

REVIEW ESSAY

L'art de la flûte française

In the Age of Ravel

Ransom Wilson *fl*, François Dumont *pf*
Nimbus Alliance NI 6344, 2017
(1 CD: 63 minutes). £14.99

In the Age of Debussy

Ransom Wilson *fl*, François Dumont *pf*
Nimbus Alliance NI 6407, 2021
(1 CD: 65 minutes). £14.99

Prélude

Some albums entail more than meets the ear.¹ *In the Age of Ravel* and *In the Age of Debussy* surround representative works of Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) and Claude Debussy (1862–1918) with contextualizing selections from contemporaries. Compellingly rendered by Ransom Wilson and François Dumont, these discs document six decades of innovation. They also illuminate intriguing connections as well as fascinating contrasts among familiar and unfamiliar works. And each celebrates the art of the French flute. But there's more.

These releases demonstrate that certain violin works from the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth can expand the flute's repertoire.² Their performances also illustrate shared values and principles – the Symbolist aesthetic – which inspired many French composers during the half century surrounding the Franco-Prussian and Great Wars.³ Indeed, poetry's

¹ I thank *Nineteenth-Century Music Review's* General Editor, Bennett Zon, for editing this review essay. I also thank my Editorial Board colleagues Sanna Pederson and Heather Platt for their advice and encouragement.

² Nancy Toff surveys literature from the Baroque to the recent past in *The Flute Book: A Complete Guide for Students and Performers*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 183–274.

³ The Symbolist aesthetic, which emphasized suggestion and nuance, arose in Charles Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal* (Paris: Auguste Poulet-Malassis, 1857, 1861, 1868). Symbols distinguish those poems, but so do imagery, intertextuality, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and sensory references, plus what poets called 'music'. *Les fleurs du mal* influenced Paul Verlaine and Stéphane Mallarmé, and their verse, along with that of Baudelaire, initiated Symbolism's first phase. For more, see Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (London: Heinemann, 1899; rev. ed. 1919); Henri Peyre, *Qu'est-ce que le symbolisme?* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1974), translated as *What is Symbolism?*, trans.

influence is evident.⁴ Hints of recitation even arise.⁵ And singing qualities emerge.⁶ But there's still more.

The music on *In the Age of Ravel* and *In the Age of Debussy* elicits imaginative responses from receptive listeners.⁷ More specifically, these compositions stimulate cognitive contribution. How? Art historians and a neuroscientist offer insight.

In the mid-twentieth century, art historian Ernst Gombrich (1909–2001) often discussed what he called 'the beholder's share' – contributions made by a viewer to the experience of a painting.⁸ For example, during his A.W. Mellon Lectures in 1956, Gombrich declared:

There is an increasing awareness of the fact that what we enjoy is not so much seeing these works from a distance as the very act of stepping back, as it were, and watching our imagination come into play, transforming the medley of color into a finished image ... The willing beholder responds to the artist's suggestion because he enjoys the transformation that occurs in front of his eyes. It was in this enjoyment that a new function of art emerged gradually, and all but unnoticed during the period we have discussed. The artist gives the beholder increasingly 'more to do', he draws him into

Emmett Parker (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1980); Wallace Fowlie, *Poem and Symbol: A Brief History of French Symbolism* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990).

⁴ Paul Verlaine's *Art Poétique* (1874), a poem that first appeared in the journal *Paris-Moderne: revue littéraire et artistique* on 10 November 1882 and was reprinted in his collection *Jadis et naguère* (Paris: Léon Vanier, 1884), articulated the Symbolist concept of 'music', which recognized aspects of our aural art in the literary form. See Alfred J. Wright, Jr., 'Verlaine's "Art Poétique" Re-examined', in *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 74/3 (1959): 268–75. Stéphane Mallarmé explored the poetic notion of 'music' systematically; see Chapter 3, 'Mallarmé and the Spectacle of Musical Poetry', in Joseph Acquisto, *French Symbolist Poetry and the Idea of Music* (London: Routledge, 2006): 47–80.

⁵ Insights on the influence of Symbolist poetry and its recitation appear in Helen Abbott, *Between Baudelaire and Mallarmé: Voice, Conversation and Music* (London: Routledge, 2009), and Katherine Bergeron, *Voice Lessons: French Mélodie in the Belle Époque* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). See also David Evans, 'Tough Crowd: The Perils of Reading Poetry Aloud, or How Poetic Value Is Negotiated in Performance', in *Poets as Readers in Nineteenth-Century France*, ed. Joseph Acquisto, Adrianna Paliyenko and Catherine Witt (London: IMLR Publications, 2015): 207–28.

⁶ For flutist Marcel Moyse (1889–1984), 'the French flute style was related to French pronunciation', according to his biographer, who substantiated her assertion with a quotation from the artist: 'The position of the mouth and the tongue required to speak French is a natural one to produce the flute tone'; see Ann McCutchan, *Marcel Moyse: Voice of the Flute* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1994): 47. A student of Moyse, Raymond Meylan, concurs; see his book, *The Flute*, trans. Alfred Clayton (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1988): 119. Jean-Pierre Rampal (1922–2000) was said to have 'explained that playing the flute was the same as singing', emphasizing 'the emotional and musical use of breath to create atmosphere and drama'; see Sheryl Cohen, *Bel Canto Flute: The Rampal School* (Cedar Falls: Winzer Press, 2003): 8, 11.

⁷ Active engagement and imagination stimulation distinguished Symbolist poetry, and French musicians took notice. Two *mélodies* from 1870, Henri Duparc's 'L'invitation au voyage', which sets a poem from Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal*, and Gabriel Fauré's 'Lydia', which applies the Symbolist aesthetic's principles to his setting of Parnassian verse by Leconte de Lisle, offer evidence of the aesthetic's early influence on French vocal music.

