a derivative of a functional harmonic structure, as with Debussy's piece. . The repeated A-flat major harmony in the first measure seems to indicate that Fauré intends for us to have a strong sense of A-flat major as either a tonic or some other high functioning chord within a harmonic hierarchy.

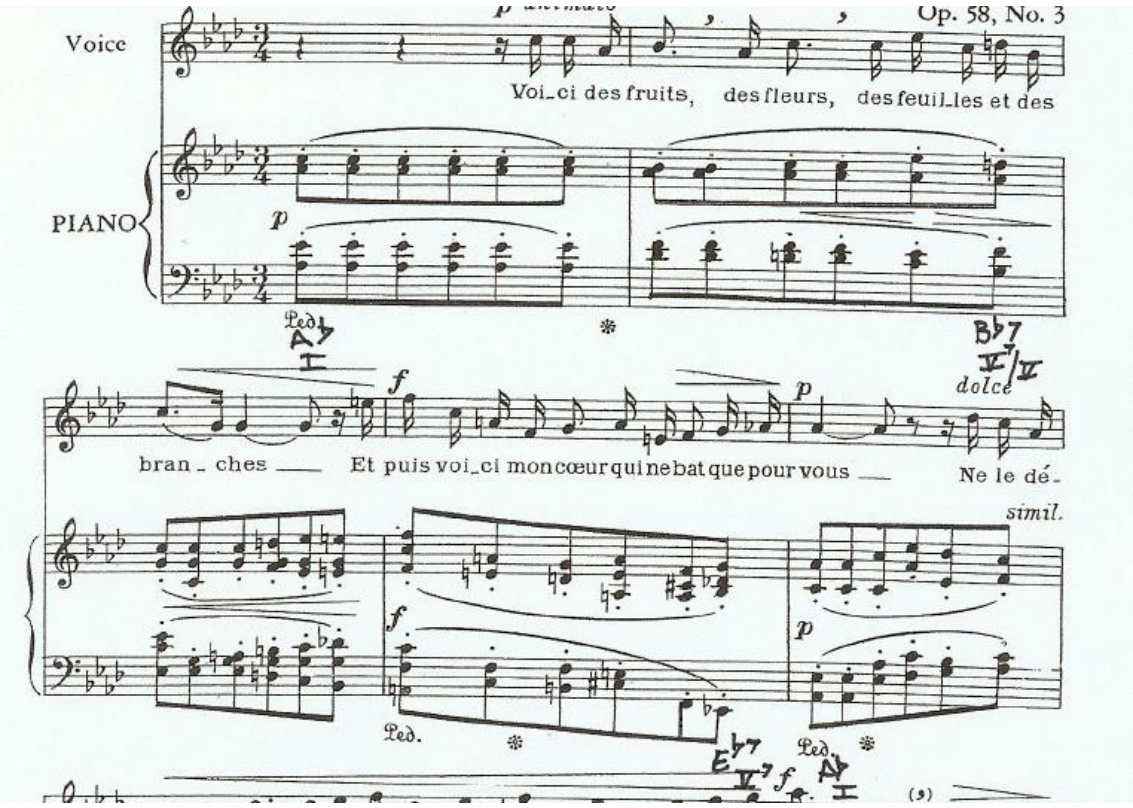
We can locate certain tonal functioning harmonies as "pillar harmonies," between which the chromatic or non-functioning harmonies occur. These pillar harmonies outline a tonic-predominant-dominant progressive structure that we hear in the piece as broad sense of tonal directionality. These chords give the piece the apparent directionality that we hear upon listening to the piece, as many of them act as a dominant of the following pillar harmony or are preceded by a harmony which functions as its dominant. Pillar chords for the A and B sections of the piece are labeled in the second annotated score in **Appendix C**.

An unusual characteristic of these pillar chords is that they often occur on weak temporal units, such as the second eighth note of the third beat. Although we still hear them as the strongest functioning harmonies of the piece, this weak metrical placement often prevents them from providing a strong sense of closure. The fleeting moments of harmonic progressions on weak beats adds the sense of continual motion. This sense of fury or flurry in the pitch/harmonic motion of the piece is also due in large part to the chromatic, non-functioning pitch content that occurs between pillar harmonies.

The difficulty, then, comes with explaining the chromatic motion between these pillar chords that does not appear to fit within the tonal syntax of a piece in the key of A-flat major. A close examination of the voice-leading in some of the more ambiguous chromatic sections suggests that a voice-leading process derived from countrapuntal techniques, might provide a reasonable explanation. Fauré would have likely had a good understanding of counterpoint from his formal education in composition as well as through his work as a church organist early in his career. It may very well be that analyzing these sections as vertical harmonic sonorities might not represent the types of pitch transformations that are actually occurring. A contrapuntal model may provide a more accurate representation of these musical segments.

A good example of Fauré's chromatic "counterpoint" is the motion from the B-flat7 harmony at the end of m. 2 to the A-flat major harmony at the beginning of m. 5, shown below in **Figure 7**. This succession appears as a series of voice-leading moves that briefly tonicize c minor (iii) along the way to the E-flat major pillar harmony at the end of m. 4 that directs our ears to the A-flat major harmony in m. 5.

Figure 7 Pillar harmonies mm. 2-5



Robert D. Morris provides a method for the analysis of voice-leading in his 1998 essay, "Voice-Leading Spaces," which may be applicable to the analysis of these passages. Morris's system consists of locating specific voice-leading types between adjacent voices. In a piece with changing harmonic cardinalities (as in the case of Fauré's "Green"), the cardinality of the piece or passage is determined by the harmony with the greatest individual cardinality. All other harmonies, then, are analyzed by the converging and diverging of voices through the various types of voice-leading motion. The voice-leading motion types that Morris defines are P (parallel), S (similar), C (contrary); and oblique motion, which is labeled as either O (motion in the upper voice of the voice pair) or U (motion in the bottom voice of the voice pair).[31] These

[31] Robert D. Morris, "Voice-Leading Spaces," *Music Theory Spectrum* 20, no. 2 (1998), 181.

motions are then more specifically defined by the direction of motion: + (ascending), - (descending), = remaining on the same pitch, < (expanding contrary motion), > (contracting contrary motion).[32] Subscripts to these labels can be used to show other types of relationships such as the "u" (unison) subscript.

