



Shudong Braamse
VOIX SUPRÊME
MÉLODIES OF JULES MASSENET
CHARLES HULIN, PIANO

n Navona
Records
FINE MUSIC

VOIX SUPRÊME: MÉLODIES OF JULES MASSENET

- O whispering wind . . .*
- O nocturnal echoes . . .*
- O music of the seas . . .*

*A voice still surpasses you with its beauty . . .
The marvelous human voice!*

- Antoinette Lafaix-Gontié

VOIX SUPRÊME MÉLODIES OF JULES MASSENET

Like the German Lied, the French *mélodie* is defined by great attention to the expression of the text in the composition of both its vocal and accompanimental parts. Massenet brought the hand of an operatic master to this dynamic, placing the beauty of the voice at center stage with arresting motives and graceful lines while constructing a dramatic framework with the piano's music, reminiscent of the players in the pit.

The *mélodies* on this recording (which comprise about a tenth of the composer's output of songs) exhibit key components of Massenet's operatic style as characterized by musicologist Hugh MacDonald. What might seem to be sparse accompaniments on first hearing are found to be the well-placed punctuations of recitative and under-scoring of *arioso* normally provided by Massenet's orchestra. To create moments of tenderness, single piano lines intertwine with the voice suggesting the colors of a solo clarinet or cello, and at the other end of the spectrum, turbulent textures, as opposed to increased dissonance, mark moments of high emotion.

Always sensitive to the audience of his day, Massenet enriched the range of his *mélodies* by incorporating religious scenes and evoking remote locales, both common practices in his operas. The baby Jesus' expression of solidarity with the poor in the austere *Le Petit Jésus* must have been profoundly moving to devout listeners in an age of Catholic

revival, while the rhetoric and rhythms of *Chanson Andalouse* served to transport their hearers to the intriguing environs of Seville.

With its florid vocal display, *Sevillana* conveys a spirit of Spain, as well. As the only operatic excerpt on this recording, it also presents a vivid contrast to Massenet's response to the art song. While he wrote his *mélodies* like an opera composer, the genre inspired an expressiveness more appropriate to the intimacy of the salon than the grandeur of the opera house.

In a critique of the evolution of Massenet's operas, Debussy wrote that, "Massenet surely would have been wiser to go on expressing his genius in delicate colors and whispering melodies and in light airy structures." Perhaps these *mélodies* provide a glimpse of the supple creativity that Debussy so valued.

- Dr. Charles J. Hulin IV

ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS

Rendered by **Patricé Noël Godet** and **Dr. Sansan V. Dah**
Edited by **Edward Bryant**

ÉLÉGIE Poetry by Louis Gallet

Oh sweet spring of old,
That green season,
Is gone forever!
I can no longer see the blue sky,
I can no longer hear the joyful warbling of the birds!
When you left me, my love,
My joy and happiness went away as well!
Yes, without you, my cheerful sun,
The happy days are gone!
How dark and cold everything is inside my heart!
All is withered! Forever!

SONNET PAYEN Poetry by Armand Silvestre

Rosa, Rosa, the air is sweeter that bathes your bosom,
April is filled with the scent of shaded foliage,
Everything is reborn!
And along the loving paths
The bleeding roses are everywhere,
Along with the snowy hawthorn!
The flower, from under the bushes,
Opens its timid eye
And gives way to the evening breeze,
To the evening breeze;
Everything is love!
Come, Rosa, come!
Lovers are happy under the shadowy trees
Which hang on the hill!

Rosa, Rosa, the air is sweeter that bathes your bosom.
But, Rosa, the priestess ignores the shivering
That April brings us
Along with its white blossoms . . .

Never does the sweet grass kiss her sandal. *
From the darkness of the temple
She searches the horror,
And of fire which burns us,
Motionless vessel,
Guards like an altar
The tomb of her heart.

** A possible reference to a statue, perhaps over a gravesite, or a memorial on a pillar
in the midst of the woods*

CHANSON ANDALOUSE Poetry by Jules Ruelle

Why sing of loving intoxication?
Why do you love me?
Your tenderness is folly!

My soul, in one day, has grown cold;
After a passionate kiss.
The dying flame has faded.
Why do you love me?
Like an empty dream,
A beautiful lie,
Ah! I recall that passionate kiss;
Why then do you love me?

At the bullfights, Seville is proud,
Of all of the ladies, I was the first.
I was laughing when in my ear, a gentleman softly whispered . . .
Love is always vigilant and alas, he took me by surprise!
A sweet, soft confession . . . time raced by,
Ah! First love languishes, the day full of passion!