⁸ Ernst Gombrich's popular book, *The Story of Art*, first published in 1950, is in its 16th edition (New York: Phaidon Press, 2007).

the magic circle of creation and allows him to experience something of the thrill of 'making' which had once been the privilege of the artist. It is the turning point which leads to those visual conundrums of twentieth-century art that challenge our ingenuity and make us search our own minds for the unexpressed and inarticulate.⁹

More recently, neuroscientist Eric R. Kandel identified the source of the 'beholder's share' idea within the work of art historian Alois Riegl (1858–1905):

In studying the group paintings of seventeenth-century Holland, such as Frans Hal's *A Banquet of the Officers of the St. George Militia Company* and Dirck Jacobsz's *Civic Guards* (Figs. 8–14 and 11–2), Riegl discovered a new psychological aspect of art: namely that *art is incomplete without the perceptual and emotional involvement of the viewer*. Not only does the viewer collaborate with the artist in transforming a two-dimensional likeness on a canvas into a three-dimensional depiction of the visual world, the viewer interprets what he or she sees on the canvas in personal terms, thereby adding meaning to the picture. Riegl called this phenomenon the 'beholder's involvement' (Gombrich later elaborated on it and referred to it as 'the beholder's share'). This conception – that art is not art without the direct involvement of the viewer – was elaborated upon by the next generation of Viennese art historians, Ernst Kris and Ernst Gombrich.¹⁰

Accordingly, cognitive contributions evoked by an artistic experience may be subliminal and spontaneous, or they may be conscious and controlled. Some responses are retrospective, others prospective. Predisposition, preparation and practice play roles. For Riegl, Gombrich and Kandel, rewarding encounters with significant art are not passive and receptive, but active and productive.

If an evocative painting induces 'a beholder's share' from an engaged viewer, then surely an expressive composition inspires a 'listener's share' from an engaged auditor. The works on *In the Age of Ravel* and *In the Age of Debussy*, influenced by the Symbolist aesthetic and animated by allusion and nuance, offer telling evidence. Cognitive contributions to aural art like this may involve images, but they are not restricted to the visual domain. Indeed, the suggestions and implications of Symbolist music may evoke many kinds of responses, all quite personal, which are dependent upon prior experience, awareness of context and one's own creative imagination.

This review essay surveys how the music on these compact discs may elicit creative cognitive contributions from engaged listeners today. It also addresses how – and how well – the performers' interpretations enable and enhance that interactive process. Departing from what's usually found in the CD Reviews section of *Nineteenth-Century Music Review*, the present contribution is more exploratory and hermeneutic, responding to the recordings with illuminative context, structural analysis and personal reflection. In turn, notions of advocacy,

⁹ Ernst Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961): 199 and 202.

¹⁰ Eric R. Kandel, *The Age of Insight: The Quest to Understand the Unconscious in Art, Mind, and Brain, from Vienna 1900 to the Present* (New York: Random House, 2012): 189. Kandel shared the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2000 for his research relating to memory. See also Alois Riegl, *The Group Portraiture of Holland*, introduction by Wolfgang Kemp, trans. Evelyn M. Kain and David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999): 11, 16, 103.

influence and intertextuality distinguish several of the compositions' discussions. The sequence of these scrutinies, which departs from album orderings, emphasizes significant relationships.¹¹

In the Age of Ravel

Ravel's *Vocalise-étude en forme de habanera* (1907) opens its disc, and it could not be better placed. Marked 'Presque lent et avec indolence', the work alludes to other media, intimates an earlier era, hints of a distant place, suggests a sensuous scene and implies physical motion – all within about three minutes. If a listener perceives any of these, such responses represent cognitive contributions to the composition's experience. Through its audition at the CD's start, contribution becomes a premise, reaction and habit as listening continues.

Commissioned in 1907 by A.L. Hettich, singing professor at the Conservatoire, Ravel's *Vocalise-étude* joined contributions by Gabriel Fauré, Paul Dukas and Vincent d'Indy, plus many others, within what became a large series of pedagogical volumes.¹² It became a popular instrumental solo, as well as a singer's étude, soon after its publication.¹³ Wilson's phrasing shapes the seemingly improvisatory gestures within Ravel's carefully crafted lines with warmth, sensitivity and energy characteristic of a chanting voice. Simultaneously, Dumont's discriminating touch imparts guitar-like timbres through the accompaniment's octave ostinatos, plus flashes of colour in its parallel chords and occasional strums. Yet the smooth flow of a violin bow also sometimes seems suggested by the flute's neighbour-note motives, and its rasp may be sensed during repeated-note figures, where Wilson's breath adds an envelope of friction. Similarly, occasional bell-like sounds from Dumont's piano offer resonant contrasts as they provide harmonic ambience. Allusions abound, stimulating association and speculation, both conscious and intuitive. Appropriately applied interpretive nuances personalize the rendition.

Of course, Ravel's early twentieth-century piece also evokes the nineteenth-century Cuban dance, associated with the then-recently ended Spanish colonial period that's signalled by its title. Multilocal and multitemporal, this music prompts listeners, wherever situated, to imagine the Caribbean island, perhaps in humid twilight sometime in the past, and prompts them to perceive sensations of physical movement within a social scene. Symbolist poetry often sought to suggest distant temporal and locational contexts like this, and here, Ravel offers a stimulating musical analogue. Beyond all of that, the *Vocalise-étude* may motivate

¹¹ The websites www.wyastone.co.uk/in-the-age-of-ravel.html (accessed 12 June 2022) and www.wyastone.co.uk/in-the-age-of-debussy.html (accessed 12 June 2022) provide track lists and timings for *In the Age of Ravel* and *In the Age of Debussy*.

¹² A.L. (Amédée-Landély) Hettich (1856–1937), *Répertoire moderne de vocalises-études*, 12 vols (Paris: Éditions Alphonse Leduc, 1907–1930).

¹³ Ravel's *Vocalise-étude* was originally set in F minor/major. However, the performers appear to have used a transposed arrangement titled 'PIÈCE' and labeled 'Transcription pour Flûte ou Hautbois ou Violon avec accompagnement de Piano par Th. DONEY' and first published by Leduc in 1921. Pitched in G minor/major, it produces an intimate impression via its limited range, which still approximates a mezzo-soprano voice. Louis Fleury produced yet another flute arrangement in G minor/major, published in 1926 by Éditions Alphonse Leduc under the title 'Pièce en forme de Habanera', that occasionally exploits the instrument's brilliant high register through upward octave transposition of selected phrases.

other kinds of recollection and connection, perhaps reminding of Ravel's contemporaneous *Rapsodie espagnole* (1907) – whose third movement is a 'Habanera' – or of passages in Ravel's opera *l'Heure espagnole* (1911), and maybe even 'L'amour est un oiseau rebelle', famously sung by the title character in Georges Bizet's *Carmen* (1875). But that's not all, for this music also enthralls via two kinds of allusions within its tonal structure.

