A Textual and Musical Commentary on J. Guy Ropartz's *Quatre Poèmes après l'Intermezzo d'Henri Heine* (1899)

by

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ABSTRACT

Heinrich Heine's collection of poems, *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, is well-known in music circles, largely due to Robert Schumann's settings of sixteen of these poems in his masterwork *Dichterliebe*. Because of *Dichterliebe*'s place of importance in art song literature, many other settings of Heine's sixty-five poems are often overlooked. Breton-born composer Joseph Guy Marie Ropartz composed *Quatre Poèmes d'après l'Intermezzo d'Henri Heine* in 1899, after having collaborated on a new French translation of the entire *Lyrisches Intermezzo* in 1890. This cycle is rarely performed, largely due to Ropartz's relative obscurity as a composer, as the focus of his career was administration of two regional conservatories in France. The *Quatre Poèmes* were written fairly early in Ropartz's life, but feature many compositional techniques that remain staples of Ropartz's work throughout his career. It is an accessible work to many singers and audience members already familiar with Heine. The texts of the four songs are not simply translations of Heine's original, but altered to adhere to the rules of French poetry. Examining the changes made in the text, both in language and structure, reveals information that will aid performers' understanding of the poetry and of Ropartz's choices in musical setting. The music of the work is greatly dependent on a single motive, an *idée fixe*, and considering the role of this motive in its various appearances is illuminating to the narrative arc of the cycle. This study seeks to aid potential performers and listeners of the *Quatre Poèmes* by expanding their understanding of the artists responsible for creating it, and by exploring the textual and musical elements that are the building blocks of this work.

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Introduction

Quatre Poèmes après l'Intermezzo d'Henri Heine by J. Guy Ropartz is a compelling song cycle that deserves frequent performances, but is rarely heard due to Ropartz's relative obscurity. Ropartz was one of César Franck's last students, and this 1899 composition has a musical language that has more in common with the mélodies of French romanticism than the contemporary trend of music being promoted by Debussy and others at the turn of the 20th century. It is partially because Ropartz's compositions were seen as old-fashioned that they have been overlooked. The scarcity of performances of Ropartz's music is also due to the fact that, although he was a prolific composer, his priority in his career was always as a music educator and administrator. During his youth, his professional activity was split between music and writing, and he published several books of poetry. This cycle is where his two art forms meet. Ropartz set very few of his own poems to music, but in the *Quatre Poèmes* he used translations of Heinrich Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo* that he had written in collaboration with Pierre-René Hirsch and published in 1890. Ropartz and Hirsch took some artistic liberties with their translations for the sake of adhering to the rules of French poetry. In Chapter 3, these changes are examined, with direct comparisons of structure and content between Heine's original German and the French translations.

Ropartz's musical fabric in the *Quatre Poèmes* is woven with one consistent thread: a four-note motive that saturates the entire cycle. The appearances of this motive are generally obvious, but as an integral cell of the composition, some subtle and perhaps unintentional uses of the motive can also be found and traced. Identifying the motive's

role and character in its various appearances is a useful exercise for performers of this work, and Chapter 4 details the musical content of the cycle, highlighting the use of this *idée fixe*. The cycle was conceived orchestrally, but is almost exclusively performed with piano. The end of Chapter 4 includes information about the instrumentation of the orchestral version, which should be of interest to pianists who are performing this work.

There is certainly a space for this cycle in recital repertoire, as representative of Ropartz's work, as one of relatively few French cycles originally composed for the low male voice, and as an alternate take on Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, which in musical circles is permanently affiliated with Robert Schumann's *Dichterliebe*. The following chapters highlight the circumstances of Heine and Ropartz's lives that contributed to the creation of the *Quatre Poèmes*, so that performers of this work may approach it with a clearer picture of its origins.

Chapter 1: A Brief Biography of Heinrich Heine

Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) has a large legacy both in literature as a pivotal member of the German Romantic movement, and in music as the author of texts that have been set thousands of times. His poems from the *Buch der Lieder* alone have inspired close to three thousand art songs.[1]

While Heine is unquestionably a quintessential German poet, his upbringing and life represent more diversity than his nationality alone. He was born in 1797 in Düsseldorf, which was occupied by the French at the time and ceded to Napoleon in 1806. It became part of Prussia after Napoleon's downfall in 1815, but Heine remained an admirer of Napoleon and of French politics for the rest of his life. Despite what ended up being a permanent re-location to Paris in 1831, Heine retained his German identity, never applying for French citizenship.

Little is known about Heine's childhood. He was born to a Jewish family, but his Uncle Salomon was a more prominent mentor figure than either of Heinrich's parents. Due to Salomon's wealth, he supported Heinrich into the poet's forties despite a tense relationship between the two of them. In 1816, Heine moved to Hamburg to apprentice with his uncle, who ran a bank, but Heinrich proved inept at business. In 1819 Salomon sent his nephew to the University in Bonn to study law, which Heinrich never practiced during his life. Here he encountered August Wilhelm Schlegel, who mentored Heine in

[1] Jeffrey L. Sammons, *Heinrich Heine: A Modern Biography*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 65.

poetic traditions and meter.[2] He left Bonn after one year for Göttingen, and then Berlin in 1821. In Berlin he experienced the height of contemporary German culture for the first time, being exposed to theater and art. After Heine's university studies concluded in 1825, he spent the next six years traveling and writing, never settling in one place for long, and returning often to Hamburg.

Heine's first published collection of poems was *Gedichte* (Poems) in 1821, followed by *Tragödien nebst einem lyrischen Intermezzo* (Tragedies with a lyrical intermezzo) in 1823, which contained two plays and the well-beloved collection of 65 poems. He became firmly established as an author after meeting publisher Julius Campe in Hamburg in 1826. Having previously published the poems that appeared in his *Buch der Lieder* as separate collections, Heine agreed to let Campe publish the whole volume for essentially no fee. The *Buch der Lieder*, containing *Junge Leiden*, *Die Heimkehr*, *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, selected poems from *Die Harzreise*, and *Die Nordsee*, was a surprise success. Heine believed that his lyric writing was behind him, and Campe considered this publication a kind gesture to symbolize his faith in his newly acquired author. Indeed, for ten years the first edition floated around Europe, slowly growing in popularity. But with the rise of the German art song, new editions and re-printings of the *Buch der Lieder* appeared. The second edition came in 1837, and the fifth in 1844 (this one was re-edited by Heine), with a total of 13 editions printed during Heine's lifetime.[3]

Heine considered himself the last great Romantic, pushing poetry in a new direction while acknowledging his ties with established poets, in particular Wilhelm

[2] Sammons, 57.
[3] Sammons,135.

Müller, to whom Heine wrote in 1826, "Very early I allowed the German folk-song to affect me, ...but I believe to have found only in your songs the pure sound and true simplicity for which I always strove…. In my poems on the other hand, only the form is somewhat folklike, the content belongs to conventional society."[4]

Heine's so-called "folksongs of contemporary society"[5] often revolve around a theme of unrequited love, particularly in his early poems. There has been much speculation about the subject of these texts, with a long-standing assumption that they were in response to his teenage years, when he had an affection for his cousin Amalie, Salomon's daughter. Letters from Heine in 1816 make it clear that he was unsuccessful in courting her, but she rarely appears in his memoirs or writings after that year. She married in 1821, and there is a theory that Heine transferred his affections to her younger sister Therese, although she too rarely appears in his writings. While his affection for Amalie may have contributed to Heine's poetic trait of emotion affiliated with rejection, it is unlikely that any of the poems from the *Lyrisches Intermezzo* were specifically about their non-affair, as they were written at least five years after the failed courtship. Heine himself said in 1823,

> Only one thing can injure me most painfully, when people try to explain the spirit of my works from the history…of the author…. However easily the history of a poet could throw light on his poem, however easily it could really be shown that often political position, religion, private hatred, prejudice, and discretions have affected the poem, one must nevertheless never mention these things, especially not during the lifetime of the poet. One deflowers, as it were, the poem, one tears its mysterious veil, if the influence of history that is demonstrated is really present; one distorts the poem if it is falsely figured in.[6]

[4] Sammons, 62.
[5] Sammons, 63.
[6] Sammons, 44-45.

It is more likely that Heine's themes were collected from multiple experiences as a young adult and concentrated into a fictional outlet in his lyric poetry. The true love poems in Heine's work are rare, with most of his texts based in bitterness and rejection. This is the manner in which Heine twisted the traditions of German Romanticism. Jeffrey Sammons, the leading Heine scholar of the current day, writes,

> Thus far it could retain Romantic traditions of emotional longing, imagined harmonies, reintegration, gratification. But by taking the topic of love from its sour and defeating side, he found an instrument for dismantling the internal delusions of late Romanticism…. For Heine love is a catastrophe…. Yet the desire of love is inextinguishable…. One wonders if there had ever before been a body of love poetry in which so much accusation is directed toward the beloved, her stupid treachery, her careless malevolence. Thus emerged the special quality of what might be called Heine's anti-Romantic irony.[7]

In 1831, Heine moved to Paris, following the French revolution of 1830. This move was prompted by his political ideals, as he considered the new government in France to be more progressive than the rest of Europe, and by his desire to gain freedom from the censorship that controlled his writing in Germany. Following his relocation, his writing turned from poetry and fiction to journalism and social commentary. He made regular contributions to the German paper *Allgemeine Zeitung*, covering French events and society. In 1833, he began work on *De l'Allemagne*, a book intended to portray German history and culture to a French audience. Heine was fighting against a perception of Germans as old-fashioned and conservative, arguing that the German philosophy of thought was more progressive than the French, despite France's progress in their political structure. This book perhaps exposes less about Germany as a whole than

[7] Sammons, 61-62.

it does about Heine's own perspective as an individual fiercely loyal to his native country despite the government's heavy censorship of his work. In his writing, he considered himself a literary ambassador between the two countries. However, he never became fully fluent in French, relying on other writers to translate his writings from German. Heine's duality of identities, yet obstinacy in assimilating, is one of the great contradictions of his personality. This ambiguity sheds light on the youthful poet whose protagonists seemed always foiled in their love affairs. The author appeared to be discontent no matter his home, constantly moving from town to town in Germany, and never willing to fully adapt to his home in France. Likewise, the subjects of his poetry seem often discontent in their fates: they anticipate the end of their love stories too soon, and then wallow in their unhappiness at the end of their affairs.

Despite Heine's preoccupation with love in his poetry, his young adult life was seemingly without many relationships. Finally, in 1836, he settled down with a French girl named Crescence Eugénie Mirat, whom he insisted on calling "Mathilde." Their relationship was somewhat unhappy, with Heine often complaining about her in his letters, but she continued to live with him until his death in 1855, including the final seven years of his life when he was paralyzed and essentially bedridden.

The rest of Heine's social life in Paris involved several famous artists, including composers Hector Berlioz, Giacomo Meyerbeer, and Franz Liszt, and the writer Gérard de Nerval, perhaps Heine's closest friend. Heine's relationships with many of the musicians he associated with were political and strained, as he used his position as a writer to attempt to blackmail and manipulate them, sometimes threatening negative

reviews, other times relying on them for financial aid. Heine valued the role music played in society, and was known to complain that he had never received any copies of songs written to his poetry, either ignoring the copy of *Liederkreis*, Op. 24, that Robert Schumann sent him, or perhaps never receiving it.[8] Nevertheless, Heine's legacy is largely due to the thousands of songs written to his poems. Although he returned to writing poetry later in his life, including his books *Atta Troll* and *Deutschland: Ein Wintermärchen* in 1844, his early writings in *Buch der Lieder* remain the most popular source of material for art songs.

Gérard de Nerval (1808-1855) was perhaps best known for translating Goethe's *Faust* into French, although he was a writer of literature and poetry in his own right as well. He became close friends with Heine, visiting him often during the later years of their lives, when Heine was paralyzed and bedridden. With Heine's support, Nerval translated many of Heine's poems into French, with the first publication of selections from *Buch der Lieder* appearing in *Revue des deux Mondes* in 1848.[9] Nerval committed suicide in 1855, and Heine wrote a kind epigraph for him. It was almost exclusively through Nerval's translations that Heine's writings existed in French for many years.

Due to Heine's relocation and censorship in Germany, Heine's legacy was somewhat stronger in France than in Germany during the end of his life and after his death. In the 20th century, the Nazis burned many of his works, both because of radical content and because of Heine's Jewish heritage. In music circles, Heine is most known

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[8] Friedrich Schnapp and Theodore Baker, "Robert Schumann and Heinrich Heine," *The Musical Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (1925): 614.
[9] S. A. Rhodes, "The Friendship between Gérard de Nerval and Heinrich Heine," *The French Review*, Vol. 23 no. 1 (Oct. 1949): 22.

today through art songs by Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Mendelssohn, and many others. His poems have also been set in translation by composers including Meyerbeer (French), Grieg (Norwegian), Tosti (Italian), Tchaikovsky (Russian), Ives (English), and of course by Joseph Marie Guy Ropartz, using his own French translations of the *Lyrisches Intermezzo*.

Chapter 2: Joseph Guy Marie Ropartz

Joseph Guy Marie Ropartz was born June 15th, 1864, in Guingamp, Brittany. His father Sigismond Ropartz was a lawyer, but also a historian and a writer who collaborated with the composer Pierre Thielemans.[10] In 1870, the Ropartz family moved to Rennes, where the young Guy Ropartz was able to study for five years at the nearby College of Saint Vincent. In 1879, he began studying at the College of Saint François Xavier at Vannes, a Jesuit institution that both affirmed Ropartz's deep Catholic faith and developed his musical talents. He studied harmony there, was involved in the choir and the orchestra, learned several new instruments including horn and double bass, and nurtured his talent on his primary instrument, the organ.

In an attempt to follow in his father's footsteps, Ropartz returned to Rennes in 1882 to study law at the Faculté de Droit. The rich culture in Rennes afforded him the opportunities to stay involved in the arts, and it was there he first made contact with Louis Tiercelin, a French writer also of Breton heritage, who had a passion for revitalizing the appreciation of Breton culture. The two men would later collaborate on the creation of *La Parnasse breton contemporain*, a collection of Breton poetry from the later 19th century. Ropartz also held multiple positions at churches, directing their choirs. After gaining his law license in 1885, Ropartz moved to Paris. As with Heine, there is no evidence that Ropartz ever attempted to practice law.

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[10] Enyss Djemil, *J Guy Ropartz ou la recherche d'une Vocation*, (Le Mans: Vilaire, 1967), 4.

In Paris, Ropartz enrolled at the Conservatoire, studying harmony with Théodore Dubois and composition with Jules Massenet. Early in 1886, Ropartz attended a performance of *Le Chant de la Cloche* by Vincent d'Indy. After the concert, upon learning that d'Indy had studied with César Franck, Ropartz sought out Franck to be accepted as a private student. He initially asked to study organ, and only later confessed to Franck that his true motivation was to study composition. Franck agreed to mentor Ropartz in composition as well, and Ropartz became one of the last students Franck taught before his death in 1890. Franck's hand guided Ropartz through some of his early compositions, including symphonic works *Les landes* and *À Marie endormie*, based on a poem by Auguste Brizeux. Ropartz also became friends with d'Indy, which turned into a long-lasting relationship of mutual respect.

