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Musical Interpretation of the Selected Poems by Paul Verlaine. Analysis of Irena Wieniawska's Songs in the Comparison to the Compositions by Fauré, Debussy, and Ravel¹

Abstract

The aim of this article is to interpret songs by Gabriel Fauré, Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel and a less-known composer—Irena Wieniawska (1879–1932), based on the same poems by Paul Verlaine. In the first part of this paper, the relationships between Wieniawska, Fauré, Debussy, Ravel and Verlaine are subsequently described. Then, the author makes a comparison between selected songs by French composers and Madame Poldowski, indicating main similarities and differences. The final part consists of some remarks related to the fact that Wieniawska fulfills features of the French *mélodie* very strictly. This is why her songs seem to be more traditional, not as allusive and sophisticated as Debussy's or Ravel's vocal works.

¹ This article is the elaboration of a fragment of the master thesis, written under the guidance of Professor Renata Suchowiejko at the Institute of Musicology of the Jagiellonian University in Kraków. See: A. Al-Araj, *Pieśni Ireny Wieniawskiej do słów Paula Verlaine'a*, MA thesis, Instytut Muzykologii UJ, Kraków 2012.

Keywords

20th-century song, *mélodie*, Gabriel Fauré, Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Irena Wieniawska

Irena Wieniawska (1879–1932), a daughter of Henryk Wieniawski, also known as Madame Poldowski or Lady Dean Paul, was a composer and pianist active in Belgium and in the Great Britain. She explored the art of music in places such as the Vincent d'Indy's Schola Cantorum in Paris; in France, she also discovered the art of impressionists, what had a crucial impact on forming her compositional idiom. Madame Poldowski often performed during recitals organized by the association La Libre Esthétique in Brussels, moreover, she traveled to the USA and to Spain, where she gave concerts.² The significant part of Wieniawska's output are songs for voice and piano (together there are thirty one of them, written in years 1911–1927), from which twenty one were based on the poems by Paul Verlaine.³ Choosing the poems of this symbolist for the musical arrangement, Madame Poldowski followed in the footsteps of the French composers active at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, treating the poetry of “Poor Lelian” as the precious source of multidimensional and not-traditional interpretation. Literary achievements of Verlaine were also the evidence of

² See: E. Grabkowski, „Poldowski”—zapomniana kompozytorka, córka Henryka Wieniawskiego, “Ruch Muzyczny” 1997, No. 4, pp. 32–33; R. Suchowiejko, *Wieniawska, Dean Paul Irena*, [in:] *Encyklopedia muzyczna PWM. Wieniawski. Od legendy do konkursu*, ed. E. Dziębowska, Kraków 2011, p. 19; *idem*, *Wieniawska, Irena*, [in:] *Encyklopedia muzyczna PWM. Część biograficzna*, ed. E. Dziębowska, vol. 12 (W–Ż), Kraków 2012, p. 167.

³ There are following compositions: *À Clymène* (1927) [a xerocopy was given to the author by David Mooney], *A Poor Young Shepherd* (1924), *Brume* (1913), *Bruxelles* (1911), *Circonspection* (1913), *Colombine* (1913), *Cortège* (1913), *Crépuscule du soir mystique* (1914), *Cythère* (1913), *Dansons la gigue* (1913), *Dimanche d'Avril* (1911), *Effet de neige* (1913), *En sourdine* (1911), *Fantoches* (1913), *Impression fausse* (1913), *L'attente* (1912), *Le Faune* (1919), *L'heure exquise* (1913), *Mandoline* (1913), *Spleen* (1913), *Sur l'herbe* (1918) [dates in bracket refer to the editions in London publishing house J. & W. Chester]. Scores were collected thanks to the initiative of Peter Renni, the English researcher and propagator of knowledge of Wieniawski family.

clever use of the effects that have musical provenance; their occurrence was on temptation on the one hand and challenge on the other for the musical “bohemianism” of those days. The juxtaposition of the songs—based on the poems of the same author—by Wieniawska and French composers, who through their achievements gained status of great in the history of music, let us perceive the value and originality of the less popular but also extremely interesting small compositions by Lady Dean Paul. In most of them, the characteristics of the *mélodie* genre are mirrored.

Under the influence of the symbolist’s art were famous composers of songs: Claude Debussy and Gabriel Fauré. The first of them many times proved his admiration for Verlaine (who, according to Stefan Jarociński, among other poets moved his soul in the strongest way),⁴ creating eighteen vocal pieces inspired by his works, fifteen of which were written before 1891.⁵ What is symbolic is also the convergence of the worldview of the poet and musician, two apologists of symbolism, accentuated for example in the following words: “Music begins where word is helpless. Music is created for inexpressible. I would like it to look as if it emerges from the shade and sometimes returns there”⁶. The values that were postulated by Verlaine and artists from his milieu, such as allusiveness, semantic fluidity, in the Debussy’s output is visible mainly in the field of harmony and tonality:

The exact keys are humbug. Music is neither major nor minor, it is both at the same time [...]. Thanks to 24 semitones in the octave, it is always possible to use ambiguous chords, that belong to the 36 keys at

⁴ S. Jarociński, *Debussy a impresjonizm i symbolizm*, Kraków 1976, p. 127.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 124. Regina Chłopicka claims that there are seventeen songs based on Verlaine’s poems. The author presumably does not include *Sérénade*, today missing, but performed even in 1938 by Claire Croiza. It is worth mentioning that this singer described the Debussy’s attitude towards poetry with huge respect, calling him “the most artistic musician”. See: M. Dubiau-Feuillerac, *Corporality and Sound in French Art Song in Some Mélodies of Claude Debussy*, [in:] *Dzieło muzyczne jako fenomen dźwiękowy*, ed. A. Nowak, Bydgoszcz 2007, p. 103; R. Chłopicka, *Claude Debussy: C’est l’extase langoureuse do słów Paula Verlaine’a*, [in:] *Forma i ekspresja w liryce wokalne 1808–1909. Interpretacje*, ed. M. Tomaszewski, Kraków 1989.

⁶ Translation of a citation from: R. Chłopicka, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

once. It is justified to use incomplete chords and undefined intervals, even more fluid in their meaning [...].⁷

The clear inspiration by the poetry of symbolists, especially by the heritage of “Poor Lelian”, influenced the crystallization of the individual style of the composer, his gradual liberation from the fascination of the Richard Wagner’s idiom.⁸ Stefan Jarociński indicates one more convergence:

[...] the development of the Debussy’s vocal art in the first episode seems to be a lucid picture of the evolution of the symbolists movement from the birth in the forge of Parnassus to the apogee in the unfinished masterpieces and esthetic divagations of Mallarmé, in the Maeterlinck’s theatre, in the painting of Redon, Gauguin and late Monet.⁹

The connections between Fauré and Verlaine look similar. The composer, an author of over one hundred songs, “preferred Paul Verlaine’s poetry, competing with Debussy in its musical interpretation, sometimes maybe even more relevant”.¹⁰ The poems of the symbolist were inspiration for two famous vocal cycles, *Cinq mélodies*, called “Venetian” (1891), and *La Bonne Chanson* (1892), in which the main expressive category is—idiomatic for the Fauré’s technique—lyricism. It appears that the reflection of poetical “fogginess”, indefiniteness and ambiguity should be looked for here also in the tonality of the song. This problem is examined scrupulously by Edward R. Phillips, who, in the article *Smoke, Mirrors and Prisms: Tonal Contradiction in Fauré* writes about “false dominant harmony”, discussing the technique

⁷ Translation of a citation from: S. Jarociński, *Debussy. Kronika życia, dzieła, epoki*, Kraków 1972, p. 139. Vladimir Jankélévitch says in this context about “Debussy’s poetry of intangibility and fragmentary suggestions” (see: V. Jankélévitch, *Ravel*, transl. into Polish by M. Zagórska, Kraków 1977, p. 136). Any bolds, if not marked, come from the author of the article.

