

THE PERFORMER'S INFLUENCE
ON FRANCO-BELGIAN COMPOSITIONS
FROM 1870 TO 1930

by

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ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE PERFORMER'S INFLUENCE ON FRANCO-BELGIAN COMPOSITIONS FROM 1870 TO 1930

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The turn of the 20th century marked an ascendancy of the Franco-Belgian school of composers. French composers were inspired by the great German composers of the Romantic era, and they created their own defined national style that emerged toward the end of the 19th century. The Franco-Belgian composers' special emphasis on tone, timbre and color encouraged a more individual, personally interpretative approach. These devices underscore the importance and influence a performer can have on the outcome of a piece. I researched the relationship between composers and violinists at a time when the Franco-Belgian style developed and flourished. The Franco-Belgian school of violin playing emerged from the Paris and Brussels conservatories as well as the symbiotic relationship between the performers and composers.

Three recitals in collaboration with pianist David Ballena, which comprise this dissertation project, were performed at the University of Maryland. Each recital featured music for violin and piano from 1870 through 1930. The repertoire was chosen to reflect a performer's influence on a composer. I examined specific composer/performer relationships that helped shape the birth of a newly defined "French" style of playing. My research focused on the stylistic interactions composers, such as César Franck, his disciple Guillaume Lekeu had with the leading prominent Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaye and between Maurice Ravel and the Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Aranyi. I also looked into the personal relationship between friends who inspired each other: Gabriel Fauré and Paul Viardot, Edouard Lalo and Pablo de Sarasate, Claude Debussy and Arthur Hartmann, and the young Lili Boulanger and Yvonne Astruc. Furthermore, I looked into the unfulfilled love between Maurice Ravel and Hélène Jourdan-Morhange, as well as the marriage of Olivier Messiaen with Claire Delbos, both relationships resulting in masterpieces for violin that have remained a part of the standard violin repertoire.

My research led me to understand what type of violin playing each composer had in mind while composing, all of which led me to understand the importance a performer has in preserving national styles. The recitals were recorded on compact discs and archived within the Digital Repository at the University of Maryland (DRUM).

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RECITAL I

Three Kinds of Musical Relationships

Performed at the University of Maryland, with David Ballena, piano
November 5th, 2010, 5:00 p.m. in the Gildenhorn Hall of the Clarice Smith Performing Art Center.

Background

Starting from the last third of the 19th century, Franco-Belgian composers strove for a definite national style. Inspired by the great German composers of the Romantic era, they created a style emphasizing tone, timbre and color, which are individual and interpretative devices. Franco-Belgian composers found their inspiration through poetry, painting, dance and nature as other composers did before them, but the one inspiration that made a prominent impact on the development of Franco-Belgian instrumental music and the shaping of the national style of playing was the relationships between performers and composers that motivated each other to surpass themselves.

This recital featured music for violin and piano that was written because of influential relationships. The repertoire was chosen to reflect how three specific performers influenced the writing of three composers through three different types of relationships: a friendship, love, and an admiration for a violinist's style of playing. The performance opens with the meaningful friendship between Claude Debussy and violinist Arthur Hartmann, a friendship that expanded the limits of both artists to new level. The unfulfilled love between Maurice Ravel and H el ene Jourdan-Morhange was also explored with the sonata for violin and piano. To conclude, the collaboration between the founder

of Franco-Belgian chamber music, César Franck and the brilliant “king of the violin” Eugène Ysaye was examined.

Musical Program

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

[1] “La fille aux cheveux de lin,” (1910)

Arranged for Violin and Piano by Arthur Hartmann (1910)

French composer Claude Debussy is one of the most important figures of French impressionistic style even though he never liked to be called an impressionist composer. In letters, Debussy shared that he is “trying to do 'something different'--an effect of reality...what the imbeciles call 'impressionism', a term which is as poorly used as possible, particularly by the critics, since they do not hesitate to apply it to Turner, the finest creator of mysterious effects in all the world of art.”

Specific works of literature inspired most of Debussy’s compositions. For him, “music and poetry are the only two arts that move in space.” He explains, “musicians who do not understand poetry should not set it to music. They can only spoil it.” *La fille aux cheveux de lin*, meaning, “The Girl with Flaxen Hair,” is the eighth number of Claude Debussy’s *Préludes, Book I* (1909-1010). The piece, originally written for piano solo, was inspired by Charles-Marie Leconte de Lisle’s (1818-1894) poem *La fille aux cheveux de lin* (1852) in the book of poetry *Chansons écossaises*, meaning “Scottish Songs.”