During this period in Paris, Ropartz continued to be an active writer. In 1888 he published his first volume of poetry, titled *Adagiettos*. Ropartz's friend and biographer Fernand Lamy says about these poems: "Dedicated in great part to intimate sufferings or joys, this first collection appealed by its natural grace and rhyme, at once simple and learned."[11] Ropartz followed this with two more poetry volumes in 1890 and 1892, *Modes mineurs* and *Les Muances*. At this time, he also was working with pianist and author Pierre-René Hirsch on their new translations of Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, published in 1890. Perhaps the two would have created more new translations of poetry, but Hirsch died suddenly from illness in 1891, at only age 21. In 1891, Ropartz also

[11] Fernand Lamy, Guy Ropartz, l'homme et l'œuvre, (Paris: Durand, 1948), 14. Translation mine. Except where otherwise noted, all translations from French sources are my own.

published *Notations artistiques*, a collection of previously published articles narrating his travels that had taken place over the past few years. These travel entries make up the majority of *Notations artistiques*, but the final chapter of the book is named "A propos de quelques symphonies modernes" and consists of Ropartz's notes on and analyses of four symphonies by Lalo, Franck, d'Indy, and Saint-Saëns. Throughout Ropartz's travels, it is clear that the *Lyrisches Intermezzo* was on his mind. He used "Im Rhein, im heiligen Strom" as an epigraph to his first chapter, in which he details his visit to the cathedral in Cologne. He accompanied this epigraph with the commonly known Nerval translation, but two chapters later, describing passing through Cologne again on his return to Paris, he wrote that Heine's verses returned to his memory and in this chapter he used his own translation.[12] Heine reappears at the very end of Ropartz's last travel entry, when he visited the Heidelberg castle. "On voit dans les caves le gros tonneau que contient deux cent trente-six milles bouteilles. Heine demandait pour 'ensevelir son lourd et triste rêve', un cercueil qui fût plus grand que ce monstre…" (We saw in the cellars the large cask that contains two-hundred-and-thirty-six thousand bottles. Heine asked for, 'to bury his heavy and sad dream,' a coffin larger than this monster….)[13] This period of Guy Ropartz's life was when poetry and music seemed to be both living equally in his mind, as he expanded his own horizons. Once his education was complete and his career started in earnest, his obligations moved away from his own edification, and instead his priorities turned to the musical enrichment of his community and his students.

[12] J. Guy Ropartz, *Notations artistiques*, (Paris: A. Lemerre, 1891), 60.
[13] Ropartz, *Notations*, 125. Trans.

In 1892, Ropartz married Cécile-Marie-Fanny Chauvy in Paris, and in 1894, he was appointed as the director of the conservatory in Nancy, a job he kept for twenty-five years. At age 30, he was the youngest man to ever be appointed to this position in any of the French conservatories. He immediately revamped the educational structure of the school, teaching a harmony class that incorporated compositional techniques ranging from Bach to Ropartz's own contemporaries. Lamy wrote of his teaching,

> He gave examples of the most diverse composers. I heard him explain to us in one class a passage of Massenet after another by Bach, followed by a few measures of Debussy, which served as an example where he commented on a work by D'Indy. His love for the work of his master César Franck, a love which he knew how to make his pupils feel by the profound knowledge he possessed, and even his great admiration for his friend Vincent d'Indy, did not bias his critical judgment of the various works he presented.[14]

The greater contribution Ropartz left in Nancy was the concert season he organized, enriching the culture of the area. There was essentially no orchestra when Ropartz arrived, so he created one with himself as conductor. Although he did not have access to the virtuoso musicians who played in the Paris orchestras, his love for promoting both older and contemporary works created concerts brimming with passion, gaining many favorable reviews published in such journals as *L'Est republican*, *Le Guide musicale*, and *Le Courrier musicale*. His programs for the symphony and chamber music concerts he organized included works by Gluck, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Schumann. He also used these concerts to introduce the audience in Nancy to Wagner, Saint-Saens, Franck, d'Indy, and Chausson. He held two festivals featuring d'Indy's

[14] Lamy, 16. Trans.

music in 1895 and 1897, and one featuring Massenet in 1896.[15] After a few years in Nancy, Ropartz felt his orchestra had become mature enough to handle a greater challenge, and in the 1898-1899 season, he programmed the entire cycle of Beethoven symphonies. He accompanied these concerts with program notes explaining the symphonies' performance history in France, a sign of his commitment to educating and connecting with his audience. After this grand introduction of the symphonic genre, Ropartz programmed Schumann's symphonies and a cycle of contemporary French symphonic works including symphonies by Franck, d'Indy, Lalo, Chausson, and Ropartz himself. When Ropartz programmed concertos, he often featured music professors from the Nancy conservatoire, highlighting the talent found in his own community, but he also brought in renowned soloists such as Alfred Cortot, Marguerite Long, and his friend Eugène Ysaÿe.

Utilizing the vocal talent in Nancy, Ropartz also mounted choral and operatic works in his concerts, including *La Damnation de Faust* by Berlioz, *Les Béatitudes* by Franck, and *Orphée et Eurydice* by Gluck. In addition, Ropartz programmed excerpts from *Parsifal* by Wagner, a work that Ropartz admired greatly and wrote the following about:

> Tonight I heard Parsifal. In my life, I had not experienced such an emotion of art. I search in vain for a word which expresses the special state of mind I went into upon hearing the performance of this sublime masterpiece. Art reaches here the inaccessible summit.... And the music is growing, always growing! It's no longer

[15] Isabelle Petitdemange, "Le concerts de Guy Ropartz à travers la presse," in *Musique En Lorraine: Contribution À L'histoire De La Musique À Nancy XVIIe-XXe Siècle: Colloque De Nancy, 6 Et 7 Octobre 199: Textes*, ed. Yves Ferraton, (Paris: Klincksieck, 1994), 183.

> theater, it's no longer art, it's religion! The audience cannot restrain their tears; the most closed hearts flourish, deliciously charmed. I do not know, in all church music, a more truly religious page than this finale of the first act of Parsifal.[16]

Ropartz held two festivals in Nancy to celebrate Wagner's music, in 1905 and 1911. If Franck's hand is apparent in Ropartz's compositions, so too is Ropartz's great respect for Wagner.

The years Ropartz was in Nancy were also his most productive years of composition. While conducting and administrating in his position at Nancy, Ropartz also wrote the majority of his works, including his first four symphonies, his cantata *Le Miracle de Saint Nicolas* (1905), his Breton opera *Le Pays* (1910), many sacred works for voices and organ, choral works, chamber music, piano works, organ works, and the vast majority of his art song output, both orchestral and with piano.

Following World War I, in 1919 Ropartz became the director of the conservatory at Strasbourg. Due to the city's location at the border of Germany, its musical culture had been dominated by German composers. Amid post-war tensions, Ropartz sought to revitalize an appreciation for French music in Strasbourg. For the next ten years, Ropartz programmed concerts full of French composers including Franck, Debussy, Chausson, Ravel, and d'Indy, as well as incorporating works by younger composers such as Ibert and Honegger. He stayed in Strasbourg until 1929, when he retired to Lanloup in Brittany. Although Ropartz did not leave quite the legacy in Strasbourg that he did in Nancy, he made great improvements to the quality of education at the conservatory and

[16] Ropartz. *Notations,* 82-85. Trans.

was well-loved by his students and colleagues. Upon his retirement, fellow professor Gabriel Le Bras wrote:

> [Ropartz] was not only a great musician, but an elite character, a man of superior dignity, steadfast in accomplishing his duties…. In our memory, he appears in turn as the Olympian conductor, whose coat is barely folded by an imprecise gesture, then in the light attire of a tennis player, or the familiar face of the bridge player, who amuses the fancies of chance as much as the chance of a spiritual fantasy. Can we remember without regret this loving companion of the best hours of life in Strasbourg? M. Guy Ropartz will leave in Alsace the memory of an artist, an administrator, and a man of rare quality.[17]

Ropartz was recognized by the French government for his work in Nancy and Strasbourg by first being appointed to the Legion of Honor in 1906, and then designated as an Officer in 1921. He received the Prix Cressent for opera in 1906 and the Prix Chartier for chamber music in 1919.

Ropartz and Brittany

The culture, heritage, and art of Brittany were among Ropartz's main influences throughout his career. He said, "Brittany has had in all its time, a music both popular and original, and the people who have a national and popular music are clearly the people of art."[18] Ropartz sought out Breton folk melodies and harmonized and published a set of religious songs for church as *Kenouenou Santel (Pieux cantiques)*. He also was known to incorporate folk tunes into his compositions, including his first symphony, his D-minor sonata for cello and piano, and symphonic works such as *À Marie endormie* and *Les landes*. His opera *Le Pays* (1912), based on a text by the Breton author Charles Le

[17] Lamy, 22. Trans.
[18] Djemil, 24. Trans.

Goffic, features a Breton protagonist who travels to Iceland and is married there, but feels drawn to return to Brittany. In his attempt to escape in winter, a frozen swamp cracks and swallows him. Cynthia Sajnovsky suggests that "the subjective moral of the legend is that the emotional grasp Brittany maintains over its people lasts forever, and one cannot escape such a hold."[19] While Ropartz surely did not intend the opera's morbid ending to be reflective to his own feeling about Brittany, he did have a loyalty to his Breton roots and felt an obligation to represent that culture in his work throughout his life.

Ropartz and his Compositional Traits

Certainly the most obvious influence on Ropartz's compositions was César Franck, but in Ropartz's later compositions there is clear Breton folk influence as well as a general rustic quality. He also expanded his harmonic language to incorporate techniques being used by contemporaries such as Debussy, although he was always somewhat behind the trend of the so-called impressionists. This perception of Ropartz's music as being old-fashioned is likely the primary reason that his works are rarely performed. Maurice Boucher defended Ropartz's musical language, writing:

> In truth it is best to say right away and simply: Guy Ropartz is not in fashion. And it is too bad for him, because fashion gives our ears headphones of excellent quality, ultrasensitive to capture subtleties and rarities that otherwise would not exist. On the other hand, it closes the ears to all the music whose wavelength, if I may say, is not in accordance with its decrees.... But it is so much the worse for fashion. Does it not happen that when a musician takes a marked place and a certain destiny, he achieves his voyage by other roads than the noisy highway

[19] Cynthia Jean Bellinger Sajnovsky, "The Organ and Harmonium Works of Joseph Guy Marie Ropartz" (PhD diss., Washington University in St. Louis, 1981), 23.

where the uproar of traffic is not related to the quantity or the value of the burden?[20]

In Enyss Djemil's biography *J Guy Ropartz ou la recherche d'une Vocation*, the author summarizes Ropartz's philosophy of music in three main points:

1) Artistic expression must first be simple.
2) A work of art must strip itself of all useless ornaments.
3) Religious works are particular, for this stripping doubles austerity, but allows divine breath to pass.[21]

"Austere" was a word that many critics used to describe Ropartz's music, to which the good-natured composer responded, "We all know that austerity is the name that politeness gives to boredom."[22] Ropartz realized that not every listener and critic admired or understood his music. "It is not, however, that what I write is very complicated, but I think that within its simplicity there is an inner life that only those who have lived near me feel."[23]

Lamy divides Ropartz's compositions into five distinct periods, with the *Quatre Poèmes* composed at the very end of the first period, where Franck's influence is heard most clearly. Lamy writes of this period, "In this early work, there is already a special atmosphere: melody, harmony, orchestral color, which means that when G. Ropartz 'speaks' to us of Brittany, his music will not resemble any other music."[24] Lamy also highlights Ropartz's frequent use of ostinato bass (*bass obstinée*) and Ropartz's gift for

[20] Maurice Boucher, "Guy Ropartz" *La revue musicale*, vol. 8 (June 1924), 200. Trans.
[21] Djemil, 171. Translated by Sajnovsky, "The Organ and Harmonium Works", 30.
[22] Boucher, 200. Trans.
[23] Lamy, 28. Trans.
[24] Lamy 39. Trans.

writing a compelling melodic line, "firm and supple at the same time with mystical impulses, eloquent syncopations, and its many expressive appoggiaturas."[25]

Ostinato basses and melodic suspensions are devices found in Ropartz's work throughout his compositional life, along with a tendency to write phrases ending with fermatas on harmonies that never resolve. He frequently used cyclical motives that would appear throughout entire works. The *Quatre Poèmes* is an excellent example of a motive-driven work, as is his second string quartet. All of these techniques were likely absorbed from Franck, but Lamy points out that Ropartz's particular use of a variety of seventh chords other than the dominant is a personal trademark that sets his language apart from other composers.

Being the rigorous academic Ropartz was, it is not surprising that the influence of Bach and counterpoint also play a role in Ropartz's compositions. "In summary," Lamy writes, "the harmonic style of Guy Ropartz is a happy mix of horizontal and vertical writing. Ropartzian counterpoint never sacrifices harmonic synthesis for an exaggerated desire to continue contrapuntal lines. That is to say: There is never an ugly harmony under the pretext of marching rigorously with different melodic lines."[26]

Boucher gives a more metaphorical summary of Ropartz's compositional style:

> On an architecture of solid basses, strange notes seem like floating flowers or stray birds, but they venture only with skill, where their balance is harmonious or their presence is revealing. Their course sometimes bends towards an unexpected consonance and rests there, as one suddenly perceives between tormented trees the united horizon of the sea. It is the music of the man of the sea and of the plain. Its very configuration is united, without abrupt transitions, without flaws. No arpeggios leaping and clinging to erect walls, no staggering gaps between the

[25] Lamy, 39. Trans.
[26] Lamy, 33. Trans.

> sound layers, but progressive and entangled ripples, a wide expanse which carries the sky and the winds, and where the most violent lights of the sun cast a shade no longer than that of the fields and the oaks."[27]

Ropartz continued composing even after his retirement from Strasbourg. His final works included his fifth symphony (1945) and *Divertimento* for orchestra (1947). Ropartz's composition halted in 1953 when he lost his eyesight, two years before his death at age 91.

[27] Boucher, 206. Trans.

