Part-Songs of Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

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Historical Context:
Fauré studied at the École Neidermeyer, a new music academy named after its founder. Fauré studied with Saint-Saëns who exposed students to Schumann, Liszt and Wagner. The École Neidermeyer specialized in training church musicians; Fauré’s output was much more sacred in genre than secular.¹

Part-Songs:
IMSLP lists four secular choral works for Gabriel Fauré: Les djinns, Op. 12, Le ruisseau, Op. 22, La naissance de Vénus, Op. 29, and Madrigal, Op. 35. Les djinns and La naissance de Vénus are large scale choral-orchestra works (both available on IMSLP), but Madrigal and Le Ruisseau are charming works for piano and keyboard.

Critical Thinking:
For Le Ruisseau:

Listen to a recording of Le Ruisseau with harp: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAtO9FbdWeY
Listen to a recording of Le Ruisseau with piano: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFqc3mPsF_g
Compare and contrast. How does the mood of the piece change, if at all? Which do you prefer?

This piece is in ABA' form. Describe in which ways Fauré makes the B section different. In what ways is A' different from A?

For Madrigal:

This work is supposed to be a melodramatic, poking fun at the torments of young love. In what ways does Fauré accomplish this? Look specifically at the tempo markings, the piano (waltz effects), the choice of text, the melodic contour, etc. How can we (the choir) convey the text in our performance?

Fauré switches from major to minor mode often in Madrigal. Identify the modes and read the text. Explain why you think Fauré assigned major or minor mode to each section of text. Would you have done anything differently if you were the composer?

Performance Practice:
Rubato is especially important in this style. Don’t be afraid to take time when starting and stopping phrases.

Consider using harp instead of piano for Le Ruisseau to truly capture the essence of the flowing stream. For Madrigal, divide the men and women with a significant gap on the risers or place them in pairs so they might interact with each other.

**Le Ruisseau, Op. 22 (The Stream)**

SA, S Solo, Piano  
Librettist: Anonymous  
**Key:** E Flat Major  
**Form:** ABA'  
**Tempo:** Andante Moderato  
**Voicing:**  
- Soprano: C4- A flat 5  
- Alto: B flat 3- E flat 5  
- Mezzo Soloist: F4- G flat 5  

**Comments:** Gorgeous, ethereal. Harp can replace the piano accompaniment. Brief SSAA divisi (mm. 33-35). Return of beginning material includes new text.

**Text Subject:** A stream notices the sadness of a bent flower on its bank. It offers to carry the flower to the ocean, but his pleas are in vain. The stream sadly continues its course. Full translation may be found at [http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=88312](http://www.recmusic.org/lieder/get_text.html?TextId=88312).

Au bord du clair ruisseau  
croît la fleur solitaire,  
Dont la corolle brille  
au milieu des roseaux ;  
Pensive, elle s'incline  
et son ombre légère  
Se berce mollement  
sur la moire des eaux.

Ô fleur, ô doux parfum,  
lui dit le flot qui passe,  
A mes tendres accents  
ta tristesse répond !  
A mon suave élan  
vient marier ta grâce.  
Laisse-moi t'entraîner  
vers l'océan profond !

Mais il l'entoure en vain  
de sa douce caresse,  
Cette flottante image  
aux incertains contours,  
Se dérobe au baiser
humide qui l'opprime,
Et le flot éploré
tristement suit son cours !

Madrigal, Op. 35
SATB,Piano
Librettist: Armand Silvestre
Key: D minor, ends in D Major
Tempo: Andante quasi Allegretto (bizarre choice… slow but sort of fast?)
Voicing:
  Soprano: D4-G5
  Alto: A3- B4
  Tenor: D3- A4
  Bass: A2- D4

Comments: Don’t be fooled by its seemingly dismal opening: this is a tongue-in-cheek text about the torment of young love. Each voice part gets a line: the boys sing about how cruel the girls are, and the girls sing back. Girl meets boy (altos and tenors sing together), and eventually all voices join together to mourn how cruel love is.

Text and Translation:
Les jeunes gens:
Inhumaines qui, sans merci
Vous raillez de notre souci
Aimez! Aimez quand on vous aime!

Les jeunes filles:
Ingrats qui ne vous doutez pas,
Des rêves éclos sur vos pas
Aimez! Aimez quand on vous aime!

Les jeunes gens:
Sachez ô cruelles beautés
Que les jours d'aimer sont comptés
Aimez! Aimez quand on vous aime!

Les jeunes filles:
Sachez, amoureux inconstants
Que le bien d'aimer n'a qu'un temps!
Aimez! Aimez quand on vous aime!

Ensemble:
Un même destin nous poursuit
Et notre folie est la même
C'est celle de fuir qui nous aime
C'est celle d'aimer qui nous fuit
Young Men:
Inhuman women who, without mercy,
make fun of our turmoil, love!
Love when you are loved!

Young Women:
Ungrateful men, who do not suspect
the dreams you arouse in your wake, love!
Love when you are loved!

Young Men:
Mark well, oh cruel beauties,
that the days of loving are numbered.
Love! Love when you are loved!

Young Women:
Mark well, inconstant lovers,
that love has but a single season.
Love! Love when you are loved!

Together:
The same fate pursues us both, and our folly is the same:
that of loving those who flee us,
that of fleeing those who love us!