Although Debussy did more to expand the possibilities of form, harmony, voice leading, and timbre than any other composer of his era, ten years before his death, he had yet to compose any music for violin. Arthur Hartmann (1881-1956), a brilliant Hungarian-born American violinist, helped solve this matter. In 1908, he attended a performance of Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902). Hartmann fell in love with Debussy's music and sought out the publisher to acquire any violin music that Debussy might have written. Unfortunately, the publisher's response was not one Hartmann wanted to hear. Hartmann then contacted Debussy directly and commissioned a work for his tour in United States. Since Debussy had little time to compose any violin music before the violinist's next recital, Hartmann asked the composer for permission to transcribe some of his songs to the violin. The request was well received and started a friendship between the two musicians. In 1914, Debussy accompanied Hartmann in a recital that included the three transcriptions Hartmann had created from Debussy's music.

Charles-Marie Leconte de Lisle
La fille aux cheveux de lin

Sur la luzerne en fleur assise,
 Qui chante dès le frais matin?
 C'est la fille aux cheveux de lin,
 La belle aux lèvres de cerise.

L'amour, au clair soleil d'été,
 Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Ta bouche a des couleurs divines,
 Ma chère, et tente le baiser!
 Sur l'herbe en fleur veux-tu causer,
 Fille aux cils longs, aux boucles fines?

L'amour, au clair soleil d'été,
 Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Ne dis pas non, fille cruelle!
 Ne dis pas oui! J'entendrai mieux
 Le long regard de tes grands yeux
 Et ta lèvre rose, ô ma belle!

L'amour, au clair soleil d'été,
 Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Adieu les daims, adieu les lièvres
 Et les rouges perdrix! Je veux
 Baiser le lin de tes cheveux,
 Presser la pourpre de tes lèvres!

L'amour, au clair soleil d'été,
 Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Charles-Marie Leconte de Lisle
La fille aux cheveux de lin
English translation Laura L.Nagle

Who sits upon the blooming lucerne,
 Singing from the earliest morn?
 It is the girl with the flaxen hair,
 The beauty with cherry-red lips.

Love, in the bright summer sun,
 Sang with the lark.

Your mouth has divine colors,
 My dear, and is tempting to kiss!
 Do you wish to chat upon the blooming grasses,
 Girl with long lashes and delicate curls?

Love, in the bright summer sun,
 Sang with the lark.

Do not say no, cruel girl!
 Do not say yes! I shall better understand
 A long gaze from your large eyes
 And your pink lips, o my beauty!

Love, in the bright summer sun,
 Sang with the lark.

Farewell to the deer, farewell to the hares
 And the red partridges! I wish
 To kiss the flax of your hair,
 To press upon the crimson of your lips!

Love, in the bright summer sun,
 Sang with the lark.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
[2]-[4] “Sonate pour violon et piano,” (1923-27)

Often put in the same category as his elder Claude Debussy, the French composer Maurice Ravel claimed to have “always personally followed a direction opposed to that of the symbolism of Debussy.” Although he had an interest in following fashion, dressing with “showy ties and frilly shirts,” he was an innovative precursor when composing music. He was a perfectionist, always expending his palette of styles using traditional forms and folk tunes, shying away from the new Schoenberg trend of atonality. He was known for his melodies, instrumental textures, and effects always attentive to form and craftsmanship.

In 1917, Ravel attended a chamber-music concert featuring in his piano trio (1914) performed by violinist H el ene Jourdan-Morhange (1888-1961). She was an advocate of the music of her time. The first impression she had of Ravel was of a shy, nervous, stammering fox. Ironically, Ravel always compared Morhange’s manner to a cat. The fox named his prey, “Moune,” after his favorite Siamese cat. Although no information was found on an existent love relationship in Ravel’s life, Manuel Rosenthal (1904-2003), a disciple of Ravel, explained that Ravel once asked Moune to marry him. Embarrassed, she had to say “no” and explained though she loved him very much, they were not compatible for marriage. She remained one of his closest friend, his confident and his technical consultant when composing for violin.

In a 1920 letter to Moune, Ravel expressed the desire to compose a violin concerto for her, but instead he dedicated the sonata for cello and violin (1922) to her, and he composed the sonata for violin and piano for her in 1927, even though he always

considered the violin and piano acoustically incompatible. Ravel explained that while writing the sonata, he imposed on himself the independence of the two instruments showing and emphasizing their incompatibility rather than balancing their contrast. When listening to the first movement, a sonata form, imagine a cat's journey with the elegance of the violin's lyricism and the short and curious interruption of the piano. The second movement, a blues, demonstrates Ravel's taste for American jazz. The violin's melody slides with one finger from note to note to imitate a saxophone while the piano simulates strummed guitar chords. The final movement, a perpetuum mobile, starts with hesitating figures to launch a high-speed, perpetual motion showing off the violin's virtuosic capabilities.