Ravel's *Vocalise-étude* prolongs the dominant of G for over half its length, simultaneously conveying a range of modal suggestions, including Phrygian and Dorian, as well as G minor, as it elicits expectation, builds tension and simulates momentum toward resolution.¹⁴ Meanwhile, a rising registral ceiling in the flute part climbs from F5 in bar 7, to G5 in bar 18, and on to A5 in bar 19, hinting that the ascent may continue upward after the dominant finally resolves to tonic in bar 39.¹⁵ Yet that last rise never arrives, and the striking G♭5 (enharmonic to F#5) of bar 48 enables the repeated G5 in bars 54–56 to provide contextual closure. Wilson and Dumont deftly manipulate the work's engaging process, drawing anticipation out of thin air. A listener's tonal and registral expectations regarding this registral ascent, intuitively perceived and complemented by those associated with the corresponding precursive prolongation, represent cognitive contributions to the composition's experience.

Gabriel Pierné's *Canzonetta*, Op. 19 (1888), an *Andantino moderato* (♩ = 60) originally scored for clarinet and piano, sounds a P5th higher here in B-flat major, as Roger Nichols relates in his helpful liner notes for *In the Age of Ravel* (p. 4).¹⁶ Pierné's title may represent a strategic distraction, perhaps intended to prompt recollection of the light-hearted, Renaissance-era vocal genre, or Joseph Haydn's late-career, English-language songs that use the term *Canzonetta* as a subtitle, or even the melancholic middle movement of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto, Op. 35 (1878), which bears the same name.¹⁷ Yet for many of us, audition of

¹⁴ Bars 1–38 of Ravel's *Vocalise-étude* represent a *precurive prolongation* – an extended prefixial passage dependent upon the structural tonic harmony of G major first heard in bar 39. For more, see my chapter 'Tonal Implication and the Gestural Dialectic in Schubert's A Minor Quartet', in *Schubert the Progressive: History, Performance Practice, Analysis*, ed. Brian Newbould (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003): 56–62, and my essay 'Precursive Prolongation in the *Préludes* of Chopin', in the *Journal of the Society for Musicology in Ireland* 3 (2007–2008): 25–61.

¹⁵ For more on rising registral ceilings, see my chapters 'Contextual Processes in Schubert's Late Choral Music', in *Rethinking Schubert*, ed. Lorraine Byrne Bodley and Julian Horton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016): 297–9, 'The Dramatic Monologue of the Mass in A Flat', in *Drama in the Music of Franz Schubert*, ed. Joe Davies and James William Sobaskie (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019): 76–7, and 'Identification in *Die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Winterreise*, ed. Marjorie Hirsch and Lisa Feurzig (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021): 161–2.

¹⁶ Roger Nichols authored *The Harlequin Years: Music in Paris: 1917–1929* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), *Ravel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), and *Poulenc: A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020). Nichols also translated Jean-Michel Nectoux's *Gabriel Fauré: A Musical Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

¹⁷ The American artist James Abbott McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) incorporated the terms 'Arrangement', 'Harmony' and 'Symphony' within portrait titles, and included the terms 'Nocturne', 'Note', and 'Variations' within landscape titles. For instance, the painting many know as 'Whistler's Mother' actually is called 'Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1: Portrait of the Artist's Mother' (1871). Titles influence attitude and interpretation.

Pierné's *Canzonetta* prompts perception not of song, but of dance.¹⁸ Once underway (and past the title's distractive ploy!), it clearly seems a fine fit for Wilson's flute, whose timbrally distinctive registers and effortless agility accentuate timbral contrasts and expansive flourishes to portray graceful and playful physical motion suggestive of ballet. The *Canzonetta* falls into four-bar units – save for the five-bar span that introduces a contrastive *piu lento* section, and the elision that enables the reprise to surprise by entering a bar 'early', plus the ending extension that provides satisfactory closure through agogic stress. Through this readily perceived hypermetric structure, the *Canzonetta*'s stimulates vicarious sensations of lithe human movement without depicting specific images. Listeners contribute to their experiences personally and privately as their imaginations allow.

At over 21 minutes, Gabriel Pierné's *Sonate pour Piano et Violon*, Op. 36 (1900), represents a third of *In the Age of Ravel*, and it poses unyielding yet rewarding challenges for listeners as well as performers.¹⁹ Its three movements, *Allegretto*, *Allegretto tranquillo* and *Andante non troppo* – *Allegro un poco agitato*, might recall the violin sonata (1886) of Pierné's *maître*, César Franck, via their chromaticism and cyclicism. However, the aesthetic of Pierné's sonata is not Romantic, but Symbolist, which makes his Op. 36 a product of the Modern Age.

For instance, the initial *Allegretto* projects temporal fluidity through polymetre (e.g., 6/8 and 2/4 over 10/16, as well as 2/4 over 6/8), changing metres (e.g., 2/4 followed by 3/4 followed 10/16), varying phrase lengths, shifting tempi, polyrhythms (e.g., septuplets and octuplets in 10/16), hemiola, syncopation and layered phasing effects, that frustrates finding a steady pulse and suggests a state of transcendence. Similarly, its sonata design, which begins in D minor and has a second theme and tonal area conventionally set in F, confronts experienced auditors' expectations regarding the traditional design via concentrated and continuous motivic superimposition that enhances structural unity while attenuating thematic contrast. This encourages analytical and predictive activity whose cumulative effect is heightened tension. The opening *Allegretto* sustains its interpretive challenge through an unexpectedly calmer and texturally clearer passage within the exposition that communicates interiority, as well as temporal transcendence. Another, even more extended lyrical span arises within the development, whose relaxation is appreciated yet whose meaning is not immediately clear. Even the recapitulation, which begins 'low' in D-flat major before slipping up into closural D major, sustains a subliminal sensation of momentum by sustaining anticipation. Obviously, that's a lot for the artists to manage, and at times, greater metric clarity and thematic projection would have been desirable. But this recording will whet interest for live performance, where spatial separation and dynamic differentiation enable fuller appreciation of the movement's contrapuntal interactivity – its dynamic musical dialogue.

