Mind, Body, and Time: A Bergsonian Theory of Musical Impressionism

by

Emily Bopp

A thesis accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in Musicology

Thesis Committee:

Dr. Abigail Fine, Chair

Dr. Stephen Rodgers, Member

Dr. Joyce Cheng, Member

University of Oregon

Spring 2024

THESIS ABSTRACT

Emily Bopp

Master of Arts in Musicology

Title: Mind, Body, and Time: A Bergsonian Theory of Musical Impressionism

Traditional style histories of midcentury musicology tend to reduce Musical Impressionism to color, light, and *debussyste* conventions, over-emphasizing visuality and limiting its purview to a scant few composers. To expand our understanding of atmospheric effects in French Musical Impressionism, I trace an alternative intellectual history through the music criticism of the period, which reveals philosophical sensibilities that recontextualize the significance of Impressionist music as more than mere sensation. More specifically, prominent music critics engaged with nascent perception theories and the process philosophy of Henri Bergson as Impressionism gained traction, finding this music to be an ample opportunity for reconfiguring the senses; that is, our sensory perception, sense of Self, and sense of time. Accordingly, I propose a new frame for Musical Impressionism, in which the composers aim not solely to create an atmosphere, but to render time indistinct for the listener as a means of reunifying mind and body.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Emily Bopp

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene
Central Washington University, Ellensburg

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Arts, Musicology, 2024, University of Oregon
Bachelor of Music, Music Education, 2022, Central Washington University
Bachelor of Arts, French, 2022, Central Washington University

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Music and Philosophy
Music in the Long Nineteenth Century
Music in the Belle Époque
Music and Print Culture
Sound Studies

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Employee, University of Oregon, 2022-2024
Assistant Teacher, Co-Op Family Center, 2023-2024
Student Teacher, University High School, 2022
Music and Leadership Mentor, AfterSchool Safe Place, 2019-2020

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Musicology Area Conference Travel Fund, UO, 2023
Graduate Summa Cum Laude, CWU, 2022
Music Department Honors, CWU 2022
Gary Weidenaar Vocal Endowment Scholarship, CWU 2021-2022
Vocal Performance Tuition Award, CWU, 2021-2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of a Master's thesis is a tall order in the time allotted, and yet it's the adequate expression of gratitude for those who supported me during the process that seems the most impossible feat.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank my advisor, Dr. Abigail Fine, who has devoted more than my fair share of her time in the last year to thesis development meetings, drafts of every stage, never-ending email ping-pong, and of course, mothering me when necessary. I have learned so much under her mentorship, and am so thankful for her careful feedback and infallible patience. Thanks are also in order for Dr. Stephen Rodgers and Dr. Joyce Cheng, whose insights and encouragements as committee members have been invaluable to the evolution of this project. I would also like to express my sincerest appreciation for Dr. Lori Kruckenberg, who showed us the ropes of musicology and has continued to be a source of inspiration during the academic grind. I am especially grateful to my cohort—Annie Liu, Frances Pinkham, Daniel Dyer, and John Wood—for fostering such a strong sense of community. You are all exceptional scholars and even better people; I am honored to call you my friends.

Lastly, I cannot say enough about my family. I am so lucky to have a mom whose support leaves no room for questions, a dad who takes both pride and vested interest in my studies and career path, a tightly-knit network of extended family looking out for me, and a little brother who thinks I am cool sometimes. I love you all so much, and would not have been able to pursue music like this without you!

DEDICATION

To my grandfather, who let me “help” in his garden so long as we listened to whatever the tomatoes liked best. Thank you for sharing your love of music with me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the twentieth century, the idea of a gap between one's observed experience and how it is internally felt was a subject that garnered much theorization. The rapid change to everyday life associated with encroaching features of modernity—industrialization, urbanization, scientific and technological innovations—confronted basic assumptions about the nature and ordering of the human experience. The various ways in which people responded to the chaotic onset of the modern world brought the issue of subjectivity to the fore, troubling the waters between perception and reality. *Why do I not see this the way that you do? Why am I hearing this and responding differently than you are?*[1]

The arts held a key position in this discourse, as they were frequently called upon as expressions of this cognitive dissonance. In late nineteenth-century France, the intertwined aesthetics of Symbolist poetry (emerging in the 1850s) and Impressionist painting (the 1870s) began to exploit the gap between perception and reality. The unblended pastels of the Impressionists, in capturing the ocular sensation of natural light, sketched scenes rendered complete by the viewer's schemata of different landscapes, hours of the day, and interpretation of its affect. In short, the Impressionists are concerned with the objective portrayal of a fleeting moment in which the viewer finds themselves. Similarly, the intentionally vague, yet evocative verses of the Symbolists offered readers an outline of a storied moment to be filled in by their own subjective experience. The perceived meaning of either art form relied on the unique perception of its audience and their response to the piece's evocation to be made complete.

[1] Jonathan Rée, "Subjectivity in the Twentieth Century," in *New Literary History* 26, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 205, 208-211.

These approaches—of both artist and audience—found expression in musical practices by the 1890s. This style of composition, which critics were quick to associate with Impressionism, seemed equally concerned with the vaporous suggestions of different scenes and the play of the light on their surfaces. However, music's innate feature of unfolding over time, combined with the concurrent development of modern philosophes of time perception, add a new dimension to the role of the listener's subjectivity in the aesthetic that later came to be called Musical Impressionism. In this thesis, I center the role of the listener in the historical development of Musical Impressionism's aesthetic, nuanced by philosophical and perceptual lenses that informed their listening. Doing so reveals a more detailed attention to meter in Impressionistic compositions that reflects an acute concern for the subjective experience of time.

A Brief Note on Terminology

The word "Impressionist," transferred from art to music early in Debussy's career, persists in our musicological vocabulary even if we question is usage. Recent examinations of composer biography find Debussy to be a literary composer rather than a painterly one, stressing that his tendency to socialize with the Symbolists make their themes more readily manifest in his music.[2] As such, scholars have moved to re-term Debussy—and, as a result, any other composer of this type of music—a Symbolist. Those who maintain Debussy's singularity as a composer, or at least stress the impact his celebrity had on this type of music's reception, have also put forth the term "*debussysme*," or Debussyism, as one that best captures the specificity of this compositional approach.

[F]François Lesure and Roy Howat, "Debussy, (Achille-)Claude" in *Grove Music Online,* http:///www.oxfordmusiconline.com (Accessed June 2024); Jann Pasler, "Impressionism," in *Grove Music Online,* http://oxfordmusiconline.com (Accessed June 2024).

If I am to refocus the development of this musical aesthetic around its first listeners, then basing terminological considerations on composer biography seems inappropriate. As will come to light in the thesis below, reception history indicates that Debussy was not necessarily considered a compositional outlier in his time, which would present a case against using the term *debussysme.* Although he may not have enjoyed being associated with Impressionism by Belle Époque critics, the fact that he was lends some credence to continued use of the term, at least for the purposes of this thesis. This is not to dismiss the contentious place of this music's terminology both historically and historiographically, but rather to re-evaluate its relationship to both the Impressionist and Symbolist aesthetics.

What distinguishes Impressionism from Symbolism is the side of human perception on which they fall. Impressionism, in capturing the play of the light in a fleeting moment, was ultimately concerned with representing things as they appeared.[3] Symbolism, on the other hand, took interest in the intangible and unobservable, such as vivid emotions or meditations on the soul, sought to voice the nature of things beneath the surface.[4] In short, if Impressionism depicted one's objective surroundings, Symbolism sought out their subjective response—seemingly opposed to one another as the "outside" and "inside" of the artistic mind, respectively.

In terms of painting and poetry, definitions of Impressionism and Symbolism can seem mutually exclusive since the medium is static. The painting does not change color or composition as you look at it, nor does the language of the poetry does not change as you read it. This is not the case of music, in which each performance is predicated on the arrangement of sonic changes. In the aesthetic of this music, the act of listening engages both Impressionist and

[3] "Symbolism," The Art Story, last updated January 2024. https://www.theartstory.org/movement/symbolism/

[4] "Symbolism," The Art Story.

Symbolist themes: listening for the evocation of landscape or story, which harkens the musical notion of an Impressionist "atmosphere," and listening to one's own response to that evocation, which centers Symbolist ideas of subjectivity and interiority. Music, itself a process that unfolds over time, has the potential to render Impressionism and Symbolism complementary as it encapsulates human perception from objective observation (what it *is*) to its subjective internalization (what it *means*) in a single artwork.

Audiences of the period were aware of this, as is evidenced by the critics writing reviews of Debussy's music. However, rather than placing this musical aesthetic on a continuum of Impressionism and Symbolism, they put it in conversation with popular philosophical ideas that sought to reimagine the relationship between objectivity and subjectivity, particularly in terms of the perception of time.[5] These early Bergsonian readings, named as such to reflect the thinker behind this philosophy, Henri Bergson, became an important point of focus for a handful of music critics across Symbolist periodicals. Current scholarship on Bergsonian aesthetics in this music, summarized in greater detail below, generally find these types of philosophical readings insubstantial when measured against composer biography. When measured by their impact on audience experience, on the other hand, these readings might be more prove more central to the development of Musical Impressionism.

While this thesis is primarily concerned with rehabilitating these Bergsonian readings as a new framework for understanding this musical aesthetic, offering "Bergsonian" for its terminology would be a disservice to the musicians within its purview, and perhaps better applicable for this group of critics. For this reason, I maintain use of the term "Musical

[5] See Chapter II.

Impressionism" to reflect the terminology of this music's first audiences, and propose the lens of the Bergsonian critics as the means by which we nuance its aesthetic.

Philosophical Overview

Venturing into the intersection of music and philosophy requires the discussion of abstract concepts, which often come with their own vocabulary and sense of history. In what follows, I will provide a brief overview of influential threads of philosophy leading to the turn of the century, which provide context for the particular strand important to Musical Impressionism.

The gap acknowledged here between perception and reality implies several degrees of separation between the conscious mind and the more direct, bodily experience of being in the world. Enlightenment thinker René Descartes (1596-1650) is best known for theorizing these degrees of separation, which he termed "mind-body dualism," or what we commonly refer to now as "Cartesian duality." The essence of this argument is that the mind and body are of completely different natures; the body, an inherently fallible physicality to be mastered, and the mind, a comparably less-fallible entity that does the mastering.[6] The basic task of an evolved person, then, is to assert mind over matter in order to better understand and navigate the world. The last great philosopher of the Enlightenment, Immanuel Kant, continues to develop the centrality of the rational mind to human experience until his death at the turn of the nineteenth century, arguing that our ability to reason is what upholds the laws of nature and the structure of everyday life.[7] In particular, Kant cites these organizational structures as observations of space

[6] Gary Hatfield, "René Descartes" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, Spring 2024), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/descartes/.

[7] Michael Rohlf, "Immanuel Kant" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, Fall 2023), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant/.

and time, as well as cause and effect—relying on the appearance of things as evidence towards them.

The dawn of the Romantic era coincided with a philosophical redirection from the intellectualism of Descartes and Kant to a new focus on spirituality and morality. This school, called the German Idealists, found the most active principle of human experience to be the nature of one's choices, which had far-reaching religious undertones.[8] Acknowledgment of the distance between an objective analysis of life and the subjective experience of it did appear in Idealist writing, although the general priority of the moral will and spiritual existence blurred their sense of binarism, and thus could dodge reconciling it.[9] More influential in artistic circles, though, was an offshoot of German Idealism known as *irrationalism*, which left more room for discussing this gap. Arnold Schopenhauer (1788-1860), an irrationalist popular among Impressionists painters and Symbolist poets, argued that scientific intellectualism may help us understand the world as it appears, but that its underlying true nature is actually governed by mere irrational impulses. Understanding the world as such undermines the organization that rationality and empiricism, ascribing significant limitation to the human mind.[10] This was a decidedly anti-academic turn in philosophical thought, as it called into question the very methods of the Academy. This attitude also matched that of the attitude of the Impressionists and Symbolists, with their departure from standardized techniques, and began to prod at the idea of human nature containing the conscious (intellectual, rational) as well as *unconscious* (impulsive, intuitive, irrational) mind.

---

[8] "Western Philosophy: Introduction" in *The Encyclopadia Brittanica* (Chicago: The Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.), https://www.britannica.com/topic/Western-philosophy/The-19th-century#ref365961.

[9] Ibid: particularly under "The Idealism of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel."

[10] Robert Wicks, "Arnold Schopenhauer" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, Spring 2024), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schopenhauer/.

Although Schopenhauer's philosophy remained influential in certain hubs of mid-nineteenth-century Paris, France overall retained a philosophical commitment to intellectualism that was overshadowed across the border during the height of German idealism. Auguste Comte (1798-1857) in particular was emblematic of this way of thinking, arguing that the only avenue to true knowledge was through the rigors of the scientific method, which largely dispensed with subjectivity vested in the everyday experience.[11] While nineteenth-century thinkers certainly revised and elaborated on central tenets of the Enlightenment, the principles of Cartesian duality and Kant's relationship between the rational mind and structures of the natural world went relatively unquestioned. Though Schopenhauer certainly sparked interest in the notion of truth underlying appearances, it still represented an under-theorized domain of Western thought by the later decades of the 1800s.

It was not until the philosophy of Henri Bergson, which reached maturity at the turn of the twentieth century, that a Western thinker significantly critiqued the general acceptance of mind-body dualism and overturned Kant's structuring of human experience.[12] Rather than speak of the mind and body as separate entities, Bergson theorized them as the central spectrum of a human being that needed to be brought back into alignment after so many years of separation. Rather than taking appearances at face value, Bergson made a crucial intervention in Kant's metaphysics, finding that he had the relationship of time and space backwards.[13] Kant's understanding of time supported the principle of mechanical time, assuming that the succession of minutes and hours lined up was a just imposition upon subjective experience. Bergson,

[11] Henri Chambre et al, "Western Philosophy: Introduction" in *The Encyclopadia Brittanica* (Chicago: The Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.), https://www.britannica.com/topic/Western-philosophy/The-19th-century#ref365961; Michel Bourdeau, "Augustue Comte" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, Spring 2023), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/comte/.

[12] Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, Translated by Frank Lubecki Pogson (London: Redwood Press, 1971) 91-93, 222-233. First published 1889.

[13] Bergson, 91-93, 222-233.

however, recognized that time existed before we constructed minutes and hours (and days, months, years, etc.) to understand it, and that the intuition of its passage was a base fact of the human experience.[14] Even if we abide by the appearance of the clock now, Bergson finds time to remain experiential at its core. Bergson termed this subjective, experiential time "la durée / the duration," and argued that returning to that sense of time was a matter of reconciling the mind (which understood the clock) to the body (which felt time differently).[15]

Bergson's metaphysics not only radically redefined what time and its perception meant to the human experience, but also discussed subjectivity, intuition, and the unconscious mind as equal components alongside the rational mind. While his theories covered other facets of knowledge production, those mentioned above were of particular interest to the Parisian music scene, where they were applied liberally to discussions of Musical Impressionism.[16] The attention to the subjectivity of the listener and their unique sense of time implicated by Bergson's philosophy, then, began to filter into the reception of Musical Impressionism as it crystallized into a recognized style of composition.

Terms to Note

Any further discussion of the intersection of music and philosophy, especially between Impressionism and Bergsonian metaphysics, necessitates the use of philosophical terminology. Key terms are perhaps best understood as sets of complements, presented with the understanding that where we may currently see opposites, Bergson sees continuous spectra.[17] The definitions

[14] Bergson, 91-99.
[15] Bergson, 100.
[16] See Chapter II.
[17] Bergson, *Time and Free Will,* 82-85; Leonard Lawlor and Valentine Moulard-Leonard, "Henri Bergson," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, Winter 2022), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/bergson/.

presented below are intended to reflect the terms as understood by Bergson in his intellectual context, and be accessible to the non-expert. While they may appear as binaries, Bergson's metaphysics lays out these categories considered binaristic at the time and seeks to reconcile them.[18] Given that philosophy in part exists to argue the true nature of these terms, they are subject to change depending on the philosopher or type of philosophy in question. Please note that *duration* is a term central to both Bergson's metaphysics and the argument to follow, and will therefore be addressed in greater depth in the next chapter.

Mind	the human faculty that enables one to think, feel, and be aware of the world and their experience in it Related term: the mind is often associated with the *intellect* or *conscious mind.*
Body[19]	the physical structure of a human person by which we experience the world Related term: the body is often associated with the *intuition* or *unconscious impulses.*
Intuition	the human faculty of immediately receiving and/or understanding an experience before (or wholly without) further reasoning **thought to be *subjective*
Intellect	the human faculty of reasoning, often with the implication that this will be carried out apart from sensuality and sentiments. **thought to be *objective*

[18] Arran Gare, "Henri Bergson and the Mind Body Problem: Overcoming Cartesian Dualism," in *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (2020): 170-173. Gare's discussion of mind and matter in Bergson's metaphysics lays out the system of binaries and ways in which Bergson fosters connectivity between them. For example, while the body and the intuition are frequently grouped together, Bergson also reads intuition in terms of the mind. For the average citizen of the Belle Époque, the binaries of Cartesian duality would have been familiar, which is reflected in the terminology and associations presented. Bergson postulates much more cross-wiring here, which animates the discussion of Chapter II.

[19] Much of the discussion to follow will center on the relationship of the mind, the sensory apparatus, and the way in which Belle Époque audiences understood their relationship. As such, this definition of "body" does not sit neatly within an embodied experience of music, but the tedious threshold at which bodily perception becomes internalized as thought—whether conscious or unconscious. While it associates easily with the intuition at first glance, the discussion to follow and privileging of Bergson's philosophy will foster connectivity in this meaning of "body" with both the intuition and the intellect.

Interior / interiority	a philosophical concept referring to the inner life of a person, sometimes thought to be synonymous with subjectivity. In most philosophy, including Bergson's, one's interiority cannot be adequately translated into language, which is what keeps it *interior*.
Exterior / exteriority	referring to elements outside of a person; their surroundings, the world that they are experiencing.
Consciousness	the part of the mind that is aware of itself and the world Related terms: the consciousness is often associated with the *mind,* the *intellect.*
Unconsciousness	the process of the mind that the conscious mind is not aware of Related terms: the unconsciousness is often associated with the sensuality of the *body,* the *intuition.*

On "Musical Impressionism"

At mentioned above, "Impressionist" was an unpopular word among painters and composers alike. Coined in a satirical piece on Monet's *Impression, Soleil Levant* (1874) and first applied to Debussy's early scores at the Académie de Beaux-Arts in 1887, its derogatory connotation devalued art that did not adhere to principles of classical form and structure (for both visual art and musical conventions).[20] Debussy's rise to fame, obvious Symbolist literary interests, and outspoken break with Conservatory models in the name of musical "color" make him a logical figurehead for a style we now know as Musical Impressionism (among other names). Beyond that, Debussy's output was relatively homogenous compared to the more diverse experimentations of other potentially Impressionistic composers, which makes his "poster-boy" status seem economical.

The centrality of Debussy to the standard story of Musical Impressionism is evident in the style histories of the '70s and '80s, which still color common knowledge of this aesthetic today. These tend to feature Debussy in the centerfold and any other composer of note decidedly

[20] Ronald Byrnside, "Musical Impressionism: The Early History of the Term" in *The Musical Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (Fall 1980), 522-523.

labeled "pre-" or "post-Impressionist," such as in Myer's *Modern French Music* (1971) or Palmer's *Impressionism in Music* (1974). This Debussyian axis is similarly translated to familiar history texts, such as the Norton line that populates so many university music history sequences. Questioning this historiography begins in the years of New Musicology with the work of Ronald Byrnside, whose study of Impressionist terminology closes with the argument that a simultaneously vague, visual, and potentially reductive term actually obscures understanding of the composer at hand.[21] The problem framing Musical Impressionism solely by means of Debussy's biography, though, is not only a disservice to Debussy, but to the aesthetic as a whole, as it dispenses with more nuanced view that consideration of other composers may bring.

Methodology & Significance

As a result of a century of Debussy-centric storytelling, available material to study related to Musical Impressionism often hinges on his oeuvre and biography. If we instead frame Musical Impressionism through its reception and philosophical underpinnings, Debussy becomes a point of entry into a broader intellectual context, allow historians to expand beyond the current boundary his oeuvre represents. This thesis argues that approaching Musical Impressionism's aesthetic through the intellectual lens of its first audiences not only nuances how we interpret its "meaning," but also reshapes what we think it can sound like when we release Debussy's compositional techniques as our main metrics. As such, this method is at odds with the issue of what term Debussy is best described by (Impressionist, Symbolist, or just Debussy) in its attempt conceive of the aesthetic beyond his compositional intentions.

[21] Byrnside, 535-537.

At its core, this project argues that consideration of the audience's intellectual context reframes the aesthetic of Musical Impressionism as principally temporal. This culminates in a Bergsonian reading, positioned as a continuation of those found in early 20th-century music criticsm, of several Impressionist pieces that endeavor to be filtered through the lens of the listener rather than insisting on the primacy of the composer.