When starting to compose this piece in 1923, Ravel had Hélène Jourdan-Morhange's playing in mind, hoping that she would première the sonata. By the time the work was finished in 1927, her severe arthritis prevented her from performing it. It was the Romanian composer and violinist Georges Enescu (1881-1955) with Ravel himself at the piano, who premiered the sonata in Paris on May 30, 1927.

César Franck (1822-1890)
[5]-[8] "Sonate pour violon et piano en la majeur," (1886)

Marcel Proust,
Excerpts of Du côté de chez swann

Cette fois, [Swann] avait distingué nettement une phrase s'élevant pendant quelques instants au-dessus des ondes sonores. Elle lui avait proposé aussitôt des voluptés particulières dont il n'avait jamais eu l'idée avant de l'entendre, dont il sentait que rien d'autre qu'elle ne pourrait les lui faire connaître, et il avait éprouvé pour elle un amour inconnu."

Marcel Proust
Excerpts of Swann's Way
English translation by C. K. Scott Moncrieff

This time [Swann] had distinguished, quite clearly, a phrase, which emerged for a few moments from the waves of sound. It had at once held out to him an invitation to partake of intimate pleasures, of whose existence, before hearing it, he had never dreamed, into which he felt that nothing but this phrase could initiate him; and he had been filled with love for it, as with a new and strange desire.

César Franck is known as the founder of modern Franco-Belgian chamber music. Influenced by the thematic transformation of Franz Liszt (1811-1886), The harmony of Richard Wagner (1813-1883), and the Romantic idea of cyclic unification through thematic return, Franck developed a personal approach to composition by blending traditional counterpoint and classical forms. His famous violin sonata in A major was composed at the end of his career, when he was sixty-three. Like the first violin sonata of Gabriel Fauré or Guillaume Lekeu's violin and piano sonata, Franck's masterpiece was often suggested as the model for Vinteuil's imaginary sonata in Marcel Proust's (1871-1922) novel: "Swann's way."

Franck dedicated the sonata to the renowned Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe and offered him the manuscript as a wedding present. Ysaÿe performed the first public performance of the sonata with the French pianist Marie-Léontine Bordes-Pène (1858-1924), on December 16th, 1886 in Brussels. The composer Vincent d'Indy (1851-1931), Franck's pupil and biographer, reported that the première occurred at the end of an afternoon concert in the Brussels Museum of Modern Painting, where artificial illumination was forbidden. When the first movement was over, the room had become so dark that the performers could no longer read their music, even though the audience refused to leave. Ysaÿe struck the music stand with his bow and said: "Allons! Allons!" [Let's go!]. They continued in the dark, playing from memory the remaining three movements of this new, difficult work. D'Indy wrote that their performance was full of fire and passion, an unforgettable miracle, in which music, wondrous and alone, controlled the night.

The piece is one of the finest examples of Franck's use of cyclic form. Each movement is linked by thematic cross-references, sometimes by the return of earlier material and other times by transforming earlier themes to fit new circumstances. The sonata is in four movements that alternate between slow and fast. The first movement, *Allegretto ben moderato*, serves as a prologue to the entire work. It has a slower tempo than usual for a first movement and has been called "sonata form without development". The piano opens with a question to the violin suggesting a contemplative mood answered by a moderately paced melody spelling out the implications already raised by the piano. The theme-shape by the violin as it enters becomes the thematic cell of the entire work.

In the fiery second movement, marked *passionato*, the mood changes. The piano opens the movement by setting the mood for the violin. It rumbles from far away until finally bursts like a fireball of passion and energy. The swarming notes of the piano make this movement one of the most challenging passages in the piano literature. The listener hears three impressive melodies: a stormy melody, its musical response followed by a beautiful and meditative melody in the violin alone.

The Recitativo–Fantasia is the most original movement in the sonata. It is in two parts; a recitative and a free fantasy. The musical ideas previously used reappear as themes that will in turn be taken up later. The piano's quiet introduction is a direct reference to the *passionato* section. The violin makes its entrance with an improvisation-like passage (this is the fantasia of the title). It converses with the piano before launching into a noble melody that dominates the movement. After the freely written third movement, the finale restores structure and happiness. Using traditional canonic form, Franck recalls the opening of the sonata into a pleasing theme for the *Allegretto*

Poco Mosso. The music gradually gains powerful momentum towards the coda, for which Franck and his era were so famous. The sonata concludes with energetic elegance.