Chapter 3: The Text of the *Quatre Poèmes*

Most of Ropartz's poetry was published between 1888 and 1892, before his career shifted completely to music. It was during this time that he and Pierre-René Hirsch collaborated to write a new translation of the *Lyrisches Intermezzo* by Heine. The existing French translation most used was the one by Gérard de Nerval that he had worked on with Heine in Paris, but these translations, in their attempt to be very literal, did not adhere to any sort of poetic structure or rhyme scheme. It is unclear exactly what role Ropartz and Hirsch each played in their new publication, but according to Enyss Djemil, it is likely that Hirsch was more responsible for the direct translation, and Ropartz for the poetic phrasing.[28] Djemil's speculation stems from two bits of evidence: Ropartz felt his German was not strong, as he noted in his *Notations artistiques*,[29] and in a letter from Hirsch to Ropartz in December 1888, he asked for the translations that Ropartz had finished in order to show them to some readers.[30] Ropartz and Hirsch published their complete translation of the *Lyrisches Intermezzo* in 1890, abbreviating the title to *Intermezzo*. Edouard Beaufils notes in his review of the book that while Nerval's translation was "admirable in fidelity [to the original], clarity, and color," Ropartz and Hirsch's was closer to Heine's artistic intent: "In their verses one finds Heine whole,

[28] Djemil, 131.
[29] Ropartz. *Notations artistiques,* 79.
[30] Djemil, 131.

with his despair of love, crystallized in small, heart-breaking stanzas, with his bitter tears, with his laughter, that nervous, constrained laugh that resonates strangely, like sobs."[31]

In the context of vocal music, the term "poetic translation" can raise objections from musicians and scholars. Often, translations made such that foreign-language songs can be sung in English without changing the tune, or translations made to keep a semblance of rhyme scheme and meter can significantly change the substance of the original text. Therefore, we musicians look for literal or word-for-word translations on which to base our study, in order to preserve the original text.

Ropartz and Hirsch's French re-writing of Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo* certainly raises some of these issues. The content of the poems changes, as does Heine's structure in some cases. However, the traditions of French poetry had been so strongly established by 1890 that it is likely that the typical reader would have failed to recognize a literal translation as true poetry. In this way, Ropartz tried to elevate his translations to the established standards of structure and rhyme scheme, therefore making them not only translations, but high-quality French poems as well.

A brief overview of some conventions of French poetry [32]

The two main constraints to which authors had to adhere were syllable count and rhyme scheme. The most commonly used meter in French poetry is the *alexandrin*, or

[31] Djemil, 130. Trans.
[32] This chapter owes much to David Hunter's book *Understanding French Verse: A Guide for Singers*. This text is highly recommended as a thorough and clear introduction to the basics of French versification.

alexandrine, a line consisting of twelve syllables, dating back to the 12th century.[33] Due to the nature of the French language, there is a stress at the end of the line, and ideally in the alexandrine, there should be a secondary stress on the sixth syllable, dividing the line into two even halves by a caesura.[34] The first line of Ropartz and Hirsch's translation of Heine's poem "Mein Liebchen, wir sassen beisammen" is a perfect example:

Tendre**ment** enla**cés**, // ma **chè**re bien-aim**é**(e)
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

This line has 12 syllables, which are perfectly divided in half not only by an emphasis at the end of the word "enlacés," but also by a comma. This example shows also that each half of the line, or hemistich, has a secondary stress as well as the primary stresses on the sixth and twelfth syllables. (Secondary stresses may occur on any other syllables in the line, but ideally there is one primary and one secondary stress in each hemistich.) This traditional form in which the line is divided into four small segments is referred to as the *alexandrin tétramètre*. This form of poetry was so pervasive in the French tradition that it appears even in the avant garde poems of Guillaume Apollinaire; his 1913 collection *Alcools* still uses the Alexandrine more than any other meter.[35]

[33] David Hunter, *Understanding French Verse: A Guide for Singers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 6.
[34] As per tradition, mute "e"s in French are counted as syllables when found in the middle of a line, but are not counted when they appear as the final syllable of the line. There is some flexibility on this rule. Hunter, 10-11.
[35] Hunter, 17.

Other important line forms in French poetry include the decasyllabic line (ten syllables); the octosyllabic line (eight syllables); and some shorter lines, generally six, four, or three syllables. Twelve- and ten-syllable lines are referred to as *vers composé*, while the shorter lines are called *vers simple*. Mixing the two forms of *vers composé* in a single poem would be highly unusual, but there are many examples of one form of a *vers composé* alone with one form of *vers simple*. Using more than two meters in one poem was generally not done at the beginning of the nineteenth century, but later in the century, poets such as Charles de Banville and Paul Verlaine did start to break these traditional rules of poetry. However, Ropartz and Hirsch adhered fairly strictly to conventional practices.

The traditional rhyme scheme of French poetry is more intricate than that found in other languages, because typically no poetic lines are left unrhymed in French poetry. German and English poetry both commonly use an *abcb* rhyme scheme, where lines *a* and *c* end in non-rhyming syllables, but in French, the final syllable in each line should have a corresponding rhyme in another line. An illuminating example is Heine's poem "Am Kreuzweg wird begraben," the sixty-second poem in the *Lyrisches Intermezzo*.

Am Kreuzweg wird begraben	*a*
Wer selber sich brachte um;	*b*
Dort wächst eine blaue Blume,	*c*
Die Armesünderblum'.	*b*

With *a*, *b*, and *c* representing the rhyme scheme of the final syllables of these lines, the text above shows that Heine took care to rhyme the ends of his second and fourth lines, but not the first and third lines. In many poems of the *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, Heine does create a more detailed rhyme scheme, generally *abab*, but it is not a mandatory convention of German poetry.

In Ropartz and Hirsch's translation of this same poem, it is easy to observe their altered rhyme scheme:

Ceux qui, parmi les morts d'amour,	*a*
Ont péri par le suicide	*b*
Sont enterrés au carrefour	*a*
Là s'épanouit et réside	*b*

This rhyme scheme (*abab*) is known as *rimes croisés*. The other rhyme pattern commonly found in quatrains is the *rimes embrassées* (*abba*).

Two other factors that play into rhyme scheme are the ideas of rhyme degree and rhyme gender. Rhyme degree has to do with the number of vowel and consonant sounds that the final words of the rhyming lines have in common. There are no rules about how frequently certain degrees of rhyme must be used, but the level of rhyme degree may have implications for the poetry. Rhyme gender refers to the final stress of the line, with masculine rhymes found on words that contain stress on the final syllable, and feminine rhymes found in words that end with the mute -e. It was widely accepted by the end of the 16th century that poems should alternate masculine and feminine rhyme gender.

I have given an overview of these standards in French poetry in order to demonstrate what Ropartz and Hirsch accomplished in translating Heine's poems. They sought not only to translate, but to find artistic wording that would adhere to the French poetry rules of syllable count, rhyme, and structure. Compared to the existing translations by Nerval, which were simply prose sentences, Ropartz and Hirsch's translations were created so the French reader could appreciate the artistry of Heine's poetry.

Changes in content to Heine's poems

Although Ropartz and Hirsch translated the entire *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, I will focus on the four poems that Ropartz set to music nine years later. An exploration of the entire book would be fascinating, but lengthy, and without immediate application to potential performers of the *Quatre Poèmes*.

I. *Mein Liebchen, wir sassen beisammen/Tendrement enlacés*

I will examine these poems in the order Ropartz placed them in his musical setting. The first poem shown below is the forty-second in Heine's collection.[36]

[36] All texts and translations of the *Lyrisches Intermezzo* have been sourced from lieder.net. Translations from the German are by Emily Ezust and translations from the French are by Ahmed E. Ismail. They are reprinted here with permission, with some adaptations for the sake of clarity in comparison. The French texts have been confirmed with the original publication of Ropartz and Hirsch's *Intermezzo*, and by the musical score.

Mein Liebchen, wir sassen beisammen,	My darling, we sat together,
Traulich im leichten Kahn.	Comfortably in the light little boat;
Die Nacht war still, und wir schwammen	The night was still, and we floated
Auf weiter Wasserbahn.	on the broad watery road.
Die Geisterinsel, die schöne,	The ghostly island, the lovely one,
Lag dämm'rig im Mondenglanz;	lay duskily in the moonlight;
Dort klangen liebe Töne,	there rang out lovely tones,
Dort wogte der Nebeltanz.	there the dancing mists waved.
Dort klang es lieb und lieber,	It sounded from there lovelier and lovelier,
Und wogt' es hin und her;	and it surged back and forth;
Wir aber schwammen vorüber,	but we floated past,
Trostlos auf weitem Meer.	Comfortless on the wide sea.

Heine constructed this poem in three stanzas of four lines each. The first stanza introduces the pair of lovers and their setting. The second stanza introduces a distant island, apparently enticing them with song and dance. And in the third stanza the island and the lovers are contrasted: while the music grows on the island, the two lovers float past, "comfortless." It is notable that this poem is preceded by a poem in which the speaker describes a dream, "Mir träumte von einem Königskind" ("I dreamed of a princess"), and followed by "Aus alten Märchen winkt es" (From old fairy tales beckons), a text that speaks of the poet's desire to be in a magical land of bliss. In context, a reader could infer that "Mein Liebchen" is part of a dream sequence, and should not be taken literally. For the two lovers in the boat, the magical island is a symbol of the joy they have bypassed.

Here is Ropartz and Hirsch's translation:

1	Tendrement enlacés, ma chère bien-aimée	Tenderly intertwined, my dearly beloved,
2	Nous nous étions assis dans un esquif léger;	We sat down in a light skiff;
3	Et par le calme soir, nous nous laissions nager	And, in the calm evening, we let ourselves float
4	Sur les moires d'une eau limpide et parfumée.	On the ripples of clear and perfumed waters.
5	L'île mystérieuse où vivent les esprits,	The mysterious island where the spirits live
6	Dessinait vaguement ses formes anguleuses;	Sketched vaguely its angular forms;
7	Sous la lune flottaient des danses nébuleuses	Under the moon floated nebulous dances
8	Et des sons sensuels d'instruments désappris	And sensual sounds of forgotten instruments.
9	Et la ronde toujours, reserrait sa spirale	And around always, tightened the spiral
10	Et les sons de venaient plus suaves, toujours;	And its sound became sweeter still
11	Et pourtant nous voguions, abandonnés au cours	And yet we sailed on, abandoned to the course
12	De l'onde, sans espoir, sous la lueur astrale.	Of the wave, without hope, under the starry light.

Notably, in their translation, Ropartz and Hirsch maintained the three stanzas of four lines each. However, the rhyme scheme, rather than *rimes croisés*, which would be similar to Heine's rhyme scheme, is now *rimes embracées*, painting the opening line's picture of the lovers "tendrement enlacés." In this version of the poem, Ropartz and Hirsch adhered to the *alexandrin tètramètre* with no exceptions. Each line has exactly twelve syllables, with stress on the sixth and twelfth, and each half of the line contains a secondary stress. As an example, here is a breakdown of the first two lines:

Tendre**ment** enla**cés**, // ma **chè**re bien-aim**ée**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Nous nous é**tions** ass**is** // dans un es**quif** lé**ger**,

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

They also adhered to the construction of rhyme gender, with each stanza containing one masculine rhyme (in the first stanza, “léger” and “nager”) and one feminine rhyme (“aimée” and “parfumée”). In addition, they created a fairly detailed rhyme scheme, with most rhyming words ending not only with the same tonic vowel, but with the preceding consonant also the same. Only one of the six rhyming pairs is at the lowest rhyme degree (“toujours” and “cours” in the final stanza).

In accomplishing these detailed standards of French poetry, clearly not everything from Heine’s original text could be kept literal. Even from the very beginning, where Heine wrote that the lovers sat together, “beisammen,” in this French version they are “enlacés,” entwined. In Nerval’s translation, he used “ensemble,” a more literal translation of “beisammen.” By changing this to “enlacés,” Ropartz and Hirsch created a visual image that they reinforced with the *embracées* rhyme scheme, and additionally created an internal rhyme with the final vowel to parallel “aimée” at the end of the line.

One minor adjustment in this stanza is that night (Nacht) now becomes evening (soir). This substitute retains a sense of vocal legato from the previous word — “Calme soir” uses the same vowel — and also creates an internal rhyme with “moires” in the following line. The most significant change comes at the end of the first stanza. The body of water the pair floats on changes from “Auf weiter Wasserbahn” to “sur les moires d’une eau limpide et parfumée.” This revision serves to extend the line to the mandatory twelve syllables, and provides a rhyme for the first line’s “aimée.” However, adding these details gives the reader a more vivid sense of the setting, by describing the

clear and perfumed waters. What is most notable is that this is the first detail the translators added, but nothing from Heine's text was left out.

The second stanza has a somewhat different affect in the French than it does in Heine's original. While Heine used words like "schöne" and "liebe" to paint an appealing image of this island, Ropartz and Hirsch's French presents a more haunting picture. Heine's use of the word "Geisterinsel" does suggest that the island is haunted, but his wording "liebe Töne" (lovely tones) and "Nebeltanz" (mist dance) contrasts with the French "sons sensuels d'instruments désappris" (sensuous sounds of forgotten instruments) and "danses nébuleuses" (nebulous dances). While Heine's portrayal of this island is clearly meant to be enticing the boat to float closer, Ropartz and Hirsch have added a darker nuance. Are the forgotten instruments a reference to an earlier time in the protagonist's life, perhaps when his relationship was a reality and not just a dream or reminiscence? Again in this stanza, the translators' construction is remarkable, especially in the second and third lines. Not only do they rhyme "anguleuses" and "nébuleuses," but they also create parallel syllabic structures for the entire second half of those lines, "ses formes anguleuses" and "des dances nébuleuses."

Due to Heine's simple presentation of the content in the third stanza, Ropartz and Hirsch needed to elaborate on it to meet the twelve-syllable requirement. The first two lines continue the second stanza's description of the island. The French wording of the first line is vague: "Et la ronde, toujours, reserrait sa spirale." The original German is also unclear, and it could be that the waving ("Und wogt' es hin und her") is really referring to the entire scene, both the music and dance on the island, and the motion of the boat. This

ambiguity creates a wider perspective, before the poem focuses back onto the pair in the boat for the final lines. The translators here essentially added the phrase "abandonnées au cours de l'onde," but split it over the two lines to adhere to the rhyme scheme and poetic structure. While the German says the pair was "Trostlos," comfortless or desolate, the French says they are "sans espoir," without hope. The addition of "abandonnées" gives the further impression that the course of the boat is out of the lovers' control, and their fate has been decided. The last change is that now instead of floating on the "wide sea," the French instead says they sail on "under the starry light."

As the beginning of Ropartz's song cycle, this poem does not necessarily imply the ending of the relationship, but there is certainly already a sense a melancholy, of happiness missed, which the French translation highlights.