⁸ As Stefania Łobaczewska noticed, “[...] almost every harmonic innovation appears in Debussy’s for the first time in the vocal pieces based on texts by French symbolists [...]”. Translation of a citation from: S. Jarociński, *Debussy a impresjonizm...*, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹⁰ J. Stankiewicz, *Fauré, Gabriel*, [in:] *Encyklopedia muzyczna PWM. Część biograficzna*, ed. E. Dziębowska, vol. 3 (EFG), Kraków 1990, p. 78.

consisting of avoiding allusions to the tonal system on the surface of the composition, whilst the deep layer is based on tonality.¹¹

The relation between the poet and Maurice Ravel has a different character. This musical “parodist” and “folklorist” was in some way interested in, usually serious and allusive, Verlaine’s output. Vladimir Jankélévitch describes the situation as following:

Sur l’herbe (On the Grass) is one meeting of Ravel and the poet who inspired Debussy and Fauré so many times. Perhaps, some asymmetry and natural liberty of the Verlaine’s poetry was not fit for our artist, a proponent of demanding craft.¹²

The analysis of the composer’s thought about texts that he preferred may indicate totally different conclusion—the Verlaine’s poem could have been too “classical” for Ravel as well as too subordinate to metric regulations.¹³

[...] if the composer wishes to set regular verse, his music has to simply underline and sustain the poem, but not explain it or add anything to it. I believe it is better if the composer is ever to express feeling and imagination, to set free verse. It actually seems criminal to me to “spoil” Classic poetry. [...] Prose is sometimes very gratifying to set to music and there are some circumstances in which it is wonderfully appropriate to the subject [meaning music—A.A.].¹⁴

¹¹ E.R. Phillips, *Smoke, Mirrors and Prisms: Tonal Contradiction in Fauré*, “Music Analysis” 1993, No. 1, pp. 3–24.

¹² V. Jankélévitch, *Ravel, op. cit.*, p. 30. It is worth mentioning that Jadwiga Paja-Stach, in the catalogue of Ravel’s works, includes also two other songs based on Verlaine’s words: *Un grand sommeil noir* (1895) and *Le ciel est, par dessus le toit* (without year). See: J. Paja-Stach, *Ravel, Maurice*, [in:] *Encyklopedia muzyczna PWM. Część biograficzna*, ed. E. Dziębowska, vol. 8 (*Pe-R*), Kraków 2004.

¹³ It is worthy to mention that Mallarmé’s poetry, far more free in terms of metric regulation, inspired Ravel to create one of his best masterpieces: the cycle *Trois poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé* (1913). According to Paja-Stach, the composer achieved there “the highest mastery in correspondence between word and music, because in the music layer it mirrors the structure and mood of the poetry”. Peter Kaminsky recognizes the piece as a certificate Ravel’s art maturity as a composer of songs. See: J. Paja-Stach, *op. cit.*, p. 322; P. Kaminsky, *Of Children, Princesses, Dreams and Isomorphisms: Text-Music Transformation in Ravel’s Vocal Works*, “Music Analysis” 2000, No. 1, p. 31.

¹⁴ F. Noske, *French Song from Berlioz to Duparc. The Origin and Development of the Mélodie*, transl. into English by R. Benton, New York 1970, p. 66.

Probably, these conditions influenced the choice of *Sur l'herbe*—the piece that in the small way exemplify poetic idiom of Verlaine, of dialogic and impaired construction. It appears that the other source of inspiration, originated from the 18th-century tradition, could have played a role, because Ravel was fond of this tradition. Childish character of the poem (Jankélévitch claims that they are “the most crumbly crumbs” of Verlaine’s phrase in the cycle *Fêtes galantes*)¹⁵ probably also corresponded with anti-romantic attitude of the composer and his aversion towards the sentimentalism.

Irena Wieniawska and Gabriel Fauré. *Mandoline* (1913)— *Mandoline op. 58 No. 1* (1891)

Mandoline, a song by Wieniawska, in many ways resembles the former composition by Fauré of the same title. In both pieces, the light and facetious character of the Verlaine’s poem is emphasized by the figurative accompaniment of piano, based on the dialogue between the right and left hand, and by performance remarks (*très rythmé et joyeux* in Madame Poldowski’s song, *leggiero* in Fauré’s). Exposed in both pieces, the arpeggiated chords are, presumably, the illustration of the play on the string instrument that is described in the text. Analogically, the dramaturgy of a song was planned, despite the clear division into episodes, these compositions are not contrasted inside and do not lead to culmination. The impression of the monotony of the mood is multiplied by the similar dynamics, oscillating around *piano* and *mezzo-forte*. What is also characteristic are the convergence of the musical illustration of the text: “mandolin moan” either in Wieniawska (Ex. 1a) and Fauré (Ex. 1b) is illustrated by the use of the low register and repetition in the vocal part. The inclination to the fluidity and ambiguity, visible in Lady Dean Paul as well as the French composer, is shown by bi-functional structures, existing in both compositions (Wieniawska: B/f#, E/c#, G#/f#, A|/G|; Fauré: the compilations of chords a/G and G/b, appearing throughout the whole song).

¹⁵ V. Jankélévitch, *Ravel, op. cit.*, p. 66.

Et la man - do - li - ne ja - se

Ex. 1a: I. Wieniawska, *Mandoline*, bb. 30–31. The musical illustration of the words “Et la mandoline jase” (“mandolin moan”).

Et la man - do - li - ne ja - se. Par - mi les fris - sons de

Ex. 1b: G. Fauré, *Mandoline*, bb. 27–28. Musical illustration of the words “Et la mandoline jase” (“mandoline moan”).

In terms of using the text, compositions emphasize however the different attitude of artists towards literary prototype. Fauré is much less restrictive, he repeats the first verse of the poem in the ending of *Mandoline* (bb. 30–38), creating the construction of arch features (scheme $\Delta B A'$), that is not implied by the Verlaine's poem. The composer arrange the text also in the melismatic way (e.g. in b. 3 on the syllable “sé-” in the word “sérénades”, in b. 8 on the syllable “-mu-” in the word “ramures”), introducing in bars 9–10 and 17–18 the full of grace phrases of the Spanish timbre, based on the hexachord $f\#-g\#-a\#-b-c\#-d\#$.¹⁶ Another difference is situated in the character of a vocal part: in Fauré's song full of lyricism, especially in episodes A and A' (small intervals, articulation *legato*, expression remark

¹⁶ This figure seems to be a musical illustration of singing, the main topic of a poem (“*Échangent des propos fades / Sous les ramures chanteuses*”).

dolce), and in Wieniawska's piece showing recitative features. Moreover, the French artist presents use of harmony that is more traditional than Lady Dean Paul's: tonal relations and simple modulations, characteristic for key G major (e.g. towards E \flat major in bb. 21–28), although he does not avoid coloristic features of the intervals, what is proved by the frequent use of second and mentioned before bi-functional structures. The lower level of complication and the internal complexity characterizes as well the texture of the Fauré's work, however, polyphonic elements such as imitation between the vocal part and piano sometimes appear (Ex. 2).