RECIATL II

French Salons Music: A Recital On International Women's Day

Performed at the University of Maryland, with David Ballena, piano
March 8th, 2010, 8:00 p.m. in the Gildenhorn Hall of the Clarice Smith Performing Art Center

Background

La belle époque, which began during the late 19th century and lasted until World War I, was marked by Franco-Belgian composers Fauré, Saint-Saëns, Debussy, Ravel and also a Spanish influence in Paris. During this period, musical salons were the favorite meeting places for musicians. These salons represented places where upper class individuals hosted important public figures, artists, writers and musicians. The music in this program included works that were commissioned by, dedicated to, or premiered in, a salon.

Women essentially ran the salons. One can appreciate the important role that they played in promoting musicians and circulating their music. Major debates focus around the relationship between the French salons and the public sphere as well as the role of women within the salons. At a time when society was defined and regulated almost completely by men, the musical salon provided a place for women to exercise a powerful influence. Women were the center of life in the salon, and they carried a very important role as regulators. These women were usually clever and brilliant, but at that time their cleverness and brilliance were primarily geared toward introducing their friends to new ideas and ways of life through happenings at the salons. Their particular gift was to

inspire others. Much of the fascination that gave them such power in their day still clings to their memories.

Celebrating the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day, this musical program is a tribute to the astonishing women of the arts whose energy and love of music has inspired so many musicians and composers. Many of us at the University of Maryland had a chance to meet such a woman in person, the incomparable Dr. Suzanne Beicken. She moved mountains for others and inspired many to reach new heights. For me, she was the epitome of the ultimate woman. Her incredible support remains infinite.

Musical Program

CAMILLE SAINT-SAENS (1835-1921) [1] "Elégie," Op.160 (1920)

Most of Camille Saint-Saëns' violin compositions were inspired by the precocious Spanish violinist Pablo de Sarasate (1844-1908) and the great Belgian violinist Eugène Ysaÿe (1858-1931). Saint-Saëns' inclination for chamber music made him a central figure in the renewal of French music. During the third quarter of the 19th century, the French seemed ultimately interested in opera, but Saint-Saëns attempted to make the case for chamber music, which so many of his countrymen continued to think of as something German.

The program opens with the second *Elégie* for Violin and Piano composed in 1920, the year before Saint-Saëns' death. Surprisingly, the piece sounds as if it were

written during his earlier musical life. Being the precursor of an imaginary new “French style of music,” the piece was written in remembrance of Alexis de Castillon’s style (1838-1873). Castillon, a young composer influenced by Robert Schumann (1810-1856), had died at the early age of thirty-five from a cold while engaged in the army. The *Elégie* is dedicated to Charles de Galland (1851-1923), one of the greatest mayors of Algier. A talented violinist, he organized salons in his home and founded the *Société des concerts populaires*. The beginning of the piece has a beautiful melody filled with optimism. It then proceeds to a powerful and fiery climax, before slowly fading away--a fine work by any standard, but certainly an incredible one for someone who wrote it when he was eighty-five years of age!

GERMAINE TAILLEFERRE (1892-1983)
[2] “Berceuse,” (1913)

The French composer, Germaine Tailleferre, was the only female member of the famous *Les Six*, a group of French composers who met at the *Conservatoire de Paris* around 1912 and became very close friends. The group included Georges Auric (1899-1983), Louis Durey (1888-1979), Arthur Honegger (1892-1955), Darius Milhaud (1892-1974), Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) and Tailleferre. Their music is often seen as a reaction against the musical style of Richard Wagner and impressionist music.

Tailleferre started composing short works at a very young age. Despite the opposition of her father, she auditioned for the *Conservatoire de Paris* in piano and *solfège*. In 1913, she won the first prize in counterpoint and harmony at the *Conservatoire de Paris*. During that successful year, she wrote *Berceuse*, which she

dedicated to her professor Monsieur H. Dallier. *Berceuse*, meaning “lullaby” in English, is very well written for violin. The flow of the melody without constraint and ease seems as if inspired by Gabriel Fauré.

LILI BOULANGER (1893-1918)

[3]-[4] “Deux Morceaux pour violon et piano,” Nocturne (1911) – Cortège

(1914)

Lili Boulanger, the younger sister of the famous French composer Nadia Boulanger (1887-1979), was the first woman composer to win the *Prix de Rome* in 1913. French composers Hector Berlioz and Claude Debussy had previously won the prestigious award. In 1914, while studying at the French Academy in Rome and recovering from a severe illness, Lili Boulanger composed the tone poem, *Cortège*, here a lively and festive piece. The term “cortège” is used to describe either a slow procession or a victorious march. Boulanger appears to have written the piece in the “happy mood” showing her strong and positive character to overcome her illness.