II. ***Warum sind denn die Rosen so blaß?/ Pourquoi vois-je pâlir la rose parfumée?***

As is the composer's right, Ropartz chose to set the four poems in this cycle in a different order than they appear in Heine's book. This second text of Ropartz's set is the twenty-third poem from the *Lyrisches Intermezzo*. In Heine's narrative, the love affair is over fairly early in the book, and the rest of the poems are spent in regret or reminiscence. If the preceding song in Ropartz's cycle portrayed a dream during which the relationship was still intact, this song brings the listener back to the present as the poet searches for answers. Here is Heine's original German:

Warum sind denn die Rosen so blaß?	Why are the roses so pale?
O sprich mein Lieb warum?	o speak, my love, why?
Warum sind denn im grünen Gras	Why in the green grass
Die blauen Veilchen so stumm?	are the blue violets so silent?
Warum singt denn mit so kläglichem Laut,	Why with such a lamenting voice
Die Lerche in der Luft?	does the lark sing in the sky?
Warum steigt denn aus dem Balsamkraut	Why from the balsam plant does there rise
Verwelkter Blütenduft?	the scent of wilting blossoms?
Warum scheint denn die Sonn' auf die Au,	Why does the sun shine down on the meadow,
So kalt und verdrießlich herab?	so coldly and morosely?
Warum ist denn die Erde so grau,	Why is the earth so gray
Und öde wie ein Grab?	and desolate like a grave?
Warum bin ich selbst so krank und so trüb?	Why am I myself so ill and gloomy?
Mein liebes Liebchen sprich	My lovely darling speak,
O sprich mein herzallerliebstes Lieb,	O speak, my heart's most beloved love,
Warum verließest du mich?	why have you abandoned me?

Heine structures the poem in four stanzas of four lines each, all with an *abab* rhyme scheme. The repeated use of the question "Warum" (Why) is the motivation of this poem, and it appears consistently at the beginning of every first and third line in each stanza, except the fourth stanza, interrupting the pattern.

Here is the French translation:

1	Pourquoi vois-je pâlir la rose parfumée?	Why do I see the perfumed rose pale?
2	Dis-moi, dis-moi,	Tell me, tell me,
3	ma bien-aimée,	my beloved,
4	Dis-moi pourquoi!	Tell me why!
5	Pourquoi, dans le gazon touffu, les violettes,	Why, in the fluffy grass, do the violets,

6	Si fraîches d'habitude, ont-elles aujourd'hui	Usually so fresh, today possess
7	Un air d'ennui?	An air of boredom?
8	Pourquoi le chant des alouettes	Why does the song of the larks
9	Si nostalgiquement meurt-il par les chemins?	So nostalgically die on the roads?
10	Pourquoi s'exhale-t-il des bosquets de jasmins	Why do the bouquets of jasmine exhale
11	La funéraire odeur qui sort des cassolettes?	The death-tinged fragrance of incense burners?
12	Pourquoi, semblable au feu suprême d'un flambeau	Why, like the final fire of a torch
13	Qui s'éteint, le soleil à l'horizon sans borne	extinguished, does the sun on the limitless horizon
14	Jette-t-il un éclat moins ardent et moins beau?	Shine a beam less blazing and less beautiful?
15	Pourquoi la terre entière est-elle grise et morne	Why is the whole world gray and mournful
16	Comme un tombeau?	Like a tombstone?
17	Pourquoi suis-je si las, si triste et si malade?	Why am I so weary, so sad, and so sick?
18	Ma chère bien-aimée oh! dis-le, dis-le moi,	My dearly beloved, oh tell why, tell me why,
19	Si tu, trouves encore un mot qui persuade,	If you can still find a word which can persuade me,
20	Dis-moi pourquoi tu m'as abandonné, --pourquoi?	Tell me why you have left me, --why? [37]

The most obvious change Ropartz and Hirsch made is to the structure of the poem. Four stanzas have now become a through-composed text of twenty lines, although several of these are fragmented into four or eight syllables instead of twelve. Combining lines 2-4 together into one twelve-syllable line and lines 7-8 into another would produce sixteen twelve-syllable lines with only one four-syllable line left, “Comme un tombeau.” Perhaps the translators simply could not work out a way to fit this text into perfect alexandrine form, but given their creativity I believe it is more likely that they chose this inconsistent line pattern in order to portray the speaker’s mindset, flitting from one thought to another, desperately searching for the answer to his constant plea, “pourquoi.” Especially at the beginning of this text, short lines give the impression that in his

[37] The original translation published in 1890 reads “Pourquoi toute la terre est-elle grise et morne” as line 15. It is my theory that when revisiting the text to set it to music, Ropartz made this small change, sacrificing the alliteration of “toute la terre,” the phrasing used in the Nerval translation, for the vocalic rhyme as well as perceived alliteration in “terre entière.”

desperate state, the protagonist is having trouble finding the words to form complete thoughts. Another factor in the asymmetrical structure may be the rhyme scheme. Including all the truncated lines, the first four lines provide an *abab* rhyme scheme. In lines 5-11, which complete the first two stanzas of Heine's original, there is an unusual pattern of two *embrassée* rhymes, with line 8 concluding the first rhyme with "violettes," but also serving as the initial line in an *embrassée* pattern concluding with "cassolettes."

The remaining lines in the poem are utilizing *rimes croisées*, with line 16 adding an extra *a* that extends the *abab* rhyme scheme found in lines 12-15 to *ababa*. Heine used an *abab* rhyme scheme throughout his poem, so this *abab* pattern in the French may have been a purposeful choice by the translators. The ending of this translation also corresponds more clearly to Heine's stanzas in that lines 12-16 translate the third stanza, and lines 17-20 translate the fourth. However the beginning of this poem is less straightforward, as Ropartz and Hirsch extend the first two lines of Heine's poem.

Warum sind die Rosen so blaß?
O sprich mein Lieb warum?

This is the only time in Heine's poem that there are two question marks ending consecutive lines, as well as the only time "warum" is found anywhere besides at the beginning of a line. This is the speaker's first question (why are the roses so pale?), followed by an entreaty to his beloved to tell him. It seems that by fragmenting the

second line into three truncated lines, Ropartz and Hirsch wanted to highlight these words as the crucial idea of the text:

Pourquoi vois-je pâlir la rose parfumée?	Why do I see the perfumed rose pale?
Dis-moi, dis-moi,	Tell me, tell me,
ma bien-aimée,	my beloved,
Dis-moi pourquoi!	Tell me why!

Certainly this change was in part to accommodate the rhyme scheme, but by repeating "Dis-moi" three times and adding punctuation, Ropartz and Hirsch exaggerated the desperate quality Heine hinted at by repeating "warum."

In this translation, the depression in Heine's text is exaggerated one step further, as the translators repeatedly added words that hint at themes of death. Instead of the larks lamenting (kläglichem), now their song dies (meurt). Instead of the balsam weeds having the scent of wilting (verwelkter), jasmine has a death-tinged fragrance of incense (La funéraire odeur qui sort des cassolettes). Heine only hints at this morbid theme when he writes that the world is gray and desolate like a grave (Grab), preserved in the translation as a tombstone (tombeau).

The final stanza of Heine's poem is again exaggerated in the French translation, by the addition of punctuation, an exclamation point mid-line after "oh," and a text redistribution so that "dis-le, dis-le moi!" is in one line rather than split over two lines. Heine does write "sprich" two times, but Hirsch and Ropartz have condensed this into one line, adding a new penultimate line, "si tu trouves encore un mot qui persuade" (If you can still find a word to persuade me). This line suggests that the protagonist has essentially given up hope. Although he has begged his beloved to answer his questions

repeatedly through this text, now there is an implication that no explanation will settle his mind. In the final line, Ropartz and Hirsch add one more repetition of the demand "Dis-moi" (Tell me) and move the question word "pourquoi" to the end of the line. The final thought is not simply a question, but an anguished demand, followed by one final plea.

III. *Am Kreuzweg wird begraben/Ceux que parmi les morts d'amour*

For Ropartz's last selections of his set, he jumps almost to the very end of Heine's book, setting poems 62 and 63 out of 65. At this point in Heine's book, the love affair is long over. The preceding poems portray the speaker drifting in and out of dreams, blurring the lines between reality and fantasy. Each poem that does not specifically mention sleep or waking could also be read from the perspective of a dream, but at the conclusion of the sixtieth poem, the text reads "erwache ich" (I awake). The sixty-first poem is very short, describing a midnight walk among trees on a cold night. This next poem then continues the speaker's nighttime wandering, now reaching a crossroads — literal or metaphorical.

Heine's original text:

Am Kreuzweg wird begraben	At the crossroads he was buried,
Wer selber sich brachte um;	the one who took his own life.
Dort wächst eine blaue Blume,	A blue flower grows there,
Die Armesünderblum'.	the Woeful-sinner's-bloom.
Am Kreuzweg stand ich und seufzte;	At the crossroads I stood and sighed;
Die Nacht war kalt und stumm.	the night was cold and still.
Im Mondschein bewegte sich langsam	In the moonlight slowly stirred
Die Armesünderblum'.	the Woeful-sinner's-bloom.

Ropartz and Hirsch's translation:

1	Ceux qui, parmi les morts d'amour,	Among those who died from love,
2	Ont péri par le suicide	Those who perished by suicide
3	Sont enterrés au carrefour	Are buried at the crossroads.
4	Là s'épanouit et réside	There blossoms and resides
5	Une fleur bleue étrange fleur	A blue flower, a strange flower
6	Aussi rare que sa couleur	As rare as its color.
7	Aucun nom ne l'a désignée	No name has it been given;
8	C'est la fleur de l'âme damnée!	It is the flower of the damned soul!
9	Pendant la nuit au carrefour	During the night at the crossroads,
10	Je soupire dans le silence	I breathe in the silence.
11	Au clair de lune se balance	In the moonlight sways
12	La fleur des damnés de l'amour!	The flower of those damned through love!

In this translation, Ropartz and Hirsch used the octosyllable line instead of the alexandrine. This shorter and plainer line reflects the simplicity of Heine's narration. However, they do not divide this translation into stanzas, as their first eight lines correspond to Heine's first four-line stanza, and their final four lines to Heine's second stanza. Dividing this translation into groups of four lines, as some online reprintings do, splits an important thought between lines 4 and 5, and in programs this text should always be printed continuously. This translation makes use of the *rimés croisées*, discussed at the beginning of this chapter, in lines 1-4 and 9-12. Lines 5-6 and 7-8 are both rhymed in simple couplets.

This text mentions the *blaue Blume* or *fleur bleu*. The famous blue flower is recognized as one of the great symbols of German romantic poetry, starting with Novalis's "Heinrich von Ofterdingen" and continuing in Eichendorff's text "Die blaue

Blume," in which the poet searches for a blue flower, representing hope and longing – a symbol of the German term "Sehnsucht." However, Heine affiliates this symbol with the "Armesünderblum" or "Woeful Sinner's bloom" and Ropartz and Hirsch say it is the "fleur de l'âme damnée!" or the "flower of the damned soul." The blue flower traditionally symbolizes longing, but when Heine plants it on the grave of suicide victims, he represents the consequences those victims suffered as a result of their longing for death. Although Heine names the flower, he does so by a poetic name, rather than identifying it as the chicory or *Wegwarte* that grew on the German roadside. Ropartz and Hirsch say that it has been given no name, perhaps not knowing that the flower that Heine referred to was real, or highlighting the "blaue Blume" as a mystical symbol.[38]

While in Heine's original German the blue flower's role is the "sinner's bloom," in the French translation, the extended description of the flower makes it the central object of this text, of symbolic importance not only to the suicide victims, but to the protagonist himself. He seems as intrigued by this flower as he was by the magical island of the first poem not simply noticing the flower, but focusing on it, saying "A blue flower, a strange flower, as rare as its color." But in contrast to the first poem, in which music beckoned to the protagonist and his beloved under the moon and starry light ("lueur astrale"), this poem finds the protagonist alone in the moonlight, in the silence. Instead of an island representing missed happiness tempting him with "danses

[38] Hoeckner, Berthold, "Paths through Dichterliebe" *19th-Century Music* 30, no. 1 (2006). In his introduction of this article, Hoeckner identifies the paradox in a single flower representing the German Romantic tradition, and Heine's ironic twist in implying that it also symbolizes suicide.

nébuleuses," a flower beckons him as it sways ("se balance"), perhaps seducing him to follow the paths of those buried in the graves underneath.

Although Ropartz and Hirsch altered the proportions of the verses in the translation of this poem, they honored Heine's repetition of the beginning and ending of his stanzas. He starts both with "Am Kreuzweg" and the translation includes the word "carrefour" in both lines 3 and 9. Heine concludes both stanzas with the "Armesünderblum." In line 8, the translators stayed fairly close by naming it "la fleur de l'âme damnée." But in the last line of the poem, they have altered its description, now calling it "La fleur des damnés de l'amour." Certainly this change is helpful for the rhyme with "carrefour," but it also implies a projection of the protagonist's own plight onto the suicide victims. Not only is it the flower of the damned soul, but of those damned by love. Even in the opening line of their translation, Ropartz and Hirsch have established that the suicide victims were those who died "of love." The German text only hinted at this with the presence of the blue flower, but Ropartz and Hirsch clearly connect the protagonist's own lovesick plight with the fate of the suicide victims. At this point the protagonist's fate seems inevitable.

IV: *Wo ich bin, mich rings umdunkelt/ Depuis que nul rayon de tes yeux*

The final two songs in this set are the only two consecutive poems from the *Lyrisches Intermezzo* that Ropartz chose to set in the *Quatre Poèmes*. After the conclusion of the previous text, the content of this poem is no surprise to the reader. Here is Heine's text:

Wo ich bin, mich rings umdunkelt	Wherever I am, I'm surrounded
Finsterniß so dumpf und dicht,	by a darkness so gloomy and dense
Seit mir nicht mehr leuchtend funkelt,	that no more before me sparkles,
Liebste, deiner Augen Licht.	Dearest, your eyes' light.
Mir erloschen ist der süßen	Extinguished for me is the sweet
Liebessterne goldne Pracht,	Love-stars' golden splendor.
Abgrund gähnt zu meinen Füßen.	An abyss gapes at my feet.
Nimm mich auf, uralte Nacht.	Welcome me, ancient night.

After the mention of suicide victims in the previous poems, this text implies that the protagonist is on the verge of succumbing to their fate. Nothing in his life matters except his beloved, as her eyes are apparently his only source of light, and without her he is surrounded only by darkness. The "ancient night" of this poem is much different than the moonlit night of the first song.

Here is Ropartz and Hirsch's translation:

1	Depuis que nul rayon de tes yeux bien-aimés	Since no ray from your beloved eyes
2	N'arrive plus aux miens obstinément fermés,	Will ever again arrive at mine, so obstinately closed,
3	Je suis enveloppé de ténèbres morales.	I am enveloped in dark spirits.
4	L'étoile de l'amour s'est éteinte pour moi	The stars of love are put out for me;
5	Plus de douce clarté, rien que l'ombre et l'effroi!	No more sweet light, nothing but shadows and dread!
6	Un gouffre large ouvert me veut dans ses spirales	A large abyss wants me in its spirals.
7	--Nuit éternelle engloutis-moi!	--Eternal night, devour me!

The translators returned here to the alexandrine of twelve syllables, with the exception of the final line. The rhyme scheme and stanza can be viewed in two ways: The more traditional way would be to see lines 1-6 as a *sizain*, which follows the typical

six-line rhyme pattern *aabccb*, sometimes called a "minor ode" stanza.[39] A more unusual way to view this text groups the first two lines together as a couplet, following it with an *embrassée* pattern in lines 3-6, an interesting reading considering the word "enveloppé" in the text. The final line stands alone. It could be viewed as rhyming with lines 4 and 5, but poetic convention generally frowns upon rhyming the same word with itself, so it seems more likely that Ropartz and Hirsch intended this line to be starkly unattached, and exaggerated this effect with indentation and the dash at the beginning. Truncating and separating this line reflects Heine's separation of his last line as its own sentence in his original poem.