On Bergsonian Aesthetics

Over the years, several scholars have explored the nature of Bergsonian aesthetics related to this music, including Jann Pasler, Carlo Caballero, Emma Adlard, and most recently, Alexandra Kieffer, in her landmark book of 2019, *Debussy's Critics: Sound, Affect, and the Experience of Modernism*. Their studies have conducted detailed analyses of how Bergson's concept of the duration, or *la durée* may have informed the intricate structures of the compositions by Debussy (and, in Caballero's case, Fauré). Most of these arguments (Kieffer's the exception) feature close readings of individual pieces, often focusing on issues of meter and harmonic rhythm, and provide historical evidence that facilitates meaningful connections between composer, philosopher, and score.

However, they typically find that the musical approaches fall short of effectively representing their philosophical underpinnings. In Pasler's discussion of Debussy's *Jeux* (1913), the rift between music and philosophy has to do with matters of organization. *Jeux* may have captured some semblance of subjective time, but its appearance was logically discernable and consistent alongside the ballet plot—something both Debussy and Bergson termed a "cinematic" approach.[22] For Bergson, the cinematic was antithetical to the duration, an artificial version of

[22] Jann Pasler, "Debussy, 'Jeux:' Playing with Time and Form" in *19th-Century Music* 6, no. 1 (Summer 1982): 74-75.

the actual flux of interior existence—and thus, *Jeux* loses its philosophical edge.[23] Similarly, Alexandra Kieffer's evaluation of *debussyste* reviews invoking Bergson finds their philosophical applications wanting in terms of intellectual rigor.[24] While it is true that philosophical readings can at times be too liberal in their application, there are important methodological differences to consider that may render this one more flexible: namely, those which stem from considering the music as heard by the audience as opposed to written by the composer.

The first issue to consider is this very matter of the privileging the listener. Like Pasler and Kieffer, standard practice is to perform the philosophical reading for a single composer, or even a single work. The intentions and artistic opinions of the composer are foregrounded, for which more granular evidence is often available, and consequently their musical ideas might be tested against the metaphysics more rigorously. This provides great insight to the processes of the various modernist composers, but does not necessarily do the same in its evaluations of listeners who may not be experts in the minutiae of philosophical principles—one would assume not all were.

The second issue has to do with the lens through which one interprets the criticism. In her recent book, Kieffer compiles and systematically examines the writings of Debussy's critics, teasing out important themes and theories present in the reception of his music. Regarding Bergsonian aesthetics, Kieffer seems to ask, *What is the nature of the relationship between Debussy's music and Bergson's philosophy?,* to which the answer ultimately is, *insubstantial.*[25] Building upon her work, one might look at a similar pool of evidence and ask, *How is the audience's sense of interiority shaping a general understanding of an Impressionist aesthetic?*,

[23] Pasler, 74-75.

[24] Alexandra Kieffer, *Debussy's Critics: Sound Affect, and the Experience of Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 276-283.

[25] Kieffer, 277 (question raised), 283 (answer given).

and find that something more substantial is there. In this second line of questioning, the frequent appearance of Bergon's *durée* and its broader applications in the criticism seems to point to listeners with an ear for that temporal sensibility—just a philosophical literacy that may not be as thorough we scholars and historians tend to read into it. This would also make Bergson's celebrity a logical feature of the argument, and "the duration" being a concept with some cultural capital.

In short, the nature of my approach here—audience as opposed to composer, broader philosophical trend over its finer points—endows the boundaries of Musical Impressionism with some flexibility. Impressionism and other emerging modernist styles need not be perfect musical manifestations of a particular philosophy; what matters is their existence in a context where the concept has some currency among its audience to meaningfully inform its reception.

Diving into this intellectual context requires a near-comprehensive grasp of music criticism of the Belle Époque surrounding Debussy and the broader associated aesthetic. To this end, I rely heavily on Kieffer's study of Debussy's critics, which offers a thorough examination of the different periodicals and individual critics that participated in the aesthetic debates surrounding Debussy's style. From a bird's-eye view, the criticism reveals that listeners engaged with Musical Impressionism among a host of newer theories surrounding human consciousness, human experience, and modes of auditory perception—all of which were in some way symptomatic of underlying anxieties surrounding a perceived gap between interior experience and exterior realities.

As they were of interest among literary circles and Parisian salons, these ideas were translated into aesthetic sensibilities through the pen of several critics. In particular, they wrote about music at the nexus of perception theory and philosophy, exploring where music interfaces

with human interiority in terms of both mind and body. To this end, this milieu was apt to discuss the musical experience through the lens of Bergson's metaphysics and popular concepts of synesthesia. Together, the application of these theories to Musical Impressionism tempers its aesthetic priority from the evocation of a visual scene, bridging atmospheric effects to the temporal. Fostering a connection between the two reflects the overturning of Cartesian duality and Kantian appearances, as they seek to situate the musical experience within the unified continuum of mind and body.

In addition to the context Kieffer provides for theories of perception in circulation at this time, Kevin Dann, Lucien Midavaine, and Joseph Acquisto note the popularity of synesthesia in late nineteenth-century salon settings, particularly those interested in Symbolism. Prizing the "confusion of the senses" as a sign of a more evolved sensory apparatus, these authors demonstrate how aestheticized versions of this psychological condition began to mediate musical performances: Dann details how mass culture found that synesthetically-consumed art might trigger individual transcendence; Midavaine compiles the different salon tactics for staging synesthetic musical performances; and Acquisto discusses how preoccupation with synesthetic perception found expression in late Symbolist writings.[26] The timeframe for this intellectual current coincides with the development of Debussy's concert career and entry into salon performance, suggesting that they would circulate among his milieu in addition to appearing in the Symbolist texts informing musical aesthetics.[27]

[26] Kevin Dann, *Bright Colors Falsely Seen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 17-18; Lucien Midavaine, "Music and the Converage of the Arts in Symbolist Salon Forms: From the Salons de la Rose+Crois to the Salons d'Art Idèaliste," in *Nineteenth-Century Music Worldwide* 18, no. 2 (Autumn 2019): 81-82, 86; Joseph Acquisto, *French Symbolist Poetry and the Idea of Music* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2016), 81-116.

[27] Arthur Wenk, *Claude Debussy and the Poets* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 1-8.

The philosophical complement to these perception theories, particularly of Wagnerian music critics, focused on the applications of Henri Bergson's metaphysics upon hearing Impressionist music. Music critics such as Louis Laloy, Paul Landormy, Tancrède de Visan, and still others were avid attendees of Bergson's public lectures and eager to comment on the intersection of his ideas with the developing Impressionist aesthetic—the details of which are discussed in Chapter 1. Bergson's overturning of longstanding rational philosophies, trading the priorities of space and visuality for time and ephemeral senses, persisted the in the concept of "the duration." It is this notion of the duration that is central to Bergson's metaphysics, and makes the most frequent appearance in relation to music in the writings of the aforementioned critics. Bergson first introduces this idea in *Time and Free Will,* a volume published in 1889 and in circulation for over a decade before the height of his celebrity, bulk of his lecture circuits, and consequently, appearance in musical publication (most often magazine critiques).[28] I center my argumentation on this text rather than his later *Matter and Memory* (1896), because it focuses on defining the duration rather than finding new applications for it.

Conceptually, the ideas of synesthesia and Bergson's duration interleave quite well. This synesthetic listening posture characterizes Impressionism's "atmosphere" as not superficially sensual but ultimately a means to a more profound interior experience. When considered from the audience's perspective, the "point" of Impressionist music may not have been so visually driven, but instead designed to reveal something about the psyche. Approaching Impressionist

[28] This thesis will reference articles and essays published in *La Revue wagnérienne, La Grande revue: Paris et Saint-Pétersbourg, Le Courrier musical, Comœdia, Le Temps,* and *Vers et Prose* in the years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. These publications range from the arts-specific to the everyday, with most of the critics Wagnerian in their aesthetic leanings. *La Revue wagnérienne* was a literary magazine devoted to artistic and philosophical ideas related to Wagner (or at least Wagner as the French knew him), *La Grande revue: Paris et Saint-Pétersbourg* was a variety journal focusing on sports, arts, and other manners of leisurely culture, *Le courier musical* was a semiformal music journal, *Comœdia* was an arts and letters newspaper established after the turn of the century, *Le Temps* was one of France's most influential daily newspapers, similar to the *New York Times*, and *Vers et Prose* was a French literary magazine with a strong Symbolist leaning.

music through this perceptual lens, then, would seem to have us pricking our ears for any instance in a piece that speaks to the duration. In some pieces, this may appear as the evocation of an atmosphere without a clear temporal context, in the traditional sense of Impressionism. In others, it may be subtle manipulations of meter that render musical time indistinct. In the former, programmatic content or poetic inspiration seem necessary: features that reinforce Musical Impressionism as a highly visual and literary style. The latter, however, does not seem to require them, which would prompt us to reconceptualize how we interpret Musical Impressionism. Doing so would seem to repopulate "the Impressionists," counting those who intentionally obscure meter in their compositions alongside Debussy.

In broad strokes, the project of Chapter 1 is to demonstrate the historical basis for considering Musical Impressionism from the perceptual and philosophical perspective of its audience, and describe how those theories operate in relation to the music at hand. Chapter 2, then, seeks to apply this manner of historical listening to other composers of the period whose works and their reception reflect similar sensibilities. Here, I rely on the model of hermeneutic analysis provided by Steve Rings, as well as studies of meter and their perception by Carlo Caballero and Harald Krebs. The structure of this project not only reflects the dynamic relationship of musicology and music theory in constructing our historiographies, but also demonstrates the fertile ground between these distinct disciplines that can be fruitful in rounding out our perspective on musical development when tended to properly. Reconceptualizing the Impressionist aesthetic through the lens of the duration, following these models in music theory, gives us a new metric by which we may evaluate composers as Impressionistic that does not necessitate direct comparison to Debussy. To this end, I offer my thoughts on the works of Gabriel Fauré, Madame Poldowski, and Marion Bauer.

***

As may already be apparent in the preceding text, the nature of arguing at the intersection of Musical Impressionism and this particular philosophy presents a few unique challenges. The first of these stems from the effort to recontextualize visual elements of Musical Impressionism in light of this philosophy. The issue lies not in the evidence or the argument, but in the language we typically use to describe music—so much of it relies on visual associations, even when that may not be the reason for using it. While I try to remedy this with selection of more neutral language during analysis, I recognize it as a potential limitation. The second, perhaps more important, is related to discussion of the philosophy itself. On one hand, it is the task of any academic text to present a logical argument. On the other, Bergson's philosophy, in its effort to realign the intuition and the intellect, capitalizes on the illogical in its attempt to foster continuity between the two—thus transcending our traditional view of what logic is. How does one construct a logical argument using material that, in many ways, is diametrically opposed to that very method of creating new understanding?

In many ways, the cognitive dissonance brought forth in such a question is of the same strain that Bergson contends with temporally and Impressionists grapple with musically. Bergson knows the constraints of language and logic, but must use them, just as the Impressionists contend with the limits of Classical music theory, yet make do with their fragments. Acknowledging the conceptual difficulty (or perhaps impossibility) of attempting to answer such a question not only allows us to better understand the crux of their dialogue, but also permits us to follow their lead when the going gets tough. In what follows, I attempt to use Bergson's approach, adhering to the conventions of a logical argument, while leaving room for the possibility that logic itself is artificial here.

CHAPTER II

IMPRESSIONIST TEMPORALITIES:

BERGSON, MUSIC, AND THE SYMBOLIST MILIEU

Accounting for the audience's understanding of sensory perception begins to nuance the role of visuality within the Impressionist aesthetic with that of temporality. Based on evidence in the criticism of the period, this shift is perhaps best captured in Henri Bergson's metaphysics of the *duration*, and his description of the processes of perception in the *conscious state(s).* To really grasp the implications of Bergson's philosophy in the consolidation of Impressionism as an aesthetic, though, one must understand how concurrent notions of sensory perception shaped important attitudes in music consumption. During the emergence of Musical Impressionism, influential Symbolist circles theorized sensory perception as an art unto itself, something that could be perfected through the appeal of multisensory artistic stimuli, such as musical performance staged with all five (or more) senses in mind. With a growing pool of evidence surrounding a nascent psychological condition called *synesthesia,* these circles found new possibilities in their effort to augment human experience through artistic experimentation.

Intuitive Listening

To assume that Musical Impressionism relies on visuality also assumes that its audience understood their senses to be discrete rather than interconnected. However, a glimpse into the Symbolist salon cultures of Paris preceding the traditional timeline of Musical Impressionism complicates such straightforward assumptions. Symbolists, by the 1880s, were captivated by a psychological condition called *synesthesia*, for which an abundance of anecdotal evidence was

becoming a newspaper sensation.[29] Individuals with synesthesia reported a "confusion of the senses" in which stimuli and the resultant sensory impression were not aligned in the traditional sense. Popular examples at the time included *l'audition colorée,* a strain of synesthesia in which hearing particular sounds induced splotches of color across an individual's line of vision.[30] Securing synesthesia's introduction into popular culture apart from scientific community was Rimbaud's "Voyelles" (1883), capitalizing on the earlier success of Baudelaire's "Correspondences" (1857), which plays on associations of color, smell, and touch with the vowels of the Latin alphabet.

While medical professionals sought to understand synesthesia as a condition with a cause and cure, Symbolists were fascinated by the idea that previously discrete senses could interact to the point of such blurred boundaries. Rather than a physiological deviation, they came to consider synesthesia a sign of a more perfect human evolution, a means of transcendence, and a return to the genesis of human consciousness before the mind and body became such dissociated concepts.[31] For these reasons, synesthesia was something the Symbolists found desirable, and perhaps best approximated through carefully coordinated aesthetic experiences.

Throughout the *fin-de-siècle,* Symbolist salons—decidedly *Wagneriste* and sometimes occultist in their leanings—would experiment with the "orchestrating" of other senses in musical performance.[32] These techniques would pair invocations of other senses to a musical performance, almost like a wine tasting. Perhaps the most extravagant examples come from the Salon de la Rose et Croix and the related Salon d'Art Idéaliste, in which musical performances

[29] Kevin Dann, *Bright Colors Falsely Seen* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 28-29.
[30] Dann, 21.
[31] Dann, 46-47.
[32] Lucien Midavaine, "Music and the Convergence of the Arts in Symbolist Salons: From the Salons de la Rose+Croix to the Salons d'Art Idéaliste" in *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwidwe* 18, no. 2 (Autumn 2019): 81-82.

would be staged with colored lighting, incense burning, flowers strewn across the floor, and so forth to create a synesthetic experience towards the rumored moment of transcendence.[33] This transcendence was not so much ascending to something above the human experience, but rather transcending the logics that organized it (e.g., the division of the senses) to achieve a truer sense of one's interior self—something that could not be neatly explained, and thus had to be directly experienced. Central to the development of Symbolist pseudo-synesthesia and its staging was writer (and occultist) Joséphin Péladan (1858-1918), who periodically wrote opera criticism and would recommend perfumes for certain harmonies or plot points, arguing that "the aromatic action acts similarly to the sound wave."[34]

Experimental synesthetic performances and references in music criticism soon gave way to attempts at a more thorough taxonomy of sensory equivalence and cross-wiring, most evident in the writing of late Symbolist René Ghil in *Traité du Verbe* (1886). In this text, Ghil attempts to codify the synesthetic artist's palette, demonstrating how particular vowels associate with different colors, instruments, key areas, and so on. Although Ghil's theories eventually carried him away from Symbolism in their more exaggerated universalism, his engagement with the processes of multisensory perception as a veritable form of artistic method signals just how seriously these theories were taken by the aesthetically inclined.[35] Synesthesia, once a fanciful

[33] Midavaine, 81-82, 86.

[34] Midavaine, 81-82; Joséphin Péladan, "Critique musicale," *La Grande revue: Paris et Saint-Pétersbourg* May 25, 1889, 408–410. The original French reads: "M. Paravey devrait mettre un peu d'encens dans les accessoires. L'action des parfums collaborerait puissamment avec celle de l'harmonie. À Bayreuth, j'ai conseillé qu'on essayât des pulvérisations odorantes à l'acte des femmes-fleurs: car l'action aromale agit similairement à l'onde sonore."

[35] Joseph Acquisto, *French Symbolist Poetry and the Idea of Music* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2016), 81-84; Dann, *Bright Colors Falsely Seen*, 26-30. It is important to note that, while Ghil was one of the more vocal theorizers of *l'audition colorée* and other sensory equivalences, he was not always taken seriously by his contemporaries due to just how completely he was willing to equate science and poetics. However, his commitment to applying synesthetic perception theory in the arts signals just how strong this synesthetic undercurrent ran in Symbolist circles.

anecdote, had become somewhat of an artistic discourse and a noteworthy facet of the listening experience.

This aestheticized sensory perception, replete with fantastical approximations of synesthetic transcendence, profoundly reorients interpretations of atmosphere and the role of visuality in Musical Impressionism. Here, individual senses are not valued in a particular experience of music on their own terms, but rather in the way they can cross boundaries in the larger network of sensory perception. This means that the visual priority of any artistic experience only reached as far as its ability to "touch" the other senses, and perhaps offer that instance of synesthetic transcendence to be found in the reconciliation of mind and body.

How, then, do we conceive of the Impressionist musical program if it is not, in fact, a mere play of timbre and evocations of color, light, and other visual cues? This is where the visual may give way to temporal matters. The introduction of the synthetic sensory perception is predicated on subjectivity of experience that might start with, but goes beyond, what individual atmospheric associations a listener might have. That is to say, the scene evoked by the music for its listener—its "atmosphere"—is only the beginning of what it *means* according to this process of listening. This notion of synesthetic transcendence in musical listening implicates not only this highly subjective interpretation of atmosphere, but a shifting of attention towards one's interiority *as it interprets*. For example, the "atmosphere" of Impressionist music can be acknowledged as something very personal soon after it occurs, with further interpretation delving into where the listener positions themselves within it rather than more exact details of the landscape.

If transcendence is marked by a shift from the exterior to the interior in a moment that may feel more expansive than it appears on the clock, then there is an element of highly

subjective time at play as well. In this sense, Impressionist music as sensory stimulus could be interpreted as an opportunity to bridge the gap between interior and exterior, mind and body. More simply put, this transcendental association implies a listening posture in which discernment of one's own sensory experience seemingly pulls time out of context. This goes beyond merely perceiving the evoked atmosphere with acute intentionality; otherwise, the time associated with the scene may seem to pass more regularly. Rather, this posture would have the listener acknowledge the atmosphere and turn their attentions to where they find themselves within it, an introspective turn that begets subjective time.

That the atmospheric effect of Impressionist music leads to the experience of subjective time without being fully representative of it is conceptually difficult to disentangle. What is important to remember here is that the subjective sense of time was thought to have ultimately been supplied by the listener, not enforced by the music itself. It would appear that audiences of this generation were interested in the idea that the music, by means of evoking a given atmosphere (for example, the sea), suggested a very particular moment to which the current time and place do not apply. The listener, perhaps hoping for synesthetic perception of the music, would immerse themselves in the moment that the music offered them, internalizing it with whatever subjective associations they may have had. This commitment the musical moment, seemingly outside of *traditional time*, is what posed the opportunity for the rumored transcendence: the *subjective time* made apparent in its absence.

As such, this approach to reunifying mind and body in a moment of transcendence troubles, if not attempts to dissolve, the boundary between the subjective experience of the listener and the objective occurrence of the stimuli (music and/or other staged components). This is all to say that, from the very beginning of Musical Impressionism's development, visuality

was considered as part of the *means*, whereas this temporal, transcendental emphasis is perhaps a better representation of the *end.*

The development of this attitude in music criticism in relation to Musical Impressionism was especially apparent in those stemming from *Wagneriste* publications such as the *Revue Musicale* and *Revue Wagnérienne.* Over last 30 years of the nineteenth century, critics grappled with the operations of music on a listener's interiority, seeking to reconcile music, sensation, and emotion. Wyzewa, notable among the writers at the *Revue Wagnérienne,* wrote of music as both a facet and influencer of "internal states," or tangles of subjective sensations rendered thought and feeling as one meditates on them. In a review that begins with the art scene of 1886 salons and eventually moves on to contemporaneous music, he writes:

> At first, our soul feels sensations, phenomena of pleasure and pain: these are the various colors, physical touches, smells, or sonorities, all things that we believe to be external qualities, and which are merely internal states of mind [*esprit*]… Sensations and ideas are pared down and multiply, jumbled together in the rushing current. These are the emotions—passion, anguish and fervent joy, which are supreme and rare states of mind: they are a confused whirlwind of colors, sonorities and thoughts: and then one marvels at the vertigo.
>
> [À l'origine, notre âme éprouve des sensations, phénomènes de plaisir ou de peine: et c'est les diverses couleurs, résistances, odeurs, ou sonorités, toutes choses que nous croyons des qualités externes, et qui sont, uniquement, des états intérieurs de l'esprit… Les sensations et les notions s'amincissent, se multiplient, au point qu'elles deviennent imprécises, dans la coulee totale. C'est les émotions, la passionnante angoisse et la fervide joie, états suprêmes et rares de l'esprit; elles sont encore un tourbillon confus de couleurs, de sonorités et de pensées: et puis un éblouissement devant ce vertige.][36]

In this passage, Wyzewa lays out a process of aesthetic perception drawing on synesthetic sensory simultaneity, predicated on affect, and anticipating the singular experience of

[36] Téodor Wyzewa, "Notes sur la peinture wagnérienne et le salon de 1886," *Le Revue wagnérienne,* May 8, 1886.

transcendence that it brings about (here referenced as "vertigo"). In the broader context of this particular article, Wyzewa puts this idea in conversation with Wagner's own estimations of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, calling on examples in music, painting, and poetry ranging from the Romantic to the Symbolist and Impressionist—finding the latter the most favorable for this synesthetic, transcendent listening posture.[37]

In review, the synesthetic interests of Symbolists informed how audiences listened to Musical Impressionism, reducing the place of visuality in its interpretation from that of a *priority* to a *component* alongside other human senses. Considering these theories in practice, the multisensory appeal of an Impressionist "atmosphere," already subjective in a listener's interpretation, is perhaps better understood as an access point to a subjective sense of time than a mere landscape. This is quite at odds with the Germanic "contemplative listening" associated with the Romanticism of the early- to mid-nineteenth century, which valorized listening to serious works with an intellectual emphasis for personal improvement. The principles of synesthetic listening after French Symbolists, however, traded prioritization of intellect for that of intuition, finding its significance no less profound as it characterized a return to a mythologized "original" human experience, unfettered by the constraints of the public timetable and compartmentalized approach to life.[38] If the Romanticist was marked by contemplative listening, then the Impressionist—decidedly less "serious"—did so *intuitively*.