Ex. 2: G. Fauré, *Mandoline*, b. 9–10. The polyphonic elements (imitation between vocal part and piano).

***En sourdine* (1911) by Wieniawska—*En sourdine* op. 58 No. 2 (1891) by Fauré**

In the Fauré's song *En sourdine*, similarly to the Wieniawska song with the same title, the Verlaine's text is arranged only in the syllabic way and is not modified. Both compositions are permeated by the constant figure in the accompaniment part that indulges the mood of marasmus and stagnation and evoking the impression of trance: in Madame Poldowski's song, it is swinging eight-note motif in the background of static chords, and, in Fauré's piece, sixteenth-note figurations on the arpeggiated chords. Also, in the vocal part we can find analogical solutions, e.g. *kathabasis* on the words: "Et quand solennel, le soir / Des chênes noirs tombera" ("And when the evening from the heaven / Falls in the black treetops", Ex. 3a and 3b).¹⁷

¹⁷ P. Verlaine, *Wybór poezji*, ed. A. Drzewicka, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk 1980, p. 48 (transl. into Polish by A. Kosko).

The form of the compositions is also similar, with scheme ABCA influencing different accentuation than in the literary prototype (in the poem, the culminating point will appear only in the last verse). The endings of two compositions as well have many resemblances: they are both discreet, restrained and of intimate mood (dynamics *pp*), despite describing exalted issues.

The musical score for Ex. 3a consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line in treble clef, with lyrics 'le soir des ch^ê-nes noirs tom - be - ra'. The middle staff is the right-hand piano part in treble clef, and the bottom staff is the left-hand piano part in bass clef. The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#) and the time signature is common time (C). The music features a simple, rhythmic melody in the voice and piano accompaniment.

Ex. 3a: I. Wieniawska, *En sourdine*, bb. 30–32. Figure *kathabasis*.

The musical score for Ex. 3b consists of three staves. The top staff is the vocal line in treble clef, with lyrics 'ch^ê-nes noirs tom - be - ra'. The middle staff is the right-hand piano part in treble clef, and the bottom staff is the left-hand piano part in bass clef. The key signature is two flats (Bb and Eb) and the time signature is common time (C). The music features a more complex, flowing melody in the voice and piano accompaniment, with a prominent arpeggiated pattern in the piano part.

Ex. 3b: G. Fauré, *En sourdine*, bb. 35–36. Figure *kathabasis*.

What is different in the songs is the scheme of musical dramaturgy: Lady Dean Paul introduces the climax in the middle episode of the piece (bb. 8–12), whereas the French composer constructs the gradual form in which increase of tension appears in the last fragment (bb. 33–44). In addition, both apotheoses have totally different character: Fauré avoids emphasis, enhancing the expression of a lyric type (dynamics *forte*, expressive mark *espressivo*, the higher voice register and greater intervals), whilst Wieniawska seems to show “delight of the senses” with exaggerated affectation and emotional

agitation (dynamics *ff* and *fff*, *appassionato*, complicated and chromatised texture, high voice register, performance remark *pressez un peu*). Another difference can be perceived in the use of vocal part: the Madame Poldowski's piece proves the composer's predilection to recitative structures; meanwhile, the French composer prefers the fluent melody of the cantilena type. In terms of harmony of *En sourdine*, the Wieniawska's song, similarly to her *Mandoline*, appears to be more advanced, commonly using bi-function and far links between chords. In Fauré's piece, the tonal relations are used more frequently, with the privileged role of tonic-subdominant connections (e.g. E \flat -A \flat in bb. 1-5, 17-20, G \flat -C \flat in bb. 31-32), although the composer does not avoid also complicated chords series (e.g. in bb. 8-10). What influences stronger the more differential mood of the Lady Dean Paul's song in comparison to the French composer's piece is more interesting texture, dynamics and agogics.

À Clymène (1927) by Wieniawska—À Clymène op. 58 No. 4 (1891) by Fauré

The Fauré's song based on the poem *À Clymène* by Verlaine is the evidence of the great respect that the composer had for the literary prototype. Similarly to Wieniawska, he does not introduce the repetition of the words, he avoids the melismatic structure as well (melismas appear only in b. 14 on the syllable “-ro-” in the word “paroles” and in b. 54 on the syllable “d'al-” in the word “d'almes”). What is more, both Wieniawska and Fauré respect the rules of intonation: they place apostrophe to the Klimena in the higher register of the voice, receiving the effect of scream. Several analogies can be noticed also in the way of musical illustrating the content of the poem by Madame Poldowski and the French artist. The state of fascination, enchantment by the voice of the lover (“Puisque ta voix, étrange / Vision qui dérange”)¹⁸ in the adaptation of Lady Dean Paul is shown by the constant sixteenth-tone motive in the part of a right hand of piano (Ex. 4a), while Fauré interprets it by using passages in tresillos, kept in the changed metre and more vigorous tempo (Ex. 4b).

¹⁸ “That your voice by itself / pulls the mind in the traps”. See: P. Verlaine, *Wybór poezji*, *op. cit.*, p. 46 (transl. into Polish by R. Kołoniecki).

Ex. 4a: I. Wieniawska, *À Clymène*, bb. 7–8. Illustration of the state of being fascinated by the voice of the lover.

Ex. 4b: G. Fauré, *À Clymène*, bb. 7–8. Illustration of the state of being fascinated by the voice of the lover.

The formal structure of the songs is, however, slightly different. Indeed, both pieces are built based on the system with the division into three episodes, but in *À Clymène* by Madame Poldowski the elements of frame (“swinging” eight-tone figures in bb. 20–22) are introduced that are invisible in Fauré’s; moreover, dramaturgy of the compositions is different. In Lady Dean Paul’s piece, there is lack of visible increases and decreases of tension, and in the adaptation of the French artist it is enriched by the culmination in the middle episode (bb. 42–51). Dynamics is strictly connected with this energetic planning: it is oscillating around *piano* in Wieniawska’s; wider sketched, with episodes *forte* and *fortissimo* in Fauré’s. In his piece, the high register of a voice part is used more frequently, and the accompaniment part shows more independence than it takes place in the Wieniawska’s piece: it is often

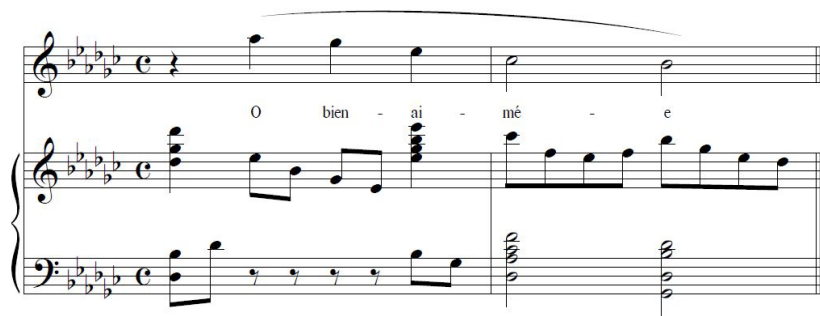
a dialogue between voice and piano, which presents important music thoughts (bb. 30–33, 51–62) that penetrate also to the introductory part and interludes. The harmonic scheme, however, is clearer and less varied than the Madame Poldowski's, that is impossible to place in the strict tonal system. *À Clymène* by the French composer is maintained in D minor (there is a change into major mode at the end, what can be linked with the hope that the subject of the poem has for meeting soon the loved one) and displays relations that are characteristic for them. The highest level of complication appears in the bars 34–53, but even there the tonic-dominant links remain important (G \flat –C \flat in bb. 37–39, F–B \flat in bb. 40–41 and 43–44, a–E in bb. 48–49). In Wieniawska's piece, nevertheless, the harmonic richness is connected with the complexity and density of the textural dimension, that lack in the composition by Fauré, based on one rhythmic model.