The following *Allegretto tranquillo* simulates a *mélodie en duo* for flute and piano, subtly shaped by poetic delivery and influenced by vocal lyricism ... albeit with an enormous range and impossibly long tones! Pierné's meticulously notated

¹⁸ Gabriel Pierné (1863–1937) studied organ with César Franck at the Conservatoire, won the Prix de Rome in 1882, conducted the première of Igor Stravinsky's *Firebird* in 1910, and composed numerous operas, ballets and *mélodies*, as well as choral and chamber works. See Georges Masson, *Gabriel Pierné, musicien lorrain* (Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1993), and Marc Wood, 'Pierné in Perspective: Of Church and Circus', *The Musical Times* 143/1878 (2002): 47–53, for more about the composer.

¹⁹ Durand et Cie published a flute edition of Pierné's sonata in 1909.

articulation, which includes brief legato gestures as well as detached notes, plus slurred staccato, tenuto and upper-neighbour graces, is enhanced by Wilson's own shadings, stresses and vibrato, plus Dumont's equally sensitive interpretation, to communicate what strikes as poetically phrased verbal exchanges unfolding within a state of reverie. A gentle respite between more dynamic and closely related companion movements, the *Andante tranquillo* functions as an extended parenthesis within a broad and continuing narrative that promotes an imaginative response.

Its successor, the *Andante non troppo – Allegro un poco agitato*, concludes the ongoing drama, returning motivic elements and thematic statements in a quickly complex cyclic collage initiated by an arresting introduction marked '*come recitativo largamente*'. Yet the movement's determinedly non-Romantic climax eventually occurs through simplification rather than struggle – achieved, it would seem, via the contents and recalled effects of the earlier unexpectedly calmer spans in the sonata. Signalled by eight rising trilled tones supported by a slowly clarified dominant harmony, the movement's *dénouement* is convincing because of the coordination and commitment of its performers. Admirably advocative, this ardent performance of Pierné's sonata stands out on *In the Age of Ravel* most memorably.

Wilson and Dumont's rendition of Maurice Ravel's *Mouvement de sonate* (1897), an *Allegro* variously also known as the composer's 'Sonate n°1 pour violon et piano' and 'Sonate Posthume', may be the first globally distributed flute recording of this early work.²⁰ Composed around the time Ravel joined Gabriel Fauré's composition class at the Conservatoire, and before his attempts to win the Prix de Rome (1900–1905), the *Mouvement* holds hints of the modal suggestions, harmonic oscillations, timbral contrasts, textural layering and conversational exchanges that would come to be associated with his mature style. It also projects determined complexity, initially exemplified by the nine metre signatures of the opening nine bars, which dare us to relax!²¹ At times its dramatic argument might be challenging to follow, but this presentation – which represents more artistic advocacy – demonstrates that flutists can be effective champions of this youthful essay too.

Unassuming intimacy distinguishes Fauré's *Berceuse*, Op. 16 (N 50; 1879), an *Allegretto moderato* originally for violin and piano and set in D major, but performed here in F.²² For many young flutists, this 'lullaby' is their 'first Fauré' – appealing and accessible music without daunting digital demands.²³

²⁰ Written when the composer was 23, though not published until 1975, the *Mouvement de sonate* was preceded by Ravel's *Menuet antique* (1895) and followed by the *Pavane pour une infante défunte* (1899), *Jeux d'eau* (1901), *Quatuor pour instruments à cordes* (1905), and the *Vocalise-étude en forme de habanera* (1907). I am unaware of any other flute recordings of this work, though there are many featuring violin.

²¹ Ralph Vaughan Williams, who studied with Maurice Ravel, related that the composer's motto was '*Complexe mais pas compliqué*'; see Ursula Vaughan Williams, *R.V.W.: A Biography of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964): 79. I thank Ryan Ross for sharing this quotation's source.

²² Fauré's compositions bear N numbers established by Jean-Michel Nectoux in *Gabriel Fauré: Catalogue des œuvres* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2018). The entry for the *Berceuse*, Op. 16 – N 50 – appears on pp. 71–3 of this resource. Nectoux reports that Hamelle released a flute edition of the work in 1904; see p. 72.

²³ In addition to Fauré's *Berceuse*, flutists play arrangements of his *Pavane* (N 100), the *Berceuse* from *Dolly* (N 113.1), and the *Sicilienne* from his incidental music to *Pelléas et Mélisande* (N 142), plus *mélodies* like *Après un rêve* (N 34) and *Clair de lune* (N 94), as well as the *Morceau de lecture à vue pour flûte et piano* (N 199).

Yet Ransom Wilson goes beyond a mere reading to imbue this interpretation with emulable detail as well as sincere expression. For instance, while its compound duple 'rocking' rhythm certainly contributes to impressions of forward flow, so do its transient tonicizations of A minor and C major, as well as its even more fleeting allusions to G minor, B-flat major and D minor, all of which allude to tonic's eventual return.²⁴ Wilson and Dumont distinguish the different tonal moves, subtly manipulating the expectations they elicit to produce subliminal anticipation perceptible as forward momentum.²⁵ This is particularly apparent near the beginning, where three 4-bar phrases lead to a 9-bar span that tonicizes the dominant, followed by two 4-bar phrases that precede a 10-bar Fauréan 'long line'²⁶ linked to an 8-bar span that tonicizes the relative major. Special attention is paid to the articulation, shaping and shading of the melody's internal gestures, accomplished within the context of a determinedly steady tempo, which is essential to realizing rhythmic subtleties within the composer's lyrical strands. All contribute to an expectation-eliciting contextual process within which a rising registral ceiling ultimately reaches a satisfying sustained D6 at the end of the piece in bars 108–111, coordinated with cadential confirmation of tonic.