---

[37] One of the many *Wagnéristes* in Paris at the time, Wyzewa's writing here is representative of a strong preference for Wagner's musical influence in the development of a French national aesthetic. Heavily associated with artistic rebellion against the status quo and hence a cutting-edge composer, *Wagnérisme* took Paris by storm—especially among those interested in Symbolism. Early in his career, Debussy was among those so infatuated, but as Franco-German tensions festered, Wagner and his Germanness became a less pronounced interest in French musicmaking. For more, see Alex Ross, *Wagnerism: Art and Politics in the Shadow of Music* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2020), 45-46.

[38] Alain Corbin, "Identity, Bells, and the Nineteenth-Century French Village" in *Hearing History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), 184-204. Corbin details that mechanical time, kept on clocks and communicated through city bells, both consolidated a community identity and kept the individual beholden to the demands of an industrializing culture—e.g., living on somebody else's time, driven on the basis of

Bergsonian Philosophy: Impressionism, Intuition, & Immediacy

In keeping with the Symbolist synesthetic concepts and their transcendental connotations, Bergson argued for a reintegration of the senses that would rescue continuity of the human experience between interiority and exteriority as a way to reconcile the mind-body dissociation in popular in Cartesian dualism.[39] With this concern at the forefront, Bergson gained traction in the academy through his valorization of immediacy and intuition.

According to Bergson, the self was indeed made up of the intellect and intuition, but had become fragmented as the intellect became the privileged functionality, as well as the most pragmatic for social navigation, across European society.[40] In his view, this disconnect became the basis for the mind-body dissociation pervasive in Western civilization, and was the underlying reason for disjunct binaries concerning philosophical discussions of the self, such as mind and body, interiority and exteriority, self and other, subjective and objective, and so forth. That these binaries failed to capture the nuances and innate contradictions of human experience turned Bergson's attentions towards creating continuities between seemingly disparate, though complementary, ideas.[41] For Bergson, this work began with rebalancing the perceived value of intuition and intellect.

If the intellect was the most socially valuable, and therefore self-conscious, feature of personhood, then Bergson reasoned that the intuition was more representative of one's fundamental identity.[42] The experience of the intuitive self, predicated on immediacy and

---

productivity, such as that of the growing factory system. While this may have created a unified rhythm to collective life, it also represented a clear departure from interior temporality and timekeeping standardized by sunlight hours or local preferences.

[39] Arran Gare, "Henri Bergson and the Mind Body Problem: Overcoming Cartesian Dualism," in *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (2020): 167-169.

[40] Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will,* Translated by Frank Lubecki Pogson (London: Redwood Press, 1971) 130. First published 1889.

[41] Bergson, 80-82.

[42] Bergson, 129-130.

sensuality, was able to grasp the "organic whole" of a circumstance, whereas later analysis by the intellect would create categories of perception (like the senses), distinctions, and ultimately, contradictions.[43] In short, it is the intellect that fragments one's sense of self, and Bergson's task of theorizing human consciousness back into a continuous whole effectively meant facilitating the reconnection of intellect and intuition through reconstructing theories of human perception. It is this dynamic *process* that Bergson defines as the human experience—not the *object* of this reasoning. Bergson characterizes this concept as follows:

> Let us ask consciousness to isolate itself from the external world, and, by a vigorous effort of abstraction, to become itself again.[44]

This approach already set Bergson apart from a philosophical tradition that usually championed intellect over sensation, but what fundamentally distinguished his metaphysics was the way his reconfigured perception theory inverted the space-time experience of the human consciousness.[45] Traditionally, Western philosophy since the Enlightenment conceived of the human consciousness confronted with spatial perception as the most inherent and objectively apparent experience of reality, with the passage of time certainly being relevant, but a secondary and more passive experience compared to that of space. In Bergson's estimation, this is backwards; time is the primary unit of human experience, and each person feels its "flow" differently—that is to say, subjectively. Space is by no means irrelevant, but Bergson finds that each individual's unique experience of it has profound implications on their innate sense of temporality, to the point that consideration of one's relationship to time supersedes that of space

[43] Bergson, 136
[44] Bergson, 90.
[45] Leonard Lawlor and Valentine Moulard-Leonard, "Henri Bergson" in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, Winter 2022), https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/bergson/.

in terms of "knowing oneself" to the core. This characterization of the consciousness was first introduced in the publication of Bergson's dissertation in 1889, entitled *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (English title *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of the Consciousness*), and marked the beginning of his ascent in the French Academy. In opening his discussion of time and space, Bergson writes:

> No doubt it is possible, as we shall show later, to conceive the successive moments of time independently of space [underline mine]; but when we add to it the present moment those which have preceded it, as is the case when we are adding up units, we are not dealing with these moments themselves, since they have vanished forever, but with the lasting traces which they seem to have left in space on their passage through it.[46]

Through lecture series and further publications on this subject, as well as assorted professorial positions throughout the 1890s and early 1900s, Bergson established himself as an authoritative figure in French intellectual life by the beginning of the twentieth century. Bergson's lectures were attended by their own contingency of music critics, whose articles incorporated these temporal ideas in conversation with Musical Impressionism. These Bergsonian critics, Raphaël Cor (1882-19??)[47], Tancrède de Visan (1878-1945), Paul Landormy (1869-1943), and the above-mentioned Louis Laloy, engaged the most significantly with Bergson's ideas in print, particularly that of the *duration.*[48]

Bergson's duration is best understood in tandem with that of the *conscious state*, the relationship between the two detailing his inversion of the traditional space-time metaphysics to

---

[46] Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 79.

[47] Further research into Raphaël Cor has not confirmed a date for his death. This information reflects how Cor's lifespan is listed on https://www.nietzsche-en-france.fr/publications-sur-nietzsche/rapha%C3%ABl-cor/, a site compiling all writings referencing the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche.

[48] Alexandra Kieffer, *Debussy's Critics: Sound, Affect, and the Experience of Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019) 277.

time-space. The *conscious state* refers to the idea that moments of human experience are identifiable through unique affects or sensations generated in response to the multisensory stimuli of one's environment. In short, the intuitive response of our interior being to the phenomenon of ongoing sensory perception becomes a conscious state. Quite similar to the aforementioned synesthetic theories, the emphasis on *multi*sensory stimuli here underscores the need for reintegrated sensory perception rather than continued reliance on visual observation, which is evident in how Bergson goes about unpacking his theories.[49] However, Bergson does not find conscious states to compile discretely or in a linear fashion—they are "mutually permeable," meaning they *compound* more than they *compile*, creating continuity between each new experience as they cast new perspectives on the others rather than rounding them off into their own exclusive events. [50] While explaining conscious states in greater detail, Bergson writes:

> —do we not count feelings, sensations, ideas, all of which permeate one another, and each of which, for its part, takes up the whole of the soul?—Yes, undoubtedly; but, just because they permeate one another, we cannot count them unless we represent them by homogeneous units which occupy separate positions in space and consequently no longer permeate one another.[51]

Bergson's point on the conscious states within the duration here is that they rely on the context of what precedes and follows them, and cannot be better understood by attempting to isolate one or another. Much like a melody, a single note does not mean much on its own; it is its context within the larger unit that informs our interpretation of it.

[49] In most Western philosophy preceding Bergson, illustrations of the metaphysics are facilitated through visually driven examples, favored for their static nature and sense of permanence that makes further analysis possible. Bergson, however, shows a preference for the more ephemeral senses, which nuances and at times overturns the work of previous philosophers such as Kant. For more information on this, see the introduction.

[50]Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 85-91.

[51] Bergson, 89.

If the conscious state covers the spatial perception of the consciousness, the *duration* refers to the sense of time with which they occur. The temporal priority is marked here by the very way we articulate our experience—for example, even writing about the physicality of experience denoted in the conscious state, we still typically refer to it as a "moment," which would privilege temporality as the general foundation from which we extract human experience. However, one's perception of such a moment is entirely subjective; not bound to the standardization of clock time, but to the relative intensity of their own conscious state. Here, the concept of mutual permeation of these conscious states becomes paramount, as it renders them undifferentiable within their fluid succession perception.[52] In Bergson's metaphysics, he describes multiple subsets of the duration concept that each denote different degrees of mind-body dissociation or unification.[53] The general term "duration," originally "*la durée,"* refers to the concept in the ideal form, or "pure duration," in which the mind-body dissociation is effectively reconnected and the sensory apparatus reintegrated. Summarizing the relationship of the *duration* to the *conscious states*, Bergson writes:

> Pure duration is the form which the succession of our conscious states assumes when our ego lets itself *live* [original italics], when it refrains from separating its present state from its former states… [this dynamic relationship] forms both the past and present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune, melting, so to speak, into one another.[54]

The ideal Bergsonian duration appeared in music criticism in 1909 in the writings of Louis Laloy, who grappled with the idea in relation to Debussy's *Pelléas et Melisande* despite

[52] Bergson, 89-90, 106, 129. Bergson later comments that to separate out conscious states is to unwittingly, and symbolically, replace our sense of time with that of space (e.g., clock time) (p. 106), and that maintaining this fluidity is to preserve the "fundamental self" (129).

[53] Bergson, 82, 86-87.

[54] Bersgon, 100.

the years separating him from its 1902 premiere.[55] As a general rule, Laloy—following precedents in less outright philosophical references of Cor and Visan—posed Bergson as the philosophical analog to Musical Impressionism alongside Symbolist poetry and Impressionist painting. Bergson himself seemed to license this interpretation of his philosophy, as his surviving correspondences reveals that he found the style associated with Debussy as "music of the duration".[56]

The extent to which music critics and Bergson alike engaged with the minutiae of the music and philosophy in-depth was at times vague and inconsistent. However, the fact of its reference in music criticism may still stand to provide valuable insight. That the duration appears, even if without consistent, philosophically robust argumentation, suggests that its association with Impressionist music may have mediated the audience's approach to listening to it. In the reading of "duration" into Debussy's compositions, the Impressionist prerequisite for atmospheric evocations and visual associations undergoes a similar inversion that Bergson performed in the broader scope of philosophy: the programmatic content becomes a mere component of a more substantial, subjective experience of time.

Consider how this temporal sensibility in Musical Impressionism in the early twentieth century seemingly continues the sensory theories of Symbolist salon culture: intuitive listening encourages the listener to engage in music with all senses, and Bergson's duration makes manifest the temporal priority implicated in this thorough recontextualization of mind, body, and music. Here, Impressionist music as a means of sensory transcendence among the Symbolists can be reinterpreted as a reunification of the Bergsonian "fundamental," intuitive self to the

[55] Louis Laloy, "La musique chez soi: M. Henri Bergson et la musique," *Comœdia*, February 19, 1914, 3.
[56] Elena Rovenko,"Henri Bergson: 'the Music of Debussy is the Music of 'la durée'," in *Journal of the Moscow Conservatory* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 1-2.

intellectual self. In this sense, to experience Musical Impressionism in its heyday is to listen with the whole body, anticipating that the music had the potential to express, if not invoke, an entirely subjective experience of time capable of returning the mind to the body. This does not completely dispense with what is "programmatic" about Musical Impressionism—that is, the assumed atmospheres, narratives, colors, light, and so forth—but relegates it to the secondary position of space and "conscious states" in Bergsonian metaphysics.

Bergsonian Reading of Musical Impressionism

The association between Musical Impressionism and Bergsonian principles were popular topoi by 1910, especially among those who sought to characterize the general aesthetic of the Belle Époque.[57] While there are some philosophical points implicated in earlier reviews, the first to explicitly invoke Bergson's work alongside Debussy's was Tancrède de Visan (a pseudonym; given name Vincent Biétrix) in his diagnostic of "l'esthétique contemperain" (the contemporary aesthetic), "La philosophie de M. Bergson et le lyrisme contemperain" (The philosophy of Mr. Bergson and the contemporary lyricism), an essay that first appeared in *Revue des lettres et des arts* in 1909. In this essay, de Visan finds that Bergson and Debussy prioritize continuity in the face of mind-body dissociation: Bergson, the continuity of perception and the consciousness of the fluid, fundamental self; Debussy, exemplifying this in fluid melodies and static-seeming harmonies that do not adhere to the traditional logics of contained phrase and chord progressions.[58] This not only aligns with Bergson's "pure duration," but also reflects ideas that

[57] Kieffer, *Debussy's Critics: Sound, Affect, and the Experience of Modernism,* 276-278.

[58] Tancrède de Visan, "La philosophie de M. Bergson et le lyrisme contemporain" in *Vers et Prose* 21 (Paris: Rédaction et administration du Recueil, 1910), 125-140. The parenthetical comments here are my own speculation.

Bergson initially communicates through musical metaphor. While revising the flow of conscious states relative to subjective time, Bergson writes:

> But the fact is that each increase of stimulation is taken up into the preceding stimulations, and that the whole produces on us the effect of a musical phrase which is constantly on the point of ending and constantly altered in its totality by the addition of some new note.[59]

If the listener follows what de Visan outlines below as Bergson and Debussy's precedent in re-establishing this continuity, or, as Bergson would put it, a return to the *duration,* the experience reveals new depths of the self beyond the evocations of mere "atmosphere." Towards this end, in music as well as the broader aesthetic of the age, de Visan writes:

> "If we descend into the deeper layers of our being, we discover another, entirely distinct Self at our core. Instead of lifeless psychological states, disjunct or isolated through intellectualization, we come in contact with a Self that is truly integrated beyond traditional expression, 'because language itself cannot grasp it without pinning it down and adapting it to [the] banality [of the intellect].'[60] But this *first* Self, who flows in pure duration like the fluctuation of life, is not so much a *thing,* but a *process.* This is the ultimate Self, the *subliminal Self* (italics de Visan's), a sort of current that runs with our most profound impressions, that Symbolists aim to express lyrically."
>
> ["Si nous descendons dans les couches profondes de l'être, nous découvrons un autre moi tout différent du premier. A la place d'états psychologiques inertes, juxtaposes ou isolés par l'intelligence, nous entrons en contact avec un moi confus, il est vrai, et en quelque sorte inexprimable « parce que le langage ne saurait le saisir sans en fixer la mobilité, ni l'adapter à sa forme banale », mais un moi *premier*, qui s'écoule dans la pure durée et qui est comme le flux de la vie, un moi concret qui n'est plus une *chose*, mais un *progrès*. C'est ce moi ultime, ce *subliminal self,* cette sorte de courant[127], qui draine nos impressions les plus profondes, que les symbolistes ont voulu exprimer lyriquement."][61]

[59] Bergson, *Time and Free Will,* 106.

[60] Here, de Visan quotes another article on the subject that appeared the same year in the *Revue de Philosophie* by William James—more a man of letters than a critic with musical expertise.

[61] de Visan, "La philosophie de M. Bergson et le lyrisme contemporain," 125-140.

de Visan's argument here is representative of perhaps one of the most in-depth engagements with Bergson's metaphysics in relation to the arts, endeavoring to develop a conversation beyond the assignment of analogues. This is evident in his invocation of such Bergsonian concepts as the "fluid Self," and the premise of selfhood as a process rather than an object. Given this characterization, Musical Impressionism does not just paint an aural atmosphere, but reflects the flowing of the core (or, to borrow de Visan's terminology, *first* or *premier*) self in that moment of atmosphere in keeping with Bergsonian duration.

In this essay and others, such as what appears in *Le cas Debussy* (*The Debussy Problem*) (1910), de Visan extends this philosophical value to other composers, such as Fauré, d'Indy, Dukas, and de Sévérac as a unifier of the general Belle Époque musical aesthetic.[62] Other critics, even without diving into Bergsonian ideals, mention distinctions between musical representations of atmosphere and self in Impressionist listening before de Visan's.[63] For example, *Le Temps* critic Pierre Lalo (1866-1943), wrote in a review for Debussy's *La Mer* that the music did not leave "an impression of the nature itelf [l'impression non point d'être devant la nature elle-même]," but of "being before [d'être…devant]" it.[64]

In the year following de Visan's essay, *Le Courrier musical* critic Paul Landormy wrote an article that, while not engaging with the metaphysics quite as specifically, similarly posed Bergson as musical analog to Impressionism. Entitled "M. Claude Debussy et l'avenir de la musique française" (Mr. Claude Debussy and the Future of French Music), Lalo evaluates Debussy as both Impressionist and Symbolist, reflecting on the consolidation of a musical

[62] Kieffer, *Debussy's Critics: Sound, Affect, and the Experience of Modernism*, 277.
[63] Kieffer, 277.
[64] Pierre Lalo, "Revue de "La Mer" de M. Claude Debussy" in *Le Temps* May 20, 1905.

aesthetic and reasoning its trajectory within the broader scope of French cultural capital. Here, Lalo treats Bergson's philosophy in general as an aesthetic underpinning, seemingly following de Visan's precedent. On this, he writes:

> —we cannot miss the striking analogy of this conception of the role of music, not only with the fundamental tendencies of Impressionist poetry, but also with the most characteristic ideas of M. Bergson's philosophy.
>
> [—l'on ne peut manquer d'être frappé pas l'analogie d'une telle conception du role de la musique, non seulement avec les tendances fondamentales de la poésie impressioniste, mais encore avec les idées les plus caractéristiques de la philosophie de M. Bergson.][65]

If de Visan and Landormy draw attention to the intimate relationship between Musical Impressionism and Bergsonian metaphysics, Louis Laloy brands the general aesthetic as Bergsonian in his earlier-cited *Comœdia* article "La musique chez soi: M. Henri Bergson et la musique" (Our Home [French] Music: Mr. Henri Bergson and Music) (1914). In later writings, Laloy's Bergsonian evaluations of this music become contradictory, especially as he incorporates thoughts on representation mediated by the emergent technology of the phonograph.[66] While some scholars take this turn as the demise of Bergsonian implications within Musical Impressionism, I argue that the philosophical tune of criticism before Laloy's contradictory "retrospective reimaginings" remains valuable given the broad cultural pull of Bergson's ideas.

---

[65] Paul Landormy, "M. Claude Debussy et l'avenir de la musique française" in *Courrier musical*, February 1, 1910, 99. Other scholars have translated this passage to the effect of "Impressionist poetics." However, Lalo's positioning of the music here as a body of work parallel to this commentary on poetry would suggest that he also intends to reference the body of poetry rather than a set of theoretical and structural principles. For more on this, see Aimée Israel-Pelletier, *Rimbaud' Impressionist Poetics: Vision and Visuality* (Wales: University of Wales Press, 2012).

[66] Kieffer, *Debussy's Critics: Sound, Affect, and the Experience of Modernism*, 283; While Laloy's technological turn here is very much in line with Kittler's writings in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1999), they date well past the momentum of Musical Impressionism as a movement. This is certainly a great example of the historical and cultural forming of listening habits, valorized by Helmholtz and an extension of the argument of this paper, but lies outside the scope of the project chronologically.

This pull is not only evident in the citation Bergson's ideas in print, but also in the ways they interleave with discussion of perception theory, psychoacoustics, and later, phenomenology among music critics.[67]

It is my aim to continue the work of critics like de Visan and Landormy here through a more substantial engagement with Bergson's concepts of the *duration* and *conscious state,* with the hope that reconciling Impressionist visuality and temporality in this framework might also function as a means of nuancing how we come to understand Musical Impressionism as an aesthetic. Drawing on the precedents set above by these critics, I propose that the reframing of Musical Impressionism begin with recontextualizing the "aural atmosphere" within the Bergsonian discourse on re-establishing mind-body continuity, which champions subjective temporal experience aided by, but not reliant upon, a visual program. This reading continues the historical precedent of consolidating the Impressionist aesthetic through philosophy, and strives to provide further nuance by considering their impact on mediating the audience's approach to listening.