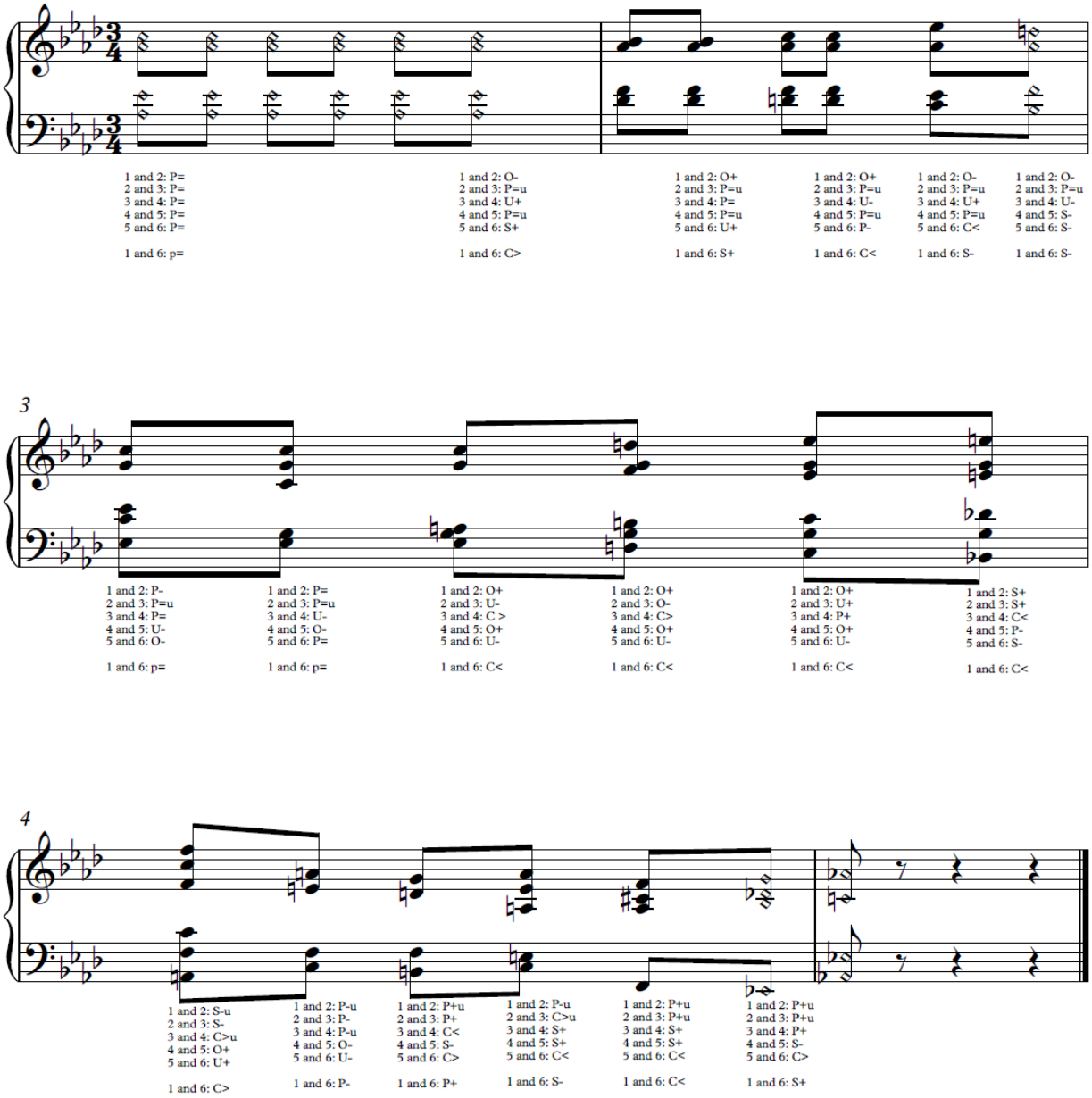
Figure 8, below, shows an analysis of measures 1 through the first beat of measure 5. Although Morris's theory is meant to be used to show motion between adjacent voices, **Figure 8** also includes voice-leading transformations for the highest and lowest voices as well. Because this analysis is meant to show motions which are analogous to earlier models of counterpoint, the outer voice motion is significant.

The adjacent voices in this passage utilize a variety of motion types. Taking into account that many of the parallel motions are non-moving and unisons between adjacent voices, the passage seems to favor oblique and contrary motion. Examination of the outer voices reveals an even stronger preference for contrary motion, which is consistent with a general knowledge of counterpoint. The intervallic distances of adjacent moves is generally narrow, particularly in the inner voices, which is also indicative of a contrapuntal technique.

The harmonic motion of the B section of the piece appears to lead the listener harmonically astray from the supposed "tonic" of the A section. This harmonic confusion is responsible for much of the element of surprise that characterizes what is one of the most intriguing moments of the piece. In m. 18, the melodic line leaps from B-flat$_4$ to G-flat$_5$. These harmonic notes function as the roots of the two successive harmonies. What is so intriguing about this moment is that the G-flat major harmony occurs as part of the piece's climax, but is not a structural pillar harmony. Instead it is a harmonization in a passing tone in the ascending line in the upper voice of the piano.

[32] *Ibid.*

Figure 8 Morris voice-leading analysis of mm. 1-5. Diamond-shaped note heads indicate pillar harmonies.



This climax of the piece occurs on the line "*Rêve des chers instants*" ("To dream of the dear moments"). Just as Debussy emphasized this moment with the use of the symmetrical pentachord progression, Fauré emphasizes this same line with the use of a surprising harmonization.

At m. 18, the vocal melody leaps from B-flat to G-flat. This leap is filled in by a rising stepwise line in the the piano's upper voice. The G-flat seems at first to be the climactic note, harmonized for two measures, until it rises to the G-natural in m. 20. It is at this point that we realize in retrospect that the surprising G-flat melodic note and G-flat major harmonization are, in fact, a prolongation of a passing tone. The following three measures are then a prolongation of the E-flat major pillar harmony that acts as the dominant of the tonic A-flat major that occurs in m. 23. The prolongation of E-flat major is marked by the descending of the upper voice in the piano from G-natural to E-flat. A predominant D-flat major harmony occurs during the descent, creating a strong cadence in m. 23. **Figure 9** below shows the pillar harmonies and prolonged passing harmony in mm. 16-22. **Figure 10** is a Schenkerian-esque representation of the ascending and descending upper voice in the piano, marked by the pillar harmonies and the prolongation of the passing G-flat.

The "chromatic delay" effect of the harmonized passing tone mirror the delayed gratification of the poem's subject. As in Debussy's setting, this line is used as a division between the first two stanzas and the third. Whereas Debussy's demarcation signaled a change from the physical to the mental realm, Fauré defines this moment as the point in which the speakers hopes are realized. The following A' section is a gradual slowing of momentum.