Although Ropartz and Hirsch did not separate this poem into stanzas, their sentence structure reflects Heine's original, with lines 1-3 containing one sentence and translating Heine's first stanza. That stanza presents the darkness as a product of the absence of the protagonist's beloved. However, the French translation provides an alternate take, where the protagonist has imposed this on himself by keeping his eyes "so obstinately closed." This sentence continues to say the protagonist is not only surrounded by darkness, but "enveloped in dark spirits." This speaks more of his mindset than a physical condition of light, that dark thoughts have consumed him. The translation of Heine's second stanza conveys a similar meaning, with an elaboration in the translators' fifth line, "rien que l'ombre et l'effroi" (nothing but shadows and dread), reinforcing the mental state of the protagonist. Line 6 is slightly different, for instead of the abyss gaping at his feet as in Heine's text, the protagonist says that the abyss wants him in its

[39] Hunter, 32

spirals. Here is an example of the protagonist apparently losing control to an inanimate force, as in the first poem, which mentioned the enticing dance's spiral, and how the pair in the boat was "abandoned" to the course of the wave. There is a parallel between the waves of the first song and this fourth song's abyss both becoming active, taking control of the protagonist's fate.

The final line uses the same wording as Nerval's original translation, which reads "engloutis-moi, nuit éternelle!" This is such a literal and vivid translation of Heine's original text that it is likely Ropartz and Hirsch resisted changing it, even at the cost of sacrificing their poetic structure. They did flip the two phrases, perhaps for the implied rhyme with lines 4 and 5, but likely for the dramatic effect of ending the cycle with the first person pronoun "moi," focusing on the protagonist rather than the night. The fact that this line breaks the conventions of poetry adds a layer of starkness and desperation to this final statement. The protagonist, in this dark moment, is unable to form a complete thought, leaving us with this hopeless declaration, "Eternal night, engulf me!"

Ropartz's Narrative

Because Ropartz and Hirsch translated the entire *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, the composer was no doubt familiar with the entire storyline presented in Heine's book. However, as Schumann did in *Dichterliebe*, Ropartz chose certain poems in order to convey his desired narrative in his cycle. I suspect he purposely avoided every poem chosen by Schumann in order to avoid undue comparison. The narrative from the second to the fourth songs seems a clear downward turn, with the first song being an outlier in its

relatively positive story. But there are marked similarities and contrasts, especially between the first and last texts: the waves and the abyss taking control of the protagonist, the mention of the *spirale*, the contrast between the first text's starry light and the stars of love being extinguished in the final poem. Especially within the musical context Ropartz added later, grouping these texts together begs the question: When the cycle begins, is the protagonist already at the edge of the abyss? If the abyss is a body of water, perhaps it evokes his memory of being on the boat, reminding him of his beloved and sending him on his depressive spiral.

Chapter 4: The Musical Content of the *Quatre Poèmes*

The first performance of the *Quatre Poèmes* was by its dedicatee baritone Paul Daraux and pianist Edouard Risler on March 17th, 1900. Ropartz also orchestrated this cycle, and likely conceived it with orchestral forces in mind. In various catalogues of Ropartz's works, this cycle can be found in either a category for voice and piano, or for voice and orchestra, and occasionally both. This inconsistency in the records of this cycle places it in the category of the many great song cycles of Mahler and the *Nuit d'été* of Berlioz, having equal artistic value when performed with either piano or orchestra. The colors and instrumentation of the orchestra contribute to the effect of the work, but the intimacy of the duo in performance can create possibilities for greater nuance and artistic freedom. The date the first performance of the work with orchestra is not documented, but it was recorded by baritone Vincent le Texier with the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg, and released in 2009.[40]

The subject matter of Heine's *Lyrisches Intermezzo* can be summed up in a single word: obsession. The protagonist, after his relationship ends, continues to be fixated on his lost love, finding reminders of her in everything he encounters and allowing her to haunt his dreams. Ropartz, after translating the words, continued his interpretation nine years later by setting four of the poems to music and filling his composition with one motive of four notes, as shown in Example 1.

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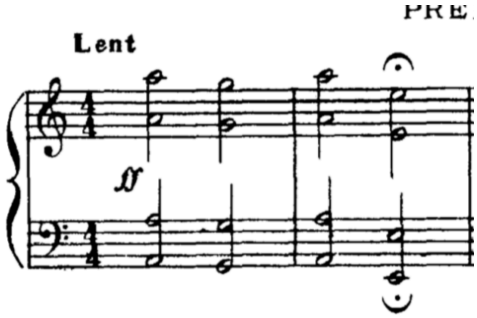
[40] Vincent Le Texier and Emmanuel Krivine, *La Chasse du prince Arthur; Quatre odelettes; La cloche des morts; Quatre poèmes; Soir sur les chaumes* (France: Timpani, 2009). Appendix A contains a selected discography with additional recordings of the *Quatre Poèmes* with piano.



Example 1: Ropartz: Prélude from *Quatre Poèmes*, Measures 1-2. The opening of the piece introduces the four-note motive.[41]

It is common in Ropartz's music for a single motive, an *idée fixe*, to pervade an entire work, whether a melodic motive or a ground bass. In this cycle, he uses this four-note motive as both, weaving it into every song as bass, melody, accompaniment, or interlude. Scholar Graham Johnson and Ropartz's biographer Mathieu Ferey both note this motive's similarity to the *Dies irae* chant, which would point towards a central idea of death. The first four notes of the *Dies irae* share the same shape as this motive, but the intervals are only a half-step and a minor third, rather than the wider intervals of a whole step and perfect fourth that Ropartz uses here. Ropartz was most likely referencing the *Dies irae* intentionally, as his lifelong involvement in the Catholic church would have ensured he was familiar with the traditional chant. However, Ropartz uses his motive almost to the point of exhaustion, and a literal quotation of the *Dies irae* in this piece would have been overwhelming. Additionally, the intervals of a whole step and a perfect fourth yield stronger tonal implications than the first intervals of the *Dies irae*, allowing Ropartz to use this motive as a way to establish key areas. From the very opening of the

[41] The piano/vocal score of the *Quatre Poèmes* is public domain in the United States and Canada and can be downloaded from IMSLP (imslp.org). It remains under copyright in Europe until 2025.

Prélude, it is clear that the outlook is not optimistic, but for performers and listeners to associate this motive only with death implied by the *Dies irae* may be too strong. Another idea could be to relate this motive with the protagonist's obsession with the object of his love, but the motive occurs even when she seems to not be present. Perhaps the best way to consider this motive could be its representation of inevitable fate ("le caractère inéluctable du destin"[42]). The entire cycle is completely saturated with the motive, whether it is a symbol of destiny, obsession, or both; clearly there is no escape for the protagonist. In Ropartz's text of the third song, when he changed Heine's "Armesünderblum'" to "La fleur des damnés de l'amour," he intertwined these two ideas of obsession and destiny: The protagonist's undying love and his inability to move on from a past relationship are what ultimately seal his fate.

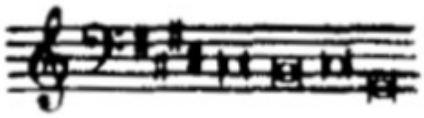
Prélude

The Prélude is certainly Wagnerian in harmony with its chromaticism and its lavish use of weighted nonharmonic tones, particularly suspensions. It seems likely that Ropartz was creating parallels between the doomed love stories of Heine's *Intermezzo* and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. It is highly unusual for a song cycle to begin with a prelude as a separate movement, and the length of this movement is substantial – only one of the four songs in the cycle has a longer duration than the Prélude. Ropartz introduces several musical ideas in the Prélude that return in the various songs of the cycle, much like an operatic overture. This Prélude sets up the mood and previews the

[42] Ferey, 60.

musical content of cycle and gives an impression to the listener of the dark mental state of the cycle's protagonist.

At the top of this score, an unusual incipit appears (Example 2).



Example 2: This incipit appears before both the Prélude and Postlude.

This combination of clefs presents two transpositions of the motive. Reading the motive in the treble clef would give the motive on notes A – G – A – E; and reading in the bass clef with the key signature of four sharps would give the motive on notes C-sharp – B – C-sharp – G-sharp. The Prélude opens with the motive on A, but uses the C-sharp version at measure 8. The opening statement of the motive on A returns in the A minor of the third song, and the C-sharp octaves become the ostinato bass of the fourth song and eventually the conclusion of the cycle. While Ropartz uses the motive on various transpositions, it seems that he wishes to establish the statements on A and C-sharp as the cornerstones of the work.

The first half of the Prélude, in seemingly disjunct fragments, foreshadows each of the four songs: the triplet accompaniment in measures 3 and 4 becomes the first song's barcarolle; vague dominant 7^{th} chords over the bass motive in measures 5 and 6 become the hesitating introduction to the second song; gently arpeggiated chords in measures 10 through 13 will return in the contemplative third song; and the *funèbre* low octaves at measure 14 become the relentless ostinato bass of the final song. Eight fermatas occur in

the first sixteen measures, either at the conclusion of the four-note motive or prolonging a dominant harmony, evoking a sense of trepidation.

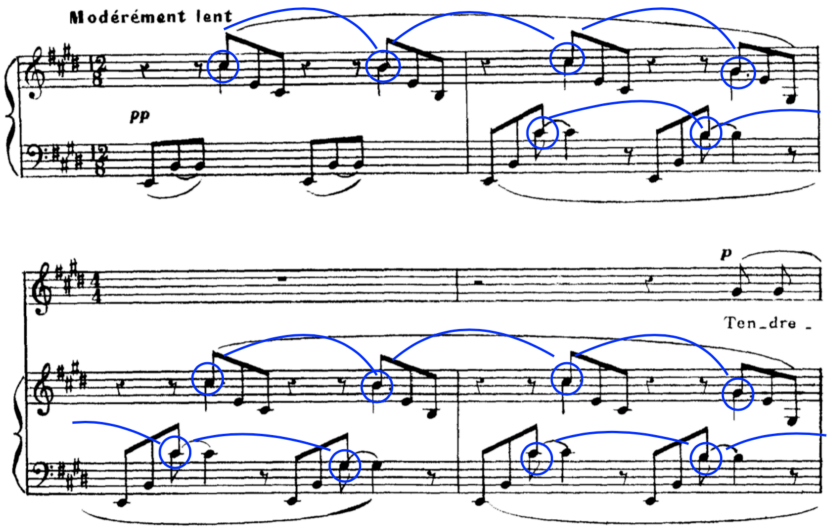
The second half of the Prélude does not directly preview any material from the following songs, aside from the continued use of the *idée fixe*. Measures 17-21, marked *à volonté*, sink lower and lower, with suspensions obscuring any harmonic foundation, before finally ending on a dominant D7 chord in measure 21. Even the sounding of this chord is delayed, with a G-sharp hovering in the top voice before finally ascending to an A, a moment that surely could have been inspired by Wagner's prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*. For the rest of the Prélude, the motive occurs in every measure on B, first in the tenor voice, and eventually moving to the bass in octaves at the culmination of what Ferey calls "un grand crescendo wagnérien."[43] Saturated with suspensions, a chromatic melody weaves upwards and builds over the constant motive, and by the climax of the crescendo, the focus on B in the motive becomes clearer as an extended dominant pedal in the key of E major. Due to so many suspensions, true B7 chords are rare, only glimpsed for brief moments in a few of the final measures. The final chord of the Prélude lingers again under a fermata, a D-sharp half-diminished 7th chord, delaying the eventual resolution to E major. The composer marks *enchainez*, signifying that the performers should move on to the first song without pause, and on the downbeat, the listener is finally granted the resolution to E major, the relative major of the C-sharp minor tonality that Ropartz had established in the first half of the Prélude.

[43] Ferey, 60

I. *Tendrement enlacés, ma chère bien-aimée*

Although Ropartz retained Heine's structure in his translation, this song has no musical structure that could resemble a strophic form. Instead, there are three distinct sections.

The E-major introduction in 12/8 features a gently rocking triplet, a barcarolle that sets the scene for the lovers in the boat (Example 3). The *idée fixe*, ever present, occurs on C-sharp in a canon between the hands of the piano part. On top of the legato triplets, the double-stemmed notes of the motive feel almost plucked from the keyboard:



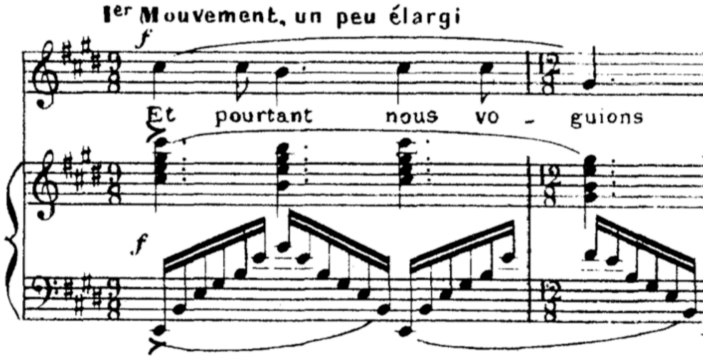
Example 3: Measures 1-4 from Song I, with the motivic canon highlighted.

When the voice enters, his line is calm, floating right in the middle of the piano texture. The opening lines are stepwise, until a gentle ascent and leap downward on the words "esquif léger," a delicate setting that highlights the intimate nature of the lovers' boat.

Vocalic harmonization and many instances of repeated consonant sounds in the opening lines also lend a sense of legato. With very few accidentals and dissonances, the first four lines of the poem remain clearly in E major, illustrating the "calme soir." The first piano interlude moves the motive down to G-sharp, and increasing chromaticism starts to hint at a new idea. As Ropartz moves to a new key, measure 15 is truncated to only two beats filled with an altered seventh chord, with G-natural as the root and a raised 5th on D-sharp. The G becomes the new dominant, and the D-sharp is anticipating the E-flat third of the new key: C minor. This distant key illustrates the "île mystérieuse," as the left hand of the piano becomes more agitated, now with arpeggiated sixteenth notes bubbling under the vocal line, and the right hand plays fragments of a haunting melody. Both the vocal line and the accompaniment rise, as the spirits on the island tempt the protagonist. When he sings "Sous la lune flottaient des dances nébuleuses," the accompaniment thins out and becomes a dancing arpeggio up and down the keyboard, and the lack of reinforcement from the bass colors the text's words "flottaient" and "nébuleuses." The meter also changes between 9/8, 6/8, and 12/8 in this section, and the former security of the boat is now lost in the "spirales" of the dance.

