

Claude Debussy (1862–1918) is known as one of the first impressionist composers. Debussy’s harmonic innovations were influential to other composers. As he studied composition under Ernest Guiraud, he worked as an accompanist for singing classes. He began to write *mélodies* (French art songs) to many poems for his first love, Marie Vasnier. Debussy set “**Fête galante**” by Theodore de Banville (1823–1891) while he was still experimenting with this new technique. This song describes a gallant party with extravagant sights. “**Mandoline**” is a poem by Paul Verlaine (1844–1896), a French symbolist poet. This is the last song dedicated to Marie Vasnier, even though he was not close to her or her family when it was published. This song also tells of a party, but rather a much more entertaining and lively party than that described in “Fête galante.” This song is playful as the piano mimics a mandolin. The text for “**Nuit d’étoiles**” also comes from a poem written by Theodore de Banville. This poem tells of the lost love of the narrator, and Debussy’s melody provides a romantic yet mysterious feel to the text.

Fête galante

Voilà Sylvandre et Lycas et Myrtil
Car c'est ce soir fête chez Cydalise.

Partout dans l'air court un parfum subtil,
Dans le grand parc où tout s'idéalise
Avec la rose Aminthe rivalise.
Phillis, Eglé, qui suivent leurs amants,
Cherchent l'ombrage en mille endroits charmants.

Dans le soleil qui s'irrite et qui joue,
Luttant d'orgueil avec les diamants,
Sur le chemin, le Paon blanc fait la roue. Ah!

Gallant Party

Here are Sylvandre and Lycas and Myrtil,
For there is a party at the home of Cydalise this
evening.

Everywhere a subtil perfum floats in the air
In the great park where all is perfection
Aminthe rivals the beauty of the rose.
Phillis, Egle, who are pursuing their lovers,
Searching among the shadows in a thousand
charming places;

In the sun which is both angry and playful,
Struggling pridefully with the diamonds,
On the road the white peacock displays his
plumage. Ah!

(Translations by Bard Suverkrop)

Mandoline

Les donneurs de sérénades
Et les belles écouteuses
Échangent des propos fades
Sous les ramures chanteuses.
C'est Tircis et c'est Aminte,
Et c'est l'éternel Clitandre,
Et c'est Damis qui pour mainte
Cruelle fait maint vers tendre.
Leurs courtes vestes de soie,
Leurs longues robes à queues,
Leur élégance, leur joie
Et leurs molles ombres bleues
Tourbillonnent dans l'extase
D'une lune rose et grise,
Et la mandoline jase
Parmi les frissons de brise.

Mandolin

The gallant serenaders
and their fair listeners
exchange sweet nothings
beneath singing boughs.
Tirsis is there, Aminte is there,
and tedious Clitandre too,
and Damis who for many a cruel maid
writes many a tender song.
Their short silken doublets,
their long trailing gowns,
their elegance, their joy,
and their soft blue shadows
Whirl madly in the rapture
of a grey and roseate moon,
and the mandolin jangles on
in the shivering breeze.

(Translations by Richard Stokes)

Nuit d'étoiles,
 Sous tes voiles,
 Sous ta brise et tes parfums,
 Triste lyre
 Qui soupire,
 Je rêve aux amours défunts.
 La sereine mélancolie
 Vient éclore au fond de mon cœur,
 Et j'entends l'âme de ma mie
 Tressaillir dans le bois rêveur.
 Nuit d'étoiles,
 Sous tes voiles,
 Sous ta brise et tes parfums,
 Triste lyre
 Qui soupire,
 Je rêve aux amours défunts.
 Je revois à notre fontaine
 Tes regards bleus comme les cieux;
 Cette rose, c'est ton haleine,
 Et ces étoiles sont tes yeux.
 Nuit d'étoiles,
 Sous tes voiles,
 Sous ta brise et tes parfums,
 Triste lyre
 Qui soupire,
 Je rêve aux amours défunts.