Pedagogical purpose also appears to have influenced the interpretation of Fauré's *Fantaisie pour flûte et piano*, Op. 79 (N 141) on this disc. Commissioned by Paul Taffanel as the set piece for the 1898 flute concours at the Conservatoire, which was won that year by Gaston Blanquart, the *Fantaisie* consists of a brisk *Andantino* fused to a scherzo-like *Allegro*.²⁷ Wilson and Dumont eschew Romantic rubato and superimposed sentimentality in the former to project rhythmic nuances and timbral differences, and they pursue a light and graceful delineation in the latter to express effervescent energy. Yes, the last half might have been faster, but aspiring students need the detail and definition that this recording provides.

Joueurs de flûte, Op. 27 (1925), by Albert Roussel (1869–1937), honours four figures associated with pipe- and flute-playing. Its constituents – which represent 'Pan', the Greek god of nature, 'Tityre', a shepherd mentioned in Virgil's *Eclogues*, 'Krishna', the Hindu god, and 'Monsieur de la Péjaudie', a character in Henri de Régnier's novel 'La Pecheresse' (1920) – were dedicated to four flutists well known to Parisian audiences – Marcel Moyse, Gaston Blanquart, Louis Fleury and Philippe Gaubert.²⁸ If one accepts the notion of a 'listener's share', Roussel

²⁴ *Transient tonicization* is a common feature in Fauré's music. For more, see my chapter 'Allusion in the Music of Gabriel Fauré', in *Regarding Fauré*, ed. and trans. Tom Gordon (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1999): 181–8. Robert Orledge called this technique 'tonal side-stepping'; see Robert Orledge, *Gabriel Fauré*, rev. ed. (London: Eulenberg, 1983): 250.

²⁵ Allusion distinguishes Fauré's music; see my chapter, 'Allusion as premise: two *mélodies* of Fauré', in *Making Sense of Music: Studies in Musical Semiotics*, ed. Constantino Maeder and Mark Reybrouck (Louvain-le-Neuve: Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2017): 15–26.

²⁶ Nadia Boulanger discussed Fauré's 'long lines' during a lecture at the Rice Institute (now Rice University, Houston, Texas) in February of 1925; see Don G. Campbell, *Master Teacher: Nadia Boulanger* (Washington, DC: The Pastoral Press, 1984): 108.

²⁷ See Edward Blakeman, *Taffanel: Genius of the Flute* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). For more on Paul Taffanel (1844–1908), who conducted the Paris Opéra as well as the Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, and founded the Société de musique de chambre pour instruments à vent, see Toff, *The Flute Book*, 246–7, and Ardal Powell, *The Flute* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003): 208 and 216–24.

²⁸ Paul Taffanel's students included Marcel Moyse (1889–1984), whose pedagogy and mentoring dominated the flute world during much of the twentieth century, Gaston

surely gives auditors 'a lot to do' in perceiving the eponymous figures within these pieces while discerning embedded evidence of their dedicatees. Ransom Wilson's conscientious intonation helps, as does his projection of timbral gradations. Likewise, his close coordination with François Dumont assures that frequent changes in metre, tempo, dynamics, articulation and texture contribute to the images within these pieces.

That same attention to ensemble also serves Roussel's purposes in the duo's interpretation of his *Andante et Scherzo* (1934), which is dedicated to flutist Georges Barrère. Although not commissioned for the annual flute concours at the Conservatoire, Roussel's work features the slow/fast/fused format that would characterize many set pieces like Fauré's *Fantaisie*. While some listeners will be drawn to the introspective lyricism of the first half and the nervous energy of the second, others will be attracted to its technical demands and moved to imagine how the music might have been conceived to illuminate a performer's prowess. We perceive what we will within such suggestive structures, contributing to their experiences.

In the Age of Debussy

For many readers of this journal, the most familiar composition on *In the Age of Debussy* may prove the most provocative. Surely it demonstrates the premise and power of what I have called the 'listener's share'. Claude Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894), a musical response to Stéphane Mallarmé's Symbolist poem, *L'après-midi d'un faune* (1865, rev. 1875–77), begins with what must be the most famous flute melody of the nineteenth century. Returning in increasingly elaborate variations within a complex configuration whose structural multiplicity derives from diverse factors, including texture, rhythm, centricity, spatiality and silence, the familiar opening theme's contour, chromaticism, durations and timbral sweep transfix auditors.²⁹ While the composition was inappropriately associated with the visual art movement of Impressionism³⁰ – an

Blanquart (1877–1962), long-time flutist with the Orchestre des Concerts Colonne, Louis Fleury (1878–1926), dedicatee of Claude Debussy's *Syrinx*, Philippe Gaubert (1879–1941), flute professor at the Conservatoire and conductor at the Paris Opéra and Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, and Georges Barrère (1876–1947), first flutist at the première of *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, dedicatee of Edgard Varèse's *Density 21.5*, and long-time member of New York City orchestras. See Claude Dorgeuille, *The French Flute School, 1860–1950*, trans. and ed. Edward Blakeman (London: Tony Bingham, 1983), and Chapter 11, 'The French Flute School', in Powell, *The Flute*, 208–24, for excellent discussions of these artists.

²⁹ Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* incorporates elements of variation, rondo and ternary forms, enabling multiple, co-existent structural interpretations – what may be called *structural multiplicity*.