At the line "Et la ronde toujour resserrait sa spirale," the allure of the island increases as Ropartz continues the dancing accompaniment. The singer's pitch rises on every line, and the harmony shifts every bar, finally arriving on a dominant seventh chord on B in measure 33 under the word "toujours." This measure is marked with a luxurious *élargissez* under the singer's highest note of the song, a D-sharp, and a descending bass in the piano sets up the return of E major.

This return to tonic for the final two lines of the text combines the rolling arpeggios of the middle section in the left hand of the piano with the right hand of the piano and voice joined in a forte unison version of the motive, the only time the *idée fixe* appears in the vocal line of this cycle (Example 4).



Example 4: Song I, Measures 33-34. The *idée fixe* occurs in both piano and voice on C-sharp.

Although this moment is glorious musically, it accompanies the words "Et pourtant nous voguions abandonnées au cours de l'onde." Neither the rolling watery accompaniment nor the return of the motive is the choice of the protagonist – he is abandoned to the course of the waves, and to his fate as well. A diminuendo begins in the vocal line as he sings "Sans espoir," a realization that being together with his beloved is not his reality. As he concludes his final words "sous la lueur astrale," the motive occurs again in the piano, softly in a higher register, like the twinkling stars over the rocking waves of the left hand accompaniment.

II. ***Pourquoi vois-je pâlir la rose parfumée?***

This second song in the set is a drastic change of mood from the previous mélodie. The repetition of the question "pourquoi" fills this song and, likewise, repetition fills the piano part as a single texture pervades almost the entire piece.

At first glance, the opening of this song seems unrelated to the rest of it, but it evokes a sense of questioning and being lost, setting the stage for the constant questions of the song's text. In fragmented phrases, the motive occurs in a dotted rhythm in the left hand and a melody in the right hand wanders upwards, asking a musical question that seems without hope of an answer. The first line retains the previous song's key signature of four sharps, landing on a D-sharp half-diminished seventh chord on a fermata in measure 3, recalling the Prélude's closing pause on the same unresolved harmony. Ropartz then repeats this phrase, transposing it upward by a half step so that the motive is on A. He utilizes the A as a dominant in D minor, the home key of this song. The final chord of this gloomy introduction is filled with suspensions. Instead of giving the listener a pure dominant seventh chord to latch onto, Ropartz retains a B-flat and a D that linger rather than resolving to A and C-sharp. This introduction sets up a downtrodden mood for the song, full of questions without answers.

The previous chapter examined how in the translation of this poem, the structure became nebulous, with four stanzas becoming twenty continuous lines. The rhyme scheme of Heine's first two stanzas became entwined in the French translation, but the third and fourth stanzas each retained some structural integrity due to their contained rhyme schemes. In a similar way, in Ropartz's musical setting, he essentially combines

the text that would have been Heine's first two stanzas into one continuous setting, with a consistent texture in the piano accompaniment throughout. Piano interludes occur before both sections of text that correlate to Heine's third and fourth stanzas, retaining some of the structure of the original German poem and contributing to the dramatic arc of the song.

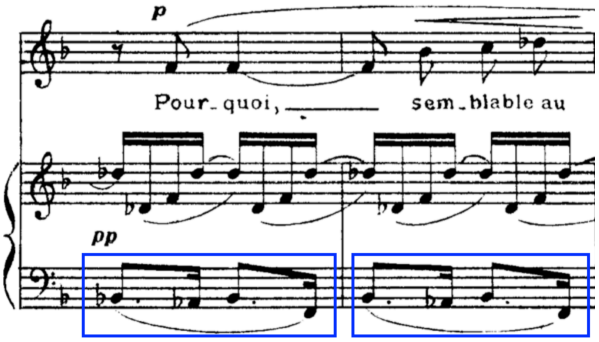
Measure 7 is marked *Sans lenteur*, without slowness. Although the bass roots the listener and the performers firmly in D minor, the right hand's agitated sixteenth notes with a suspension in every beat gives a restlessness that provokes the singer to start his questions. The conventional musical setting of a question is a line that ends with an upward leap. Throughout this song, Ropartz chooses when to employ this convention and when to utilize an ironic reversal, with some of the settings of "Pourquoi" coming across more demanding, others more pleading, and some simply desolate.

In the singer's opening, he leaves no time to even listen to the answer of his first question "Pourquoi vois-je pâlir la rose parfumée," continuing immediately on to his demand, "Dis-moi, dis-moi, Ma bien aimée, Dis-moi pourquoi!" The singer's restlessness in this song means that he rarely lingers on one word, but "bien aimée" is sustained, reminiscent of the way he addressed his beloved in the opening line of the first song. The end of this first phrase has the singer ascend a tritone on his final "pourquoi" (measures 13-14), highlighting the question but placing it in a negative light. An imposing downward series of octaves in the piano bass line sets up the next question, "Pourquoi dans le gazon touffu…." Through the rest of this idea the singer descends almost an octave, starting on a D with the first "pourquoi," and with each phrase

descending until “un air d’ennui” ends low on an E. This question is not illustrated by a rising vocal line, but by ending on a dominant chord on E, the V7 in the temporary key of A minor.

The next phrase, which marks the start of Heine’s second stanza, begins with a rising triad in the vocal line on “Pourquoi le chant des alouettes,” a change from the previous melodic contour, which was almost exclusively stepwise. This question then seems more anxious, and the singer can make great contrast in color as he moves from that anxiety to the tender setting of the next phrase, “Si nostalgiquement meurt-il par les chemins?” A slight relaxation in tempo may aid the decrescendo into the downbeat of bar 30, where an F-major harmony provides a brief respite from the anxiety. This seems to be a turning point in the piece, as the music begins a crescendo, with octaves returning in the bass of the piano. At measure 31 Ropartz moves to the key of F-sharp minor, far from the D minor tonic of the song. The final phrase of this section, “La funéraire odeur qui sort des cassolettes?” is set as a stepwise descent, with the final words turning upwards to ask the question, leading into the first piano interlude. Consistent sixteenth notes are retained in the piano, and the *idée fixe* returns in the left hand on C-sharp – surely no coincidence after the mention of the funereal scent of incense burners. The right hand of the piano trails in arpeggios upwards over the motive, first played on C sharp, then on A – the same two key implications that Ropartz established in the Prélude. This interlude sequences downward, before the motive seems to disintegrate into falling fourths in measures 45-47. The full motive returns on B-flat, in octaves in the bass once more before the voice re-enters.

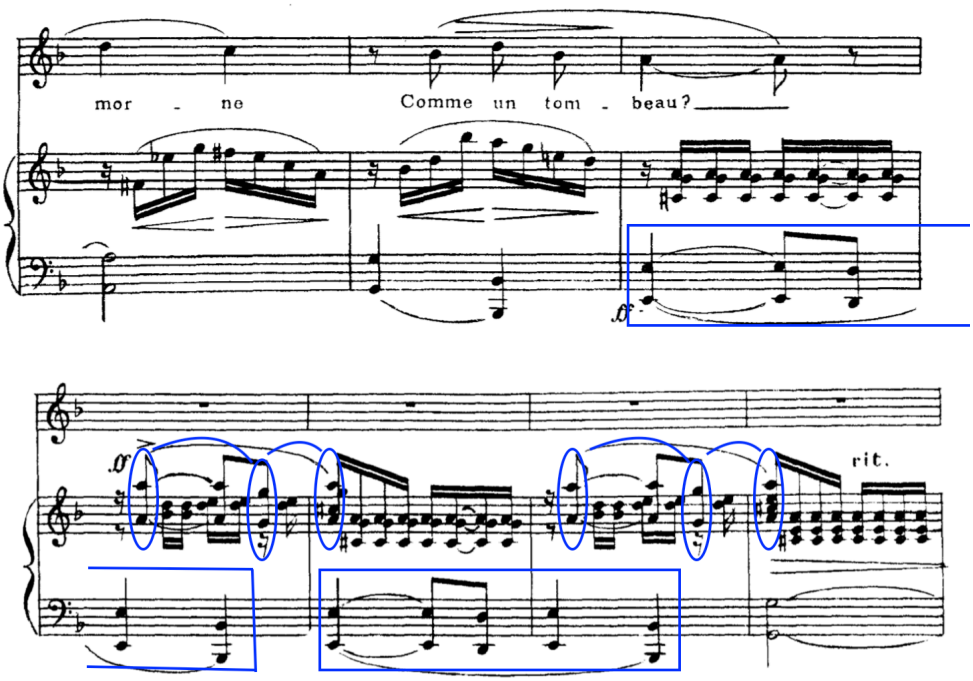
At measure 50, now in B-flat minor, the motive is in the left hand of the piano, but with an altered dotted rhythm that provokes a feeling of agitation, even more so than the initial anxiety of this song (Example 5). The right hand continues the rising arpeggios of the interlude.



Example 5: Song II, Measures 50-51. The notes of the motive occur in the left hand of the piano.

This section of the poem speaks in the grandest dimensions. The "ennui" mentioned earlier in the text, pervading elements of nature through the poem, now extends to the sun and the whole earth. "Why like the final fire of a just-extinguished torch does the sun on the limitless horizon shine a beam less blazing and less beautiful?" During these lines about the sun, the motive is shortened to just the first three notes in the piano's left hand, played in octaves and moving up and then sinking again, as the vocal line also rises and sinks, like a sun that rises and sets. The vocal line has been fluid, utilizing dotted rhythms and triplets to emphasize the text, but at measure 60, it turns to straight eighth notes against the solid quarter-note octaves in the piano left hand. Both lines descend as the singer demands, "Why is the entire earth grey and mournful…." An eighth-rest emphasizes the end of his question: "...like a tombstone?" (Example 6). At this question,

the motive returns in the piano left hand in octaves (although the final interval has been extended from a fourth to a harsh tritone), while the right hand violently repeats chords and echoes a fragment of the motive on A.

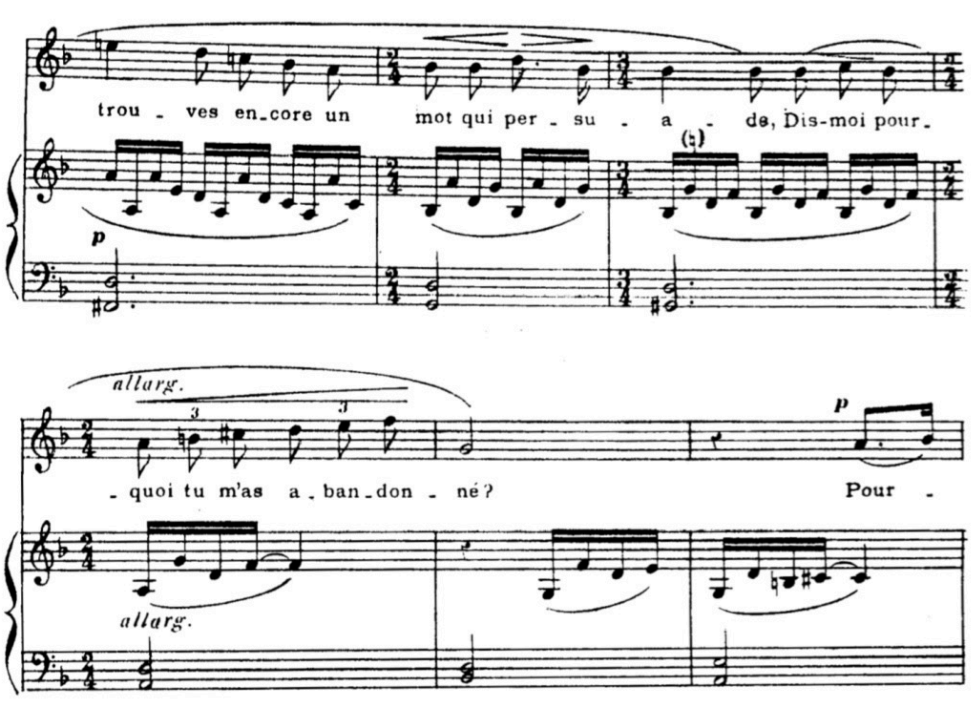


Example 6: Song II, Measures 65-71, with the motive and motive fragments highlighted.

The protagonist has reached his darkest moment so far, realizing that like his vision of the sun, his torch will also soon be extinguished, and the tombstone he sees in the world will be his own. This dramatic return of the *idée fixe* and the accompanying chords reflect his impending fate.

A ritardando and a decrescendo transition to the final section of the song, marked *plus lent.* The piano part remains in sixteenth notes, but the shape is now more gentle, the suspensions less prominent, and the pianissimo dynamic is one of sadness as the

singer asks, “Why am I so weary, so sad, and so sick?” rising upward on each descriptive word. On the word “malade,” he rises to a B-flat, clashing against an A in the bass of the piano, illustrating how unwell he is. “Ma chère bien-aimée oh! dis-le, dis-le moi” is set as a demand, a rising line and a crescendo, ending on a diminished-seventh chord in the piano, before his final plea, now marked *doux*: “If you can still find a word to persuade me.” The word “trouves” is set with a high appoggiatura for the singer, and “persuade” with a *messa di voce* emphasizing the first syllable, allowing for great expression on these two words and the possibility of rubato. “Dis-moi pourquoi tu m’as abandonné?” the singer asks, with the piano finally halting its ceaseless sixteenth notes, a large crescendo and an allargando marked in the score (Example 7).



Example 7: Song II, Measures 82-87

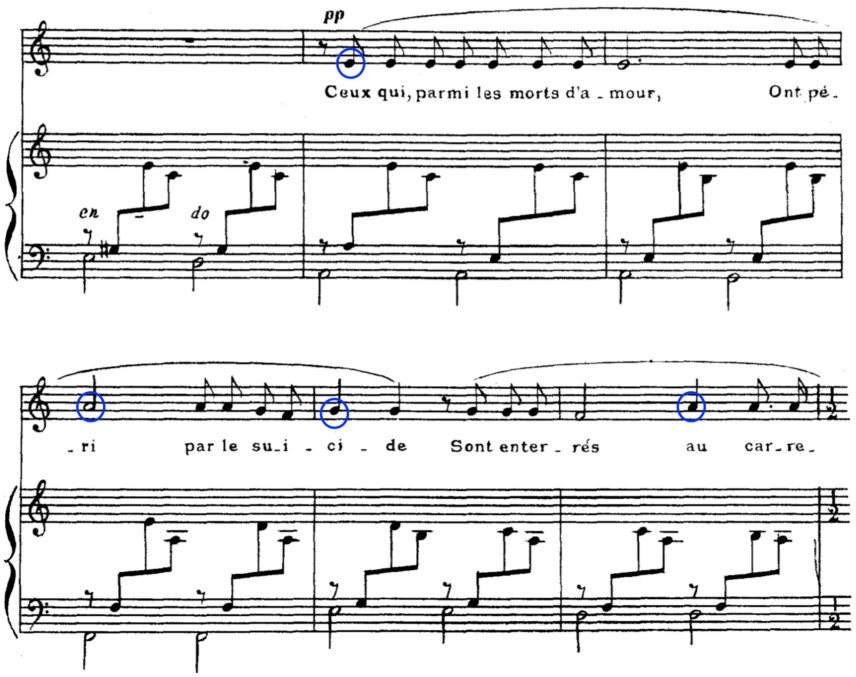
The last interval of "abandonné" does not rise, but sinks from an F4 all the way to a G3. The restless searching of this song has culminated in this one question, but the downward interval reveals that the narrator knows there will be no answer, and his questioning is futile. The piano attempts to restart its sixteenth notes, but stops again, as though the protagonist has given up hope. The final "Pourquoi" is quiet and desolate. This moment is still within the *allargando*, allowing both performers to take time until the *première tempo* marking at measure 88. In the postlude of the song the piano starts its restless motion again, the same pattern as in the beginning of the song. As the right hand decrescendos, the *idée fixe* appears a final time in the left hand in octaves on D. The right hand rises and drifts away and the left hand sinks down until a final low D. This postlude is the last attempt of the protagonist to look for meaning in his life, but he is entirely overcome by this motive and his despair over the end of his relationship.