Figure 9 Pillar harmonies and prolongation of passing G-flat major in the climax of "Green"

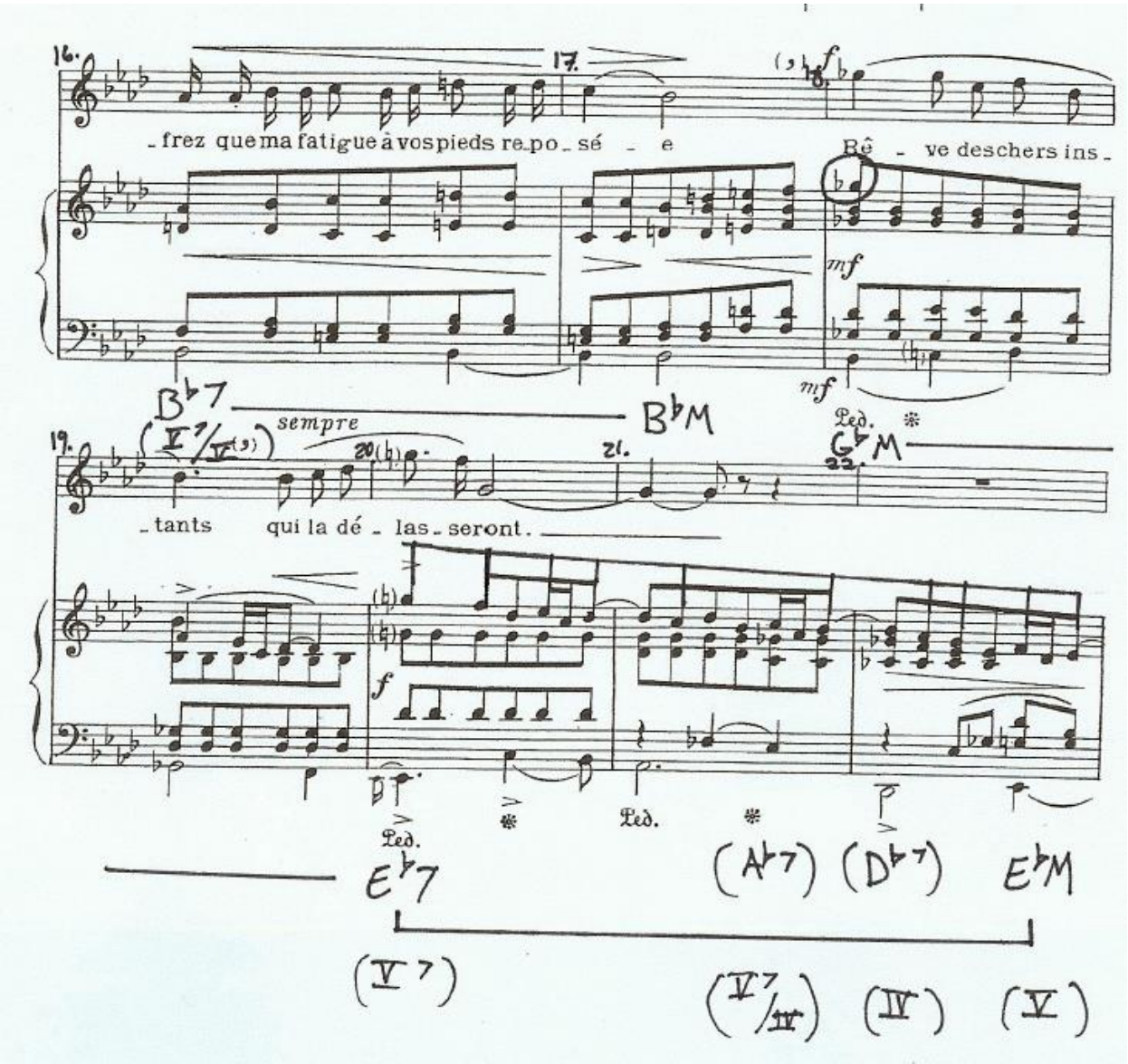
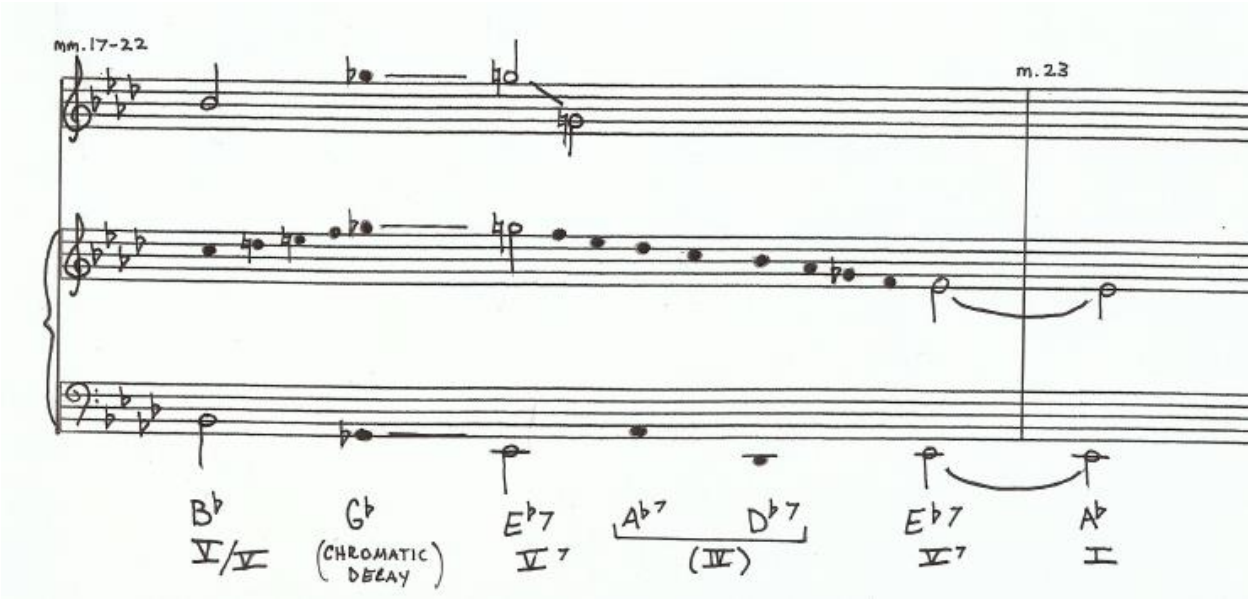


Figure 10 Diagram of upper piano voice and structural harmonic tones in m. 17-23. Half notes denote structural tones of pillar harmonies.