Duration [la durée]

Bergson and critics alike esteemed Debussy's Impressionism as the incarnation of the duration concept, the most pertinent feature of Bergson's metaphysics to be applied to musical aesthetics. If the duration denotes the experiential flow of time (i.e., distinct from clock measure), then Musical Impressionism is reflective of, if not an encouragement of attention towards, that flow. Taken this way, the "moment" of musical experience that a particular piece of

[67] Kieffer, 283. While engagement with the intersection of Impressionism, psychoacoustics, and phenomenology remains outside the scope of the project, they contain similar themes of reconciling the mind-body dissociation in their varying applications to the experience of music that also appear at length in Belle Époque music publications.

Musical Impressionism represents is not only the movement of nature painted in shades of sonorities, but also the subjective flow of the Self and its own sense of time set within that particular atmosphere. In short, to experience Musical Impressionism as duration is not to attend to an atmospheric program in listening, but to attend to one's unmediated internal state as it perceives some semblance of the implied atmosphere.

In the context of Debussy's "Colloque Sentimental," from *Fêtes Galantes II* (1904), the Bergsonian duration becomes more accessible for discussion given presence of a lyrical text to reference. Verlaine's poem follows the tale of two bygone lovers, here represented as ghosts, walking through the site of their past life and love, one remembering their exchanges fondly, vividly, the other holding the flame of memory at arm's length. In their conversation, this is plain in the questions and responses of each party:

—Ton cœur bat-il toujours à mon seul nom? Toujours vois-tu mon âme en rêve? —Non.	—Does your heart still surge at my very name? Do you still see my soul when you dream? —No.
—Ah! Les beaux jours de bonheur indicible où nous joignions nos bouches!—C'est possible.	—Ah, the beautiful days of inexpressible bliss when our lips met!—It may have been so.[68]

Debussy's setting underscores the stillness of this moment of reflective memory at the opening of the piece with sparse piano textures and narrow, declamatory melodic contours, especially when voicing the ghost who treats romantic memories as vague inclinations. This narrative of ghostly memory facilitates discussion of the Bergsonian duration in music not only with respect to the musical material, but because ghosts themselves are haunting—that is, observing—the

[68] Richard Stokes, "Text & Translation: 'Colloque Sentimental' by Claude Debussy." *Oxford International Song Festival*, 2023. https://oxfordsong.org/song/colloque-sentimental.

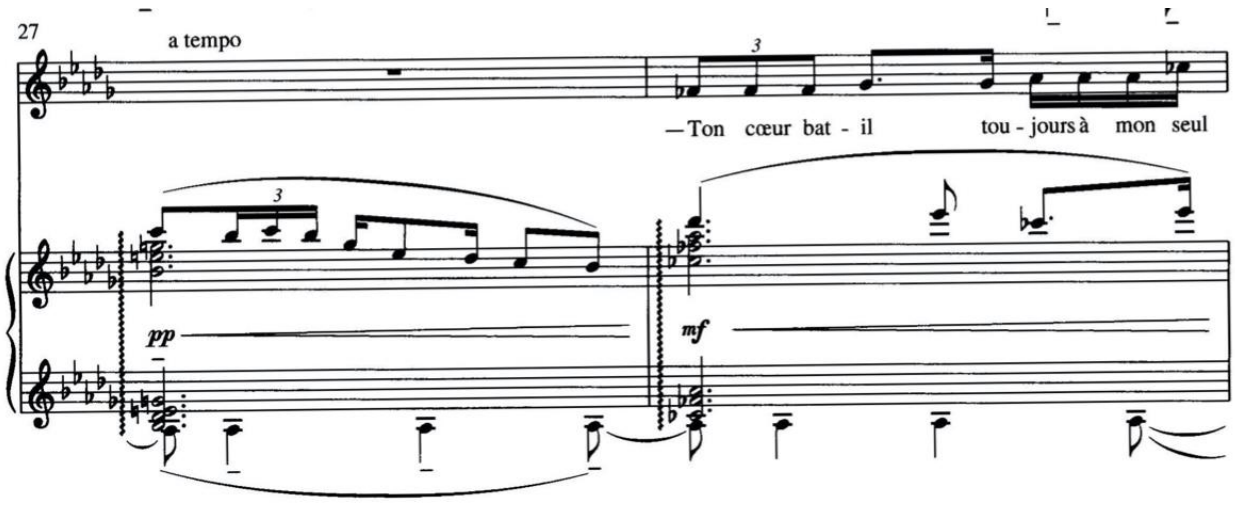
previous conscious state concerning their romance in a way that would usually be filled in by a listener's subjectivity. *They* inhabit this moment, both in the past sense of vivid romance and the present sense of dislocation, allowing the listener to observe the multiple subjective temporal flows apparent in each ghost's duration. The difference of experience between each ghosts demonstrate Bergson's duration as a qualitative multiplicity, in which the quality of conscious states is varied, yet continuous, and their senses of time distinct from one another.[69]

In the simplest terms, the musical memory of "Colloque Sentimental" concerns itself with one moment—the past romance—shared by two Selves—the spectral couple—at once actors and observers therein, with distinct durations. It is as though they walk through a near-frozen scene from their life together. The subjectivity of the duration is revealed in each ghost's contrasting review of their lost love: one reminiscing on the passions of the past, using verbiage that connotes vivid motion (e.g., "ton cœur bat-il [does your heart surge?]"), the other reluctant, noncommittal (e.g., "c'est possible [it may have been so]"). These cast each ghost's sense of duration surrounding the same events in very different lights: the former, a blur of rapturous affection, seemingly breathless sixteenth-note figures punctuated by sweeping rolled chords and a more active piano texture; the latter, a lackluster vocal interjection marked by plodding, harmonically static accompaniment. This same convention is at work again in measures 28 through 31, the interaction of voice and piano as well as the harmonic rhythm capturing the subjective temporalities of each party (see Figure mm. 27-31). Both perspectives on the duration denote unique experiences of time, and are each distinct from the very concept of measured "clock" time. Here, in memory, this duration is illustrated as a moment expanded to the point of immeasurability that each ghost simultaneously inhabits (in life and in love) and revisits

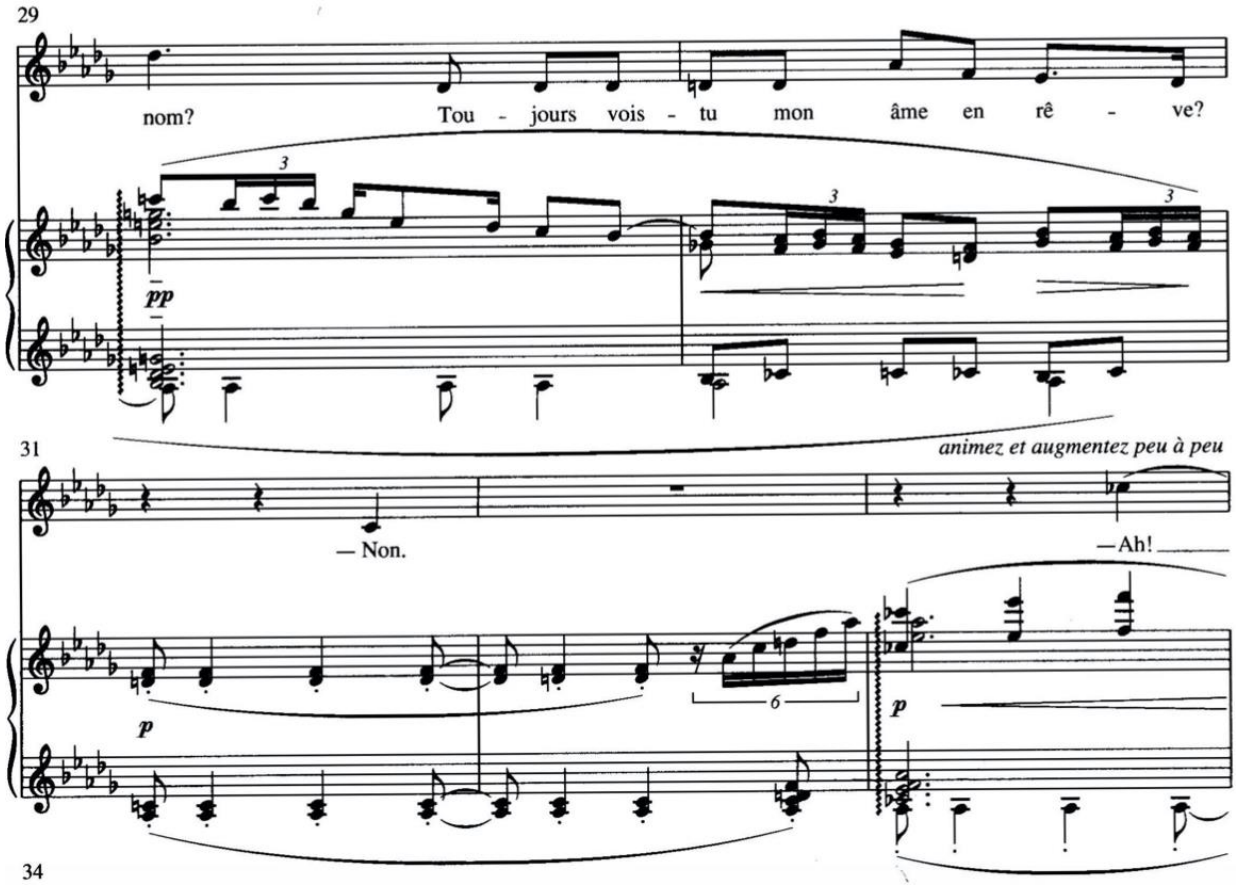
[69] Lawlor and Moulard-Leonard, "Henri Bergson," 2022.

(posthumously) with keener eyes—an example of each individual ghost's conscious states mutually permeating one another. That these Selves are ghosts, perhaps, suggests that their being has been stripped down to the core, "*premier*" Selves—but this is speculation.[70] Their respective durations are their entirely unique temporality as they traverse a common moment in memory, even as they do so together.

"Colloque Sentimental" by Claude Debussy, mm. 27-33



[70] I use "the '*premier* self'" in reference to Tancrède de Visan's above-cited 1910 article in *Verse et Prose.*



As such, the ghosts of Debussy's "Colloque Sentimental" offer a spectral model of the Impressionistic duration and its multiple temporalities, through which the audience may consider the existence of their own. In compositions without this model, the listener becomes a spectator to their own duration, their attentions drawn inward in response to the impressions shaped in the music. This is not only dependent upon more frequently cited atmospheric effects that are characteristic of Impressionistic composition, but also underlying effects of meter that point audiences towards alternative senses of time (see Chapter III).

Conscious States [les états conscieux, les états d'âme]

Read as such, the temporal implications of the Bergsonian duration become the main concern of Musical Impressionism and its subsequent listening experience. This does not completely disregard the role of visuality, but merely reaffirms its secondary position. Continuing in the application of Bergson's metaphysics, the "atmospheres" of Musical Impressionism are perhaps better situated as the evocations of *conscious states,* which operate as a sort of springboard into meditations on the duration. As previously mentioned, the conscious state is the spatial complement to Bergson's duration, denoting the interior perception and immediate response to the multisensory stimuli of one's immediate environment.[71] The atmospheric effects of Musical Impressionism, read as the representation of conscious states, mark the aural atmosphere as the moment in which the listener can attend to their duration. It is important to note here that "attending" to this atmosphere is not to intellectualize and contemplate it in the Romantic, Germanic fashion, but to engage with it intuitively. Bergson describes this mode of listening as "—limit[ing] [one]self to gathering, so to speak, the qualitative impression produced by the whole series."[72]

In "Colloque Sentimental," the rendering of the conscious state is facilitated in the evocations of a frozen garden, often referenced as a Watteau *Fête Galante* come wintertime.[73] Single, nearly sporadic notes make up the opening piano accompaniment, evoking a cold, desolate atmosphere; the gentle nudging of neighboring keys seeming to imply the crunch of a

[71] Bergson, *Time and Free Will,* 77-78.

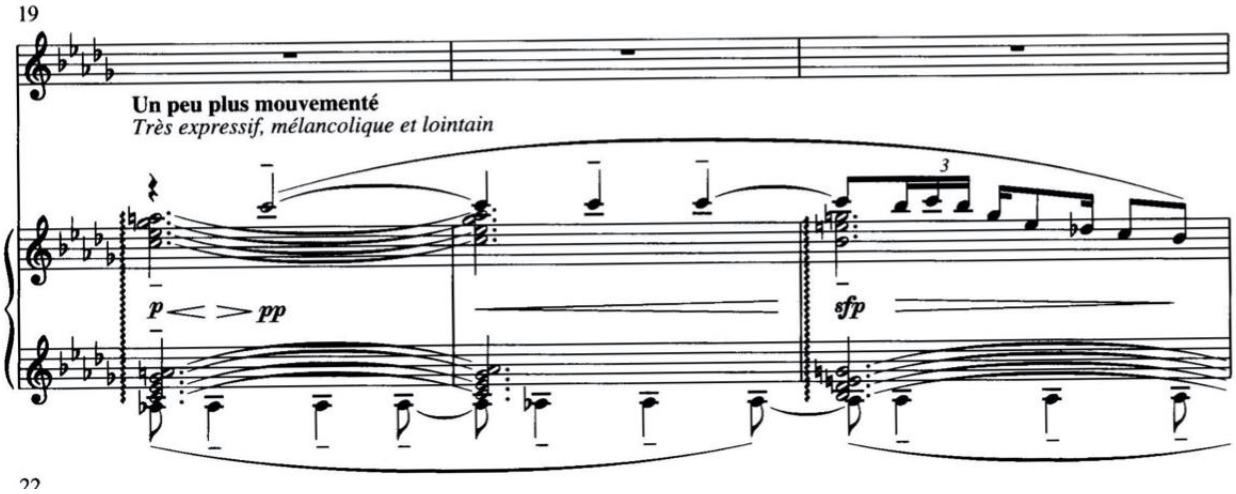
[72] Bergson, 86.

[73] The Verlaine poetry of the same title that Debussy sets in this piece is thought to be inspired by the painter Jean-Antoine Watteau's *Fêtes Galantes* series (1717), which take luxurious gardens of bourgeois leisure as their subject. These fanciful springtime depictions capture at once the decadence and refinement of the French crème-de-la-crème of the 18th century, while also noting the emptiness and ambivalence of their superficial joy and sensuality. Debussy's setting here treats Watteau's scene in distant memory, bringing this ambivalence to the forefront. For a closer reading of this relationship, see Alfred J Wright's 1967 article, "Verlaine and Debussy: Fêtes Galantes" in *The French Review,* 40, no. 5, pp. 627-635.

trudging footstep or the errant blowing of the winter wind that reappear throughout the piece (see mm. 19-21). Points at which the accompaniment completely falls away augments the overwhelming sense of emptiness, as does the wide disparity of register when the left hand softly adds low chordal support to the uneven, tinkling right-hand figures. This icy expansiveness, punctuated by the relative stillness of the vocal line in its narrow range and syllabic text delivery, represents the sensual appeal for which Musical Impressionism is known.

The neat consolidation of the vocal line against the sparse, still piano texture brings the subjectivity of the ghostly speaker to the forefront—immediate, intimate—while making the wintry scene seem vast, sluggish, and somewhat removed in comparison. Read through the lens of the conscious state, this musical rendering would be in line with a particular moment in memory feeling more expansive than its clock measure. That the two lovers passed are more concerned with their own interiority within this setting than they are with the atmosphere itself also speaks to the priority of feeling subjective time, the "frozen park" only attended to in transitioning in and out of this instance of retrospection. The extent to which these specters interact with or even mention the atmosphere is dependent upon its ability to "take them back," not just to a moment of memory, but to a state of awareness of their own interiority. This is where the sensory appeal of the conscious state calls forth the experiential flow of time—duration—and turns the listener's attention toward it. In short, the Impressionist atmosphere, conceived of as a conscious state, is the mechanism by which the musical experience as a "moment" is seemingly expanded, foregrounding the temporal subjectivity of the listener within it.

“Colloque Sentimental” by Claude Debussy, mm. 19-21



The ghosts of “Colloque Sentimental” model this in their spectral walk through the past garden of their love, frozen by the winter wind but not necessarily in time. In other works of Musical Impressionism, the listener traverses the conscious state to the flow of their duration themselves. This harkens back to Symbolist estimations of multisensory perception as a means to some sort of transcendence, as well as the Bergsonian reunification of the mind and body in the “fundamental self” through a return to one’s pure duration. Here, the valorization of the both the aesthetic experience and the self as *process* as opposed to *object* in reconciling mind and body is evident, with Bergson the most squarely concerned with how this process unfolds.

Beyond Debussy

While much of this discourse first appeared with respect to Debussy as a figurehead French composer at the beginning of the twentieth century, it is important to consider that the intellectual context presented here by no means revolved around him alone. The listening posture that arose from the perceptual experimentation of the Symbolists and subsequent theorization of

Henri Bergson saw applications that were not limited to Debussy, and were arguably not even limited to Musical Impressionism. For example, the Symbolist synesthetic salons mentioned at the top of the chapter programmed Palestrina and Wagner alongside emerging French composers.[74] It is the work of music critics in the early 1910s that funneled the common threads of these theories through a Bergsonian lens to encapsulate the aesthetic of Musical Impressionism, in which Debussy appears *alongside other composers*—a historiographic commitment I make in this thesis as well as a simple fact of the period's music criticism. Whereas de Visan wrote to the inclusion of Fauré and other pertinent French composers in this strain of music, Landormy was sensitive to the developing *Debussyste* hegemony and wrote frankly to the credit of other relevant composers.[75] Published in the same *Courrier* article as previously referenced, he states:

> Do not believe Mr. Debussy to be isolated. Alongside him and behind him, other men work in parallel directions. They may not resemble him on all accounts, but they do express the same contempt for deposed traditions, and the same faith in their own creative power.
>
> [Ne croyons pas M. Debussy isolé. A côté de lui, derrière de lui, d'autres hommes travaillent dans des directions parallèles. S'ils ne lui ressemblent pas de tous points, au moins professent-ils le même mépris à l'égard des traditions déchues, et la même foi dans leur puissance créatrice.][76]

As we shall see in the chapter to follow, Debussy was not only accompanied by men of similar stature, but also female composers rising to both musical and literary prominence. Reframing Musical Impressionism as a movement, with respect to reception history, therefore

[74] Midavaine, "Music and the Convergence of the Arts in Symbolist Salons: From the Salons de la Rose+Croix to the Salons d'Art Idéaliste," 88-95.

[75] Landormy, "M. Claude Debussy et l'avenir de la musique française," 100.

[76] Landormy, 100.

requires a dramatic reorientation towards distinct temporal sensibilities, a Bergsonian re-situation of the role of visuality, and the consideration of Debussy's contemporaries in relation to this rich intellectual context and associated listening habits.

***

Musical Impressionism overall benefits from recontextualization among pertinent theories of sound and self, steeped in Bergsonian philosophy. The applications of these theories make sense of how Impressionist sonorities were interpreted in their time: in a word, sensual, but not without a greater sense of experiential implications. Further examinations of this metaphysics provide key insight into habits surrounding Impressionistic listening, which pose the surface sensuality of the Impressionist "atmosphere" as a gateway to an expanded, subjective timeflow that is best consolidated in the philosophical principles of Henri Bergson. This historicization of listening is not so much to reassert an old practice, but to argue the way it profoundly reimagines how we conceive of Musical Impressionism as a movement. Such reimagination begins with considering the works of other Impressionistic composers on the basis of the philosophical underpinnings indicated in the above examination of reception history—with a more liberal approach to musical parameters.

CHAPTER III

CREATING TIME:

LISTENING THROUGH BERGSON'S DURATION

If this temporal sensibility is indeed a key feature of Impressionism, then it must find expression somewhere beyond textural evocations of color and light. Although this temporal focus momentarily diverts our attentions from matters of harmony and timbre, the intention is to build upon the emphasis that already exists on Impressionistic sonorities, which utilize polymodality, non-diatonic scales, and generally break with the functional harmonies and counterpoint taught in Western conservatories at the turn of the century. While the Impressionist approach to harmony can reference time, as will be shown below, much existing literature privileges their functionality referencing color and light. Furthermore, Impressionist techniques towards a sense of Bergson's duration do not rely solely on harmonic approaches. If we attend to compositional techniques that seem to invoke the duration, we might refocus our theoretical parameters to meter and register—those that more directly reflect the duration in terms of musical time and common procedures to reference memory.

Bergson's proximity to the composition of Belle Époque music has long been of interest to the scholarly community. A number of theorists and musicologists have discussed the subject, although these analyses tend to privilege Fauré and Debussy, and consider the philosophical nuance on an individual basis. For example, Jann Pasler identifies recontextualization of melodic motives in larger metrical structures as a method towards portraying "psychological time" in Debussy's *Jeux,* discussing its sympathies with Bergson's philosophy at length.[77] Carlo

[77] Jann Pasler, "Debussy, "Jeux:" Playing with Time and Form" in *19th-Century Music* 6, no. 1 (Summer 1982), 74-75.