***L'heure exquise* (1913) by Wieniawska—*La lune blanche* op. 61 No. 3 (1892) by Fauré**

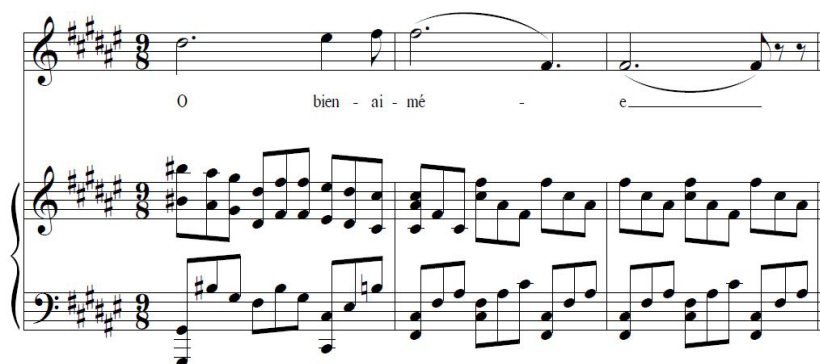
In the Fauré's song *La lune blanche*, based on the Verlaine's poem with the same title, the repetition of the text does not appear, it is rather used in the syllabic way. Melismas are, however, much more frequent here than in the Madame Poldowski's composition. Both pieces are united by the calm and dreamy mood, underlined by the performance marks (*doux et calme* in Lady Dean Paul's composition, *dolce* in Fauré's), the lyricism of the melodic line in the vocal part and, most of all, a type of accompaniment in the swinging eight-note rhythm (in metre 4/4 in Wieniawska's song, 9/8 in Fauré's). The adaptations share enharmonically equal key: G \flat major and F# major, properly illustrating the oneiric character of a poem. Several similarities are present in the harmonic layer of both compositions, characterizing by the simplicity and the vantage of relations of fifths and parallels. What is more complicated is the end of the Fauré's song, oscillating around relatively distant chords F# major and D seventh.¹⁹ At the end of Madame Poldowski's piece, there are connections based on the parallel chords G \flat major and E \flat

¹⁹ In terms of tonality, D major chord can be interpreted as a minor tonic of the sixth degree being a submediant to minor tonic F# (ellipsis).

minor. It is also visible that the exclamations closing the particular verses of the poem are treated in the similar way: both Lady Dean Paul and the French composer use high tessitura in the vocal part and long rhythmic values in order to illustrate them (Ex. 5a and 5b).



Ex. 5a: I. Wieniawska, *L'heure exquise*, bb. 11–12. Figure *exclamatio*.



Ex. 5b: G. Fauré, *La lune blanche*, bb. 12–14. Figure *exclamatio*.

The major difference between songs by Wieniawska and Fauré concerns the formal-dramaturgical dimension. The first piece reaches the culmination point in the middle episode, what is indicated by the elements such as: the change of texture into chords, enlargement of the dynamic scope to *forte*, placing the expressive marks *accelerando* and *appassionato*, chromaticism and avoiding allusions to tonal centre (bb. 22–27). Analogical moment in the Fauré's composition (bb. 24–29) lacks the elements increasing the level of musical tension and is not

contrasted with the rest of episodes. This layout of the narration together with relatively flat dynamics (*forte* appears only in b. 13) and the ostinato-type texture affects the homogeneity of the composition's character and evokes the impression of trance that, in the second interpretation, is more suggestive.

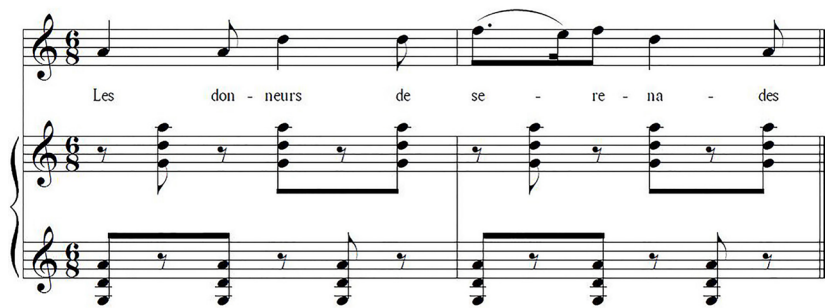
Irena Wieniawska and Claude Debussy.²⁰ ***Mandoline* (1913)—*Mandoline* (1882)**

Claude Debussy was inspired by the poem *Mandoline* even earlier than Gabriel Fauré. The composer does not use the repetition of the text, and at the end he puts the vocalize imitating “singing” (or maybe “lamentation”) of the title instrument (bb. 49–68).

Similarly to the pieces by Fauré and Wieniawska, the French artist illustrates the sound of mandolin: exposes the super-position of two fifths in the chords of the “arpeggio” type (Ex. 6), constructs passages that are descending and based on the chromatic scale, probably mirroring “moan” that is described in the poem (Ex. 1c), adds the Spanish coloring to the vocal part through showing the swinging, twisting direction of the melodic line. Both compositions analogically paint a picture of the apparent lightness and carelessness of the poem (motoric accompaniment, metre 6/8, vivid tempo, the monotonous dynamic level, articulation *staccato*, performance remarks: *très rythmé et joyeux* in Wieniawska's piece, *dolce e leggiere* in Debussy's), although the realization of Debussy, full of splendid and flourish vocal ornaments, seems to mirror the Verlaine's irony more precisely. In the parts that adapt particular verses of literary prototype, both Madame Poldowski and the *La Mer*'s author change

²⁰ The chronological analysis of the Debussy's songs proposed in this article does not correspond with the numeration of the following cycles: compositions *En sourdine* and *Fantoches* from the first collection *Fêtes galantes* were created in years 1881–1882, but they were published later than *Ariettes oubliées*, in 1891. The greatest amount of corrections were made by the composer in the final version *En sourdine*. *Fantoches* and *Mandoline* remained almost unchanged.

the key of the composition in order to achieve different timbre (D \flat major in bb. 17–23 of Wieniawska's song, E major in bb. 28–38 of the Debussy's piece). The shape of vocal part, in both compositions based on the arpeggiated passages, refers to the tonal system. Harmony of these songs indicate, however, innovative features: in *Mandoline* Madame Poldowski uses the shift of chords on the diatonic scale (B–A–G in bb. 11–12) and chromatic scale (alternation of A7 and A \flat 7 in bb. 33–36) as well as distant juxtapositions of the chords (e.g. G \sharp 7 and E7 in bb. 1–5, G \flat and E in b. 23). Debussy introduces series of major triads on the following semitones to his piece, not dividing them by any modulations or passages (A \flat –G–G \flat , C–C \flat –B \flat in bb. 10–14 and 45–48), he also exposes mediant links between the vertical structures (mainly C–E).



Ex. 6: C. Debussy, *Mandoline*, bb. 4–5. Super-position of two fifths.



Ex. 1c: C. Debussy, *Mandoline*, bb. 46–48. Musical illustration of the word "brise"
("mandolin moan").