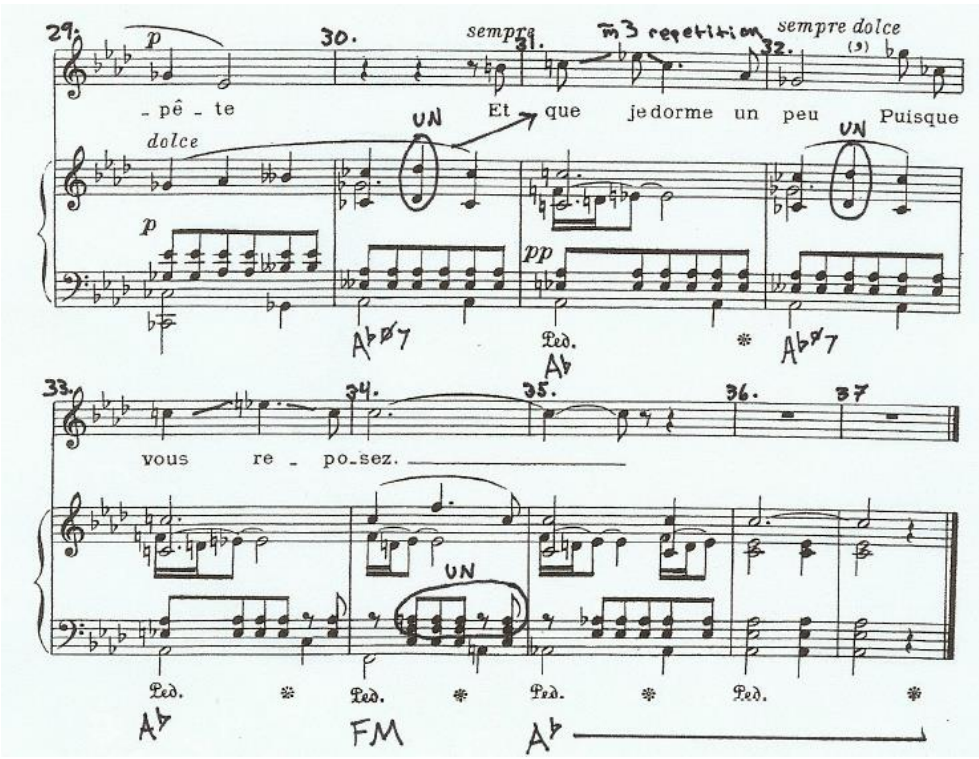
The excitable nature of the piece comes from such obvious elements as the continuous staccato and chromaticism of the piano as well as the quick sixteenth note rhythms of the melodic line. Another, less apparent factor in the change of mood from nervous excitement in the first A section to the sleeping and dreaming at the conclusion is the harmonic rhythm.

One of the factors that is largely responsible for the slowing of momentum in the concluding section is the harmonic rhythm, which gradually declines from the beginning of the piece to the end. **Appendix D** presents a diagram of the harmonic rhythm throughout. This slowing begins at the B section (around m. 10 and 11) and suggests the change of mood from the first stanza to the second. The first stanza appears as a romantic gesture, an optimistic giving of the speaker's heart. In the second stanza, we learn that the speaker has traveled through the wind and storm and suffers some exhaustion from his journey.

It is in the third stanza that we see the most drastic energetic decline, which is due to the harmonic rhythm as well as harmonic repetition. The concluding measures of Fauré's setting

signal the repose of the speaker, as Debussy's did, however he does not provide the same sense of harmonic closure. We expect to hear the V-I (E-flat - A-flat) pillar harmonies as members of a closing cadence. However, Fauré replaces the E-flat major harmony with an F-major harmony in m. 34. In fact, there is not an E-flat major harmony in the entire A' section of the piece. This leaves us with a sense of harmonic uncertainty which is made stronger by the use of the A-flat half-dimished seventh chord in the setting of the final line of text. The repetition of the upper neighbor-tone piano motive (mimicked in the melody with the interval of a minor third), and the alternating A-flat half-diminished seventh/A-flat major harmonies (shown in **Figure 11** below) create a strong sense of harmonic uncertainty as the speaker of the poem becomes weary in the last line. The absence of tonal closure in this case, creates a sense of fading away as opposed to wrapping things up.

Figure 11 Concluding measures of Fauré's "Green"



Fauré's setting of "Green" expresses the nervous excitement of love. The quick and repetitive rhythm signals a kind of optimistic obsession, while the chromatic contrapuntal motion between pillar harmonies creates a sense of constant motion and energetic disorientation. The extended harmonization of a passing tone just before the climax illustrates the building of tension from the first two stanzas. The descending stepwise line following the climax strongly indicates the coming feelings of repose in the final stanza. Overall, Fauré presents a somewhat optimistic image of love akin to the *amour courtois* that Wenk suggested in his analysis of the poem. The *amour courtois* of the troubadour who braved a difficult ordeal in order to bring gifts to his lover, in hopes that his triumph will lead to future joy.[33] The conclusion of the piece, however, leaves us wondering if that future joy will in fact come to fruition.

Conclusions

The multiple simultaneous interpretations of Verlaine's poem, presented in these two analyses, underline an important aspect of poetic Symbolism: the reader as a collaborator in the artistic process. The composer, then, acts as the reader; directing the listener's ear to specific interpretations that exist within the text. This raises additional questions about the listener as the interpreter of symbolist music; and, furthermore, the listener as the "interpreter of the interpretation" in the case of Symbolist art song. Though listener perception is a matter beyond the reaches of this analysis (crossing into the fields of psychology and neuroscience), it is an interesting topic for future study.

The use of various different analytic tools that are used to address these pieces individually is an indication of their relative uniqueness. Although there is no perfect analytic device,

[33] *Ibid.*, 51.

particularly when addressing this repertoire, borrowing ideas from many existing theories in order to uncover the specific musical qualities of the individual pieces and composers is an excellent starting point. Some recent transformations theories, such as those employed in this study, create some different perspectives from which to view the pitch language of works like these, that may not be fully or accurately realized by functional tonal analysis alone. The more we strive to uncover the unique compositional devices employed in works such as these, the more we can come to understand the late nineteenth-century *Mélodie* and works of musical Symbolism.