Caballero brings a similar Bergsonian focus to Fauré's aesthetic of "sincerity" and "the elusive," naming his diffusion of meter an important representation of the duration in non-representative music.[78] Steve Rings, taking a similar approach to Caballero in theorizing the ineffable, unpacks the multiple temporalities of Debussy's *De pas sur la neige* through register and resurgences of ostinato figures.[79] In more recent publications, Emma Adlard posits that Debussy's works capitalize on Bergson's ideas as a philosophical trend, crediting the perceived aural "incompleteness" created by manipulations of harmonic rhythm as the listener's gateway to "interior time."[80]

These precedents all stress the correlation between philosophical developments, notions of interior time, and their relationship to the aesthetics of singular composers at the turn of the twentieth century. I argue that this type of philosophical reading and hermeneutic analysis may be applied to other, understudied composers, as well as to music that is not conventionally "representational."[81] This serves to highlight Impressionism's temporal nuance and broaden the framework of the movement in light of the abstract argumentation of Chapter II.

If we cease to understand Impressionism as purely representational music, the problem of how we conceptualize its oft-cited "atmosphere" or "landscape" remains. With temporal concerns at the forefront, the music is not so much representative of a landscape, but rather a reflective tool for the soul, or more clinically put, the listener's interiority—this much is evident

---

[78] Carlo Caballero, *Fauré and French Musical Aesthetics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 35-53, 220-228. Caballero presents several examples of this in Fauré's *melodies* in a section entitled "Scattering stars: Fauré's diffusion of meter."

[79] Steven Rings, "Mystères limpides: Time and Transformation in Debussy's Des pas sur la neige." In *19th Century Music* 32, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 181-189.

[80] Emma Adlard, "Debussy, "Fêtes galantes," and the Salon of Marguerite de Saint-Marceaux." In *The Musical Quarterly* 96, no. 2, (Summer 2013): 197-201.

[81] Caballero, *Fauré and French Musical Aesthetics,* 126-169. Here, Caballero begins this work of questioning "representational" music through a corpus study of Fauré's works, particularly in "Homogeneity: meaning, risks, and consequences," which questions the spectrum of the programmatic when musical representation is "tacit."

in the music criticism of the period.[82] Understanding how different features of the music might interact with the soul, given concurrent, influential Bergsonian principles, becomes the Impressionistic project that applies to more than just Debussy and Ravel. We see these techniques at work in the compositions of Fauré, as well as those of Mme. Poldowski and Marion Bauer, in their use of meter and register.

Broadly, I refer to these techniques as methods of "creating time," a somewhat colloquial ballet phrase referring to one's ability to stretch out a moment of music through the seamless addition of more steps than originally choreographed.[83] I find this an apt terminological translation because, when it comes to the musical material, nothing changes—not even the tempo—but the minute gestures of the dancer give the illusion that certain beats last longer than they appear in the score or on the clock. Without the presence of a dancer to create this sense of amorphous time, I argue that this may appear in music in instances where a sense of meter is obscured or otherwise disoriented to the point where metrical structure seems absent: a technique Carlo Caballero has theorized in Fauré's works as "metrical multivalence," or "pulse without meter."[84] Another tactic may be the superimposition of several metric feelings—not so much decontextualizing the pulse, but blurring where it occurs—an approach to meter that Harald Krebs finds relevant to the work of Schumann, which he terms "metrical dissonance."[85] This not

[82] The music criticism of the period, referring to that presented and argued in Chapter 1, is perhaps best captured Téodor Wyzewa's essay "Notes sur la peinture wagnérienne et le salon de 1886." From *Le Revue wagnérienne*. Here, Wyzewa writes writes "At first, our soul feels sensations, phenomena of pleasure and pain: these are the various colors, physical touches, smells, or sonorities, all things that we believe to be external qualities, and which are merely internal states of mind [*esprit*]…," which foregrounds the listener's reaction to music rather than the music itself as its most compelling aspect.

[83] Although this term does not appear in scholarly literature, it appears to have some currency in describing a ballet artist's musicality. I first came across this term on the Instagram profile of Cynthia Dragoni (@ccomtesse_), who directs professionally and posts educational dance content online. Dragoni unpacks this concept of "creating" or "bending" time in this reel.

[84] Caballero, *Fauré and French Musical Aesthetics*, 222-223.

[85] Harald Krebs, *Fantasy Pieces: Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Robert Schumann.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 29-39. Here, Krebs describes the interaction of different metrical layers within a piece of music, indicating that they become more dissonant when their integers of subdivision create less frequent

only means that the meter is obscured, but the placement of the "beat" as well. These techniques for "creating time" apart from what is measured or otherwise expected represents the listener's opportunity to delve into their own duration in the absence of longstanding logics of functional harmony and distortion of conventional rhythmic structures.

A Note on Selected Composers

One may notice that the composers mentioned alongside Debussy in the criticism presented in Chapter 1—de Sévérac, d'Indy, Dukas, and so forth—are not those selected for further study towards this idea of "creating time." This is not to say that they are not Impressionist composers within the philosophical bounds laid out in this project; that they were stylistically grouped with Debussy by a similar audience seems to provide some baseline evidence towards that conclusion. In fact, the only composer mentioned next to Debussy by critics that appears below is Fauré, whose position with the Conservatoire de Paris would seem to conflict with everything characteristically unconventional about Impressionism. Generally, his composition style is considered far too Classically informed to be in line with the somewhat harmonically anarchic attitudes of Impressionist composers, and his aversion to representative music categorically irreconcilable with the style. However, approaching Fauré with fresh eyes, with attention to the philosophical underpinnings of Impressionist temporality and the Bergsonian duration, might just expand our understanding of what Musical Impressionism can sound like.

coincidences of all layers "pulsing" on the same beat. As such, music that contains metrical dissonance seems to lack a regularly occurring downbeat, or at least have too many aurally apparent options to assign the "pulse" to just one.

Poldowski and Bauer, on the other hand, might seem more removed from the intellectual context presented thus far. Younger, female, and decidedly less French than typically assumed of an Impressionist, these composers may not seem like logical inclusions at first glance. Belgian-born Poldowski, best known for her 22 art song settings of poetry by Paul Verlaine, seemed to absorb some of this French influence during her studies with Vincent d'Indy.[86] Pedagogically speaking, her Verlaine songs are often used as the aspiring vocalist's introduction to Impressionist singing, a steppingstone to the larger, more technically demanding works of Debussy, d'Indy, and so forth.[87] Bauer, hailing from Walla Walla, Washington, spent even more time studying in Paris at the Conservatoire, where she shared professors with Ravel. Upon her return to the U.S., Bauer was credited as an expert in modernist music, and wrote extensively on the developments of Musical Impressionism—counting herself as a contributor.[88] Both Poldowski and Bauer left behind writings that reveal important sympathies to the philosophical underpinnings discussed in this thesis.

Fauré, Poldowski, Bauer, and the Philosophical Read

Marion Bauer writes *Twentieth Century Music* first in 1933, soon after Impressionism's innovative sheen seems to lose its edge among the splintered "-isms" of the modern era. Here, she devotes three chapters to the birth and impact of Impressionism, quantifying the style as

[86] See section "*Poldowski (1879-1932)*" below for further details of her musical training.

[87] Richard Aldrich, "Music: A Verlaine Recital by Poldowski" in *The New York Times*, April 23, 1921, 15. Although Poldowski was not a stunning vocalist, she would often perform her own art songs at the piano. Reviews such as that of Richard Aldrich write candidly that "as a singer, she did not shine." Perhaps because of her own technical skill, as well as the tendency of her vocal lines to be better supported by the harmonies in the piano accompaniment than those of Debussy and Ravel, her art songs are sometimes used as young singers' introductions to French *mélodie.* Admittedly, this evidence trails from the observational to the anecdotal, as it captures sentiments presented by my own voice instructors over the years (Nancy Klingman, based in Spokane, Washington, and Mia Spencer at Central Washington University).

[88] See section "*Marion Bauer (1882-1955)"* below for further details on Bauer's education and career.

Debussy-led, and predicated on polymodality and an unconventional approach to harmony that challenged Conservatory models.[89] However, Bauer remains generous in her estimations of who can be counted as Impressionistic—the bar seeming to be the composer's individual tendency toward the unconventional in ways that are either "ultramodern," to use her terminology, or overtly archaic, given Impressionism's intersection with French Neoclassicism.[90] Bauer takes a comparable stance to this thesis when arguing that Debussy remains an important catalyst for Impressionism as one of the initial rule-breakers, with his growing popularity becoming the license other composers needed to follow their own Impressionistic compass. Naming Impressionist painters and Symbolist poets as key stylistic influences on these composers, Bauer even lists some American Impressionists whose works predate the possibility of Debussyian influence (or at least make it highly improbable), yet capitalize on painterly influences and familiarity with the works of Paul Verlaine.[91] Bauer's stance here denotes that she sees common stylistic roots Musical Impressionism—Impressionist painting and Symbolist poetry—that certainly apply to, but do not outright include, Debussy in its initial development.

Although Bauer does not spend much time on the issue of Impressionistic philosophy, her emphasis on certain hallmarks of the style seems sympathetic to the case made in Chapter 1 in modes of music perception. To be Impressionistic, much like it is to be practiced in the philosophy of immediacy and "la durée," is to transcend the logics that serve the rules of the conscious mind—or in this case, the rules of counterpoint and functional harmony. Poldowski's writings in *The Chesterian,* though not quite as studied as Bauer's argumentation, reveal a

[89] Marion Bauer, *Twentieth Century Music: How it Developed and How to Listen to It.* (New York: Van Rees Press, 1933), 125-185.

[90] Bauer, 153.

[91] Bauer, 153-168. This chapter, "Impressionism and the Twentieth Century Renaissance: England, Poland, Hungary, Spain, Italy, America, Etc.," takes inventory of Musical Impressionists as they appear outside of France.

similar attitude. In her short piece, “Man and Modernism,” Poldowski emphasizes the problems created when men make attempts to theorize art music into something orderly, going as far as claiming that the “Professor” responsible for close musical analysis is hardly the right man to act as a composer. In fact, she argues that the rightful title of composer is more appropriate for female accomplishment for this reason (music education being at that point, and to this day, a male-dominated profession).[92] Much like an excess of logical reasoning, à la Bergson, creates conceptual distance between the experience of life and the Western organization of it, Poldowski finds that excessive commitment to principles like functional harmony begins to separate music from true, effective art.

As far as Bauer and Poldowski’s own philosophical underpinnings and temperaments as composers go, they seem to invite a Bergsonian reading with an expanded purview of the musicality of “la durée.” It is Fauré, though, whose more Classical structures seem diametrically opposed to these concerns—especially as head of the Conservatoire, a veritable site and symbol of the intellectualism Bergson (and Musical Impressionism) wishes to temper. If the primary concern of “la durée” remains attention to one’s interior sense of time, however, the inclusion of Fauré is apt given that he was one of the major proponents of the French aesthetic of *sincerité,* and had a propensity to program the elusive.[93] Even his preceding Debussy seems to be less of an issue given Bauer’s approach to the chronology. What’s more is that Fauré’s techniques for creating metric variability seemingly highlight the subjectivity of psychological time and the possibility of multiplicity before Debussy’s polymodalities became the common Impressionistic currency. In short, Fauré’s compositional style exhibits the temporal nuances of the Bergsonian duration as an important building block in the development of Impressionism—effectively

[92] Poldowski, "Man and Modernism,” in *The Chesterian* (September 1923): 5-6.
[93] Caballero, *Fauré and French Musical Aesthetics,* 35-53.

bending the rules to "transcend logic" and "create time" before Debussy et. al. arrived on scene to finish breaking them.

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Traditionally, the compositions of Gabriel Fauré are considered too Classically informed to warrant consideration as Impressionistic.[94] However, the presence of the aforementioned temporal nuance particularly in his later works, may put him in line with the development of Impressionism. Fauré's central aesthetic of sincerity, characterized by his desire to communicate the depths of his inner life through his compositions, correlates well with fin-de-siècle theories of the unconscious mind.[95] In France during this time, *sincerité* was generally understood as the alignment of a work with the general temperament and biography of the artist, and was discussed in musical publications as frequently as such familiar terms as "decadence" and "Impressionism" (coined as one of Fauré's aesthetic cornerstones by Carlo Caballero—see footnote 18). While Schopenhauer may have been the most prevalent philosopher with musical sway in Fauré's early career, the tables turned to Bergson and his musical metaphors for the duration as the twentieth century approached. Where Bergson considered music a vehicle of introspection vis-à-vis the duration, Fauré found this inexpressible inner reality to be the source from which music rises.[96] In short, Fauré's sincerity reads quite similarly to Bergson's philosophy of interiority, with music being the sole means of imperfect translation where language altogether fails.

---

[94] Although some studies lump Fauré into a "pre-impressionistic group," such as in Christopher Palmer's "Harbingers of Impressionism," overwhelming focus on his early- to mid-period works and lofty position at the Paris Conservatoire has landed him in the role of the Romantic "old guard" in several midcentury style histories. For example, Rollo Myers discusses Fauré as one of the "New 'Old Masters'" in the early pages of his style history, *Modern French Music: from Fauré to Boulez.*

[95] Caballero, *Fauré and French Aesthetics*, 12-17, 35-42. The manner of this alignment was an elaboration on Romantic notions of self-expression of the composer, holding that "sincere" music is only beholden to the aesthetics of the composer before it is subjected to the rule of functional harmony.

[96] Caballero, 41.

Fauré touches on this point in a letter to his wife concerning his progress on his First Quintet in 1903, where he writes:

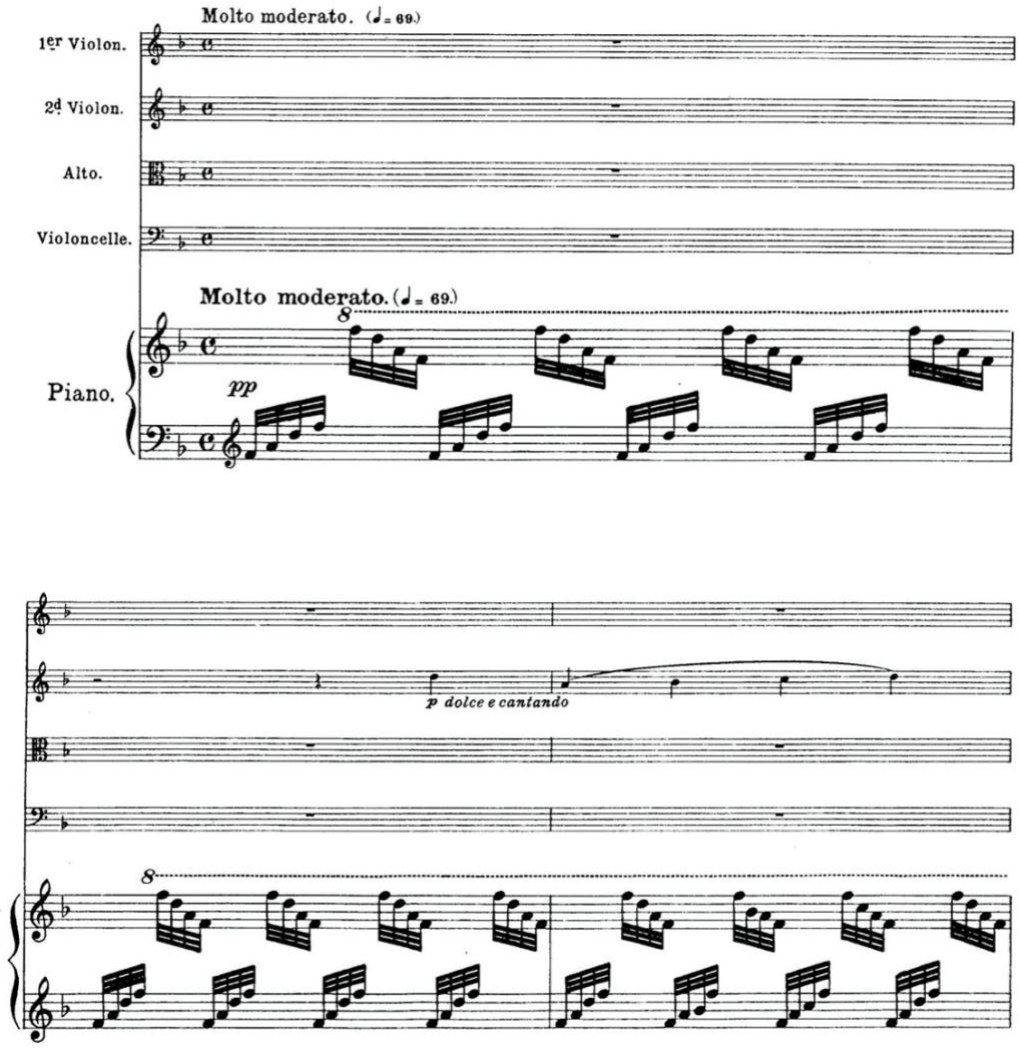
> So often the point where we are, or the one we are aiming for, is untranslatable. How many times have I asked myself what music is for? And what it is? What feelings? What ideas? How can I express something of which I myself can give no account?[97]
>
> [Combien de fois est-ce intraduisible le point où l'on e nest, celui vers lequel on pense marcher. Et combine de fois me demandé-je à quoi cela sert la musique ? Et qu'est-ce que c'est ? Et qu'est-ce que je tradius ? Quels sentiments ? Quelles idées ? Comment exprimer ce don't moi-même je ne puis me rendre compte !]

Fauré's sensitivity to the profound ineffability of one's interior existence did not manifest in the ways typically associated with Musical Impressionism. Rather than taking measures to obscure tonality or blur classical forms, he plays with the listener's sense of meter—providing them the impetus to experience their own duration. In the quintet mentioned above, finished in 1906 under the title *Piano Quintet no. 1 in D minor, op. 89,* this is apparent how Fauré uses metrical recontextualizations of melodic material and metronomic treatment of string accompaniment to stretch time and obscure meter. Please note that the excerpts of the quintet below do not appear in order, but are instead grouped by compositional technique.

The first instance of obscured meter appears in the quintet's first movement, "Molto moderato," in the multiple resurgences of the opening piano shimmer against a variety of string settings. These first appear in the first few measures of the piece as running 32nd notes, lasting for several pages while the main string motives are introduced.

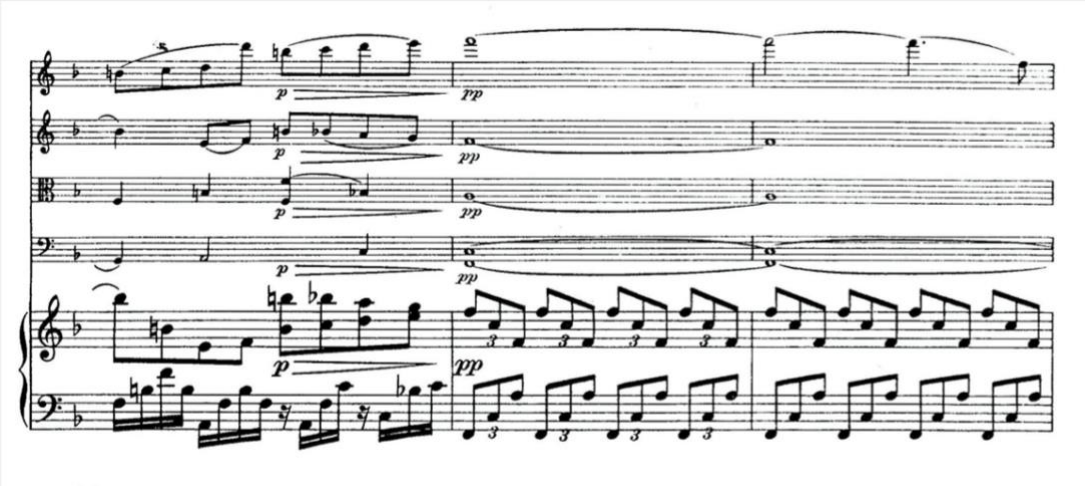
[97] Gabriel Fauré and Philippe Fauré-Fremiet, *Lettres intimes* (Paris: La Colombe, 1951), 78. Written by Gabriel Fauré to his wife, later compiled and published by Philippe Fauré-Fremiet, his son, in this small collection of correspondences. This quotation also appears in the first chapter of Caballero's *Fauré and French Aesthetics* – I use his translation here.

***Piano Quintet no. 1* by Gabriel Fauré, mm. 1-3**



Gradually, they drop from the higher registers of the piano, with brief interjections of eighth-note ornaments after cadences, to cluster around middle C. During this slow spiraling of the piano, Fauré develops the string motives, coming to a pianissimo F major cadence at the end of rehearsal 7. On the downbeat of this cadence, the piano shimmer thins slightly and makes the subtle shift to running eighth-note triplets instead of steady 16ths, while the string motives enter again, overlapping one another—this time in a predominantly major tonality.