In terms of placing the text, Wieniawska and Debussy treat the Verlaine's prototype in the different way: in the composition of the French artist, the syllabic and melismatic use of text is equal, however, in the Madame Poldowski's composition the first type of treating the voice part domineers. Songs have also different formal structure: two-part with introduction and coda in Lady Dean Paul's realization (scheme ABCD) and with reprise in Debussy's song (scheme ABA'). The French composer enriches the texture of the piece, leading two melodic lines in unison: in the vocal part and in the left hand of piano (bb. 35–36, 50–52, 53–55, 58–60).

***En sourdine* (1911) by Wieniawska—*En sourdine* (1881–1882) by Debussy**

En sourdine is another example of the poem that was used not only by Fauré and Wieniawska, but also Debussy. In both adaptations of *En sourdine*, the text is presented by voice in the syllabic way without repetitions. The only exception is, as always, melisma on the syllable “-te-” in the word “chantera” (“will sing”)²¹ in the song by Debussy (b. 38). The form of both compositions is a very interesting “marriage” of the frame structure (the return of the initial motifs at the end) and chain structure (every verse of the poem has its own musical arrangement). It is connected with presence of the melodic-rhythmic figure integrating particular elements in the first and last episodes, that creates mesmerizing mood: in the Wieniawska's song, it appears as the waving eight-note phrase in bars 1–7 and 33–35, and in Debussy's: a repetitive motif repeatedly returning in the composition, based on the pentatonic scale.²² In the parallel fragments of the Madame Poldowski's and the French composer's songs the voice is treated in the recitative way (Lady Dean Paul: bb. 3–7, 21–27; Debussy: bb. 4–9, 26–30). In the analogous way, in the arrangement of the third verse of the Verlaine's poem, the state of fainting, stagnation and stillness was also displayed: as monotonous eight-tone passages in

²¹ In the translation by Allan Kosko, this word was translated into “call” (Polish: “dzwonić”). See: P. Verlaine, *Wybór poezji*, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

²² This pentatonic passage also appears in the later song by Debussy, *Collogue sentimentale*, and symbolizes irretrievably lost and expired feeling.

the piano part which appear in bars 13–20 of Wieniawska's piece and in bars 18–24 of Debussy's. Several similarities can be also found in the shape of the vocal melodic line—when in the text there are words “Qui vient à tes pieds rider / Les ondes de gazon roux” (“shirring in the long nods / The waves of the red grass”)²³ both Wieniawska and *Nocturnes*' author introduce the passage on the chromatic scale ending with the wide interval. What decides about the dramaturgical strength of both compositions is, to a great extent, the efficient use of tempo, finalizing with so-called *frozen time*, symbolizing “stifling in despair” (Wieniawska: performance remark *de plus en plus calme*, dynamic *pp* and *ppp*, repetitions in the vocal part; Debussy: tempo *lent*, dynamic *pp*, note *en se perdant*). When it comes to harmony, bifunctional structures are widely used in both songs (e.g. in the ending of both compositions juxtapositions of parallel chords appear: A major and F# minor in Wieniawska or B major and G# minor in Debussy) and linking through seconds (in Wieniawska's song: D–E–F#, E–D, A–B [Ex. 7a], in Debussy's: C#–B/b, G#–F# [Ex. 7b]), resembling the ones from the adaptation of the poem *Mandoline* by Fauré. In the similar way, the dramaturgy of the pieces was planned, clearly leading to, put in different places (Wieniawska: bb. 8–12; Debussy: bb. 29–31), culmination point and losing the intensity of the expression after reaching it.

Whilst Lady Dean Paul introduces to her composition moments that are characterized by exaggerated emphasis, the piece written by the French composer is in the mood of silence and stability, even increases of tension, appearing from time to time, are characterized by subtlety and high sense of taste. This phenomenon is partly connected with the consequent avoidance of dynamic extreme (Debussy never uses *forte*, and *mezzo-forte* appears only once, in b. 31). The Verlaine's text is interpreted by the artist in the less literal way than his heiress (and Fauré): he does not use the figure *kathabasis* in the passage telling us about the sunset or, as in the translation of Allan Kosko, about “falling evening”, but, slightly contrariwise, he indicates this phrase as ascending (bb. 33–35), introducing descending musical line scarcely in bb. 36–39.

²³ In Polish: “Marszczący w długich pokłonach / Fale rudawej murawy”; see: P. Verlaine, *Wybór poezji*, *op. cit.*, p. 48 (transl. into Polish by A. Kosko).

mi, - croi - se tes bras sur ton

Ex. 7a: I. Wieniawska, *En sourdine*, bb. 14–15. Chords in relation of second.

mi, croi - se tes bras sur ton

Ex. 7b: C. Debussy, *En sourdine*, bb. 19–20. Chords in relation of second.

***Fantoches* (1913) by Wieniawska—*Fantoches* (1881–1882) by Debussy**

Debussy, similarly to Wieniawska, gives the song *Fantoches* features of through-composed piece, as he composes every stanza of the text in a different way.

Episode	Introduction	A	Bridge 1	B	C	D	Bridge 2	Coda
Bars	1–5	6–17	18–21	22–33	34–46	47–60	61–65	66–72

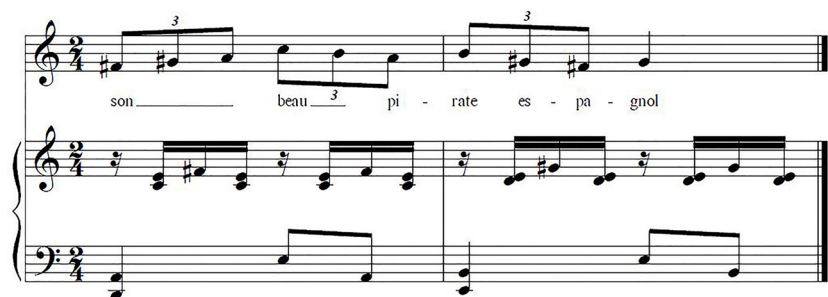
The French composer paints a picture of mechanical moves of puppets with equal accuracy, making the composition more similar to *perpetuum mobile* (the monotonously pulsating accompaniment,

tempo *allegretto scherzando*, articulation *staccato*, mocking vocalizes based on the syllable “la”, effect of scansion in the vocal part). In both realizations, illustrational elements appear: tresillos in the dialogue between piano and voice in the Madame Poldowski’s composition, clarified by the mark *misterioso*, mirrors “creeping” of the daughter of Doctor Bolonai (“Lors sa fille, piquant minois, / Sous la charmille, en tapinois, / Se glisse demi-nue”, Ex. 8a). At the other end of the spectrum, when the words tell us about the Spanish pirate, Debussy creates the exotic mood (wide phrases, Spanish-like ornaments; Ex. 8b).



The musical score for Ex. 8a consists of two staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature. The lyrics are "nu - e, en que - te de son". The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It features a series of chords and some melodic lines, including a prominent triplet of eighth notes in the right hand.

Ex. 8a: I. Wieniawska, *Fantoches*, bb. 16–17. Musical illustration of the words “Se glisse demi-nue, / En quete de son” (“creeping” of the daughter of Doctor Bolonais).



The musical score for Ex. 8b consists of two staves. The top staff is a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. The lyrics are "son beau pi - rate es - pa - gnol". The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in bass clef with the same key signature and time signature. It features a series of chords and melodic lines, including a prominent triplet of eighth notes in the right hand.

Ex. 8b: C. Debussy, *Fantoches*, bb. 50–51. Musical illustration of the words “Son beau pirate espagnol” (“Spanish” ornaments).