And now, to the woods I go, having forgotten,
And no voice can make me happy,
I have grown cold inside.
Frivolous love stole away my first kiss.
The love song is now folly!
Why do you love me?

Like a dream which ends with the dawn,
Ah! You flee away, day full of pleasure,
Alas! With no return!
Alas! Why do you love me?

ELLE S'EN EST ALLÉE! Poetry by Lucien Solvay

Over there, over there,
Under a foreign sky,
Far from my arms, far from my eyes,
She has gone away.
Like a swallow in flight,
Through the dull, misty atmosphere which freezes my sorrowful soul,
She whispers to me, "Goodbye,"
Smiling, knowing nothing of my inconsolable sorrow.
To the joy of a victorious future,
She takes with her my heart,
My whole life is whisked away!
She is gone,
And I remain alone . . .
And my endless tears
Interrupt the echo of my complaint
And I breathe in vain!
I search, in vain, for comfort!
I call . . .
I can no longer hear the voice of my beloved in exile! . . .
Alas, she is gone! . . .
Far from my arms! . . .
Under a foreign sky! . . .
Over there . . . far from my eyes! . . .
Over there . . . far from my arms! . . .
She has gone away! . . .
Over there . . . under a foreign sky! . . .

LE PETIT JÉSUS Poetry by Georges Boyer

The baby Jesus, in clothes of white,
To His beloved, those who are poor and barefoot, he says:

"My children, the Holy Virgin protect and console you.
To console you, we came;
To amuse you, the chiseled, silvery moon shines at night,
When, in your linen blouse, you shiver,
I created the sun which shines and warms you."

Winter is cruel,
But as the snow is white, so is your soul,
My dear, innocent ones,
And when April comes, the bird on the branch modulates his song,
So that you can dance!

Sleep, sleep...
No remorse shall prevent you;
Some of you have bright, white beds,
But I, I was born in a crib, next to a bull with big eyes.
Your misery is hard,
But remember that I saw my mother, the virgin,
At the feet of Calvary;
Children, I have suffered more than you.

MUSETTE Poetry by Florian

The other day, under the shade,
A young and handsome shepherd was speaking of his pain
To the plaintive echo of the grove!

"Happiness is being loved, ever so tenderly.
Oh love, what sadness is following you?
Why do you come so slowly
And then flee away so quickly?

My shepherdess forgets me.

Love makes me die!
Oh love, when one stops to cherish you,
What a cruel burden life becomes.

Unfortunately, my shepherdess has forgotten me!"

SEPTEMBRE Poetry by Hélène Vacaresco

How sweet and lukewarm are the first days of September!
We could pretend, beneath the pale yellow sun,
To secretly see the coming of spring.

Just as in April,
The breeze is carrying the scent of the reseda.
The shadows of the leaves are dancing and trembling
Upon the grass they are about to cover;

It seems that nature wants to be the most beautiful
Before she dies.
And like her, in my distress,
My heart feels the need for a great renewal of tenderness.
Why, beloved, are you so far away?

How sweet and lukewarm the first days of September would be
If you were here, when, toward the pale yellow sun,
The scent of the reseda climbs!

Why, beloved, are you so far away?

L'ÂME DES OISEAUX Poetry by Hélène Vacaresco

Spring has thrown away his lyre
Under the willows and reeds,
O great forest, can you tell me
What becomes of the souls of birds?
The entire month of April is made of their grace!

I had one, but he is dead . . .
And since then, the air around me is devoid of music and energy.

Even lighter than their wings,
Lighter than the down on the edges of their nests,
Who removes them,
Where do they go, the souls of these little ones?

That sap filled with flames,
O flowers, O willow, O reeds,
Pray with your souls,
Pray for the souls of the little birds.

PREMIÈRE DANSE Poetry by Jacques Normand

Some good, old and well-known melodies,
Keeping time, with tiny gestures,
The little girl is dancing.
She comes and goes, always gracefully
And, as always, to this new pursuit,
She is not shy.

Her feet, gliding gracefully on the wooden floor,
Slip and slip away,
And with her tiny fingers, she lifts the hem of her dress.

Five years old and no lessons!
But she is clever
And well-mannered
Like a beautiful lady.

She arches her back proudly, she poses,
And soon, with a single glance,
She reveals much about herself when she says,
"Watch me turn and smile;
I am cute and guess what?
I love to be admired!
I love to be noticed for my complexion, which is like the sunrise.
My white forehead, which no worry has yet touched,
My fine, golden hair, fluffy and glowing . . .
I love to be admired,
For all of me!"

LES YEUX CLOS Poetry by G. Buchillot

When your eyes are closed
And you can no longer see
The dear places where we once were in love,
My soul will fill with tears.