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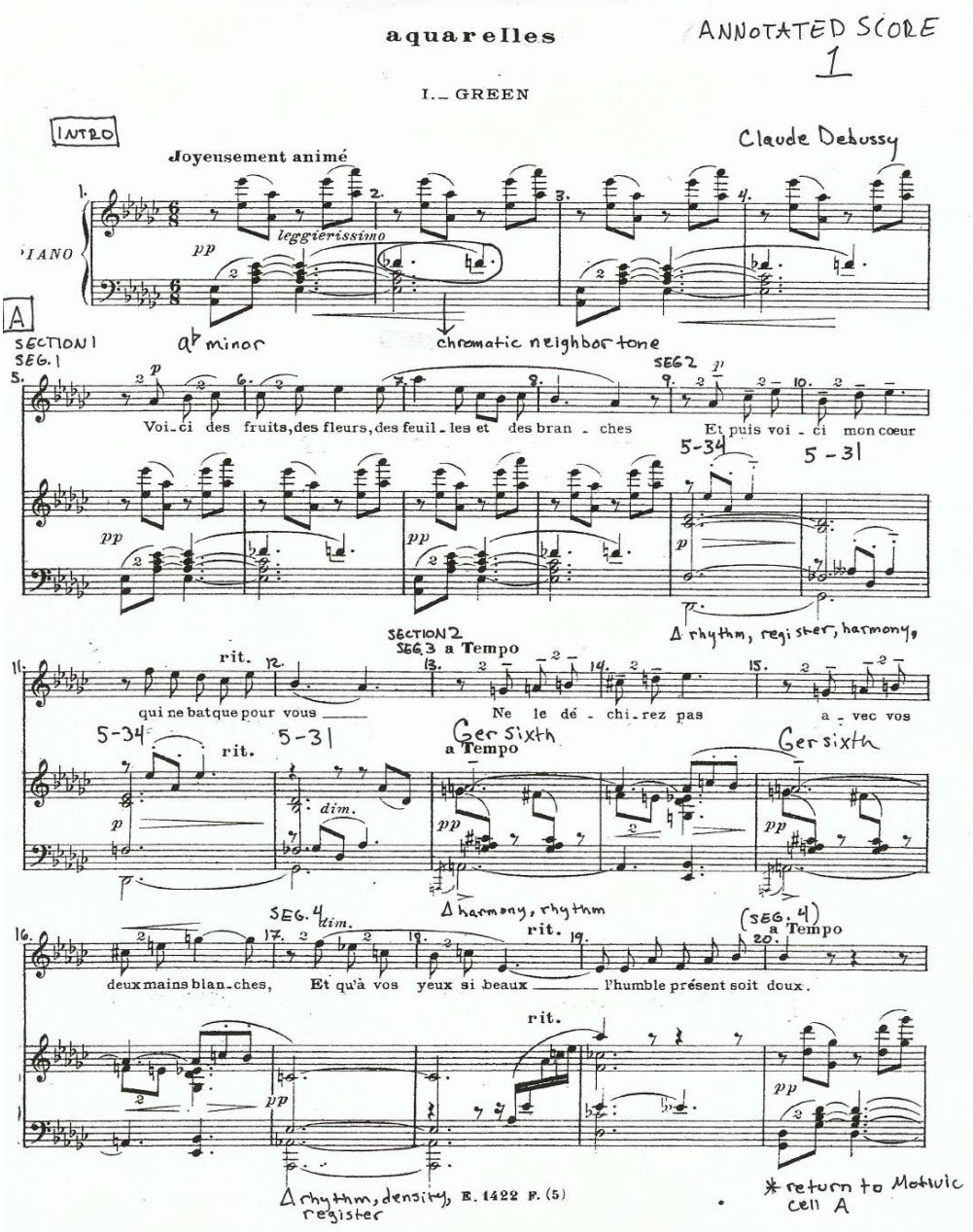
Appendix A


aquarelles
ANNOTATED SCORE
1
I._ GREEN
INTRO
Joyeusement animé
Claude Debussy
PIANO
leggierissimo
pp
A
SECTION 1
SEG. 1
a♭ minor
chromatic neighbor tone
SEG 2
Voi-ci des fruits, des fleurs, des feuil-les et des bran-ches
Et puis voi-ci mon cœur
5-34
5-31
Δ rhythm, register, harmony,
SECTION 2
SEG. 3 a Tempo
rit.
qui ne batque pour vous
Ne le dé-chi-rez pas
a-vec vos
Ger Sixth
dim.
Δ harmony, rhythm
SEG. 4
(SEG. 4)
deux mains blan-ches,
Et qu'à vos yeux si beaux
l'humble présent soit doux.
Δ rhythm, density, register
E. 1422 F. (5)
* return to Motivic cell A

B

SECTION 3

SEG 5.

21. 22. 23. 24.

J'ar - ri - ve

pp

Δ pitch collection, rhythm

25. 26. 27. 28.

tout cou - vert en - co - re de ro - sé - - e

SEG. 6

Que le vent du ma -

5 – 34

pp

* Repetition of Motivic cell

Δ melodic idea

SEG. 7

Un peu retenu

29. 30. 31. 32.

- tin vient gla - cer à mon front

Souf - frez que

5 – 9

pp

m.g.

Δ rhythm, density, harmony

SEG. 8

serrez - - - -

tendre

33. 34. 35. 36. 37.

ma fa - ti - gue à vos pieds re - po - sé - e

Rê - ve des chers ins - tants qui

m.g.

5 – 34

Δ rhythm, register

F. 1499 R (5)

A'

SECTION 1b

SEG. 9

Encore plus retenu

Andantino

caressant

la dé - las - se - ront.

Sur vo - tre

5 - 25

m.g.

più p e molto dim.

pp

pp

F°

* Return of original pitch collection and Motivic cell

SEG. 10

jeu - ne sein, lais - sez rou - ler ma tê - te

Tou - te so - nore en - co - re

5 - 34

5 - 31

p

SECTION 4

SEG. 11

rit.

p

Plus lent

pp

de vos der - niers bai - sers

Laissez la s'a - pai - ser de la bonne tem - pê - te,

5 - 34

5 - 31

p

m.g.

pp

pp

pp

Δ rhythm, density, register, P-space, melodic motion, melodic idea.

SEG. 12

pp

Et que je dorme un peu

puisque vous re - po - sez.

pp

ppp

Δ rhythm, density, incorporation of Motivic cell A and melodic idea 1

E. 1422 F. (5)

ANNOTATED SCORE 2
Melodic ideas and Motivic Cell

aquarelles

I.— GREEN

Claude Debussy

MOTIVIC CELL A

Joyeusement animé

PIANO

leggierissimo

pp

MELODIC IDEA 1

Voi-ci des fruits, des fleurs, des feuil-les et des bran-ches

Et puis voi-ci mon cœur

MOTIVIC CELL B

rit.

a Tempo

qui ne bat que pour vous

Ne le dé-chi-rez pas a-vec vos

MOTIVIC CELL C

dim.