***Piano Quintet no. 1* by Gabriel Fauré, mm. 67-69** (rehearsal 7)

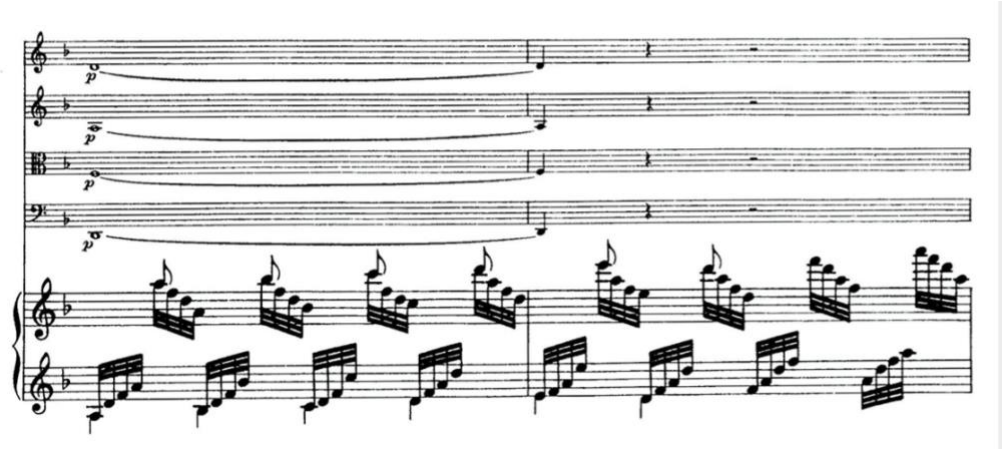


This shift, combined with the quiet F major cadence, startles the listener's expectations after so many pages of running 32nds and 16ths. While crossing this barline from sixteenths to triplet eighths, the transition seems to slow time momentarily before the ear falls comfortably into the piano's triplet figures. This instant of temporal ambiguity, before the listener is once again accustomed to the piano shimmer in new metric context, might be read as a snag of the listener's attention towards their own interior time where their expectations of exterior time are suddenly disrupted. I can concede, however, that such a reading seems dependent on a given listener's musical literacy, which could alter their ability to transition between rhythmic patterns and render their window of "temporal ambiguity" highly variable.

More broadly applicable to the structure of the movement is how this twinkling piano figure interacts with the rest of the ensemble to create time apart from meter. For the first few measures of "Molto moderato," the fluttering sixteenths in the piano seem to diffuse a sense of pulse with their even treatment. When each member of the string quartet enters, their drawn-out, largely unsubdivided melody against this pulseless piano figure may be heard as unfolding outside of a strict metric context. It is only once all strings have layered in that the sense of

common time consolidates and remains firm throughout the piece. However, when this piano shimmer emerges here and there from the general texture of the ensemble, such as at the bottom of page 187 while the strings cadence on D minor, the sense of meter is briefly released until the strings enter again at rehearsal 4.

***Piano Quintet no. 1* by Gabriel Fauré, mm. 37-38**



Here, Fauré's more classically-developed string quartet against a comparatively more untethered piano figure is ripe for a reading after Bergson's duration, and as such, may be aligned with more Impressionistic practices given the temporal flexibility. This piano shimmer opens the movement almost weightlessly, its freewheeling contour seemingly ignorant of the more apparent metric organization of the strings. The listener might interpret this juxtaposition as their own sense of interior time-flow—that is, their unique duration. The imposition of the steadily metered string quartet, then, is analogous to the exterior time that distances the conscious thinking of the listener from their duration. That Fauré disrupts the listener's relationship with a consistent sense of time sporadically throughout "Molto moderato" speaks to an Impressionistic sensitivity to the listener's interior world—released to the public during a

period in which Bergson's estimations on temporality and interiority would have been compelling.[98] While the precise nature of each listener's boundary between interior and exterior senses of time is ultimately subjective here, the musical measures taken to render that boundary indistinct speaks to the realignment of mind and body that Bergson's duration hinges on.

Even if we consider the music metaphorically, rather than as a physical stimulus, with the piano figure representing the interior time and the string quartet taking on the logical measure of time imposed upon it, the temporal mutability of the musical experience stills speaks to Bergson's duration. The near-omnipresence of this shimmer seems to emphasize the activity of one's inner being, with pressure of the string quartet's adherence to common time highlighting where the body's intuition of time is disjunct with that of exterior logics. What's more is that where the piano shimmer is interrupted, favoring more obviously metered eighth-note figures, could be read as Bergson's crisis—a point at which one's duration, or sense of mind-body continuity, is lost (but in this piece, thankfully returns). In this sense, Fauré's strain of Impressionistic techniques highlight the tension that exists between mind and body, intuitive and logical temporalities, and offers fleeting glimpses of their reconciliation where the indeterminate meter of the piano figures is prominent in the quintet texture.

Mme. Poldowski (1879-1932)

Irène Régine Wieniawski, also known by her married name and noble title Lady Dean Paul, composed and published under the pseudonym "Mme. Poldowski" from roughly 1910 until

[98] Caballero, *Fauré and French Musical Aesthetics,* 37-38.

her death in 1932.[99] For the purposes of this project, I will continue to refer to her as "Poldowski" given that it was the name she chose to pair with her works.

Although Poldowski did not pursue the lengths of traditional music education perhaps expected of a famous performer's daughter (Henryk Wieniawski, violinist), those who analyze her works find the fingerprints of French approaches self-evident, citing the brief period she spent at the Schola Cantorum de Paris under Vincent d'Indy (1907).[100] Studies of Poldowski have increased in recent years, and often list French composers such as Fauré, Debussy, and Ravel in the same breath as important stylistic influences. Such is the case of David Mooney, who positions Poldowski as a potential transitionary figure between Fauré, Debussy, Ravel, and Les Six, as well as Karen Kness, who traces Impressionistic threads as understood through Fauré and Debussy in Poldowski's art songs.[101] Before these more recent publications, Myra Brand's initial study of Poldowski's life and career revealed her as a distinct contributor to French mélodie, emphasizing her treatment of meter.[102] These observations seem to invite an Impressionistic re-reading of her works through the lens of Bergson's duration, especially given her attitude towards music theory as distinct from the practice of composition.

Poldowski composed for a variety of ensembles, but is perhaps best known for her art songs – particularly her settings of Verlaine poetry, of which there are 22. "L'heure exquise" was first published in 1913, but consideration of its performance history suggests that it may have

[99] Lindsay Koob and Anne Maley, Liner Notes for *Poldowski: Art Songs* (Sonoma: Delos Productions, 2017), 4.

[100] Myra Friesen Brand, "Poldowski (Lady Dean Paul): Her life and her song settings of French and English Poetry," *PhD diss.* (University of Oregon, Print, 1979), 2.

[101] David Mooney, *A Guide to the Songs of Poldowski (Lady Dean Paul) 1879-1932* (Oxford: Peter Lang Ltd., 2023), 47, 51; Karen Kness, "An Analytical Comparison of the Art Song Style of Poldowski with the Styles of Debussy and Ravel," *DMA diss.* (Indiana University, 2012), 1-2. If not already evident in Kness's choice of title, the introduction to her dissertation makes this approach to Poldowski even clearer.

[102] Brand, "Poldowski (Lady Dean Paul): Her life and her song settings of French and English poetry," *PhD diss.*, 27-28.

been composed as early as 1908.[103] The poetry describes two lovers meeting under the cover of night, during the titular "exquisite hour," and focuses on the setting in which the speaker hears his beloved's voice. It remains one of the most frequently performed of Poldowski's works—one that "typifies" Poldowski's compositional style and consolidates Impressionistic techniques.[104] These analyses often look to the middle section of the piece (a loose A B A' form overall) with reference to its "listless" shifts of tonal center with significantly thinned piano textures.[105]

These shifts occur at key points in the poetry that not only denote sensitivity to the text, but also tease out Bergsonian threads with changes in metric feel and register. In terms of the poetry, the narrative shifts from a description of scenery during this "exquisite hour" to consideration of how it appears in the reflections of the pool (below, "l'étang reflète").

La lune blanche	The white moon
Luit dans les bois;	Gleams in the woods;
De chaque branche	From each branch
Part une voix	Arises a voice
Sous la ramée…	Beneath the boughs…
Ô bien aimée.	O beloved.
L'étang reflète,	*The pool reflects,*
Profond miroir,	Profound mirror,
La silhouette	The silhouette
Du saule noir	Of the black willow
Où le vent pleure.	Where the wind weeps
Rêvons, c'est l'heure.	[We] dream, it is the hour.
Un vaste et tendre	A vast and tender
Apaisement	Consolation
Semble descendre	Seems to descend
Du firmament	From the sky

[103] Brand, 5-6.

[104] Kness, "An Analytical Comparison of the Art Song Style of Poldowski with the Styles of Debussy and Ravel," *DMA diss.*, 68; Mooney, *A Guide to the Songs of Poldowski (Lady Dean Paul) 1879-1932*, 17.

[105] Kness 72; Mooney 17.

Que l'astre irise…	That the moon illumines…
C'est l'heure exquise.	It is the exquisite hour[106]

Turning one's attention to the reflections in water has long denoted a turn towards self-reflection, and at the very least, self-infatuation.[107] Here, Verlaine's choice to shift focus from the general nighttime scenery to reflections in the water could be read as crossing the threshold from the speaker's immediate experience with his surroundings to an interlude of introspection while peering into the "profound mirror." Poldowski captures this transition to interiority, as referenced above, with the thinning of the piano accompaniment with sparsely arpeggiated chords and shifting the tonal center up one-half step, from D-flat to D natural. Paring down the density of notes on the page and briefly removing the doubling of the melody in the piano imposes some degrees of independence between the piano and vocal line, as if the speaker is becoming increasingly untethered from the scene at hand and getting lost in their own head. Similarly, the tonal shift may represent the subtle distinction of perceiving one's surroundings and perceiving oneself, lending credence to harmonic approaches' ability to carry a temporal narrative such as the duration.

These nuances are not without implications of meter and register that speak to Bergson's duration. In most recordings, there seems to be a general consensus that the transition into this B

[106] Richard Stokes, "Text & Translation: 'L'heure exquise' by Reynaldo Hahn." *Oxford International Song Festival*, 2023. https://oxfordsong.org/song/lheure-exquise. While the title indicates a different piece, this is the same Verlaine poetry set by Poldowski. This translation is my own, but Stokes's proved helpful in clarifying ill-printed accents.

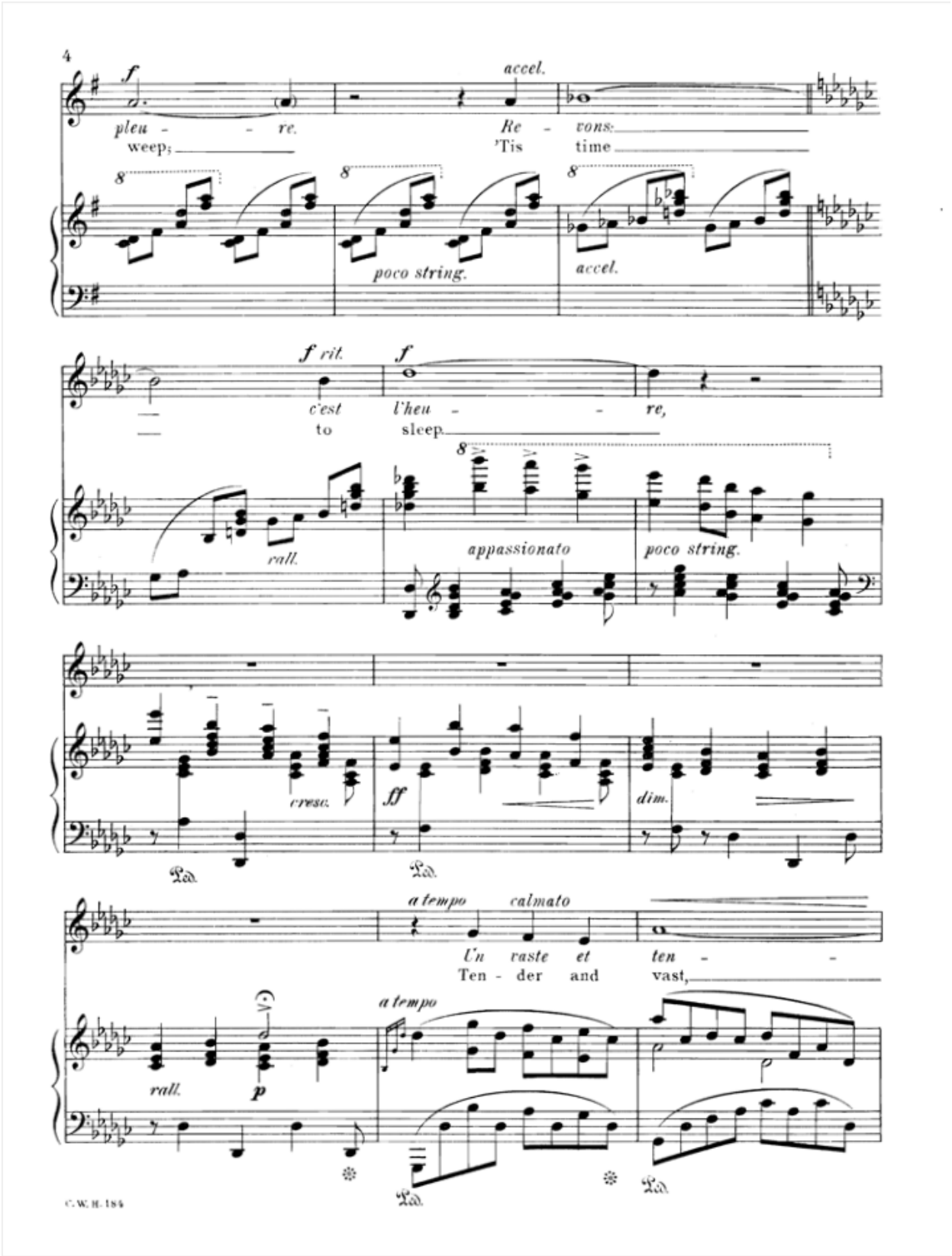
[107] Steven Levine, *Monet, Narcissus, and Self-Reflection: The Modernist Myth of the Self* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 15-24. The myth of Narcissus has long colored how Western civilization conceives of prolonged self-reflection. In the second chapter, Levine details that the Orientalist interests of Impressionist painters like Monet reconceptualizes the Narcissus myth in their renderings of water scenes. On one hand, in the more Western sense, Narcissus's preoccupation with his reflection is read as vanity—the overinflation and demise of the ego. However, approached by the way of the Symbolists in light of Japanese mythology, preoccupation with one's reflection is a sign of modesty and separation from oneself for the purpose of observing and refining.

section at measures 13 and 14 be treated with rubato.[108] The section itself is marked with "poco più mosso," indicating that the tempo should slow ever so slightly, and closes with an "accelerando" back to the home key and original melody on "Rêvons," or "[we] dream." The rubato plays with the listener's sense of meter, stretching out common time, before settling into something slower for the introspective text—effectively denoting that this speaker's duration is slower than time observed on the exterior. The moment remains the moment, but for the speaker, it is bigger, wider, deeper, only returning to the original tempo, tonality, and metric feel when he names that they are dreaming—the conscious, logical mind ostensibly inactive, but reawakening to finish describing the "exquisite hour."

Here, the meter is not totally obscured, but reweighted through a drastic change in register and repetitive rhythmic figures. By measure 15 and through the end of the B section, the piano accompaniment has leapt up the octave, playing a string of broken chords in running eighth-note figures. In the absence of the more grounded, dense piano accompaniment of the A-section that often doubled the quarter-note-heavy melody, this makes the B-section seems less metronomically bound—listeners perhaps more likely to hear the pulse as the downbeat or half-note rather than each and every quarter. Rather than diffusing meter entirely, Poldowski seems to compose its subtle recontextualization to make the shift to interiority more evident when read through Bergson's duration.

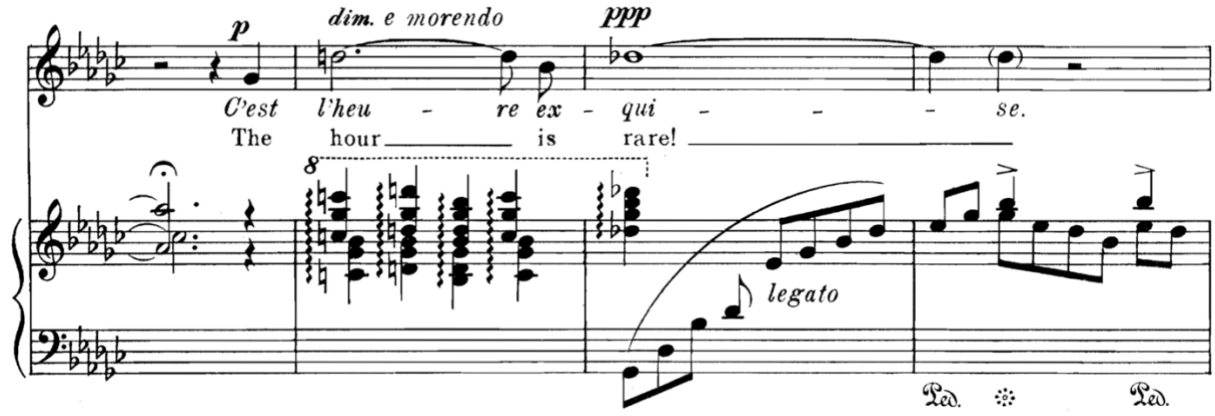
[108] Survey of "L'heure exquise" such as those performed by Susan Young, Ensemble 1904, Angelique Zuluaga, Carolyn Sampson, and Urszula Kryger indicate that there is a general instinct to apply rubato despite the *ritardando* marked a few measures before.

“L’heure exquise,” mm. 10-33 (B section and return to A)



As the vocalist delivers the final line of the poetry, Poldowski couples her method of recontextualized meter with a harmonic approach that lends greater emphasis to a feeling of time out of context for the listener. Following an indulgent fermata in measure 40, the vocal line suspends on a D-natural while the piano accompaniment rolls whole-tone chords up the octave from its previous position. This is a stark contrast from the previous material, which featured a more comfortable tonal center and tapering eighth-note figures. On the heels of a fermata, this dramatic shift in harmonic language, rhythmic content, and register seemingly erases any reference point the listener possessed, creating a sense of temporal untethered-ness in which a sense of subjective time might come to light. That the tonal center, familiar eighth-note figures, and return to middle register return just a measure later may emphasize this reading of the duration, as its disjunction with more traditional forms of musical time and harmonic organization provide a very close contrast. Her setting of "L'heure exquise" captures the distinction of the mind-body dichotomy and the temporal implications of where interiority lies, paying heed to the nuances of the poetry.

"L'heure exquise," mm. 40-43



Still other art songs by Poldowski were sensitive to the temporal implications when one's attentions turned inward. This is apparent in another of her Verlaine song settings, "En Sourdine" (1911), in similar fashion to "L'heure exquise." The poetry here calls two lovers to "steep" their affections and "mingle their souls" in the languor of twilight. [109] Following the lead of Verlaine's verse, Poldowski uses five different repetitive rhythmic figures for each stanza, each comfortably situated in common time. However, subtle adjustments of these rather straightforward figures (e.g., straight quarters, running eighths, syncopated eighth-quarter-eights, etc.) gently reframe the metric feeling of the song as the stanzas become more or less introspective. This is apparent as the second and third stanzas, the climax of the speaker's introspection, are set to patterns of syncopation and running eighths that seem to displace the downbeat, implicating the confusion of time when attentions are turned inward. On the other hand, the stanzas that rely more on quarter note figures for more landscape-heavy text that keep the listener's ears—and sense of time—more grounded.

This strategy is at work again in her setting of Anatole le Braz's "Berceuse d'Armorique" (1914), composed shortly after the death of one of her children. The text of this Armoric (Old Breton) lullaby bids mothers to continue singing their lullabies over children lost and children they risk losing at sea—the rocking of the cradle equally as relevant to a dying infant as it is to the sailors in the rocking of boats amid storm and waves.[110] Poldowski's treatment of le Braz's verse is a touch more fluid, not necessarily relying on the organization of the stanzas in her adjustments of meter. Throughout, the piano accompaniment remains steadily in straight ¾ time, as does the vocal line where the text deals primarily with commentary on the child's bed, the sailors at sea, or the rising of the moon. Where the poetry rearticulates with the appeal of grief,

[109] See Appendix for "En Sourdine" score and translation.
[110] See Appendix for "Berceuse d'Armorique" score and translation.

though— “Chante ta chanson, chante, bonne vielle ! / Sing your song, sing, old woman!”— Poldowski’s vocal line shifts to figures of dotted quarters and eighths more familiar to 6/8, implying a degree of difference between things as they are and things as they are *felt*, harkening back to the duration.