Again, the piece written by the creator of *The Afternoon of a Faun* is characterized by greater liberty in the comparison to the literary archetype than interpretation of Lady Dean Paul. Debussy replaces the term “langoureux”, referring to the nightingale, with the variant

“amoureux”, and also incrusts the song with vocalizes of satirical implication (bb. 12–16, 44–46, 66–70). The composer enriches the melodic line in vocal part by—not existing in *Fantoches* by Wieniawska—numerous melismas, simultaneously allowing the licenses toward prosodic correctness (in b. 38, metric accent is when in the text we have not-accented article “la”). These pieces are different also in terms of tempo: dignified and balanced *moderato* of Madame Poldowski’s song introduces different character than slightly quarrelsome *allegretto scherzando* in Debussy’s adaptation. The dramaturgy of two compositions is planned in a different way as well: in Lady Dean Paul’s realization, the culmination appears in the middle episode (bb. 16–19: mark *pressez*, dynamic *forte*, high register in the vocal part, dense texture), while the song by the French composer has its culminating point in the last phase (bb. 56–60: high register of the vocal part, trills and ornaments imitating bird’s song). Wieniawska’s masterpiece is characterized by greater harmonic richness, effecting in inability to place it in the form of particular tonal centre (at the beginning: B major chord with none without root, at the end: E \flat major chord). Debussy’s piece, despite the fact that it clearly oscillates around A minor, in the melodic dimension is placed mainly by passages on the chromatic scale (bb. 22–24, 30–33, 56–58), determining also the vertical system of composition (passage of chords A–A \flat –G–F \sharp –G–A \flat –A–B \flat) returning three times in the composition: in bb. 1–3, 18–20 and 22–24).

Brume (1913) by Wieniawska—L’ombre des arbres (1885–1887) by Debussy

Debussy’s and Wieniawska’s pieces are based on the poem starting with “l’ombre des arbres” (“shade of a branch”). The composer, similarly to Madame Poldowski, avoids the repetition of words in his arrangement. He breaks this rule only at the end of the song, repeating the word “noyées” (“drowning”, bb. 25–26). The next analogy appearing between pieces concerns their form. Both have the form of a scheme ABC with tendency toward frame:

Composer	Episode	Bars
Wieniawska	Introduction	1–2
	A	3–10
	B	11–15
	C	16–21
	Coda	22–23
Debussy	Introduction	1–2
	A	3–10
	Bridge	11–12
	B	13–20
	C	21–26
	Coda	27–31

Here, frame form is a derivative of endeavoring to achieve integration that characterizes both vocal pieces: in Lady Dean Paul's song it is realized thanks to the swinging eight-note figure developed with the accompaniment of static chords (bb. 1–6, 21–22), whilst in the French composer's composition—thanks to the altered motif based on the fragment of the chromatic scale, returning in the part of the right hand of piano (bb. 2, 4, 12, 14, 28) and especially exposed in the prelude and postlude.²⁴ The homogenous character of *Brume* and *L'ombre des arbres* is also connected with analogous planning of their dramaturgy, not having clear increases and decreases of tension, highlighting the effect of trance, characteristic for Verlaine's poem, and so to say, mental distance. Also, at the level of detailed solutions, similarities in both pieces can be found. Both Madame Poldowski and Debussy use rhetoric figures: *kathabasis* appears in bb. 9–10 of the realization of Wieniawska (words "Se plaignent les tourterelles") and in bb. 21–22 of the French composer's song ("et que tristes pleuraient"); what is more, in both interpretations the apostrophe to wanderer is highlighted by the ascending melody line (Wieniawska: bb. 11–12; Debussy: bb. 2–14). In the vocal part, melody of a recitative type appears definitely more often, and its presence is marked by numerous repetitions. Analogically presents the agogics and expression of the compared compositions

²⁴ What can be found in the shape of the motif is the allusion to, guiding the Verlaine's poem, principle of mirror reflection: sound $E\flat$ is the centre, around which there are respectively sounds b and e/d .

(remark *très calme mais pas trop lent* in Wieniawska's song and *lent et triste* in Debussy's song; dynamic *pp*, *rallentando* and *morendo* at the end of both songs).

In the Debussy's piece, the text is generally treated in the syllabic way, however, melismas also appear, incidentally (bb. 14, 17, 19–20). Dynamics in *L'ombre des arbres* oscillates around *p* and *pp*, avoiding the high volume (music, what is different from the Wieniawska's composition, does not reach *forte*). The creator of *The Afternoon of a Faun* more often than Lady Dean Paul uses extreme, especially low registers of piano (Ex. 9). The harmonic layer is characterized by the strong influence of Wagner's achievements on this field: a reference to chords of a "Tristan" type are vertical structures with sixth leading to seventh, sometimes without the root, with sixth and seventh at the same time or only with sixth. The inspiration by the master from Bayreuth's art can be proved by the richness of chromatic.



Ex. 9: C. Debussy, *L'ombre des arbres*, bb. 1–2. Low register in the piano part.

***Spleen* (1913) by Wieniawska—*Spleen* (1885–1887) by Debussy**

Wieniawska arranges the famous *Spleen* written by “Poor Lelian”, as an analogy to Debussy, syllabically, without introduction and repetitions of words. In both compositions, the possible “escape” of a lover is presented suggestively, and it is the main theme of Verlaine's poem;

Madame Poldowski, in order to picture it, exposes the descending tresillo motif in piano part in bars 18 and 20, whilst the creator of *Peleas and Melisande* illustrates it with help of ascending chromatic figures and the mark *stringendo* (bb. 20–21). Moreover, both the French composer and Lady Dean Paul respect the principles of intonation, in the similar way they interpret exclamations—placed in the high register—and sighs, based on the repetitive sounds (Wieniawska: bb. 9, 28–29; Debussy: bb. 10, 29–30). Similarities also concern the construction of the pieces, what is an another example of the marriage of frame form and chain form:²⁵

Composer	Episode	Bars
Wieniawska	Introduction	1–4
	A	5–12
	B	13–20
	C	21–29
	Coda	30–34
Debussy	Introduction	1–4
	A	5–17
	B	18–30
	Coda	31–34

Culmination of dramaturgy in both songs is placed on the last words of the poem: “Et de la campagne infinie / Et de tout, fors de vous” (“And this landscape, infinite, / Everything but you”),²⁶ clearly articulated using analogous compositional techniques: dynamic *f* and *ff*, dense texture and high register of the vocal part. In the compared compositions, the recitative treating of the voice is the most common, what is strongly exposed especially at the end of the compositions (Ex. 10a and 10b). When we take into account the harmonic richness characterizing both discussed pieces, it seems interesting that both songs have perfect full cadence at the end (in Madame Poldowski’s song: chords g–a–d, in Debussy’s: chords b|–C–f).

²⁵ Motif presented in the opening phase of the Debussy’s piece (bb. 1–2) is repeated six more times besides its further course, as the ostinato pattern.

²⁶ P. Verlaine, *Wybór poezji*, op. cit., p. 85 (transl. into Polish by F. Konopka).

ro - ses é - taient tou - tes rou - ges et les

Ex. 10a: I. Wieniawska, *Spleen*, bb. 5–6. Recitative treating of vocal part.

ro - ses é - taient tou - tes rou - ges, et les liè - res é - taient tout

Ex. 10b: C. Debussy, *Spleen*, bb. 5–7. Recitative treating of vocal part.