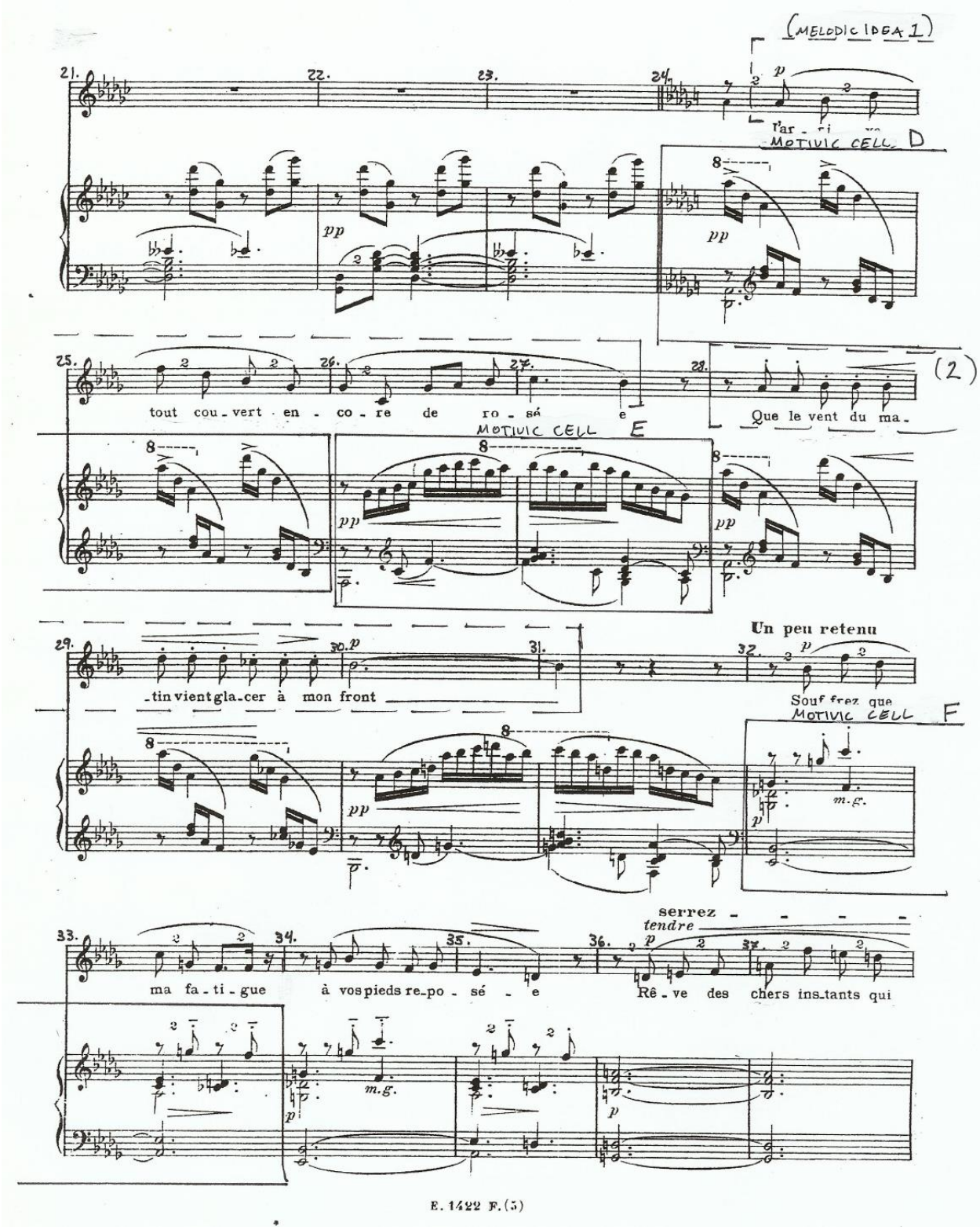
deux mains blan-ches, Et qu'à vos yeux si beaux

l'humble présent soit doux.

MELODIC IDEA 2

MOTIVIC CELL B1

E. 1422 F. (5)


(MELODIC IDEA 1)
MOTIVIC CELL D
MOTIVIC CELL E
(2)
tout cou-vert en-co-re de ro-sé-e
Que le vent du ma-
Un peu retenu
-tin vient gla-cer à mon front
Souf frez que
MOTIVIC CELL F
serrez
tendre
ma fa-ti-gue à vos pieds re-po-sé-e
Rê-ve des chers ins-tants qui
E. 1422 F. (5)

Encore plus retenu

Andantino

caressant

la dé - las - se - ront. Sur vo - tre

MOTIVIC CELL B''

m.g.

più p e molto dim.

pp

jeu - ne sein, lais - sez rou - ler ma tê - te Tou - te so - nore en - co - re

rit.

Plus lent

de vos der - niers bais - ers Laissez la s'a - pai - ser de la bonne tem - pê - te,

MOTIVIC CELL G

MOTIVIC CELL H (A+B)

MELODIC IDEA 1+2

MELODIC IDEA 2

Et que je dorme un peu puisque vous re - po - sez.