III. *Ceux qui, parmi les morts d'amour*

The third song of this cycle returns to the A-minor tonality suggested by the first notes of the Prélude. Over a pedal A in the bass, the four notes of the motive are struck in accented notes in the treble, with a gentle arpeggiated accompaniment that feels almost plucked from the keys, a return of material that occurred starting in measure 10 in the Prélude. Ropartz was generous with his use of slurs in the piano in the previous songs, so the absence of any slurs in this song signifies a less connected touch.

This is the lowest and quietest entrance of the voice in the cycle, almost a whisper, reverent at the burial site of the suicide victims. The opening line of the voice

vaguely refers to the *idée fixe*, with the four notes appearing in retrograde and being sustained over several words (Example 8).



Example 8: Song III, Measure 4-9. Tracing the motive in retrograde.

Interestingly, although Ropartz created a careful rhyme scheme, he essentially ignores the structure he built in the poem, instead grouping ideas by Heine's original sentences. That means that the second line of the poem ending in "suicide" is left unrhymed, as the fourth line, which ends in "réside," is pushed to the next phrase. The way that Ropartz sets the next lines also disguises his original line structure:

> La s'épanouit et réside
>
> Une fleur bleue étrange fleur
>
> Aussi rare que sa couleur

These lines become phrased in this way:

Là s'épanouit et réside Une fleur bleue

étrange fleur Aussi rare que sa couleur

Ropartz's redistribution of these lines reinforces the sentence structure rather than the poetic phrase structure, creating lines of twelve syllables each, although they do not rhyme.

In comparison to the previous songs, this song feels remarkably calm in its consistency and sparseness of texture. The song is in 2/2, but occasional truncated bars of 1/2 give the slightest impression of the protagonist's still uneasy mental state. The first instance of this comes at the conclusion of the third poetic line, as the motive in the piano interlude starts before the singer finishes the word "carrefour." There are five of these truncated bars in this song, and four of them are immediately followed by the motive in the piano right hand, interrupting the protagonist's thoughts at every opportunity.

Ropartz inserts one F-sharp in measure 12, right before the above lines begin, modulating to G major. This first appearance of the blue flower is painted in a positive light both by the key and by two small rising phrases, with a crescendo on the words "Une fleur bleue," quite literally encouraging the voice to bloom as he ascends to a C-natural. C is the highest pitch of the vocal line so far, and it highlights the first mention of this flower, the symbol of longing and hope. However, at measure 18, Ropartz ends

the phrase on an E-minor chord, with the piano interlude again sounding the motive, now on E. The motive prompts the singer's next phrase, marked forte over the piano accompaniment: "Aucun nom ne l'a désignée, C'est la fleur de l'âme damnée!" The vocal line in this phrase extends both higher and lower than this song has yet called for, up to a D4, and then down to a B2 on the word "damnée," set dramatically on a downward tritone. A rallentando even further elongates this statement while the piano drifts back to A minor.

The re-entrance of the singer is marked *a tempo*, as the narrator returns to the present. He sings, "Pendant la nuit au carrefour Je soupire dans le silence." The translation from the previous chapter read, "I breathe in the silence," but "soupir" is more literally translated as "to sigh," and Ropartz sets this word on a downward triad, a "sighing" gesture. In the following phrase Ropartz mirrors what he did during the phrase "Aucun nom ne l'a désignée…." by setting "Au clair de lune se balance La fleur des damnés de l'amour!" with a rising and falling line that stretches even further, up to an E and down to a low A. Again when the protagonist mentions the damned, Ropartz marks a rallentando, which adds an extra layer of somberness to the conclusion. As the singer cuts off, the *idée fixe* is once again in the piano part on A, the fourth note E echoing over and over again. The harmony underneath this repeating E wanders, sounding for a moment as if it may end in C major, but the E instead becomes the root of a seventh chord, resolving back to A minor, with E still sounding on top. As the continuous eighth-note accompaniment becomes halting for the first time, unraveling at the end, a final high E is struck, and then a final bass note: a low A, the lowest note on the piano. This deep

note stands out in the piano's timbre, especially in this particular song, in which the piano part hovers near the center of the keyboard throughout. If the high E was one last recall of the love symbolized by the blue flower, the low A is the reminder of its fatal consequences for those buried at the crossroads.

IV. *Depuis que nul rayon de tes yeux bien-aimés*

The mood of the fourth and final song is unmistakable. The first sound heard is the *idée fixe*, on C-sharp in octaves in the bass, becoming an ostinato lasting almost the entire song. The dynamics in this piece range from *ppp* to *ff*, but Ropartz indicates *Les notes de basse toujours marquées*, implying that even when the singer and the right hand of the piano are marked to be quiet, the pianist should keep the left hand relatively prominent and may find a slight separation between the notes helpful in bringing out this ostinato.

Ropartz indicates the fourth song's dark mood through use of the marking *Funèbre*. He was surely familiar with Chopin's famous *March funèbre* movement in his Op. 35 piano sonata, and Chopin's somber opening is recalled in Ropartz's right-hand entrance in the second measure, with accents and dotted rhythms on a repeated G-sharp. This repeated note may also reference to another Chopin piece, his famous "Raindrop" prelude, Op. 28, no. 15. The middle section of that prelude shares the same key of C-sharp minor as Ropartz's fourth song, with a low ostinato bass under relentless G-sharp eighth-notes.

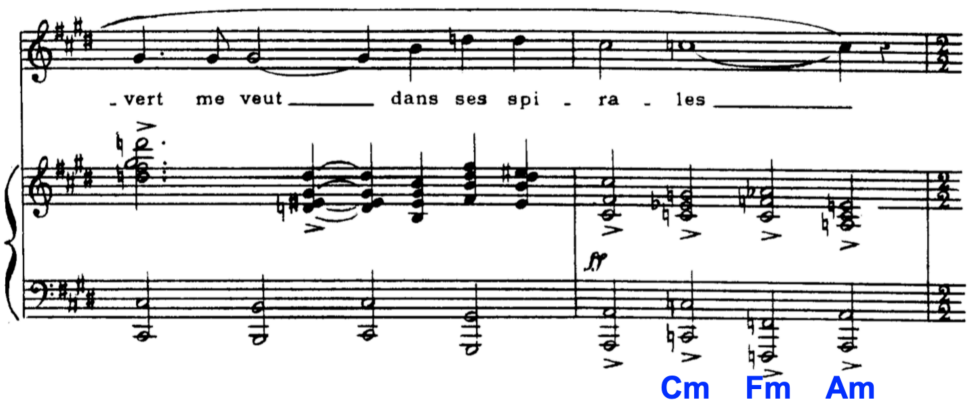
When the singer enters, his opening line sinks down: “Depuis que nul rayon de tes yeux bien-aimés.” The next line is a parallel statement, with the vocal line now a third higher over the same piano accompaniment. A slight change in the rhythm to solid quarter notes strengthens the resolve in his statement, “N’arrive plus aux miens.” Ropartz sets “obstinément” over a triplet to highlight this word, and the singer may further paint the protagonist’s “obstinacy” by stressing each syllable of the word with a tenuto. This triplet is mirrored in the next line on the word “enveloppé,” which also brings out an internal rhyme between “aimés”/“fermés”/“enveloppé.” (Although “morales” at the end of this line rhymes with “spirales,” the slow tempo of this song and the breaks in the phrases between lines 3 and 6 are not conducive to the listener’s hearing this rhyme.) When the protagonist says, “I am enveloped in dark spirits,” the piano in measure 7 becomes denser and crescendos, adding a dotted-note melody that rises to a B-sharp leading tone. This line ends without resolution, and although both voice and left hand of the piano have a C-sharp on the next beat, the octave displacement does not provide a satisfactory closure, leaving the listener in trepidation.

The singer’s measure of rest at measure 9 interrupts Ropartz’s poetic rhyme scheme but honors the original German. This is where the break between Heine’s two stanzas would appear in the text. The next entrance catapults the singer up to an E (the highest note in this song) on the word “étoile,” before he sinks down and decrescendos: “The stars of love are extinguished for me.”

The line “Plus de douce clarté, rien que l’ombre et l’effroi” is original to Ropartz’s translation – it corresponds to no line from the original German poem.

Appropriately, the musical material that appears with it is unlike the rest of the song. A soft melodic line weaves in the right hand of the piano. The vocal line, a simple and diatonic line for the first half, "Plus de douce clarté" (no more sweet light), with "nothing but shadows and dread!" rises with a crescendo and ends high with a surprising D-natural, which conflicts with the ostinato's C-sharp. As the singer cuts off, the piano continues in measure 14 with crashing, dissonant chords separated by wide leaps that illustrate the starkness of the gaping chasm. The offsetting of the two hands in the piano and the general contour of the right hand evoke a memory of the introduction of the second song. In that song the protagonist wondered at the greyness of the world, and now he is unable to even look at the details of life around him, as the shadows overtake him.

"A large abyss wants me in its spirals," the protagonist says in measures 14-16, with a chromatic descent on the word "spirales." On the downbeat of measure 16, the left hand of the piano breaks from its ostinato, moving from an F-sharp minor harmony to a C-minor chord (a tritone apart). This break from the pattern is the protagonist's final hesitation, a last struggle before the conclusion. As the singer ends "spirales" at measure 16 on a C-natural, the piano, now without the constraints of the fixed bass, strikes three chords underneath his note. But rather than a discernible progression in the tonic of C-sharp minor, it appears that the music attempts to find a resolution to this struggle by trying each minor triad that the singer's C-natural would fit into: first C minor, then F minor, then A minor (Example 9).



Example 9: Song IV, Measures 15-16

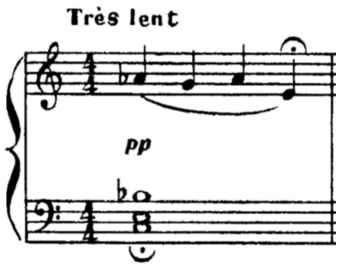
Both piano and voice become silent for a brief moment – the only time in the four songs that the accompaniment completely drops out. The singer then ascends through an A-minor arpeggio, the last harmony left from the piano part. At the peak of his phrase, "Nuit éternelle," the voice reaches a high E, but the harmony that joins now from the piano is a fortissimo D9 chord – a sort of altered Neapolitan, voiced here so widely and so deeply in the bass of the piano that it sounds of impending danger. In the shadow of this chord comes a quiet V7 chord, the G-sharp root a tritone away from the previous D-natural, and in the wake of these two chords comes the singer's last statement, still fortissimo on repeated G-sharps: "Engloutis-moi!"

At this moment, the bass of the piano returns to the *idée fixe*, accompanied by the return of alternating descending chords and the ringing of G-sharp octaves in the right hand. These accented octaves can now truly be heard as a death knell, and it is as if the narrator heard and anticipated his funeral bells already with his final sung G-sharps. The final statement of these repeated notes adds an E-natural, ending on a true C-sharp-minor

harmony rather than an open one. The filled-out chords lend a sense of closure, as the ostinato bass gradually halts before descending to a final low C-sharp octave.

Postlude

While many song cycles end with a Postlude, it is unusual for a composer to notate a separate movement. The text of the last song leaves little room for interpretation, but this final piece in the set seems to ask more questions than it answers. Whatever sense of closure Ropartz just established is somewhat destroyed in the opening of the Postlude, which is meant to be played without pause after the fourth song. With the fourth song's final low C-sharp still ringing in the piano, the first new harmony is a dominant 7th chord on C-natural (Example 10). The right hand of the piano plays an altered form of the motive, the first interval only a half step, the A-flat left over from the last G-sharp of the previous song.



Example 10: Postlude, Measure 1. The motive is altered in the piano right hand.

Here Ropartz starts a reprise of the Prélude's wandering second half, although in a different key. The motive returns to its original form in measure 3 and is played on A, recalling the very first notes of the Prélude. With a C in the bass for the first six

measures, it sounds for a moment that he will end this postlude in F major, but in typical Ropartzian manner, he writes a square fermata on the bar line at the end of measure 6, leaving a dominant seventh chord on C lingering in space. When the music restarts, it may sound as if Ropartz is on his way to resolving to F, but the bass note is notated as an E-sharp. After two indecisive measures, the right hand of the piano finally returns to a C-sharp-minor triad, and the left hand quietly sounds a final iteration of the *idée fixe* on C-sharp. But instead of adding a final low tonic note as he did in the fourth song, Ropartz leaves the final harmony open, with the last bass note on the G-sharp.

Ferey says about this Postlude, "Ropartz chooses to end with a six-four chord, one that suspends time, that makes you want to continue, that asks the question. It is not a conclusion, it's a new prologue."[44] The interpretation of this music is ultimately left up to the performers, but the question of what this Postlude implies should be considered. Does the protagonist not have the capacity to act on his final demand and so becomes stuck in a cyclical depression? Or perhaps the Prélude and Postlude speak more to the universal themes of unrequited love. At the end of one love story, there is always another who will be heartbroken. In Heine's own words:

> Es ist eine alte Geschichte,
> Doch bleibt sie immer neu;
> Und wem sie just passieret,
> Dem bricht das Herz entzwei.

[44] Ferey, 64. Trans.

It is an old story,
Yet it remains ever new;
And to whom it has just happened,
It will break his heart in two.