Night of stars,
 beneath your veils,
 beneath your breeze and your perfumes,
 sad lyre
 which is sighing,
 I dream of bygone loves.
 Serene Melancholy
 comes to bloom in the depths of my heart,
 and I hear the soul of my beloved
 quiver in the dreaming wood.
 Night of stars,
 beneath your veils,
 beneath your breeze and your perfumes,
 sad lyre
 which is sighing,
 I dream of bygone loves.
 At our fountain I see again
 your gazes, blue as the heavens;
 this rose is your breath,
 and these stars are your eyes.
 Night of stars,
 beneath your veils,
 beneath your breeze and your perfumes,
 sad lyre
 which is sighing,
 I dream of bygone loves.

(Translations by Christopher Goldsack)

Amy Beach (1867–1944) was an American composer and pianist. She was praised during her lifetime as becoming the first woman composer in America and is still recognized today as the first American woman composer of large-scale music. She composed several art songs and pieces for piano, and she performed them around the United States and Europe. One of her most popular works, *Three Browning Songs* was commissioned by the Browning Society of Boston for poet Robert Browning's (1812–1889) birthday. The fast tempo of "**The Year's at the Spring**" aids in expressing the excitement of the text welcoming the season. The piano mimics the fidgeting joy with constant quick rhythms until the end of the song when the excitement turns to ease. "**Ah, Love! but a Day**" is a slower song that emotes a sadness of change and loss. The text questions what to do and how to feel with a sudden loss. The piano changes moods from sad slow rhythms to frantic, faster rhythms to mimic the feelings of loss. Ending the cycle, "**I send my heart up to thee**" sweetly tells of giving one's heart to another. This song resolves any feelings of grief from the previous song and warms the heart for another day.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) was an Austrian composer whose writing is a part of the classical era and is renowned as one of the greatest composers of all time. Mozart was also well known during his lifetime because he was a prodigy on many instruments, such as the clavichord, violin, and harpsichord. He first performed when he was only five years old and began composing alongside his father at age 7, and he composed his first opera in 1766. Mozart

famously rejected writing for the court, but still was declared the chief composer in Salzburg of instrumental and secular vocal music. Mozart began to compose operas for commission, which was how *Le nozze di Figaro* came in 1786. This opera originated from the play by Pierre Auguste Caron de Beaumarchais (1732–1799). It tells the story of Figaro finding a woman to marry. “**Via resti servita madame Brillante**” is a comedic duet between Susanna and Marcellina as they try to be kind through the tension of both loving Figaro.

MARCELLINA

Via resti servita, madama brillante.

SUSANNA

Non sono sì ardita, madama piccante.

MARCELLINA

No, prima a lei tocca.

SUSANNA

No, no, tocca a lei.

SUSANNA e MARCELLINA

Io so i dover miei, non fo inciviltà.

MARCELLINA

La sposa novella!

SUSANNA

La dama d'onore!

MARCELLINA

Del Conte la bella!

SUSANNA

Di Spagna l'amore!

MARCELLINA

I meriti!

SUSANNA

L'abito!

MARCELLINA

Il posto!

SUSANNA

L'età!

MARCELLINA

Per Bacco, precipito, se ancor resto qua.

SUSANNA

Sibilla decrepita, da rider mi fa.

MARCELLINA

After you, gracious lady.

SUSANNA

I'd not be so bold, worthy ma'am.

MARCELLINA

No, you go first, pray.

SUSANNA

No, no, after you.

SUSANNA and MARCELLINA

I know my place, I'd not so presume.

MARCELLINA

A bride to be first.

SUSANNA

A lady in waiting.

MARCELLINA

The Count's favourite.

SUSANNA

The toast of Spain.

MARCELLINA

Your qualities.

SUSANNA

Your dress.

MARCELLINA

Your position.

SUSANNA

Your age.

MARCELLINA

I'll fly into a rage if I stay here any longer.

SUSANNA

Decrepit old witch, she's a laughing stock.