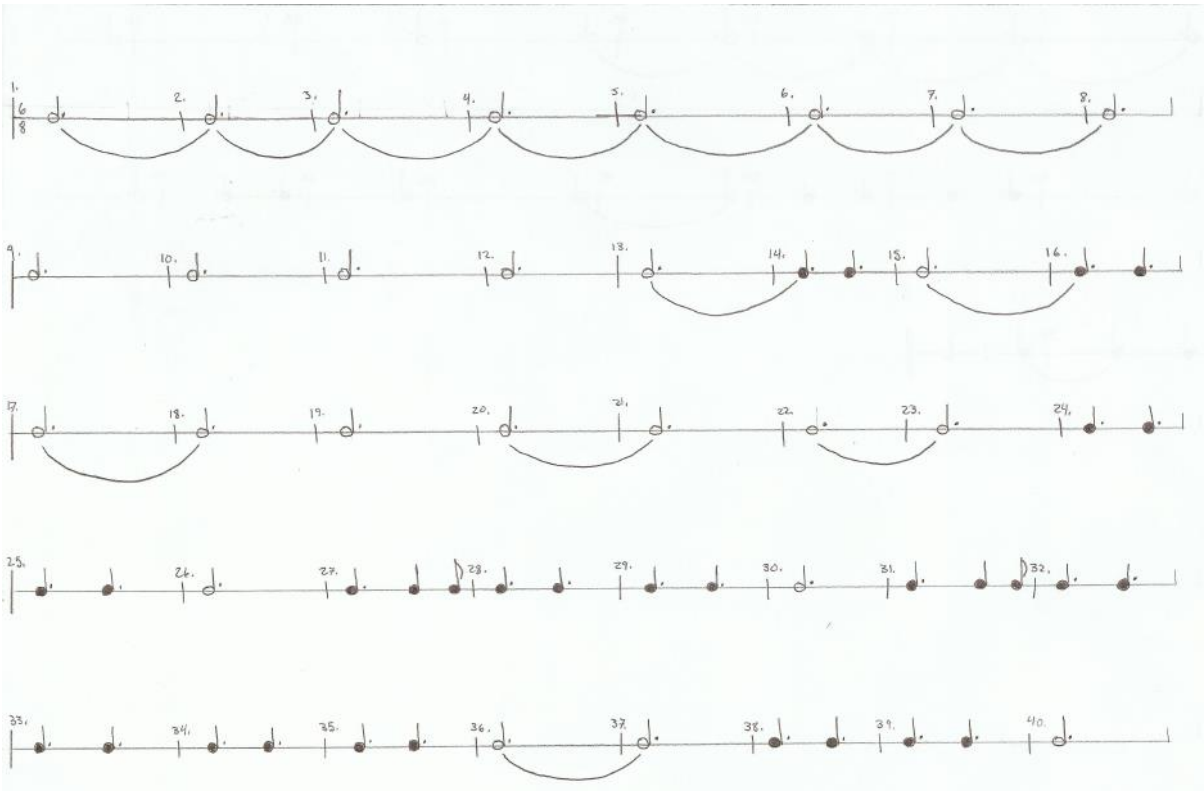
A+B

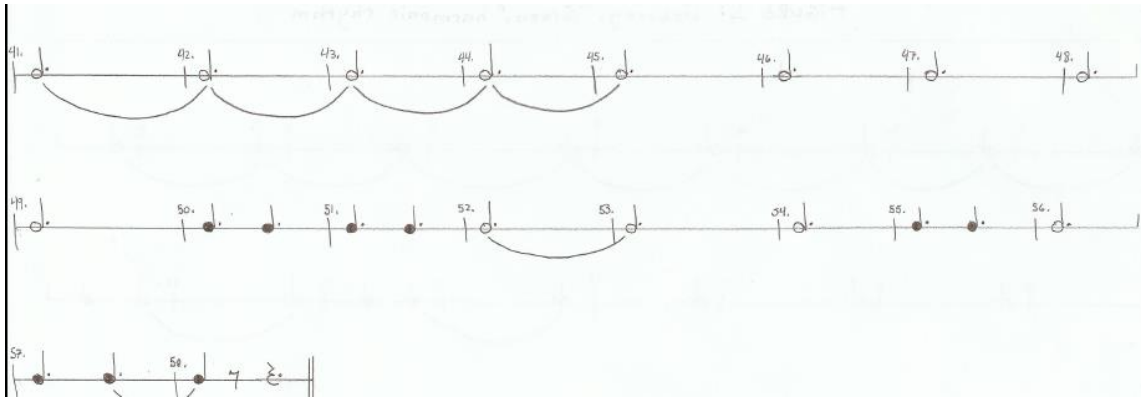
A+B

E. 1422 F. (5)

Appendix B

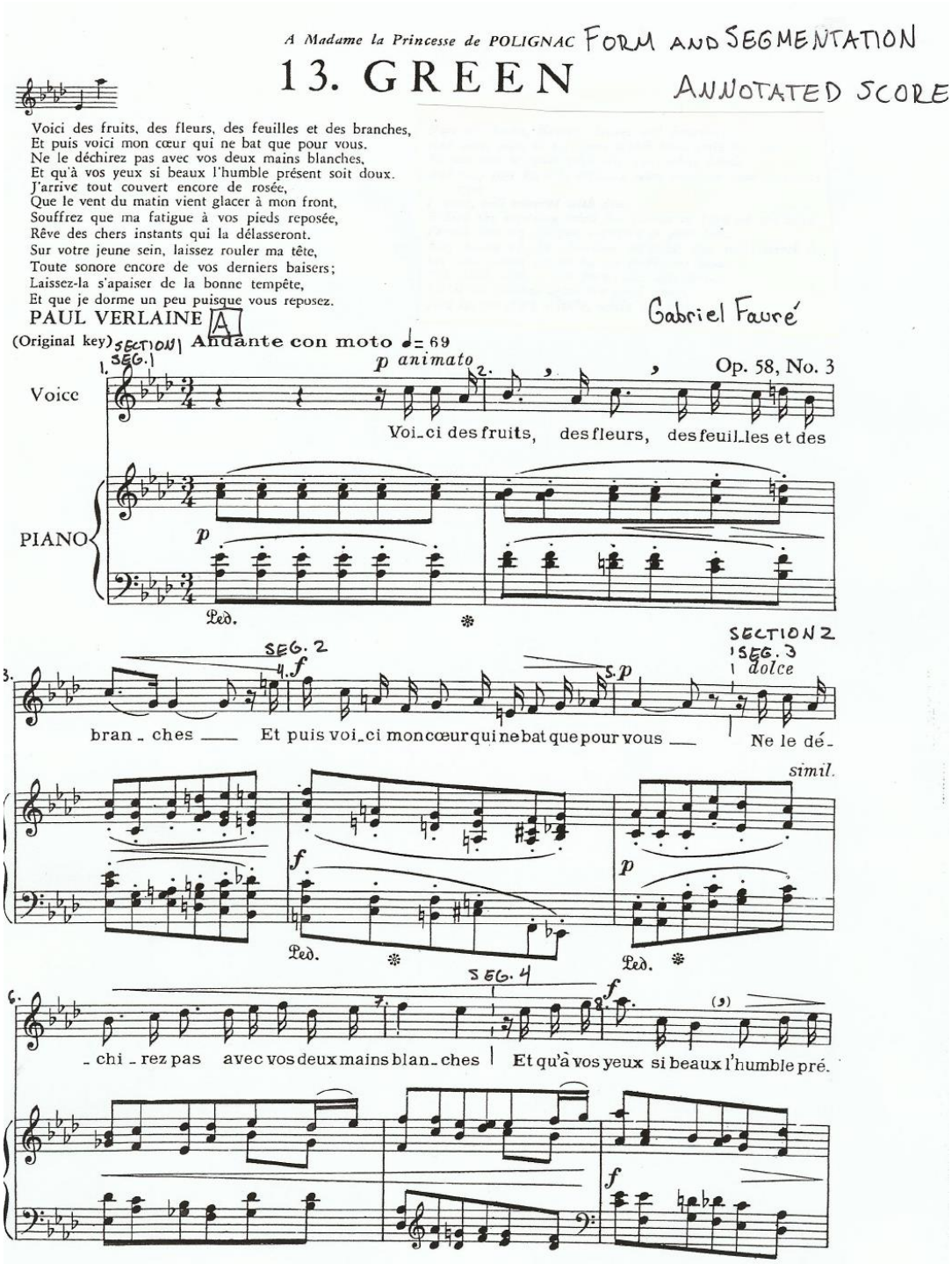
Debussy, “Green”: Harmonic Rhythm





Appendix C

Fauré, "Green": Annotated Score 1



B

SECTION 3
SEG. 5

9. p pp 10. 11. dolce 12.