Lili Boulanger dedicated *Cortège* to violinist Yvonne Astruc (1889-1980), a violinist and friend of the family who had often come to play at the Boulanger household. According to Darius Milhaud (1892-1974), Astruc’s “manner of playing is both purposeful and expressive.” In 1937, a French journal, “Le Petit Radio,” described her as the “Ambassadress of the French Musical Art” due to her noble style of playing, the beauty of her sound, and her impeccable technique. The French government awarded her the prestigious French *Légion d’honneur*. She premiered works dedicated to her like

Darius Milhaud's *Concertino de printemps* (1934) and Germaine Tailleferre's violin concerto (1936).

After Lili's death in 1918 at the age of twenty-four, Yvonne Astruc and Nadia Boulanger recorded *Cortège* in 1930, pairing it with *Nocturne*, also written for violin or flute and piano dedicated to Marie Danielle Parenteau. This little piece that Lili composed in 1911 was written in the impressionist style. It starts with a long pedal C in the piano, over which a hauntingly beautiful violin melody moves. The two voices push each other to a central powerful climax, which then fades back to its earlier, gentle atmosphere. Concert attendees were encouraged to listen for Lili's musical quotation of Claude Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1892-94) and Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* (1857-59).

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

[5] "Il pleure dans mon cœur" (1885–1887)

Arranged for Violin and Piano by Arthur Hartmann (1908)

French composer Claude Debussy is one of the most important figures of French impressionistic style even though, as mentioned earlier in the first recital, he never liked to be called an impressionist composer.

Specific works of literature inspired most of Debussy's compositions. *Il pleure dans mon cœur* is a movement from Claude Debussy's song cycle *Ariettes oubliées* for voice and piano written between 1885 and 1887. These settings of some of the best-known poems of Paul Verlaine (1844-1896) mark Debussy's transition from a traditional composer in the style of Charles Gounod (1818-1893) to a more individual artist. Debussy's setting of *Il pleure dans mon cœur* expresses the melancholy of Paul

Verlaine's poem, the soft and light melancholy of hearts, which do not know why they are sad.

**Paul Verlaine,
Il pleure dans mon coeur**

Il pleure dans mon coeur
Comme il pleut sur la ville.
Quelle est cette langueur
Qui pénètre mon coeur?

O bruit doux de la pluie,
Par terre et sur les toits!
Pour un coeur qui s'ennuie,
O le bruit de la pluie!

Il pleure sans raison
Dans ce coeur qui s'écoeure.
Quoi! nulle trahison?
Ce deuil est sans raison.

C'est bien la pire peine,
De ne savoir pourquoi,
Sans amour et sans haine,
Mon coeur a tant de peine.

**Paul Verlaine
There is weeping in my heart
English translation by Peter Low**

There is weeping in my heart
like the rain falling on the town.
What is this languor
that pervades my heart?

Oh the patter of the rain
on the ground and the roofs!
For a heart growing weary
oh the song of the rain!

There is weeping without cause
in this disheartened heart.
What! No betrayal?
There's no reason for this grief.

Truly the worst pain
is not knowing why,
without love or hatred,
my heart feels so much pain.

Although Debussy did more to expand the possibilities of form, harmony, voice leading, and timbre than any other composer of his era, ten years before his death he had yet to compose any music for violin. Arthur Hartmann (1881-1956), a brilliant Hungarian born American violinist, helped solve this matter. In 1908, he attended a performance of Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902). In 1914, Debussy accompanied Hartmann in a recital that included the three transcriptions Hartmann had created from Debussy's music. The first transcription for violin and piano (1808) that Hartmann arranged was *Il pleure dans mon coeur*. Hartmann explained in the book, *Violin Mastery*, that even "though Debussy was not, generally speaking, an advocate of transcriptions, he liked [it]..." In 1914, Debussy accompanied Hartmann in a recital that included the three transcriptions Hartmann had created from Debussy's music.

EDOUARD LALO (1823-1892)
[6] “Guitare Op 28,” (1882)

As a performer of the *Quatuor Armengaud*, composer Edouard Lalo contributed to the renewal of the chamber music scene in France at the end of the 19th century. After 1865, Lalo hosted a musical salon every Friday in Paris. Although he was an admirer of the Wagnerian orchestra, Lalo kept his own personality. Due to his Spanish descent and his friendship with the great Spanish virtuoso violinist and composer, Pablo de Sarasate (1844-1908), Lalo was one of the first composers to use Spanish folklore and its dance rhythms in his compositions. Among Lalo’s masterpieces, his *Symphonie espagnole* (1875) for solo violin and symphonic orchestra was dedicated to Sarasate, and has attained a permanent place in the standard violin repertoire.