(Translation from Opera-arias.com)

Italian composer Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868) is most known for his operas. He was born into a musical family with his father a horn player and his mother a singer. His mother was frequently casted in operas which introduced Rossini to the opera world. He learned to play several instruments as well as composition. Rossini continued to compose operas throughout his lifetime, some comic and some more serious. Though not directly from an opera, “**Duetto buffo di due gatti**” (Funny Duet of Two Cats) melodically comes from his opera *Otello*. This comic duet features two sopranos playfully mimicking cats with only the text “Miau” (Meow).

Franz Schubert (1797–1828) was an Austrian composer specializing in German *Lied*. As a child, Schubert attended the Imperial and Royal City College, where he succeeded in all aspects of his musical education. He was a highly skilled vocalist and was influenced heavily by opera. He began setting several poems to music when he was a young adult. Schubert used several poems by Franz von Schober (1796–1882), an Austrian poet whom he lived with for some time in 1816. “**An die Musik**” is one poem in a pair that expresses how music eases the burdens of life. Schubert set both poems to music, and “An die Musik” finishes out the pair of *Lieder* by thanking music for easing the troubles in life. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) wrote the poem “**Gretchen am Spinnrade**.” The piano accompaniment Schubert composed has a spinning-like sound to mimic a spinning wheel while the text expresses the anguish of losing a lover. Karl Lappe (1773–1843) wrote the poem “**Im Abendrot**.” This *Lied* gives reassurance of faith by describing the wonderful world. “**Du bist die Ruh**” is set to a poem by Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866). The text is tranquil and talks of no grief or unease. Schubert used this as he composed and wrote a beautifully peaceful melody.

An die Musik

Du holde Kunst, in wieviel grauen Stunden,
Wo mich des Lebens wilder Kreis umstrickt,
Hast du mein Herz zu warmer Lieb entzunden,
Hast mich in eine bessre Welt entrückt!

Oft hat ein Seufzer, deiner Harf entlossen,
Ein süsßer, heiliger Akkord von dir
Den Himmel bessrer Zeiten mir erschlossen,
Du holde Kunst, ich danke dir dafür!

Gretchen am Spinnrade

Meine Ruh' ist hin, mein Herz ist schwer,
Ich finde sie nimmer und nimmermehr.
Wo ich ihn nicht hab' ist mir das Grab,
Die ganze Welt ist mir vergällt.
Mein armer Kopf ist mir verrückt
Mein armer Sinn ist mir zerstückt.
Meine Ruh' ist hin, mein Herz ist schwer,
Ich finde sie nimmer und nimmermehr.
Nach ihm nur schau' ich zum Fenster hinaus,
Nach ihm nur geh' ich aus dem Haus.
Sein hoher Gang, sein' edle Gestalt,
Seines Mundes Lächeln, seiner Augen Gewalt.
Und seiner Rede Zauberfluss.
Sein Händedruck, und ach, sein Kuss!
Meine Ruh' ist hin, mein Herz ist schwer,
Ich finde sie nimmer und nimmermehr.
Mein Busen drängt sich nach ihm hin.
Ach dürft' ich fassen und halten ihn.
Und küssen ihn so wie ich wollt'
An seinen Küssen vergehen sollt'!

To Music

Beloved art, in how many a bleak hour,
when I am enmeshed in life's tumultuous round,
have you kindled my heart to the warmth of love,
and borne me away to a better world!

Often a sigh, escaping from your harp,
a sweet, celestial chord
has revealed to me a heaven of happier times.
Beloved art, for this I thank you!

Gretchen at the Spinning Wheel

My peace is gone, my heart is heavy;
I shall never ever find peace again.
When he's not with me, life's like the grave;
The whole world is turned to gall.
My poor head is crazed,
My poor mind shattered.
My peace is gone my heart is heavy;
I shall never ever find peace again.
It's only for him I gaze from the window,
It's only for him I leave the house.
His proud bearing, his noble form,
The smile on his lips, the power of his eyes,
And the magic flow of his words,
The touch of his hand, and ah, his kiss!
My peace is gone, my heart is heavy;
I shall never ever find peace again.
My bosom yearns for him.
Ah! if I could clasp and hold him,
And kiss him to my heart's content,
And in his kisses perish!