Her last published song, “Narcisse,” a setting of her own poetry based on the Greek myth of Narcissus, presents an interesting case of metric treatment that might further nuance the nature of introspection associated with the duration. Poldowski notated this piece for voice and string quartet in the absence of a time signature—perhaps a mark of an Impressionistic composition style.[111] Despite its lack of time signature, the implied meter (common time) remains apparent throughout, its changes obvious to the eye and ear rather than ambiguous (and therefore, marked as such in published editions of the score). Here, Poldowski could be making a point on the nature of time and interiority: while introspection does seem necessary to regain awareness of one’s duration, self-obsession does not necessarily accomplish the same thing. Think to Narcissus—in love with his own reflection, he remains complacent with his sense of self and content with things as they appear on the surface to the outside world. This posture would speak to a complete *separation* from the duration, and hence, the uninterrupted commitment to 4/4 time in this song setting. The type of self-reflection that would denote attention to the duration, in the spirit of continuing the Narcissian metaphor, requires a more critical form of introspection that targets the gap between the apparent reflection and the intuitive feeling of the person reflected. The lack of metrical obscuration in “Narcisse,” then, may point to Poldowski’s sensitivity towards this philosophical thread—an empty setting of *la durée.*

[111] For a brief description of the myth of Narcissus, click here. I may be briefer: Narcissus, punished by the gods to fall in love with his own reflection, either wastes away, kills himself or drowns because he cannot walk away.

The song settings of Madame Poldowski provide rich insight into the relationship between the duration and use of meter in Impressionist composition—not only for her the examples provided by her varied approaches that include both harmonic and metrical considerations, but for those seeming to clarify the duration by making its absence felt. While it is unknown whether Poldowski and Bauer were familiar with each other's works, similar philosophical postures and compositional approaches are evident in her American counterpart's historical footprint.

Marion Bauer (1882-1955)

American composer Marion Bauer has recently received more attention at the intersection of music and gender studies given her status as an influential female composer in the early twentieth century. Among other accomplishments, Bauer helped found the Society of American Women Composers (1925) and made a point to include her female colleagues in her texts on music.[112] Bauer's modernist stance captured a transitional phase between American late romanticism and more aggressive forms of modernist composition, her style considered by herself and others as fundamentally Impressionistic—even when Impressionism was no longer in vogue for its innovation.[113] Like many of her better-known American contemporaries, Bauer studied composition in France: first in 1906, studying with a 19-year old Nadia Boulanger, and again in 1923 at the Paris Conservatory under André Gédalge (who also taught Ravel and a handful of Les Six).[114]

[112] Ellie Hisama, *Gendering Musical Modernism: The Music of Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 123.

[113] Sarah Shewbert, "The Versatile Marion Bauer (1882-1955): American Composer, Lecturer, Writer." *MA thesis.* (University of Portland, 2008), 34-5, 175-176.

[114] Shewbert, 13, 23-24.

Upon her return to New York in 1927, Bauer took to teaching at NYU and Juilliard, performing, publishing, and becoming a respected expert on the development of modernist music.[115] In *Twentieth Century Music,* where Bauer discusses Musical Impressionism at length, she cites her own pieces alongside those of Debussy, Ravel, and Griffes.[116] Although Bauer engages Impressionism primarily through harmonic principles as well, she notes that philosophical tenets shine through in music of any period.[117] Given that she referred to her own style as Impressionistic, and her tendency to push past the prevalent logics of music theory in the German classical tradition, Bauer's works call for a Bergsonian reading.

Shortly after her last trip to France, Bauer composed *A Fancy,* a now-standalone piece originally in a group of other short piano works.[118] Nearing what some scholars would denote as her "post-tonal idiom," this music flashes by with very little security of tonal center or musical time.[119] Over the course of just 22 measures, Bauer's writing gradually unravels from dense, chromatic textures to one much thinner, trades a freewheeling melody for a pared-down A-flat octave motive, and has the left hand making slow climb from bass to treble registers. That these shifts occur in such a small span of music, the titular notion of a fleeting fancy seems more than

---

[115] Shewbert, 28.

[116] Bauer, *Twentieth Century Music: How it Developed and How to Listen to It*, 150-151.

[117] Hisama, *Gendering Musical Modernism: The Music of Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon*, 122. Hisama quotes Bauer here in a source I have not yet been able to access: "The greatest work of the composer is often sublimination, that is the dedication of energies, thoughts, occurrences, psychological and physical reactions, into socially constructive or creative channels." Bearing this in mind, Hisama argues that Bauer's sensibilities about social justice and the gendered experience of being a female composer are the philosophical tenets shining through. Looking at the same quote, I find that this attention to the interior processes and affects of music to be similar to those noted in Fauré's surviving letters, as well as some writing by earlier critics (even if decidedly less dramatic).

[118] In 1930, Bauer released a group of piano solos entitled *Four Piano Pieces, op. 21,* for which *A Fancy* was originally slotted. However, *A Fancy* was pulled from the group, which is now made up of *Chromaticon, Ostinato, Toccata,* and *Syncope.* All five pieces are still listed under op. 21, but *A Fancy* (no. 1), is now presented as a standalone piece.

[119] Hisama, *Gendering Musical Modernism: The Music of Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon*, 137-138. Hisama's analysis of Chromaticon cites Bauer's use of post-tonality to illustrate social inequalities. That the aforementioned *Four Piano Pieces* experiment more with post-tonality than apparent in *A Fancy* might be reason for its removal from the group.

apt. In many ways, the simplification of all these features seems to mirror the pull of one's focus as an unfettered thought emerges from the undisciplined, ineffable depths of one's being. All that which defies reason, and here, obscures tonality, must be pared down for effective communication to the world beyond—melody becomes motive, chromaticism becomes the implied key of D-flat, and so forth. Here, harmony buttresses meter in conveying the duration.

Throughout the unwinding of this piece, though, Bauer does something intriguing with the meter. In her treatment of 6/4 time, she creates a sense of temporal tension that seems to play on the liminal spaces of Fauré's "metrical multivalence," or perhaps directly into the principles Krebs finds in Schumann's "metrical dissonance."[120] Although the first two bars maintain a strict sense of 6/4 time, the melody shifts in the third to material more conducive to being felt in 12/8, such as dotted rhythms and groups of three descending eight-note figures in the right hand.[121] However, this change is not wholesale; the left hand dutifully continues with its string of quarter-note chromatic chords. By the time we arrive on the second page, roles between hands may reverse, but the principle remains the same. The effect is not quite that of "three-against-two," but a general ambiguity as to where one should feel the pulse. Since 6/4 and 12/8 are analogous meters, the downbeats seem apparent enough, but further subdivisions seem a bit thorny.

The issue of further subdivision, if anything, is exacerbated by the thoroughgoing presence of eighth-note figures whose melodic contour becomes less consistent as the piece develops. The above-referenced descending figures initially place the highest note on the strong beats of the 12/8 feel, as these become more angular, higher pitches cut through the texture at

[120] Krebs, *Fantasy Pieces: Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Robert Schumann,* 29-39.

[121] Krebs, 29-39. Krebs would term these as two metric layers, one 2 (6/4) and one in 3 (12/8), with the variation imposed on the downbeat between the two layers causing the sense of "metrical dissonance." My argument here is that this sense of multivalence, dissonance, or what have you, may have been interpreted in its time as a musical reading of the duration.

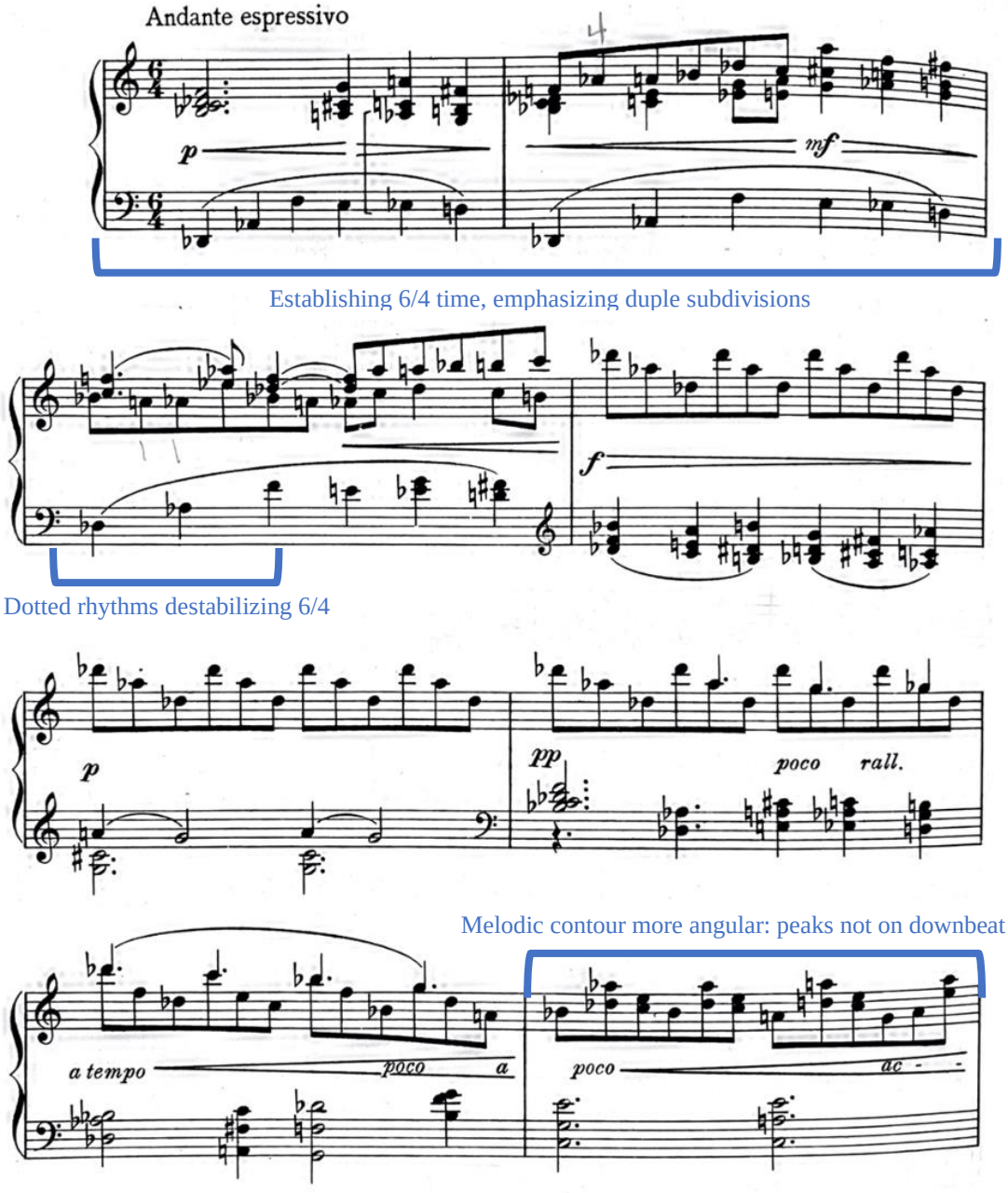
less regular intervals, removing some emphasis from the compound meter. With the two metric feels already at odds with one another, disrupting the listener's expectations with these eighth-note figures renders the organization of musical time here even more disorienting. This effect may be conceptualized on the edges, if not the flip side, of "metrical multivalence," in that it is not so much a pulse without a meter, but an evasive meter with an uncertain pulse.

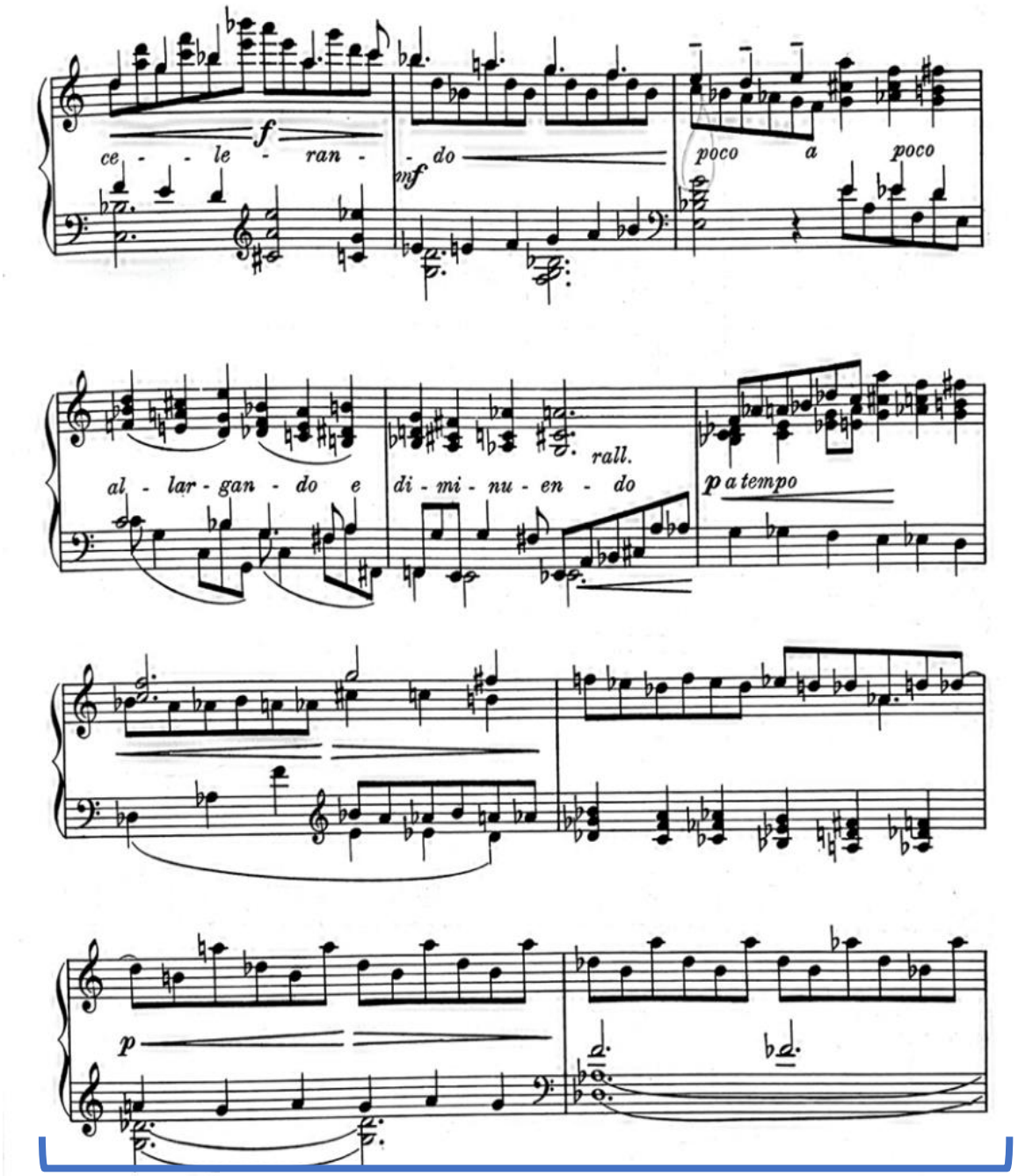
While the piece is bookended by stricter senses of 6/4 and 12/8 (beginning and end, respectively), I would argue that this intentional metric disorientation is at play for the essentially the entire piece, and is at its most apparent in measures 17 and 18. This is the point in the piece where the texture has most notably thinned and the melody drops to a motive, which from here on out is pared further and further down. At the transition into measure 18, the left hand drops the quarter notes that secure the 6/4 meter, and the absence of a more continuous melody renders the 12/8 feel insecure as well—only the running eighths and more sustained left-hand chords being left. Even these eighth-note figures, while rhythmically familiar, somewhat displace the listener's sense of pulse as the peak of the pitch contour is gradually postponed from major subdivisions (beats 1, 4, 7, 10) to their traditionally weaker counterparts (for example, beats 2 and 3 of the first eighth-note grouping). This displacement is maintained even as the continuous eighths are plucked down to an A-flat octave motive (beginning at measure 20), which is interjected exclusively on the weaker subdivisions.

Although this gradual "paring down" does alleviate the temporal tension Bauer creates between warring pulses, the effect of its absence is something that seems resistant to diagnosis of a pulse altogether, especially given the effects of pitch placement and contour. A similar effect is at play with the sense of key area: while highly chromatic and tonally ambiguous throughout, the final cadence on D-flat retains an air of incompleteness. Here, the dwindling A-flat octaves

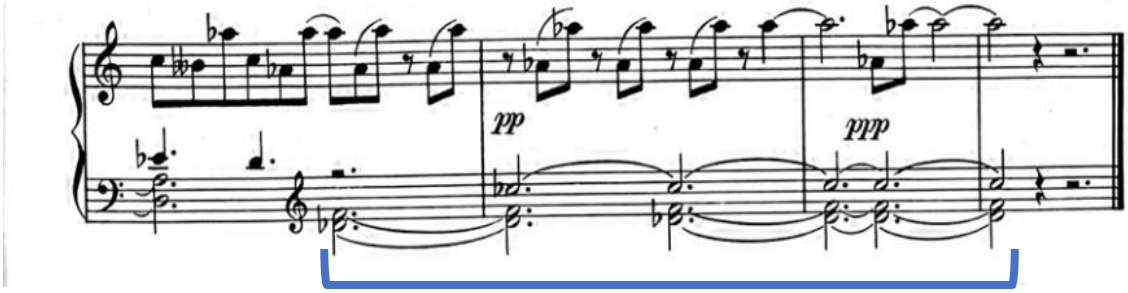
outbalance the tonic and leave meter seemingly open-ended, negating any sense of resolution at the end of the piece. As with Poldowski, Bauer's harmonic and metric approaches seem to work together when reading through the lens of Bergson's duration.

***A Fancy*, op. 21 by Marion Bauer**





Texture and melodic material pared down; 12/8 or 6/4



Octave motive peaking on weak subdivisions, 12/8 more apparent but not solidified

What, then, are we to make of Bergson's duration in this context? Where Fauré obscured meter and Poldowski reweighted it, Bauer's treatment stands in a fickle middle ground—not pulseless, but phasing through multiple; not redistributed, but seemingly superimposed; yet disrupting the listener's sense of musical time all the same. Perhaps Bauer's writing does not make the duration apparent by escaping to it or referencing its existence apart, but rather emphasizes the sort of cognitive dissonance that belies understanding time as at once measurable and immeasurable, captured in a qualitative multiplicity of pulses.[122] With this reading, the competing pulses in which Bauer sets this music captures the temporal tension that one experiences between mind and body—exterior and interior time—with the ultimate shift from a 6/4 to 12/8 or "weightless" feel denoting the one's awareness shifting towards their duration.

"Creating Time" and Reviewing Methodology

In the works of Fauré, Poldowski, and Bauer, we see time made uncertain through a variety of methods boiling down to manipulations of meter and supported by consideration of harmony. Whether this renders a musical pulse ambiguous through obscuring it, redistributing it, or superimposing multiple, the principles of metric ambiguity here align with the temporal sensibilities of the Impressionist intellectual context, particularly Bergson's philosophy of the duration. Since the methods here are multiple, perhaps they may not "create time" in the same manner of "stretching it out" so much as they create *opportunities* for the listener to cultivate a temporal awareness, which makes *la durée* such a compelling musical concept for this style of composition.

[122] Bergson's qualitative multiplicity: heterogenous, yet continuous streams of perception that make up human experience, and therefore, the duration. For more, see Lawlor-Moulard, "Henri Bergson," 2022.

However, nuancing Musical Impressionism with philosophical meditations on temporality in this way might make its boundaries as a "style" even more nebulous than before, making the *debussyste* comparisons seem that much more convenient. When Impressionism remains closely tied to *debussysme*, the distinctions seem clear, especially because his compositional approaches were so radical for their time and relatively consistent across his career. Introducing Fauré, Poldowski, and Bauer blurs the lines of how we consider Musical Impressionism as a style not only for their apparent "not-Debussy-ness," but because their careers also encompassed *other* approaches to composition. This is where Fauré's Neoclassicism, Poldowski's interest in jazz, and Bauer's later turn to post-tonal practices beg the question: is this temporal nuance really key to Impressionism, or a more diffuse idea that is actually characteristic of the emergence of modernism from late romanticism *in general*?

This is perhaps a complication related Musical Impressionism's placement as one of the initial styles associated with modernism, emerging at a point in which the two are difficult to separate. Positing the philosophical lens of an invested audience as a new frame for conceptualizing Impressionism, in some ways, exacerbates this issue—trading on clean-cut musical structures for abstractions that are tough to grasp. Furthermore, Bergson's philosophies of time and human consciousness have been read into other emerging modernist styles, such as Serialism, Primitivism, and Neoclassicism—even if Bergson favored Impressionism.[123] Keith Salley and Klara Moricz have done so with Arnold Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky in the last decade, respectively, albeit still performing the reading from the composer-down.[124] Herein lies

[123] Henri Bergson, in *Mélanges* (Paris: University Presses of France, 1972), p. 844. Here, Bergson coins the style Debussy represents as "la musique de la durée," and is often cited by scholars interested in the intersections of music and Bergsonian philosophy. This particular quotation has been cited in the publications of Jann Pasler, Emma Adlard, and Elena Rovenko, among others.