³⁰ The values, principles and means of Impressionism – a visual arts movement that arose in the 1860s, thrived in the 1870s and evolved in the 1880s – differed from then-contemporary Symbolist poetry, though the movement's leading artists, like Claude Monet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, certainly employed suggestion and elicited contribution. See Robert L. Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), and Jann Pasler's entry, 'Impressionism', in *Grove Music Online*.

attribution rejected by the composer³¹ – Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* exemplifies Modernism and the Symbolist aesthetic.³²

However, most readers of this journal know the *Prélude* so well that any arrangement is apt to invoke memories of the symphonic original.³³ Elicited recollections, in turn, cue critical comparison and cognitive contribution. During audition of this disc's track, listeners might be prompted to imagine – intuitively or intentionally – the original's instrumentation and timbral spectra, the range and types of orchestral textures, the strands and masses of sound, plus tiny details – like the delicate crotale strokes that signal closure – as well as some of the spatial nature of Debussy's masterwork perceived when heard in a concert hall. Yet here, with the flute assigned most of the foreground lines, and the piano primarily allotted middleground and background components, our focus is apt to tighten, shifting to counterpoint, rhythm and the play of expectation. And within this context, the variational nature of the *Prélude* comes through particularly well, thanks to Wilson's attention to detail and discreet adjustments during thematic returns. So do the unifying roles of middleground melodies and background motives, ably projected by Dumont. But for some of us, the *Prélude*'s climactic passage (bars 63–73) may seem to lack its anticipated dramatic impact. Whether attributable to the arrangement, or the mixing process, or even the tempo, we're reminded that this recording offers an opportunity to complete the intertextual experience however we wish, as well as hear Debussy's essay anew. And surely it belongs on *In the Age of Debussy* to prompt such contribution.

³¹ The quote, 'Anyone who calls my music "impressionist" is an imbecile', attributed to Claude Debussy, appears to be a contrivance of contemporary culture that was derived from a letter that the composer sent to his publisher Jacques Durand in March of 1908 about his *Images pour orchestre* (1905–1912). In that *envoi*, Debussy actually wrote: 'J'essaie de faire "autre chose" et de créer – en quelque sorte des *réalités* – ce que les imbéciles appellent "impressionnisme," terme aussi mal employé que possible, surtout par les critiques d'art qui n'hésitent pas à en affubler Turner, le plus beau créateur de mystère qui soit en art!' ('I am trying to do "something different" and to create – somehow *realities* – that which imbeciles call "impressionism," a term as poorly used as possible, above all by the critics of art who do not hesitate to cast it on Turner, the finest creator of mystery that is in art!'); *Lettres de Claude Debussy à son éditeur*, ed. Jacques Durand (Paris: Durand et Cie, 1927): 58. Debussy's letter also appears in Claude Debussy's *Correspondance: 1872–1918*, ed. and ann., François Lesure, Denis Herlin and Georges Liébert (Paris: Gallimard, 2005): 1080–81. Debussy's orchestral essay *Printemps* (1887), written at the Villa Medici during his Prix de Rome residency, had been criticized for its 'vague impressionism' decades earlier, so the composer's impatience with being misconstrued is understandable; see *Debussy on Music*, collected and introduced by François Lesure, trans. and ed. by Richard Langham Smith (New York: Knopf, 1977): 50.

³² The literature on Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* is vast and scattered. One might start with Leonard Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976): 236–59, and Matthew Brown, 'Tonality and Form in Debussy's *Prélude à "L'Après-midi d'un faune"*', *Music Theory Spectrum* 15/2 (1993): 127–43.

³³ Arrangements of *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* include those for two pianos (1895) by Debussy, for piano four hands (1910) by Ravel, and for piano solo (1912) by Leonard Borwick, all of which were published in Paris by Fromont. *In the Age of Debussy*'s album notes indicate that Gustave Samazeuilh's transcription for flute and piano (Paris: Editions Jobert, 1925) was used in this recording (p. 2). Samazeuilh (1877–1967) prepared arrangements of music by many contemporaries, including D'Indy, Dukas and Fauré, for various publishers.

Intertextuality appears via the increasingly audible echoes of the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* that resound within *La plainte, au loin, du faune ...* by Paul Dukas.³⁴ Originally published in 1920 as a piano solo within a memorial issue of *La Revue musicale* dedicated to Debussy, the flute-featuring arrangement heard here encourages recollection of the earlier work through the melodic projection and timbral associations afforded by Wilson's instrument.³⁵ Long-sustained tones, descending chromatic steps, initially vague references to gestures and rhythms from the *Prélude* that seem to become more like those we remember, plus familiar fluctuations in dynamics and tempo – all of which increase in frequency and urgency – motivate us to focus on details, make connections and recognize motivic evolution. Composed a quarter century after Debussy's *Prélude*, Dukas' *La plainte, au loin, du faune ...* captures a poignant mixture of nostalgia, despair and gratitude – at least readily apparent to this listener, as it must have been to the Parisian listening community of its day – even as it shows how far French music had come after the Great War.

The six short pieces of '*Bilitis*' pour flute proceed from Claude Debussy's *Six Epigraphes antiques* (1915) for two pianos.³⁶ The latter, in turn, relate to the *Musique de scène pour Les Chansons de Bilitis* (1901) – incidental music for a set of *tableaux vivants* – and the even earlier *Chansons de Bilitis* (1898) song cycle.³⁷ All six, which bear evocative titles, express intertextual relationships with those predecessors as well as with the poetry (1894) of Pierre Louÿs and its complicated literary backstory.³⁸ However, dwelling on those connections may be less rewarding at first than just responding to the rich sonority of these pieces, which unfold via two to four pages of score.

For instance, the modal fabric of 'Pour invoquer Pan, dieu du vent d'été', which is set in the signature of one flat and lacks chromaticism, features a pentatonic theme that nostalgically evokes a pastoral past, even as it embodies early twentieth century touches and values. Multitemporality, a common pursuit of Symbolist poetry, dominates here, with Wilson's gentle, fluid and nuanced flute part rendering retrospectivism, while Dumont's piano part, often quite spare and yet at times orchestral in conception, providing progressivism. In striking yet complementary contrast, 'Pour un tombeau sans nom' pursues intense and imaginative melodic development of the tritone interval within a sonorous context that exploits the lower half of the piano keyboard and seems to have been conceived for the

³⁴ Paul Dukas (1865–1935), a classmate of Claude Debussy's at the Conservatoire, may be best known for his orchestral scherzo *L'apprenti sorcier* (1897), which was featured in the Disney film *Fantasia*, and for his opera *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* (1899–1907). For more, see Laura Watson, *Paul Dukas: Composer and Critic* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2019).