When your eyes are closed
And you can no longer see,
I will bow my head
Under the weight of countless memories of you
And of the years we spent together,
Years too quickly gone, like a whirlwind.

When your eyes are closed
And you can no longer see,
I will cover your gravestone

With flowers which have opened to please you, my love.

When your eyes are closed...

TOUT PASSE! Poetry by Camille Bruno

The most ardent love
Has bored me, like everything else.
The most ardent love cannot last forever.
The bond, which was so dear to us, broke, just like everything breaks.
The bond, which was so dear to us, could not hold the flesh.
The sweet time when I was in love has passed, just as everything passes.
The sweet time, when I was in love, will not come back again.

LES EXTASES Poetry by Annie Dessirier

Songs, flowers and sun,
Kisses on the lips, roses!
Sky, the fiery ocean at sunset,
Love . . . above all things!

Golden rays that fill the sky,
Whispers on the soft breeze! . . .
Perfume with surreal fragrance . . .
Pleasure passes and teases.

Songs, flowers and sun,
Kisses on the lips, roses!
Intensity, pleasure,
Grinning . . . crazy drunkenness!
Emotions . . . troubling desires,
Lingering touches . . . and caresses!

MA PETITE MÈRE A PLEURÉ Poetry by Paul Grivollet

My little mother cried,
For a long time, a long time,
Her big tears . . .
I was heartbroken:
She cried with such big tears!

I wish I could have comforted her
Just as she always comforts me,
But I dared not speak.
What could I say to comfort her? . . .
Where did this grief come from?
Who made her suffer?
I did not ask anything,
I was afraid of making her even more heartbroken.
Oh, these long, choking tears . . .
Poor momma, dear momma!
How sorrowful to her children are a mother's tears!

Softly I snuggled up against her tortured breast
And, under my kisses, I felt her bosom less tortured.
Finally, under her long, silky eyelashes
Her joy was renewed, what a joy!
And when I dried her tears,
For a while, I cried . . . for joy!

VOIX SUPRÊME Poetry by Antoinette Lafaix-Gontié

○ whispering wind
Which climbs to the skies;
○ nocturnal echoes among silent woods
And charmed by a nightingale;

O music of the seas,
Under glowing lighthouses,
When the foam gently brushes against the rocks,
With long singing kisses;
O endless concerts,
In harmony with summer;
A voice still surpasses you with its beauty,
And everything listens to that voice
Which startles and vibrates, rises and falls,
Singing about pain, about joy or about love;
The human voice,
The marvelous human voice!

SI VOUS VOULIEZ BIEN ME LE DIRE Poetry by Ludana

If you were to tell me,
How happy I would be!
And with nothing other than your smile,
You would make me so very happy!
If you were to tell me!

Know that my soul is distraught . . .
Ah, of course, you can laugh about it . . .
While I wait to hear what you might say!

If you were to tell me,
I would no longer care about the sunrise, the dawn,
The night, hell, and a thousand things worse,
You are my life and I adore you!

L'HEUREUSE SOUFFRANCE Poetry by Georges de Dubor

My heart, go quickly, poor heart,
Go to the one I love.
And tell him that I am burning with desire
And that I implore him!
Tell him that, night and day,
Even though I am far away, I long for him.
Tell him that, for his love,
I am in pain and agony!

Tell him that ceaselessly, endlessly, I weep,
Tell him that I lament, hour after hour,
But between the rigors,
All the pain, all the alarm,
All the sighs, all the passion, all the tears;
Tell him that, in his remembrance of me,
I am still a thousand times happier in my suffering!
Alas!

STANCES Poetry by Gilbert

At the banquet of life,
An unfortunate guest,
I appeared but for a moment and now I am dying.
Slowly, I arrive at my tomb, despairing,
No one will visit my grave to shed a tear!

Farewell, fields I loved!
Farewell, soft greenery!
Farewell, branches waving in the woods!
Sky which covers all mankind,
Beauteous nature!

Farewell for the last time! . . .
Ah! May those friends who are deaf to my farewells
Long behold your sacred beauty.
May they die full of days,
May they be mourned,
May a friend close their eyes! . . .

LE SENTIER PERDU Poetry by Paul de Choudens

I wanted to see it again, that path in the woods
Where we used to dream in the evenings.

The sound of her heartbeat mingled with the breeze.
My eyes were speaking of love to her indecisive soul,
That word that I was hoping for, but not expecting to hear!

I'm coming to tell you about her, oh path that brought me joy.
You have faithfully kept the song of our love!

Yes, I'm coming to see you again, oh path of hope,
To live in happiness again, provided by your silence.

Trembling, she was walking under the vast shaded woods,
And I was holding her hands and we were so happy!