[124] Alexandra Kieffer, *Debussy's Critics: Sound, Affect, and the Experience of Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 179; Keith Salley, "On Duration and Developing Variation: The Intersecting Ideologies of Henri Bergson and Arnold Schoenberg" in *Music Theory Online* 21, no. 4 (Winter 2015); Klara

the predicament of approaching Musical Impressionism through its audience reception and philosophical context: it shares these things with other styles of composition that we consider quite distinct.

In this sense, Impressionism could be conceived of as just one musical manifestation of *la durée* among many, and representative of a tectonic cultural shift in how people pondered time and understood it musically. The privileging of its philosophical underpinnings, then, does not serve to renegotiate the parameters necessary to its boundaries, but rather to provide some connective tissue to the fragmented substyles of modernism. At the risk of staking too bold a claim for the scope of this project, I would think that this might reconfigure the "splintering" of the twentieth-century "-isms." With this framing, they seem more likely to be nodes in a philosophical network of music than they do their own discrete aesthetic approaches.

What to Make of Musical Impressionism

When first undertaking this research endeavor, I'd hoped that this methodological approach to Musical Impressionism might broaden the frame beyond its tendency towards *debussysme.* The result, though, has been a frame swinging towards the opposite extreme in its permeability. If time and interiority remain consistent concern for audiences and composers across multiple kinds of music, a frame predicated on philosophical networks rather than clean music-theoretical boundary lines may be the most appropriate. This references the various

Moricz, "The Burden of Chronos: The Geneology of Stravinsky's Concept of Musical Time," in *Kronoscope* 22, no. 2 (2022). As the "fashionable philosopher" of the era, as Kieffer notes that he was very much part of the intellectual milieu that composer of other styles existed within. This is perhaps complemented by Keith Salley's Bergsonian reading of Schoenberg's *Sechs kleine Klavierstücke, op. 19, no. 4,* and Klara Moricz's approach to Stravinsky's *Symphony in C,* which traces the broader issue of time in a line of philosophy culminating in Bergson, the most closely aligned with the composer.

connections of seemingly disparate musical ideas brought to light with further attention to Bergsonian philosophical underpinnings.

Framing fin-de-siècle modernism this way would continue to situate modernism as the overarching sense of "period" in the trajectory of music history, while nestling the relevant "-isms" within the Bergsonian philosophical network. Doing so foregrounds the focus of Belle Époque audiences on the experience of time and the lens it imposed on listening, part of what helps establish this "connective tissue," while the concerns and techniques of composers fall to the background. The modern composer was, and in some ways continues to be, valued for innovation, originality, and newness—and thus centering their musical parameters in the past has made diagnosing style a tedious game drawing boundaries rather than acknowledging spectra. With the proposed frame, turn-of-the-century modernist composers can be mapped onto the various strands and intersections of philosophy and musical approaches that allow them this aesthetic permeability

It's also worth noting that a Belle Époque Bergsonian network may provide a ready antidote to the subtle temptations of "great-man" and "work-concept" historiographies that can feel so useful to classroom pedagogies and familiar to classical performance. Whether a composer can be placed on this map is a matter of the period of their activity and to what extent they or their audiences may have shared in this philosophical sensibility—not the quantity of their surviving compositions, perceived quality of their music, or proof of material success met in their lifetime. In short, it is a frame friendlier to those that to whom canon is not always welcoming—a map on which composers like Poldowski, Bauer, and Howe (see footnote) can

exist alongside Debussy and Fauré unfettered by any qualifications of "almost" or "not quite."[125] One must acknowledge, though, that issues of access to the mere notion of the duration could have a potentially limiting impact on the demographic makeup of composers on the map, regardless of whether there's more variety present than in the canon.

***

By considering effects of meter as an Impressionistic manifestation of Bergson's duration, I have demonstrated how we might reconceptualize contributors to Impressionism and its broader context among other modernist idioms. By attending to the philosophical nuances of this music, we gain new insight into how Musical Impressionism and its meaning consolidated in its time. While the philosophical approach laid out here can feel dissonant in light of other Bergsonian readings, the presence of several varied interpretations may well be in line with the philosophy at hand. Perhaps the flexibility of this frame harkens to Bergson's call for continuity—questioning the logic by which we understand this music, and returning once more to the confusing jumble of the raw material underlying it, attempting to let it shine through and foster a connection.

[125] Mary Howe (1882-1964) was an American-born composer and pianist whose case study was dropped from this project due to the availability of scores and feasibility of full orchestral analysis given its scope. Consider listening to her miniature tone-poem, *Stars* (1927).

CHAPTER IV

EPILOGUE

Underneath the clean-cut logics that provide principles for understanding life and art lies the opportunity for many things to be true at once. For Bergson, this is not merely an opportunity, but a reality that accommodates the contradictions that arise when subjectivity is taken into account. This becomes more apparent when we begin to think of the duration from the perspective of several people, not just a single listener—a multiplicity of distinct senses of time that flow independent of the clock's artificial measure. As the lens of the duration was increasingly applied to Musical Impressionism, this listening practice became a means of fostering continuity between these two senses of time, where one might freely traverse the gap between them.

The cultural currencies that different philosophical threads carry, as demonstrated here, meaningfully inform the reception of the musics contemporary to them. However, while the music may persist, the influence of philosophical frames for its reception grow malleable with the passage of time. Musical Impressionism is no exception; following the devastation of World War I, intellectual vogue shifted from Bergson's metaphysics to the existentialists, who find that each person's existence is unique, and that only they are capable of making it meaningful. Although Bergson was influential to some of the French existentialists, he remains distinct from them in his approach to the notion of truth. Implicit in Bergson's philosophy is the existence of a deeper, universal truth of existence, whereas the existentialists hold that even truth is fashioned by humans.

As such, existentialists took a different approach to the notions of intuition and intellect. An important forerunner of existentialism is the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, which

championed a practice of highly intentional perception. This required the practitioner not to take appearances for granted, but to try to experience them to their fullest potential, almost as if taking objective inventory of a subjective experience. Further into the twentieth century, the phenomenological approach became a popular lens for Musical Impressionism, as if the composer had suggested a landscape in which the listener might practice noticing every little thing and their own responses to it.[126] Since phenomenology also gained traction as a musicological method, it has remained a common retrospective frame for this style—one that augments the priority of visuality compared to Impressionism's contemporary lens of the duration.[127] The intersection of music and philosophy, as an established area of study for both Musical Impressionism and other aesthetics, remains a rich field for mining the influence of philosophical frames and the consequences of their constant permutation.

It is also important to note that the circumstances of Musical Impressionism's development bear unmistakable marks of coloniality specific to 19th-century French imperialism that demand additional discussion. There are several threads to consider here: the Orientalist interests of the Impressionist painters and Symbolist poets that are foundational to Musical Impressionism, the unequal musical interactions with and sonic stereotyping of East Asian cultures at the World's Fairs of 1889 and 1900 that make up long-staying pieces in the Impressionist repertory, as well as the striking resemblance that certain facets of Bergson's philosophy and Husserl's phenomenology bear to Eastern meditation practices. While it is not

[126] Martina Stratilková, "Husserlian Notion of Inner Perception, Sound Qualities and the Philosophy of Music in Geiger," in *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 47, no. 2 (December 2016), 207-209; for a more concrete example of phenomenological perception in practice, see Sarah Bakewell, *At the Existentialist Café: Freedom, Being, and Apricot Cocktails* (New York: Other Press, 2017), 40-42.

[127] Phenomenology is considered one of the foundational philosophical frames for sound studies, a branch of musicology that seeks to understand sound more rather than through the lens of music and its theoretical principles. For more on this, see F. Joseph Smith, *Experiencing of Musical Sound: A Prelude to a Phenomenology of Music* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 1979), or Jonathan Sterne, *The Sound Studies Reader* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2012).

entirely productive to put creative minds of the past on trial with a 21st-century perspective, making an effort to understand which facets of their work are representative of cultural imports and counterfeits is crucial in delivering a history that is respectful to all involved peoples. At the very least, this matter is just as much a part of the philosophical currents that frame music—even if they are not always explicitly addressed.

***

Generally speaking, this thesis has been an exercise in investigating the philosophical frames for musics past, as well as a demonstration of their implications for the way that music is heard and its history recorded. Nuancing of Musical Impressionism's temporal aesthetic has historiographic applications and certain curricular revisions that seem rather apparent, as well as something that amounts to a historical listening practice. Is this an opportunity to resurrect an old way of hearing, of thinking about our own human experience? Or, is it perhaps an invitation to interrogate the philosophical frames that give shape to our listening experience today? The former seems intriguing at the very least, perhaps useful in individual evaluations of a now-familiar musical aesthetic. The latter, however, asks us to think more critically about our core assumptions of the human experience and how they inform the way we consume music. Whether an individual meditation or the impetus for another line of research, the opportunity to understand our own ears just as much as audiences past is as valuable and multifaceted as we make it.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Musical Scores

Bauer, Marion. *A Fancy, op. 21*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927.

Debussy, Claude. "Colloque Sentimental." In *Fêtes galantes II*, by Claude Debussy. New York: Dover Publications, 1981.

Fauré, Gabriel. *Piano Quintet no. 1 in D minor, op. 89.* New York: Schirmer, 1907.

Poldowski. "L'heure Exquise." Paris: Durand, 1911.
—. "En Sourdine." Paris: Durand, 1911.
—. "Berceuse d'Armorique." Paris: Durand, 1914.
—. "Narcisse." Paris: Durand, 1927.

Historical Sources

Aldrich, Richard. "Music: A Verlaine Recital by Poldowski:" *The New York Times*, April 23, 1921.

Bauer, Marion. *Twentieth Century Music: How it Developed and How to Listen to It.* New York: Van Rees Press, 1933.

Bergson, Henri. *Time and Free Will.* Translated by Frank Lubecki Pogson. New York: Humanities Press, 1971 (first published 1889).

De Visan, Tancrède. "La philosophie de M. Bergson et le lyrisme contemporain" in *Vers et Prose* 21, 125-140. Paris: Rédaction et administration du Recueil, 1910.

Fauré, Gabriel, and Philippe Fauré-Fremiet. *Lettres intimes.* Paris: La Colombe, 1951.

Lalo, Pierre. "Revue de "La Mer" de M. Claude Debussy." *Le Temps*. May 20, 1905.

Laloy, Louis. "La musique chez soi: M. Henri Bergson et la musique." *Comœdia*. February 19, 1914.

Landormy, Paul. "M. Claude Debussy et l'avenir de la musique française." *Courrier musical*. February 1, 1910.

Péladan, Joséphin. "Critique musicale," *La Grande revue: Paris et Saint-Pétersbourg*. May 25, 1889.

Poldowski, "Man and Modernism." *The Chesterian.* September 1923. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uiug.30112014377862&seq=25&q1=poldowski

Wyzewa, Téodor. “Notes sur la peinture wagnérienne et le salon de 1886.” *Le Revue wagnérienne*. May 8, 1886.

Secondary Literature

Acquisto, Joseph. *French Symbolist Poetry and the Idea of Music.* Burlington: Ashgate, 2016.

Adlard, Emma. “Debussy, “Fêtes galantes,” and the Salon of Marguerite de Saint-Marceaux.” *The Musical Quarterly* 96, no. 2 (Summer 2013): 178-218.

The Art Story. “Symbolism.” Accessed June 2024. https://www.theartstory.org/movement/symbolism/.

Bakewell, Sarah. *At the Existentialist Café: Freedom Being, and Apricot Cocktails.* New York: Other Press, 2017.

Bergson, Henri, André Robinet, Henri Gouhier, Martine Robinet, and Rose-Marie Mossé-Bastide. *Mélanges*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1972.

Brand, Myra Friesen “Poldowski (Lady Dean Paul): Her life and her song settings of French and English Poetry.” PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1979.

Byrnside, Ronald L. “Musical Impressionism: The Early History of the Term.” *The Musical Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (Fall 1980): 522–537.

Chambre, Henri, Armand Maurer, Avrum Stroll, David McLellan, Albert William Levi, Richard Wolin, and Kurt von Fritz. “Western Philosophy.” *The Encyclopædia Brittanica*. Accessed April 27, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/topic/Western-philosophy.

Caballero, Carlo. *Fauré and French Musical Aesthetics.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Corbin, Alain. “Identity, Bells, and the Nineteenth-Century French Village.” In *Hearing History*, edited by Mark Smith, 184-204. Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2004.

De Mille, Charlotte. “Grafting a Dream: Henri Bergson, Claude Debussy, and Henri Matisse.” In *Rival Sisters, Art and Music at the Birth of Modernism, 1815-1915*, by James Rubin and Olivia Mattis, 297-311. Burlington: Ashgate, 2014.

Gare, Arran. “Henri Bergson and the Mind Body Problem: Overcoming Cartesian Dualism.” In *Cosmos and History: Journal of Historical and Social Philosophy* 16, no. 2 (October 2020): 165-181.

Hisama, Ellie. *Gendering Musical Modernism: The Music of Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

Israel-Pelletier, Aimée. *Rimbaud's Impressionist Poetics: Vision and Visuality.* Wales: University of Wales Press, 2012.

Jarociński, Stefan. Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism. London: Eulenberg Books, 1976.

Kieffer, Alexandra. *Debussy's Critics: Sound Affect, and the Experience of Modernism.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Kness, Karen. "An Analytical Comparison of the Art Song Style of Poldowski with the Styles of Debussy and Fauré." D.M.A diss., Indiana University, 2019.

Krebs, Harald. *Fantasy Pieces: Metrical Dissonance in the Music of Robert Schumann.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Koob, Lindsay, and Anne Maley. Liner Notes for Mme. Poldowski. *Poldowski: Art Songs.* Angelique Zuluaga, Gwendolyn Mok. Recorded February-August 2016. Delos Productions 2017, streaming audio

Lesure, François and Roy Howat. "Debussy, (Achille-)Claude" in *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com (Accessed June 2024).

Levine, Steven. *Monet, Narcissus, and self-reflection: The modernist myth of the self.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Midavaine, Lucien. 2019. "Music and the Convergence of the Arts in Symbolist Salons: From the Salons de la Rose+Croix to the Salons d'Art Idéaliste." *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 18, no. 2 (Autumn 2019): 80-107.

Mooney, David. *A Guide to the Songs of Poldowski (Lady Dean Paul) 1879-1932.* Oxford: Peter Lang Ltd, 2023.

Moricz, Klara. 2022. "The Burden of Chronos: The Genealogy of Stravinsky's Concept of Musical Time." *KronoScope* 22, no. 2 (2022): 87-112. https://doi.org/10.1163/15685241-20221516.

Myers, Rollo. *Modern French Music: From Fauré to Boulez.* New York: Praeger Publications, 1971.

Palmer, Christopher. *Impressionism in Music.* London: Hutchinson, 1973.

Pasler, Jann. "Debussy, "Jeux:" Playing with Time and Form." *19th-Century Music* 6, no. 1 (Summer 1982): 60-75.

Pasler, Jan. “Impressionism,” in *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com (Accessed June 2024).

Rée, Jonathan. “Subjectivity in the Twentieth Century.” *New Literary History* 26, no. 1 (Winter 1995): 205-217. https://www.jstor.org/stable/20057276

Rings, Steven. “Mystères limpides: Time and Transformation in Debussy’s Des pas sur la neige.” *19th Century Music* 32, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 178-208.

Ross, Alex. *Wagnerism: Art and Politics in the Shadow of Music.* New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2020.

Rovenko, Elena. “Henri Bergson: “…the Music of Debussy is the Music of ‘la durée’ ”.” *Journal of Moscow Conservatory* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 9-33.

Salley, Keith. “On Duration and Developing Variation: The Intersecting Ideologies of Henri Bergson and Arnold Schoenberg.” *Music Theory Online* 21, no. 4 (Winter 2015).

Shewbert, Sarah Grace. 2008. “The Versatile Marion Bauer (1882-1955): American Composer, Lecturer, Writer.” M. A. thesis, University of Portland, 2008.

Smith, F. Joseph. *The Experiencing of Musical Sound: Prelude to a Phenomenology of Music.* New York: Gordon and Breach, 1979.

Stokes, Richard. “Text & Translation: ‘Colloque Sentimental’ by Claude Debussy.” *Oxford International Song Festival*. Accessed November 2023. https://oxfordsong.org/song/colloque-sentimental.

—. “Text & Translation: ‘L’heure exquise’ by Reynaldo Hahn.” Accessed February 2024. https://oxfordsong.org/song/lheure-exquise.

Sterne, Jonathan. *The Sound Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Stratilková, Martina. “Husserlian Notion of Inner Perception, Sound Qualities and the Philosophy of Music in Geiger.” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 47, no. 2 (December 2016): 207-222.

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Accessed April 2024 https://plato.stanford.edu/.

—. Bourdeau, Michel, “Auguste Comte,” last updated Spring 2023.

—. Hatfield, Gary, “René Descartes,” last updated Spring 2024.

—. Lawlor, Leonard, and Valentine Moulard-Leonard, “Henri Bergson,” last updated Winter 2022.

—. Rohlf, Michael, “Immanuel Kant,” last updated Fall 2023.

—. Wicks, Robert, “Arnold Schopenhauer,” last updated Spring 2024.

Wenk, Arthur. *Claude Debussy and the Poets*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

Wright, Alfred. “Verlaine and Debussy: Fêtes galantes. *The French Review* 40, no. 5, (April 1967): 627-635.

APPENDIX

"En Sourdine" by Paul Verlaine

Set by Mme. Poldowski in 1911, Translation by Richard Stokes

Calmes dans le demi-jour	Calm in the twilight
Que les branches hautes font,	Cast by loft boughs,
Pénétrons bien notre amour	Let us steep our love
De ce silence profond.	In this deep quiet.
Mêlons nos âmes, nos cœurs	Let us mingle our souls, our hearts
Et nos sens extasiés,	And our enraptured senses
Parmi les vagues langueurs	With the hazy languor
Des pins et des arbousiers.	Of arbutus and pine.
Ferme tes yeux à demi,	Half-close your eyes,
Croise tes bras sur ton sein,	Fold your arms across your breast,
Et de ton cœur endormi	And from your heart now lulled to rest
Chasse à jamais tout dessein.	Banish forever all intent.
Laissons-nous persuader	Let us both succumb
Au souffle berceur et doux	To the gentle and lulling breeze
Qui vient, à tes pieds, rider	That comes to ruffle at your feet
Les ondes des gazons roux.	The waves of russet grass.
Et quand, solennel, le soir	And when, solemnly, evening
Des chênes noirs tombera	Falls from the black oaks,
Voix de notre désespoir,	That voice of our despair,
Le rossignol chantera.	The nightingale shall sing.

“Berceuse d’Armorique,” by Anatole le Braz

Set by Mme. Poldowski in 1914, Translation by Hélène Lindqvist

Dors, petit enfant, dans ton lit bien clos : Dieu prenne en pitié les matelots ! – Chante ta chanson, chante, bonne vieille!	Sleep, little child, in your soft bed: May God take pity on the sailors! – Sing your song, sing, old woman!
La lune se lève et la mer s’éveille. Au pays du Froid, la houle des fiords Chante sa berceuse en berçant les morts. – Chante ta chanson, chante, bonne vieille!	The moon is rising and the sea is awakening. In that cold country, the swell of the fjords Sings its lullaby while lulling the dead. – Sing your song, sing, old woman!
La lune se lève et la mer s’éveille. Dors, petit enfant, dans ton lit bien doux, Car tu t’en iras comme ils s’en vont tous. – Chante ta chanson, chante, bonne vieille!	The moon is rising and the sea is awakening. Sleep, little child, in your soft bed, For you will go away as they all go away. – Sing your song, sing, old woman!
La lune se lève et la mer s’éveille. Tes yeux ont déjà la couleur des flots. Dieu prenne en pitié les bons matelots ! – Chante ta chanson, chante, bonne vieille!	The moon is rising and the sea is awakening. Your eyes already have the colour of the waves. May God take pity on the sailors! – Sing your song, sing, old woman!
La lune se lève et la mer s’éveille.	The moon is rising and the sea is awakening.

“Narcisse” by Poldowski

Translation by Lindsay Koob and Anne Maley

Oh! Quelle est cette ombre qui me regarde	Oh! What is this ghost that is watching me,
L’eau que vire l’entoure d’une auréole de lumière	The swirling water surrounds it with a halo of light,
Son corps blanc comme le Lys se penche vers moi	Its white body like a lily bends towards me
Et dans mes yeux des paroles que sa bouche n’ose me dire.	and in my eyes puts words which its mouth dares not speak to me.
Je tremble, j’expire, ouvre tes bras, enlace moi	I quiver, I exhale, open your arms, embrace me
Ombre divine que nos deux êtres se confondent en une étreinte eternelle.	divine specter so that our two foreheads will melt in an eternal coupling.
Amour! Couronne nos fronts de fleurs blêmes et glacées.	Love! Crown our heads with pale and frozen flowers.
Narcisse, O mon amant!	Narcissus, O my lover!