In 1878, Lalo wrote to Sarasate stating that his presence in Lalo’s life had been his greatest artistic opportunity and that without him he would have continued to write insignificant odds and ends. Although Lalo’s friendship with Sarasate inspired him to write his greatest works for violin, *Guitare, Op. 28*, the charming little encore piece for violin, was not dedicated to Sarasate. Lalo composed it for his own use. This light, Spanish flavored piece reflects Sarasate’s traits, such as his smooth legato, creating a beautiful singing playing. Originally written for violin and piano, *Guitare, Op. 28* was orchestrated by Gabriel Pierné (1863-1937) long after Lalo’s death.

OLIVIER MESSIAEN (1908-1992)

[7] “Thème et Variations,” (1932)

Thème et Variations of 1932 is one of Messiaen’s most famous works. After graduating from the Paris Conservatory in music composition (1930), Messiaen met the talented violinist Claire Delbos. They performed recitals together, and their time together led to a beautiful marriage. Their home was the venue for occasional musical gatherings. Some of Messiaen's works for those occasions were written often to celebrate the happiness of the young couple. *Thème et Variations* was a wedding present to *Mi*, the nickname he gave to his wife, Claire Delbos. They performed it together on November 22nd, 1932.

Like Arthur Hartmann, the eleven-year-old Olivier Messiaen who began composing at age seven, fell in love with Debussy’s opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*. It was a revelation for him, which led him to decide on devoting his life to music. He studied organ and composition at the Paris Conservatory and gained the heritage of the distinguished line of Franco-Belgian composer-organists, including Camille Saint-Saëns and César Franck.

Thème et Variations was Messiaen’s first chamber-music piece, and one of only two written for violin and piano. Although it has fewer rhythmical complexities than several of his later compositions, it does not feel like a young composer’s work. Messiaen’s tonal palette was already fully developed. The piece has five variations and a three-part theme of twenty-eight bars. The theme is a soft and tender melody played around the note E. Simple chords in the piano part, reflecting a heartbeat, accompany the mesmerizing singing line. The first three of five variations move at increasingly quicker

speeds, from duples and triplets to sixteenth notes. The fourth variation builds up like waves into the fifth variation; the whole piece offers an extreme range of dynamics. A re-statement of the theme represents the final variation, an octave higher, accompanied by fuller chords in the piano.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918)

[8] “Beau soir,” (ca. 1891)

Arranged for Violin and Piano by Arthur Hartmann (1943)

Claude Debussy’s *Beau soir*, meaning “beautiful evening,” a French art song, is one of his youthful works. It is difficult to know the exact dates of this work because Debussy’s early manuscripts were usually undated and their publication often occurred many years later. Inspired by his friend, poet Paul Bourget (1852-1935), Debussy composed a set of seven songs from Bourget’s *Les aveux*, meaning “confessions.” Only three of these have been published. With the tranquil eighth-note rhythmical pedal in the piano, and the flow of the dreamy and enchanting melody, Debussy illustrated the poet’s aspiration to be happy and enjoy life on gorgeous evenings, even though death was inevitable.

Arthur Hartmann was devoted to Debussy’s music. He wrote a transcription of *Beau Soir* after Debussy’s death during the World War II that was published in 1943. While reworking *Il pleure dans mon coeur*, Hartmann explained that he applied the same technique of “interlacing fingers as Debussy had so charmingly, characterized the continuous exchange of musical material between violin and piano” to *Beau soir*. The

violin is muted in order to create a warm, intimate, calm and atmosphere of a beautiful and delightful evening.

Paul Bourget
Beau soir from Les aveux

Lorsque au soleil couchant les rivières sont roses
Et qu'un tiède frisson court sur les champs de blé,
Un conseil d'être heureux semble sortir des choses
Et monter vers le coeur troublé.

Un conseil de goûter le charme d'être au monde
Pendant qu'on est jeune et que le soir est beau,
Car nous nous en allons, comme s'en va cette onde:
Elle à la mer, nous au tombeau.

Paul Bourget
Beautiful Evening from The Confessions
English translation by Leslie McEwen

When streams turn pink in the setting sun,
And a slight shudder rushes through the wheat fields,
A plea for happiness seems to rise out of all things
And it climbs up towards the troubled heart.

A plea to relish the charm of life
While there is youth and the evening is fair,
For we pass away, as the wave passes:
The wave to the sea, we to the grave.