I'm coming to tell you about her, oh path of my fondest days,
You who have faithfully kept the song of our love!

RÊVERIE SENTIMENTALE Poetry by Mathylde Peyre

Tonight, my love,
I am alone and weeping,
Dreaming about the other nights
Where we dreamt together;
I doubt spring and charm and time
Because your hands did not place any flowers on my hair.

The breeze caresses the branches and makes them sing,
The dawn is wearing a transparent veil;
But I am unable to taste the beauty of the sky,
Because it causes me to remember that I am alone tonight! . . .

Silence, ever so slowly, envelopes my dwelling . . .
Still replaying the moment of our farewell,
I dream of the evenings, far away,
Where we dreamt together.
Tonight, my love,
I am alone and weeping! . . . tonight . . .

CHANSON DÉSESPÉRÉE Poetry by Edmond Teulet

If I could sing again,
I would say: Come into my arms!
Come and listen to my ringing heart,
To the song that you alone resonate;

But I sang with that evil one,
For her pleasure and to exalt her,
In front of your dawning grace;
I can no longer sing . . .

Alas! Alas!
If I could love you again,
I would feel love only for you,
Because I believe I see the sunrise when you appear,
So transparent.

The other one, just like you, was beautiful,
Her whole body knew how to charm.
I was afraid of you, I trusted her . . .
I no longer know how to love . . .

Alas! Alas!
I cannot sing anymore . . .
I cannot cry anymore . . .
I no longer know how to love.

L'AMOUR PLEURE Poetry by Madeleine Postel

Poor love is all in tears,
His tender heart is broken;
He has dropped his weapons;
He has cried and cried and cried!
His clear, blue eyes are veiled with painful tears.

He no longer flaps his wings;
Ah! Unfortunate love!
He is all alone, all the time;
He is alone everywhere;
He is alone night and day.

Ah! Feel sorry for love.
And cry for love!
Cry, cry, cry!

SEVILLANA Poetry by Jules Ruelle

In Seville, beautiful ladies,
One braves the frost.
In Seville, beautiful ladies,
The flower grows under your feet
And in the air a sweet echo murmurs,
Charming the nights and days.
One would say that, with the pure breeze,
Ah, the wings of love are rustling!
Ah, ah, ah, beautiful ladies,
Do you know Seville?

The flower grows under your feet,
The mantilla is fragrant with perfume;
The day is golden and blue
And at night, when the stars shine
One can hear the song of love.

Why dream,
Why, far from our parties, why sigh?
Ah, far from our parties, ah!

Charles Hulin

A prize-winner in the Hilton Head International Piano Competition and a recipient of recognition for collaborative work in the Liszt-Garrison International Piano Competition, Charles Hulin studied with Yoheved Kaplinsky at Juilliard and Ellen Mack at Peabody Conservatory while participating in the master classes of Leon Fleisher. Before moving to Florida, he performed extensively in the Mid-Atlantic region frequently appearing with members of the U. S. Naval Academy Band and as a soloist for performances of the Richmond Ballet. He has participated in a wide range of festivals including the Third Prac-

tice Festival of electro-acoustic music, the University of Oklahoma Clarinet Symposium, and the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada.

Dr. Hulin teaches at Southeastern University in Lakeland and coordinates the Lasker Summer Music Festival, an organization that supports Christian musicians in the integration of their artistic work and faith. He has presented research regarding the music of Franz Liszt for the College Music Society and numerous lecture-recitals on parlor music in the Antebellum South at various venues in his native North Carolina. He writes informally at hulinmusic.blogspot.com.



Shudong Braamse

An international performer, coloratura soprano Shudong Braamse has appeared on stages in Italy, Austria, Estonia, Spain, Singapore, China, Canada, and the United States. Holding masters and doctoral degrees in vocal performance from Michigan State University, she is a professor of voice at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida and has served as artist faculty at the Alion Baltic International Music Festival in Tallinn, Estonia. She is also an active adjudicator, judging for events such as the George Gershwin International Music Competition in New York.

Shudong has a passion for sharing the traditions of Western vocal music with her native China and sharing developments in Chinese concert music with audiences and students in America. She has given numerous master classes and recitals at universities and concert halls in China and has translated *Complete Preparation: A Guide to Auditioning for Opera* by Joan Dornemann and *Basics of Vocal Pedagogy* by Clifton Ware into Chinese. Both works are available from People's Music Publishing House in Beijing. Shudong's earlier album, *Silvery Night*, introduces American listeners to the songs of Yao Qi, a poet and composer from Singapore.

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All tracks recorded January 18 & 19, 2014 and June 2, 2014 at the Springs Theatre in Tampa FL

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