The differences between compared interpretations of the poem *Spleen* refer to, primarily, textural and harmonic dimension of the compositions. The song of Madame Poldowski is characterized by the clarity and homogeneity in terms of the realization of the accompaniment part (repetition of the eight-note formula); the texture of the Debussy's arrangement, however, is full of chromatic. The abundance of accidentals used is often connected with the modulations, frequently introduced by the French artist, clearly predicted in the composition (bb. 14–17) or without preparations (bb. 24–25, 27–29). Also, Debussy uses movement of chord on the chromatic scale (B \flat –B–B \flat in bb. 22–24, E \flat –D–D \flat –C in bb. 30–31), and he does not avoid the chords in relation of tritone: G \flat major (minor subdominant of the diminished second degree) is juxtaposed with C major with diminished ninth

(dominant ninth chord), and the novelty of this juxtaposition is even greater as it appears at the beginning of the song (bb. 3–4), after short solo introduction.

***Dimanche d'Avril* (1911) by Wieniawska—*L'échelonnement des haies* (1891) by Debussy**

The pieces by Debussy and Wieniawska are the musical adaptation of the poem beginning with the words “l'échelonnement des haies” (“scattered hedges”). Also in this song, the French composer consequently avoids melismas and repetitions of the words, in which he is more restrictive than Lady Dean Paul, who introduces the single melisma in bar 8 with the word “clair” (“light”). The piano part is analogous in both compositions: it consists of sixteenth-note figuration based on the arpeggiated chords. Sound repetitions, appearing at the end of both compositions in vocal part (enriched in Debussy's song by additional thirds), picturing the process of calming and quieting of the surface of a sea, are also the far echo of *Augenmusik* (Madame Poldowski: bb. 34–36; Debussy: bb. 29–34). There are more illustrative solutions used in the songs: both in *Dimanche d'Avril* and in *L'échelonnement des haies* the sound of bells is imitated (“De cloches comme des flûtes / Dans le ciel comme du lait”).²⁷ In the interpretation of Lady Dean Paul, their monotonous beating resembles the sounds *a* and *f#* as well as *f#* and *d#* in the one-line octave and two-line octave, accented in the monophonic passages (Ex. 11a). In the musical interpretation of the author of *La Mer*, the same function have the vertical structures based on the fifth bass base and parallel octaves in the part of the right hand of piano (Ex. 11b).²⁸

²⁷ “Bells like flutes; / in the sky like milk” (Polish: “We flety głos scedziły dzwony; / Rozprysł się w niebie pełnym mleka”). See: *ibid.*, p. 125 (transl. into Polish by R. Kołoniecki).

²⁸ Jarociński notices that the topic, expose in bars 29–34 in double octaves, is presented for the first time in the prelude of the left hand of piano (bb. 1–3, later bb. 9–11, 21–23). It was borrowed from the *Tarantella styryjska* (*Danse*) for piano, created in 1890. See: S. Jarociński, *Debussy a impresjonizm...*, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

Ex. 11a: I. Wieniawska, *Dimanche d'Avril*, bb. 32–33. Imitation of the sound of bells.

Ex. 11b: C. Debussy, *L'échelonnement des haies*, bb. 29–31. Imitation of the sound of bells.

Both compositions are also characterized by the simplification of the harmonic texture and—what imposes on the form of cadence²⁹—exposing of the particular relations between chords: fifths in Debussy's and mediant in Wieniawska's piece. In the songs appear as well not too much expanded modulating fragments (Madame Poldowski: bb. 15–18, 31–33; Debussy: bb. 14–20).

The basic difference between the pieces is connected with their form: recapitulate structure in *Dimanche d'Avril* by Lady Dean Paul and chain form in *L'échelonnement des haies* by Debussy (Wieniawska: form ABCA'D, with caesuras in bars 10, 19, 22 and 35; Debussy: form ABCDE, with caesuras in bars 3, 11, 15 and 20). Architectonic determines the dramaturgical dimension of the pieces: in Wieniawska's realization, there is clear increase of tension in the *mutatio* part (bb. 15–19:

²⁹ In the song of Lady Dean Paul the ending cadence has a following form: VI-I-VI-I-VI-I, and in the composition of Debussy it is IV-V-IV-V-I, with a change of mode from C# minor to C# major in the last bar.

agitato, dynamics *forte*, dense and chromatic texture, high register of vocal part), whilst the through-composed form used by Debussy does not make it necessary to introduce the clear culmination point. Used alternatively with *legato*, articulation *staccato* in the vocal part of the song by the French composer, linked with the recitative type of melody, evokes the effect of scansion. However, it will not be applied in the Madame Poldowski's composition.³⁰ The agogic differences that appear between the compared realizations (*moderato* in the song of Wieniawska, *assez vif et gaiement* in Debussy's) influence the diversity of their character.

Le Faune (1919) by Wieniawska—Le Faune (1904) by Debussy

In the song *Le Faune*, Debussy treats the text in the syllabic way, without repetitions. He does not illustrate it in such literary way as Wieniawska, who through introducing vocalize into the piece reciprocates the ominous laugh of the mischievous god. However, in the realization of the French author, similarly to the Madame Poldowski's song, "flute" leading motif appears, based on the chromatic minor scale with diminished fifth degree (Ex. 12a and 12b). In the composition written by Wieniawska, this passage has both ascending and descending character, whilst Debussy prefers descending shape. There are also formal analogies between the songs: both have a form of two parts with inclination to frame structure (the return of the initial figure in coda):

Composer	Episode	Bars
Wieniawska	A	1–13
	B	14–24
	Coda	25–30
Debussy	Introduction	1–12
	A	13–23
	B	24–33
	Coda	34–39

³⁰ Despite the fact that melody in the Lady Dean Paul's song has the element of recitative, the articulation *legato* as well as particular fluency of the music reduce the effect of scansion.

The image shows a musical score for the first three measures of the 'Flute' leading motive in the first movement of Frédéric Chopin's Étude Op. 10, No. 3. The score is written for piano and flute. The piano part is in the left hand, and the flute part is in the right hand. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major), and the time signature is 3/4. The flute part features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the piano accompaniment consists of chords and rhythmic patterns.

Ex. 12a: I. Wieniawska, *Le Faune*, bb. 1–3. “Flute” leading motive.

The image shows a musical score for the first three measures of the 'Flute' leading motive in the first movement of Claude Debussy's *Le Faune*. The score is written for piano and flute. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major), and the time signature is 3/4. The flute part features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the piano accompaniment consists of chords and rhythmic patterns.

Ex. 12b: C. Debussy, *Le Faune*, bb. 1–3. “Flute” leading motive.

The compared interpretations suggestively illustrate sharp and soulless tambourine sound, that is the theme of the ending of the Verlaine's poem: in *Le Faune* by Madame Poldowski, in the part of the left hand of piano, the superposition of fifths is introduced (bb. 19–24), whilst in the song of the French composer, the ruthless passage of time is shown by the rhythmic ostinato in the low register of the instrument.³¹ It is worthy to indicate one more similarity: in both discussed pieces on the culmination: “Jusqu'à cette heure dont la fuite / Tounoie au son des tambourins” (“Until the time of which the flight / Swirl in the

³¹ Jarociński describes it as “figured bass”. See: S. Jarociński, *Debussy a impresjonizm...*, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

rhythm of tambourines”)³² there is dissection of texture (Wieniawska in bb. 19–24, Debussy in bb. 31–39).