GABRIEL FAURE (1845-1924)
[8]-[11] “Sonate pour violon et piano,” No. 1. (1876)

One of the leading *salonnières* of the Parisian musical scene, Pauline Viardot (1821-1910) born Garcia, is one of the little-known heroines of French music. The New Grove Dictionary of Women Composers describes her as an accomplished woman. She was a mezzo-soprano and composer, taught at the Paris Conservatory, and presided over a music salon in the *Boulevard Saint-Germain*. Through her salon, she helped launch the careers of many composers, including Camille Saint-Saëns and Gabriel Fauré. For the young Fauré, Pauline Viardot “was by far the most glamorous female musical personality that [he] had ever encountered.” When composing his first sonata for violin and piano, in A Major, at the age of thirty, Fauré was courting Marianne Viardot, Pauline’s daughter. It was for Marianne’s brother, violinist Paul Viardot (1857-1941), considered a great salon player by the brilliant violin pedagogue, Carl Flesch (1873-1944), that the sonata is dedicated.

Ardent, elegant and refined are some of the adjectives that describe the music of Gabriel Fauré. His teacher, Camille Saint-Saëns, hailed this sonata for its “formal novelty, quest, refinement of modulation, curious sonorities, [and] use of the most unexpected rhythms.” The Sonata No. 1 for violin and piano was Fauré’s first chamber-music work and is considered a milestone in the history of that genre, not only in France but throughout Europe. It came ten years before the famous César Franck (1822-1890) sonata for violin and piano (1886), and three years before the violin sonatas of Johannes Brahms (1833-1897). The work displays both exuberance and its own style of intimacy, mirroring the image of the composer. According to violinist Jacques Thibaud (1880-1953), although “not especially difficult to play,” Fauré’s sonata in A Major for violin and piano can be “hard to interpret. It’s largely a matter of physical and mental touch.”

In the first movement the melodies unfold one after another, creating a propelling momentum. The elegance is complemented by youthfulness, and hopeful, refreshing qualities. The music flows on without constraint and with ease. The second movement is both tender and melancholic. The third movement, although written in 2/4, is like a “Scherzo;” and it is considered to be a masterpiece of French musical wit and brilliance. It displays a lightness and fast tempo in the outer parts with a rich middle section. This style became a prototype for later scherzo movements by both Ravel and Debussy. The final movement concludes brilliantly, lending boldness to a splendid work filled with beautiful, impassioned melodies.

RECITAL III

Thanks to Them

Performed at the University of Maryland, with David Ballena, piano
April 24th, 2010, 2:00 p.m. in the Ulrich Hall at the Tawes Fine Arts.

Guillaume Lekeu (1870-1894) **[1]-[3] “Sonate pour piano et violon,” (1892)**

Like the composer Lili Boulanger (1893-1918) who was performed in the previous recital, Guillaume Lekeu is one of the few extremely gifted composers who died too early, at the age of 24. He was considered one of Belgium’s bright young stars, but unfortunately died before he could harvest the fruits of a ripened genius. Although he was not exposed to music at a very young age, he still published his Op. 1, an *Andante et Variations* for violin and piano, at the age of fifteen, after alone teaching himself composition by plunging into the scores of Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827) and Richard Wagner (1813-1883). Lekeu’s talent impressed César Franck, who would become his teacher, mentor and close friend. Franck took the young man on a trip to Bayreuth to attend the Wagner festival. One of the operas performed there, *Tristan und Isolde* (1857-59), made a tremendous impact on him, resulting in a burst of creativity and encouraging a whole new level of musicality. This brought Lekeu to his quest to master different shades of feeling and plenitude. Lekeu stated “Even if it kills me, I put my very soul into my music.”

Because Lekeu shared the same belief as the Belgian violinist, Eugène Ysaye (1858-1931), that music should be what “the heart suggests, and the soul expresses,” Ysaye, regarded as “the King of the Violin,” commissioned Lekeu’s two first chamber-

music works: a piano quartet and a violin sonata. Lekeu's *Sonate pour piano et violon en Sol Majeur* (1892) that he claimed to have cost him "infinite pain," was premiered in 1893, and since then never left the standard repertoire of the violin in France. It is worth noting that the title mentioned the piano before the violin, certainly to emphasize the importance of the voluptuous piano part. Although the piece was composed when Lekeu was twenty-two, and considered his masterpiece, one may feel that the composer might not have had the chance to totally find his own, unique voice. The sonata is absolutely breathtaking; the narration of the two instruments might be felt as a dedication work to the greatest German composers and to the founder of the Franco-Belgian style, as well as a debut of Debussy's impressionism. The influence of César Franck's *Sonata pour violon et piano en la majeure* (1886) is very much implied. Like Franck's sonata, Lekeu's is written in cyclic form. One obvious mark of this *idée fixe* (a melody that is used in each movement to represent an obsessive image) is found when the theme of the first movement is literally quoted note-for-note in the denouement of the final movement. It is exactly what Franck did in his sonata with his third and fourth movements. But the genius of Lekeu shows his ability to continue and even surpass the path of the Franco-Belgian chamber-music founders by using an increased emphasis on an important compositional technique of his time, chromaticism. Coming from the Wagnerian school, this technique was the lifeblood of expressive music in the mid to late 19th century. When transferred to the Franckists, it became an additional means to achieve equilibrium and restraint, major attributes that have now long been esteemed in Franco-Belgian music.