Im Abendrot

O wie schön ist deine Welt,
Vater, wenn sie golden strahlet!
Wenn dein Glanz herniederfällt,
Und den Staub mit Schimmer malet;
Wenn das Rot, das in der Wolke blinkt,
In mein stilles Fenster sinkt!
Könnst' ich klagen, könnst' ich zagen?
Irre sein an dir und mir?
Nein, ich will im Busen tragen
Deinen Himmel schon allhier.
Und dies Herz, eh' es zusammenbricht,
Trinkt noch Glut und schlürft noch Licht.

Du bist die Ruh,

Der Friede mild,
Die Sehnsucht du,
Und was sie stillt.
Ich weihe dir
Voll Lust und Schmerz
Zur Wohnung hier
Mein Aug' und Herz.
Kehr' ein bei mir,
Und schliesse du
Still hinter dir
Die Pforten zu.
Treib andern Schmerz
Aus dieser Brust.
Voll sei dies Herz
Von deiner Lust.
Dies Augenzelt
Von deinem Glanz
Allein erhellt,
O füll' es ganz.

In the Sunset

How lovely is your world,
Father, in its golden radiance
when your glory descends
and paints the dust with glitter;
when the red light that shines from the clouds
falls silently upon my window.
Could I complain? Could I be apprehensive?
Could I lose faith in you and in myself?
No, I already bear your heaven
here within my heart.
And this heart, before it breaks,
still drinks in the fire and savours the light.

You are repose

and gentle peace.
You are longing
and what stills it.
Full of joy and grief
I consecrate to you
my eyes and my heart
as a dwelling place.
Come in to me
and softly close
the gate
behind you.
Drive all other grief
from my breast.
Let my heart
be full of your joy.
The temple of my eyes
is lit
by your radiance alone:
O, fill it wholly!

(Translations by Richard Wigmore)

French composer Gustave Charpentier (1860–1956) was most famous for his opera *Louise*. Coming from a middle-class family, Charpentier was mindful of those in the working class and established an institution and a conservatoire to give those in the working class a chance to study music. *Louise* is an opera that stars a woman, Louise, from the working class. Louise falls in love with Julien, a young poet. “**Depuis le jour**” is sung by Louise to Julien as she expresses her love for him. Louise expresses that Julien makes her day bright and cheerful even though she must work every day to survive.

Depuis le jour où je me suis donnée,
toute fleurie semble ma destinée.
Je crois rêver sous un ciel de féerie,
l'âme encore grisée de ton premier baiser !
Quelle belle vie !
Mon rêve n'était pas un rêve !
Ah! je suis heureuse !
L'amour étend sur moi ses ailes !
Au jardin de mon cœur
chante une joie nouvelle !
Tout vibre,
tout se réjouit de mon triomphe !
Autour de moi tout est sourire,
lumière et joie !
Et je tremble délicieusement
Au souvenir charmant
Du premier jour
D'amour !
Quelle belle vie !
Ah! je suis heureuse! trop heureuse...
Et je tremble délicieusement
Au souvenir charmant
Du premier jour
D'amour !

Since the day I gave myself
my destiny seems all flower-strewn
I think I'm dreaming under a fairy sky
my soul still intoxicated by your first kiss!
What a beautiful life!
My dream wasn't a dream!
Oh! I'm so happy!
Love is spreading its wings over me!
In the garden of my heart
sings a new joy!
Everything is vibrant
everything rejoices at my triumph!
All around me everything is smiling
light and joy!
And I'm trembling delightfully
from the charming memory
of the first day
of love!
What a beautiful life!
Oh! I'm so happy! ...utterly happy!
And I'm trembling delightfully
from the charming memory
of the first day
of love!

(Translation by Maria Callas)