³⁵ Paul Dukas, '*La plainte, au loin, du Faune ...*'. (Paris: *La revue musicale*, 1920): 1–5. Other composers represented in this *tombeau* of ten scores include Béla Bartók, Manuel de Falla, Eugène Goossens, Gian Francesco Malipiero, Maurice Ravel, Albert Roussel, Eric Satie, Florent Schmitt and Igor Stravinsky. Roger Nichols' liner notes specify that Gustave Samazeuilh's transcription (Paris: Durand et Cie, 1927) was used in this recording.

³⁶ See the arrangement edited by Karl Lenski (Vienna: Universal Edition, 1984).

³⁷ For more on this work's predecessors, see David Grayson, 'Bilitis and Tanagra: Afternoons with Nude Women', in *Debussy and His World*, ed. Jane E. Fulcher (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001): 117–40, and William Gibbons, 'Debussy as Storyteller: Narrative Expansion in the *Trois Chansons de Bilitis*', *Current Musicology* 85 (2008): 7–28.

³⁸ For more on the poet, see H.P. Clive, *Pierre Louÿs (1870–1925): A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), and Jean-Paul Goujon, *Pierre Louÿs: une vie secrète, 1870–1925* (Paris: Seghers/J.J. Pauvert, 1988).

distinctive registral differentiation characteristic of the straight-strung Érard pianos of Debussy's day. Its effect seems both timeless and transcendent, qualities also dear to Symbolist poets. 'Pour que la nuit soit propice' communicates energy, colour and freedom. Its Lydian theme, differentiated articulation, stepwise grace ornamentation and anacrusic gestures keep listeners riveted in the present moment, experiencing anticipation within a nocturnal context. The fourth piece, 'Pour la danseuse aux crotales', which is set in triple metre, conveys physicality and spatiality more so than visuality, through sensitive interpretation of Debussy's rhythm, articulation, dynamics and dynamics. One perceives cultivated gestures, steps, momentum and distances. 'Pour l'Égyptienne', also in triple metre, features stratified textures, long-sustained basses, syncopated pedal tones, plus sustained and planed harmonies featuring fourths and fifths, supportive of a wide-ranging, mostly modal melody marked *librement expressif*. Unified by a comprehensive rising registral ceiling (C6→D♭6→E♭6→F6→G♭6), the composition fascinates via its chant-influenced melody. Finally, 'Pour remercier la pluie au matin' proves surprisingly short, offering closure via a brief reprise of material from the opening movement.

Lili Boulanger (1893–1918), Prix de Rome prize-winner in 1913 and younger sister of Nadia Boulanger, composed her spirited *D'un matin de printemps* (1917) for violin and piano. Even so, the published score already included an alternative flute part. Soon arranged for string trio (1917), and then orchestrated during what would become her final year, the essay actually seems ideally suited to the incarnation heard here, as if originally inspired by the flute. Structured as a five-part rondo plus coda, its refrains feature two distinctive gestures – an anxious oscillation within a fourth, plus an upward-darting octave-span – supported by repetitive piano clusters, which animate the modal fabrics of the reprises. While the work's vitality transfixes listeners moment-to-moment, an unfolding contextual process involving non-adjacent upper-register pitches guides the dramatic flow. A gradual rise from E6 (bar 6) to F6 (bar 15) to F#6 (bar 20) in the opening bars later pushes up to G6 (bar 87) but skips A♭6 and A6 before stalling at B♭6 (bar 89). A seemingly more determined upward rise occurs later, starting lower at C#6 (bar 170) and ascending to D6 (bar 174), to E6 (bar 176), to F#6 (bar 178), to G6 (bar 180), before pushing up through A6 (bar 181) on up to B♭6 (bar 182), just prior to the climactic section of the work (bars 183–198, marked *ff brilliant*) and the coda (bars 199–214). This listener's contributions to his artistic experience? Anticipation, prediction and exhilaration!

The *Rêverie et Petite Valse* (1897) of André Caplet (1878–1925), conceived for flute with piano and dedicated to Georges Barrère, were written before their composer won the Prix de Rome in 1901, and before he became a friend and professional associate of Debussy. One might be tempted to listen for echoes of Debussy's *Rêverie* and *Valse romantique*, piano pieces from 1890, or perhaps for resonances from the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*. However, what's within these two ternary works reminds more of Fauré and Ravel, and surely reflects the freedom found during the *fin-de siècle* through the then-still-spreading Symbolist aesthetic. In the former, poetically shaped conversation, full of nuanced individuation and intimate exchanges, surely impresses most, while in the latter, witty *repartée*, full of graceful gestures as well as extravagant surprises, certainly delights and rewards. For me, Caplet's pieces, both so very 'verbal', along with Boulanger's energetic *D'un matin de printemps*, have proven to be the most fascinating 'finds' on *In the Age of Debussy*.

A tradition of flutists performing Gabriel Fauré's four-movement *Première Sonate pour violon et piano en la majeur*, Op. 13 (N 44; 1876) arose and flourished during the past four decades.³⁹ Paula Robison and Ruth Laredo's interpretation of Fauré's sonata, recorded in 1985 and released on compact disc in 1992, appears to have been the first featuring a flutist.⁴⁰ Robert Stallman's flute edition of Fauré's Op. 13 offered timely encouragement and enabled practical access.⁴¹ New recordings of the sonata followed, increasing in recent years.⁴² *In the Age of Debussy* sustains, reinvigorates and renews this advocative tradition.⁴³

The forms within Fauré's composition – sonata-allegro, rondo, compound ternary and rondo again – along with the work's publication date – 1876 – might lead some of us to regard it as conservative, even reactionary.⁴⁴ But its interpretation of those designs, plus the sonata's embodiment of the Symbolist aesthetic, as

³⁹ Rie Schmidt's 1983 performance of Fauré's sonata in Carnegie Hall won critical acclaim. See John Rockwell's review of her recital, dated 13 February, in the *New York Times*, Section 1, p. 56 (available online at www.nytimes.com/1983/02/13/arts/music-debuts-in-review-227396.html, accessed 12 June 2022).