– Heinrich Heine, "Ein Jüngling liebt ein Mädchen"

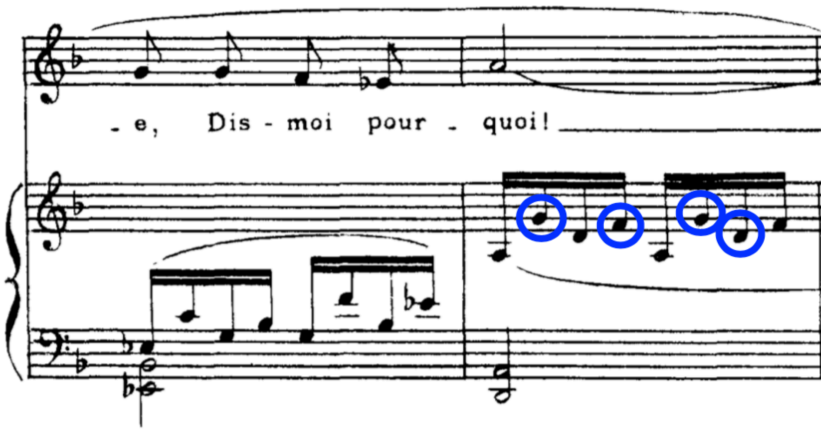
The Role of the *Idée Fixe*

According to Lamy, the four notes of the *idée fixe* serve as a melodic link and a canvas for the four songs, but the motive takes on a different character in each. "In the first...the funeral call will be distant and veiled like a dark foreboding."[45] Indeed, if not for the preceding announcement of this motive in the Prélude, these four notes could almost go unnoticed in the first song. While often in these songs the starting note of the motive represents the tonal center of the piece, the use of the C-sharp as a suspension to the E major harmony somewhat modifies the prominence of the four notes. The return of the motive at the conclusion of the song takes control of the story from the protagonist, as he is "abandoned" to it. The higher echo of the motive on C-sharp at measure 38 represents the starry night and foreshadows the C-sharp funeral motive of the fourth song's "eternal night."

In some ways, the motive has the least importance in the second song. It mainly appears as part of the introduction, interludes, and postlude. However, the treatment of

[45] Lamy, 44. Trans.

the first note of the motive as a suspension that resolves down stepwise remains a prominent part of the accompanimental figuration that permeates this song. While not explicitly using the *idée fixe*, many permutations of the sixteenth-note figure contain the same intervallic content (Example 11):



Example 11: Song II, measures 13-14. The accompanimental figure refers to the intervals of the motive.

In this way the motive serves as a canvas on which the second song is painted, remaining unobtrusive in the background. The reappearance of the motive in the interlude at measure 40 and its sequential descent illustrate the protagonist's thought progression as his questioning becomes graver and more desperate. Although the rhythm is altered in measures 50-54, this is the only time during this song that the motive appears with its full four notes while the voice part is also active. While the other three songs speak of nighttime, this line asks about the sun. The motive is truncated to its first three notes in measures 55-60, but still prominent in the left hand of the piano. This is both the most complex poem and the most complicated song in the cycle, and in these snippets of the motive, the song is not only riddled with anxiety from the rhythm, but also with

darkness. It is the narrator's own fixation that has made the sun shine less brightly and the whole world grey. When he says that the world is grey like a tomb, "un tombeau," the motive returns fortissimo in the left hand, beginning on E but now altered to stay diatonic in D minor, with the last interval becoming a tritone rather than a perfect fourth. Lamy says this iteration of the motive is like "sobbing clashes, the anguish of betrayal and the tears that it makes pour."[46] The final appearance of the motive in this song is at the very conclusion, in octaves in the bass on D. This text, with the references to the "funéraire odeur" of incense burners and the world appearing as a tombstone, sets the stage for the *March Funèbre* that is coming, and this final iteration of the motive is a premonition of the fourth song's ostinato bass.

The third song contains the motive only five times (not including the subtle retrograde reference found in the opening vocal line), the fewest iterations of any of the songs. However, due to the sparseness of the accompaniment and the simplicity of this song, the motive seems far more prominent in it than in the previous two. It is present from the very opening on A, clearly played as a melody on top of the arpeggiated accompaniment. In this song, although Ropartz's altered text makes references to the protagonist's own plight, the focus is more outward. Here Lamy writes, "He expresses, with relentless rhythm the idée fixe which haunts [the narrator]."[47] There is no mention of the "bien-aimée," and in Heine's original text, there is no reference to the love story at all. The motive appears prominently when the protagonist describes the "flower of the damned soul," suggesting that his obsession will lead him to the same fate as those buried

[46] Lamy, 44.
[47] Lamy, 44.

at the crossroads. As the blue flower is the recognized universal symbol of longing, perhaps the protagonist even desires this death. No longer distant as in the first song, but at the forefront of the accompaniment, the motive serves as a bleak premonition.

The role of the *idée fixe* in the fourth song is obvious. It is the protagonist's funeral march for himself, not unlike Berlioz's "March au supplice" from *Symphonie fantastique*. The setting of this song in C-sharp minor and the motive's repetition on that pitch conclude the journey that Ropartz began in the Prélude.

The duality of keys Ropartz presents in the incipit that precedes both the Prélude and the Postlude may imply something about the contents of the work. Of the four mélodies, the motive is most focused on A in the third song and occurs on C-sharp prominently in the final song as well as the opening of the first song. In the second song, the motive occurs on many different pitches, portraying the protagonist's constant questioning and searching. As mentioned above, the third song is the only text that does not mention the protagonist's beloved, and is the only poem where the protagonist speaks of others outside his own story, as he contemplates the victims of suicide. Taking this into consideration, one interpretive reading is that the motive focused on A could represent a universal view of this story, the anguish of love, and the inevitability of fate. As the Prélude moves from its initial announcement on A to a new key area in C-sharp, it is as if a camera lens focuses in on the individual at the center of this narrative. Both the first and last songs are focused in this way, particularly the final song. Although the protagonist addresses his beloved at the opening of the fourth song, the rest is extremely first-person centric ("*Je* suis enveloppé".... "Pour *moi*"...."Un gouffre large ouvert *me*

veut" …. "engloutis -*moi*"). In the Postlude, keeping in mind Ferey's interpretation of this movement as a new prologue, the iteration of the motive returning to A begins a new story, or the new stories of many other victims, and the final C-sharp iteration could be heard as a warning to take this man's story as a cautionary tale. Here are the contradiction and appeal of Heine's *Intermezzo*: while in some ways an incredibly personal and specific narrative, it is also a universal tale of heartbreak.

The Orchestration of the Cycle

Although this cycle is rarely performed with orchestra, this information about the orchestration is useful to pianists who wish to enhance their performance by considering the colors and articulations that Ropartz's instrumentation implies. The orchestration is detailed in Table 1.

Instrumentation in the Orchestration of the *Quatre Poèmes*

2 flutes
2 oboes
2 clarinets in A
2 bassoons
4 horns
2 trumpets
Harp
Timpani
Full string section

Table 1

In general, Ropartz has a tendency to use solo winds for important individual lines, particularly oboe and clarinet. For example, the clarinet has the half-note motive found at measures 3-4 in the Prélude, and the sinking fragmented melody from measures 17-21; the flute has the long single notes in measures 10-13; the oboe begins the winding melody in measure 25 before it crescendos to a giant tutti. Similar wind solos continue through the cycle's orchestration. This use of wind instruments is consistent with many French composers; like Ropartz, many of them were primarily organists and therefore partial to the sound of wind instruments.

The musical content between the piano and the orchestration is remarkably similar throughout. Unlike what is found in most reductions of works first composed for orchestra, textures and all melodic lines have been retained with one major exception. The first song, in which the motive is so remarkably subtle in the opening, features flute and clarinet trading off prominent motive figures right at the beginning of the piece. The canon on the off-beats is still present in the harp, but with this instrumentation the motive is certainly unveiled.

The instrumentation of the middle section of the first song is somewhat unexpected, as the watery arpeggios that rush up and down the keyboard of the piano are not designated to one instrument, but traded among harp, clarinet, flute, viola, and cello. The flurry of notes contributes to the feeling of the narrator's losing control and becoming lost in the waves, before the harp takes over all the arpeggios for the beautiful conclusion.

The dark opening of the second song is colored by bassoon and viola in the initial statements of the motive, before clarinet and horn take over in the new key at measure 4; therefore the pianist should play these two lines significantly differently in color as well as in dynamic. In this author's opinion, the anxious feeling of this song's piano accompaniment is masked in the orchestration, as the sixteenth notes are split between violins and violas, which brings out the suspensions beautifully, but lacks an internal momentum as no individual player has to play every sixteenth note. This song is accompanied almost exclusively by the strings, with winds starting to enter shortly before the first interlude, as the narrator's agitation rises. The most notable detail of orchestration in this song is the use of the horns for the ominous repeated chords at measures 67-72. Their imposing sound contributes to the feeling of danger and panic at this moment before the sorrowful final verse.

The arpeggios in the third song, which as previously noted have no slur markings in the piano part, are played by the harp. The harp's gentle plucking is surrounded by sustaining strings, so on the piano, a healthy amount of pedal may be used, but a clear and gentle articulation of each eighth note will help achieve the desired atmosphere. The five iterations of the *idée fixe* in this movement are played by horn the four times they occur on A, and by oboe the one time it appears on E, at measure 19. The oboe also plays the final high E5 of the piece, and the low A1 is plucked by the harp and played arco by the basses. This is likely why Ropartz notated a low grace note in the piano score, a common reduction technique for pizzicato bass under arco cello. In this case, I would not advise playing the grace note as a staccato note together with the downbeat,

because this piano part exists separately from the orchestration and should not be considered a reduction; but consideration of the harp's articulation for the low A may affect touch or timing at the keyboard.

The ostinato bass of the fourth song is played by both low strings and timpani during almost every occurrence. Curiously, the timpani drops out entirely for measures 16-18 and does not play on the final low C-sharp of the piece. The repeated, accented octave G-sharps are played by muted trumpets, and the melody at measures 7 and 10 is played in octaves by the clarinets. The weaving line at measure 12 is played by strings and joined by oboe leading into the grand tutti at measure 14. In this moment, the bassoons join the low motive, all the winds and brass play the first chords of each measure, and the violins and violas play the lower syncopated chords.

The instrumentation of the Postlude features the oboe in the top line, and interestingly, the harp returns to play the *idée fixe* on A with the viola in measures 3-6. This instrumentation and statement of the motive on A recall the A-minor third song where the harp was prominent. The final high iterations of the motive on A in measures 7 and 8 are played by the flute, before the celli and basses take over for the final low iteration.

Overall, the orchestration contains few surprises, but plenty of detail that will be informative to the interested pianist. The most important new information in the orchestration, in Ropartz's own hand, are his specific metronome markings, as shown in Table 2.

Movement	Measure	Marking in piano/orchestrated version	Metronome marking
Prélude	m. 1	"Lent"	Quarter note = 60
	m. 17	"à volonté"/ "A tempo rubato"	Quarter note = 60
Song 1	m. 1	"moderiment Lent"	Dotted quarter = 60
	m. 33	"1er mouvement, un peu élargi"	=60
	m. 39	"Rall."/ "ritenuto poco"	
Song 2	m. 1	"Lent"	Quarter note = 60
	m. 7	"Sans lenteur"	Quarter note= 80
	m. 73	"Plus lent"	= 72
	m. 85	"allarg."/ "rit" marked through m. 87	
	m. 88	"1er tempo"	=80
Song 3	m. 1	"Assez lent"	Quarter note = 72
Song 4	m. 1	"Funèbre"	Half note = 60
Postlude	m. 1	"Très lent"	Quarter note = 50

Table 2: tempo markings in the piano and orchestral versions of the score

According to his conducting notes, although the third song is in 2/2, Ropartz apparently conducted each quarter note, marking 4/4 or 2/4 throughout his meter changes.

These markings show a remarkable uniformity in tempi, with the Prélude and Songs 1, 2, and 4 all starting with the pulse at 60. The primary tempo of the second song is a bit faster, at 80, to invoke an agitated feeling. But for all pulses to range from 50 to 82 is remarkable in its general slowness. The dark mood of this cycle never stretches to rage, but lives somewhere in the neighborhood of mourning, contemplative and distraught.

Conclusion: Final Thoughts

Although the *Quatre Poèmes* is one of Ropartz's earlier compositions, it is among his more frequently performed works. I believe one reason it is programmed is that there are relatively few cycles in French originally composed for low male voice, so it appeals to singers who wish to perform in the original keys. Another reason the Quatre Poèmes is performed is that many singers are aware of the *Lyrisches Intermezzo* because of Robert Schumann's *Dichterliebe*. Lamy cautions his readers about this connection:

> [The comparison] of R. Schumann's *Amours du Poète* could be dangerous here. It is not so. In each work as in the other, the melodic line is fully genuine as it relates to the text, but Guy Ropartz's process creates complete musical unity in the four poems, while only unity of feeling groups the sixteen immortal melodies of *Dichterliebe*.[48]

Some scholars would take issue with what seems to be a dismissal of Schumann's set for being not truly cyclical, especially those interested in Schumann's use of the "Clara" motive, not to mention *Dichterliebe*'s intricate key-relationship scheme. But Lamy is pointing out that Ropartz's use of his four-note motive drives his entire set, while *Dichterliebe* is more plot-driven. As a close friend of Ropartz, Lamy surely wrote this in loyalty, hoping his mention of Heine's texts would not invite an invidious comparison of Ropartz to the highly-respected Schumann. Lamy's reference does serve to confirm that Ropartz was certainly familiar with Schumann's work, supporting the theory that in choosing which four poems to set, Ropartz strategically avoided any overlap with the texts Schumann used, so as not to infringe on *Dichterliebe*. The two sets

[48] Lamy, 44. Trans.

convey very different narratives, so programming them on one recital may shed more light on Heine as an author, but should not invite the audience to perceive the protagonists of the two sets as a single character.

Although the work is specified for baritone (or bass-baritone), the only gender referenced in the text of the cycle is addressing the "bien-aimée," implying the ex-lover is female. Although *Dichterliebe* is generally affiliated with a male voice, there is precedent for women to sing that cycle, and women have recorded many other settings of the *Lyrisches Intermezzo*, including those by Brahms and Wolf. As an advocate for more performances of the *Quatre Poèmes*, I believe that this work could be beautifully sung by a female voice, likely a mezzo, as the range would extend from A3 to F5.

One might ask, if this is not Ropartz's most mature work, is this the best piece to perform in order to promote his compositions? Most of his songs were written early in his career, almost all composed between 1888-1914. In *A French Song Companion*, Graham Johnson writes that this is probably Ropartz's finest vocal work.[49] Because many of Ropartz's songs have apparently not been recorded, this set for now stands as the most popular representative of his vocal output. Most of the compositional traits highlighted by Ropartz's commentators are found in this cycle, so if later in his life he developed a more mature hand to deal with motivic techniques and harmonic suspensions, then this work serves as a precursor of what was to come. Missing from this work is Ropartz's advocacy for Breton art, as this cycle uses neither Breton poetry nor Breton-influenced melodic content. But the most uncharacteristic trait of this set is its

[49] Graham Johnson and Richard Stokes, *A French Song Companion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 430.

overwhelmingly dark atmosphere, as Ropartz's warm personality did not generally lend itself to the composition of extremely sad music. In this way, Ropartz fully committed himself to the poetry. Perhaps Hirsch's death so soon after the completion of the translation lay heavy in Ropartz's memory when he was writing these songs, and in a way they became an homage to his friend and colleague who worked with him to rediscover Heine's words.

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APPENDIX A

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