- sent soit doux. J'ar_ri_ve tout cou_vert enco - re de ro_

dolce p pp Ped. *

SEG. 6 mf 13. 14. 15. SECTION 4 SEG. 7

- sé - e Que le vent du matin vient gla_cer à mon front, souf_

mf p *

SEG. 8 CLIMAX/INTERRUPTION

16. 17. (3) f

- frez que ma fatigue à vos pieds re_po_sé - e Rê - ve des chers ins_

mf B♭7 mf G♭M Ped. *

sempre

19. (3) 20. (♮) 21. 22.

- tants qui la dé - las_ seront.

(♮) (♮) f Ped. * Ped. *

A'

SECTION 1b

SEG. 9

SEG. 10

23. 24. 25.

Sur vo - tre jeu - ne sein laissez rouler ma tê - te | Tou-te so-

pp *p*

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

SEG. 11

26. 27. 28.

f *f*

-nore en-cor de vos der-niers baisers, | Lais - sez - la s'apaiser de la bonne tem-

f *f*

Ped. *

SECTION 6

SEG. 12

SEG. 13

29. 30. 31. 32.

p *sempre* *sempre dolce*

-pê - te Et que je dorme un peu | Puisque

dolce

p *pp*

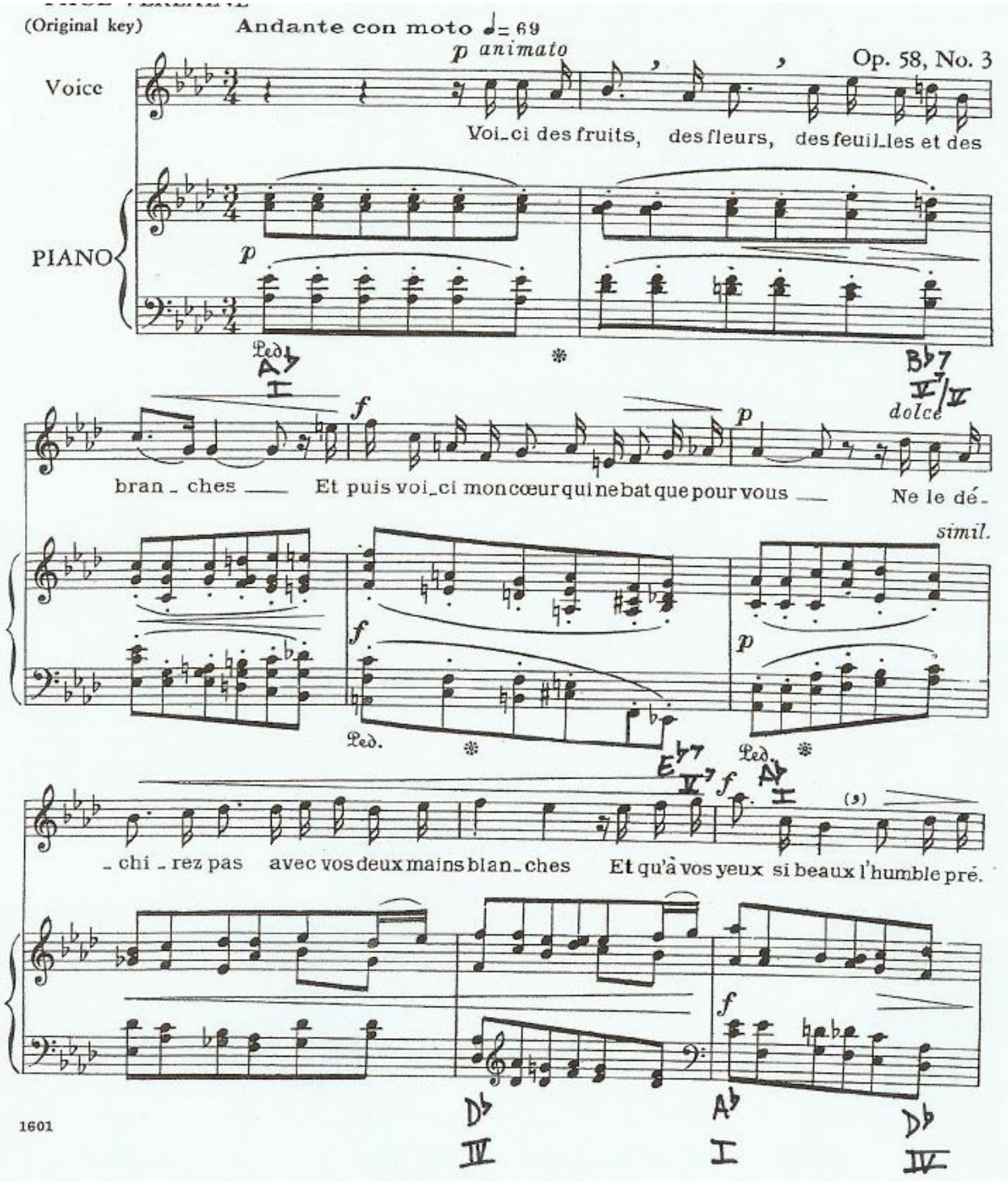
Ped. *

33. 34. 35. 36. 37.

vous re - po-sez.

Ped. * Ped. * Ped. * Ped. *

Fauré, "Green": Annotated Score 2



B

9 10 11

p *pp* *dolce*

- sent soit doux. J'ar_ri _ ve tout cou_vert enco - re de ro_

dolce *p* *pp*

Ped. *mf*

- sé - e Que le vent du matin vient gla_cer à mon front, Souf_

mf *p*

- frez que ma fatigue à vos pieds re_po_sé - e Rê - ve des chers ins_

mf *mf*

Ped.

sempre

- tants qui la dé - las_seront.

f

Ped. Ped.

Appendix D

Fauré, “Green”: Harmonic Rhythm