The basic difference between these two songs is a result of the level of their harmonic complexity. The author of *Peleas and Melisande* introduces numerous complication, resulting in abolishing of tonal relations. The morphology of the chords and the way in which the vertical structures are treated seem to indicate the organization of the sounds typical for ragtime, although these type of impulses will be stronger yet in the later pieces written by the composer.³³ The associations with New-Orleans’ musical genre can be triggered by the presence of multi-storey sound constructions (e.g. G minor with augmented eleventh in bb. 7–12 and 15 and eleventh in bb. 16 and 22), exposing of the interval of augmented second in the leading motive and tritone *g-c#* in the last chord of the song, using frequently the augmented triads and parallel movement. This effect is also maintained by other elements, such as tempo *rubato*, texture *arpeggio* (bb. 18, 31–32) and emancipation of the rhythmic factor (ostinato based on fifth, syncopation e.g. in bb. 2–3, 11–12). Dramaturgy of the both pieces was also planned in the different way: in the Debussy’s piece, there is uniformity and passiveness, and Wieniawska displays the gradual scheme with the culmination in coda.

Irena Wieniawska and Maurice Ravel. *Sur l’herbe* (1918)— *Sur l’herbe* (1907)

Sur l’herbe is the only song by Ravel based on a Verlaine’s poem. The composer resigns from the melisma-type adaptation of the text, avoiding the repetition of the words. Both in Wieniawska’s realization and in the piece by *Dafnis and Chloe*’s author, the expressive dominant is the category of “caprice”, originating from the literary archetype. In both cases, it is illustrated by, causing the expression of instability, often changes of metre and tempo (Madame Poldowski: *rubato*, *lento*,

³² Polish: “Do godziny, której przebieg / W rytm wiruje tamburynów”. See: P. Verlaine, *Wybór poezji*, *op. cit.*, p. 44 (transl. into Polish by F. Konopka).

³³ Among others, in *Golliwog’s Cake-Walk* from 1908 and a finale of *Sonata* for violin and piano from 1916.

vivement, très animé; Ravel: *modéré, plus lent, un peu plus lent qu'àn début, lent, retenu, assez vite*) and performance remarks, distinguishing the sentences spoken by the particular characters participating in the dialogue (Wieniawska: *capricieusement, avec ironie, douce, avec affectation, joyeusement, avec élan, languido, rêveusement, avec impatience, tendrement, avec surprise*; Ravel: *expressif, avec afféterie*). Disproportion between the amount of composers' remarks appearing in the compared songs pictures tendency to avoid any literality, typical for Ravel, his inclination to briefness and the concentration of the argument:

This extraordinary Ravel's reserve is not a calculated strategic maneuver, aiming at whetting our appetite, but the opposite: rather antidote for the literary exaggeration, phraseology and automatic musical murmurs; therefore, the apparent lack of cohesiveness of argument of Ravel's and Debussy's works is based on, broadly speaking, anxiety of recitative and on the need to display only the crucial subjects [...].³⁴

The ambience of sensual and alcoholic intoxication ("Ce vieux vin de Chypre est exquis / Moins, Camargo, que votre nuque") intensifies the articulation applied in the song of the *Bolero*'s author: *glissando, staccato, portato*, numerous arpeggios. In the vocal part of the Wieniawska's and Ravel's interpretations, the recitative melody is the most common. In both pieces, there is also a suspension of the function relations by highlighting the seconds linking and tonal ambiguity (the oscillation between C# minor and G# minor at the beginning of the passage, and the change of mode at the end of Ravel's *Sur l'herbe*).

The arrangements have different form; in the interpretation of Wieniawska, there is element of recapitulation (ABA'C), and in the interpretation of the French composer it is the chain structure with elements of frame form (return of the material of the introduction, moved a second lower in coda). The differences also apply to the layout of dramaturgy: in the Madame Poldowski's piece, tension gradually ascends to a surprising exaltation in bb. 32–33 (Ex. 13a), and, in Ravel's work, there is culmination on the words: "Embrassons nos bergères, l'une / Après l'autre, Messieurs, eh bien?" (Ex. 13b), as a consequence resulting in energy discharge.

³⁴ V. Jankélévitch, *Ravel, op. cit.*, p. 129.

The musical score for Ex. 13a consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in 2/4 time and features a melodic phrase with a fermata over the final note. The lyrics are "He! bon - soir la Lu - ne!". The piano accompaniment is in 2/4 time and provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines in both hands.

Ex. 13a: I. Wieniawska, *Sur l'herbe*, bb. 32–33. Culmination.

The musical score for Ex. 13b consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is in 3/8 time and features a melodic phrase with a fermata over the final note. The lyrics are "Em - bras - sons nos ber - gè - res, l'une Ap - rès". The piano accompaniment is in 3/8 time and provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines in both hands.

Ex. 13b: M. Ravel, *Sur l'herbe*, b. 18. Culmination.

Conclusion

The presented comparative analysis pictures the existence of both many similarities and differences between interpretations of Verlaine's poems by Madame Poldowski and other composers: Fauré, Debussy and Ravel. Wieniawska's approach, in the several aspects equal with ideas of the French artists, derives from the composer's predilection to realize the basic features of the genre *mélodie* (such as, among others, harmonic inconsistency, variable structure, voice treated in a recitative way, accompaniment that has expressive function or multitude of orchestral effects in the piano part).³⁵ Lady Dean Paul seems to be

³⁵ For more about the genre *mélodie* see: F. Noske, *op. cit.*, pp. 1–39.

unassailable when it comes to the realisation of these postulates: any of the above-mentioned predecessors was so consistent and scrupulous in this field.

The best illustration of this tendency would be the relation of these artists to the literary archetype: Debussy and Fauré sometimes treat the Verlaine's poems more freely, introducing repetitions of the words (*Mandoline* by Fauré, *L'ombre des arbres* by Debussy), changing word order (*Fantoches* by Debussy), adding vocalizes that provoke culmination or change of the scheme of the song (*Mandoline* and *Fantoches* by Debussy), not including the rules of text prosody (*Fantoches* by Debussy) or even adapting text in the melismatic way (what was not recommended to the authors of *mélodies*). Present in the vocal part in the Wieniawska's pieces, recitative melodic is also unprecedented: in the songs of remaining composers, especially Fauré, it happens to be overshadowed by cantilena.

Madame Poldowski had clear tendency to use the chain form, what is a result of her desire to mirror the meaning of the particular stanzas in detail, and it seems to refer to the Debussy's achievements in this field. Similarly to him, she skillfully conjoins the episodic form with technique of resembling motifs, what makes these pieces integral and coherent. However, it does not change the fact that Lady Dean Paul also composed extremely regular, recapitulate songs.

In terms of harmony, Wieniawska's compositions could be located between Fauré's realizations, remaining in traditional tonal system, and innovatory way of treating the chords present in Debussy's works. Indeed, Madame Poldowski introduces in her songs vertical structures in parallel movement, chords in relation of second, and modulations or ambiguous chords, but she does not use them as often as the French composer, whose creative activity, at that time still early,³⁶ is derived from the fascination by the Wagner's idiom on the one hand and just emerging jazz on the other.

In relation to the interpretation of the poetic text, Lady Dean Paul's compositions are characterized by the higher level of conservatism than the Debussy's and Ravel's songs. The explicit type of picturing, being

³⁶ The exception would be the song *Le Faune*, created in 1904.

a consequence of introducing unsophisticated, predictable rhetoric figures and numerous performance tricks, makes it unable to constitute the allusive type of lyricism, full of nuances and understatements, characteristic for the compositions of French composers. The mirror of such a state is deficit of liberty, grace or, so to say, nonchalance in the realizations by Wieniawska, the categories that are fulfilled in the music written by above-mentioned composers.

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