The chromaticism is found in the first movement of the sonata, which opens with a beautiful calm statement played by the violin, accompanied by very light and sporadic

piano chords suggesting moving harmony. This part also serves as a quotation to the opening of Johannes Brahms's G-Major violin and piano sonata Op. 78 (1878-79). In order to keep his own flavor, Lekeu brings the theme into different twists and turns from its original state with the help of chromatic harmonic changes. Before leaving the maze of this first movement, the conversation between the piano and the violin arrives at a unison agreement and a victorious climax, later leading into a regretful and moving coda. This end sets the mood for the deep and touching second movement. By choosing a 7/8 meter, the first theme is continuous, as if the atmosphere is too unbearably intense to even breathe. Lekeu shifts from Brahms-like melodies, evoking lyricism towards popular songs laced with futuristic harmonies of another world. The third movement seems more traditional with its sonata form and use of counterpoint than the themes of the first two movements, which are more spontaneous with their chromatic adventures.

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)
[4]-[6] "Sonate pour violon et piano," (1917)

Not only is the violin sonata, *Sonate pour violon et piano*, Claude Debussy's last work, but it is also his only work for violin. Although it is dedicated to his wife Emma, it may be acknowledged as written for Arthur Hartmann (1881-1956). Before his friendship with Hartmann started in 1908, Debussy had never considered composing for violin. After the few transcriptions of the composer's various piano works and songs that Hartmann arranged Debussy promised the violinist to compose for him, in return, a *Poème* for violin and orchestra. His life ended before he could accomplish his promise.

Most of his life, Debussy stayed away from traditional forms like the symphony, the concerto or sonatas. He would write music with evocative titles such as *Prélude à*

l'après midi d'un faune. For his violin sonata, he adapted sonata concepts to his uniquely personal expressive needs. He wrote, "I am more and more convinced that music, by its very nature, is something that cannot be cast into a traditional and fixed form. It is made up of colors and rhythms. The rest is a lot of humbug invented by frigid imbeciles riding on the backs of the Masters." Although the piece was written while he was dying, it is animated, whimsical and flamboyant.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
[7] "Tzigane, Rapsodie de concert," (1924)

Maurice Ravel first heard the Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Aranyi (1893-1966), the grandniece of the famous violinist Joseph Joachim (1831-1907), at a private musical salon in England in 1922. Both d'Aranyi and Bela Bartók (1881-1945) were performing Bartók's own sonata for violin and piano No. 1. Ravel was amazed by d'Aranyi's musicality and flawless technical ability. He asked d'Aranyi to play Gypsy melodies from Hungary for an encore, which she did well into the early morning, mesmerizing Ravel. He explained to his friend Bartók that they inspired him to write a short piece of diabolical difficulty, conjuring up the "Hungary of his dreams." Despite his initial enthusiasm to write a Gypsy flavored virtuoso showpiece, it was not until two years later that Ravel began working on *Tzigane*. It took him only a few days to finish the piece for violin and piano, just in time for its scheduled première in London on April 26, 1924. Even though the dedicatee received the score only a couple of days before the performance, the piece was wildly successful with the audience. D'Aranyi made such a hit with *Tzigane* that Ravel later provided a version for solo violin and orchestra.

Many European composers have been fascinated by the influence of gypsy music, as it contributes to the overall fabric of European culture. Ravel once said that if he would ever write something Arabian, it would be more Arabian than the real thing. The combination of Ravel's rhythmical precision and his mischievous sense of humor, which can be found in his previous masterpiece *La Valse*, made reviewers perceive the piece at its première, as a parody of the "Liszt-Hubay-Brahms-Joachim school of Hungarian violin music." Ravel described *Tzigane* as a virtuoso piece in the taste of a Hungarian Rhapsody.

Ravel, who considered the violin and piano acoustically incompatible, gives the entrance to the violin alone, specifying the dark, rich sound of the G-string for the first twenty-seven measures. This makes the piece unique, beginning with a cadenza. The sweeping piano enters as a safety net under the whispering violin double-stops tremolo, providing a dramatic entrance. The soloist is propelled through a series of virtuoso passages to a fiendishly difficult dénouement. Although its leaping double-stops, harmonics at blinding speed, and combination of left and right hand pizzicato passages have kept many violinists up late, its difficulties go beyond the technical. Freewheeling *rubato* and sudden tempo changes diabolically pull the performer apart between sentimentality and blurry speed, much in keeping with the greatest gypsy folk tradition.