⁴⁰ Made on 2 and 3 October 1985 at the Chapel, College of New Rochelle, this recording of Gabriel Fauré's *Première Sonate pour violon et piano* was widely circulated on the compact disc, *Ruth Laredo and Paula Robison, French Masterpieces for Flute and Piano* (MusicMasters Classics, 01612-67069-2; 1992). In a personal communication for which I am grateful, Paula Robison shared that she began performing Fauré's Op. 13 in 1981, explaining: 'For about ten years I had the delight of playing in a duo with Ruth Laredo. We were looking for substantial repertoire and she had played the Fauré Sonata many times with violin. The Franck Sonata was already in our repertoire and we played it often. But we felt that it was a bit of a struggle because of the second movement, and the need for double stops. We made it work, we loved playing it, but we wanted something more natural. Ruth said, "Let's try the Fauré sonata." The Fauré was perfect. It has a great elegance as well as passion, and the tessitura worked well. The vocal style of the work is well suited to the flute. So we set about making our own arrangement. We disagreed sometimes, because Ruth always had the violin in her ear, but we always came to a good compromise based on experience in performance. In the end Ruth was really hearing it as a flute and piano sonata. What a masterpiece!! I'm so grateful to have it part of my life!'

⁴¹ Robert Stallman's flute edition of Fauré's *Sonata in A major*, Op. 13, was published by the International Music Company (catalogue # 3254) in 1992.

⁴² See the compact discs featuring flutists James Galway (*The French Recital*, RCA Victor Red Seal, 09026-68351-2; 1996), Michel Bellevance (*Pan*, Meridian, CDE84509; 2004), Emmanuel Pahud (*Fauré & Franck: Flute Sonatas*, Skarbo, DSK4074; 2007), Kara Kirkendoll Welch (*Ballade: Works for Flute and Piano by Dutilleux, Fauré, Griffes and Martin*, MSR Classics, MS 1286; 2009), Robert Langevin (*Sonates Romantiques*, Avie, AV2213; 2010), Sharon Bezaly, (*Flute Sonatas – Bezaly Ashkenazy*, BIS, BIS2259, 2017), Lisa Friend (*Lisa Friend Plays Fauré and Debussy*, Chandos, CHAN 20084; 2019) and Atsugo Koga (*Music from France for Flute and Piano*, Genuin, GEN22559; 2022).

⁴³ In a personal communication for which I am grateful, Leone Buyse related that Denis Verroust, discographer of Jean-Pierre Rampal, indicated to her that to his knowledge, Rampal never transcribed or played Fauré's A major sonata. However, she also mentioned that Alain Marion shared his own transcription of the work with her in the early 1990s. This suggests that by that time, Fauré's composition had attracted flutists on both sides of the Atlantic.

⁴⁴ Fauré's first violin sonata was published by Breitkopf & Härtel in 1877. For more, see Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré: A Musical Life*, 80–84, and Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré: Catalogue des œuvres*, 62–5. Upon publication, Camille Saint-Saëns championed it in his article, 'Une sonate', *Le journal de musique* 45 (1877): 3. In the second edition of his invaluable research guide, Edward R. Phillips reports that Saint-Saëns' article was reprinted in the composer's book,

well as its elegant yet inconspicuous manner of eliciting ‘the listener’s share’, made the music progressive in its day. Ransom Wilson and François Dumont recognized this and skillfully exploited the sonata’s inherent allusions and incorporated expressive nuances to make it captivating.

For instance, Fauré attenuates rhythmic, dynamic and registral contrasts between the first, second and closing themes in the opening *Allegro molto* to enhance continuity and flow. Nevertheless, Wilson and Dumont have individuated the three themes’ internal motivic and gestural components, encouraging us to lean in and appreciate subtleties – the vocalicity of their articulation. Indeed, purely musical conversation characterizes much of Fauré’s sonata, and here, its interactivity engrosses – we listen for echoed shaping and shading in responsive gestures. The *Allegro molto*’s recapitulation is not an exact repeat, and care has been taken to project its changes, prompting our intuitive comparison with what’s been retained in memory. Perhaps most remarkably, Fauré’s voice-leading fabric systematically delays satisfactory cadential confirmation of the movement’s structural tonic until bar 356 – 8.03 into this 9.01 recording – via an expansive pre-cursive prolongation.⁴⁵ Taking advantage, the duo cultivates it to elicit expectation perceptible as forward momentum.

In the following *Andante*, a compound triple-metre *barcarolle* that moves from repressed tragedy to determined optimism, instrumental dialogue again holds sway.⁴⁶ Reifying generalized personae – virtual agents – flute and piano sensitively respond to one another, reflecting recognition of one another’s inflections, particularly in the many melodic *appoggiaturas* (incomplete upper neighbour tones) that serve as surface motives.⁴⁷ Textual inversion plays a significant role in this movement, enabling the pair to simulate paraphrasing. Here, flutist and pianist present an intimate musical *tête-à-tête*.

In contrast, their performance within the following movement presents the effect of a physicalized musical ‘game’ describable as ‘tossing’. The *Allegro vivo* initially features flute and piano ‘back-and-forth’ short gestures at a brisk tempo before each ‘holds possession’ of the foregrounded melody for longer spans. It demands precise coordination, involving quickly contrasting articulations, skittering energy and dry staccato in the framing sections, plus long-breathed lyricism and fluctuant dynamics in the centre, where the ‘hand-offs’ are even longer. A little more edge on the many accented off-beats within the A and A’ sections, plus a little more fullness on the songful effusions of the B section, might have been desirable, but the musicians deliver – it’s genuinely playful.

If the preceding *Allegro vivo* hadn’t provided plenty of proof that Fauré’s *Sonata in A* demands athleticism from flutists in the form of capacious lungs and a tireless embouchure, surely the ‘long lines’ of the finale will convince. Several instances in this *Allegro quasi presto* stretch 17 bars without a break,

Au courant de la vie (Paris: Dorbon-Áine, 1914) on pp. 41–2; see Phillips, *Gabriel Fauré: A Research and Information Guide* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011): 290.

⁴⁵ See James William Sobaskie, ‘Allusion in The Music of Gabriel Fauré’, in *Regarding Fauré*, ed. and trans. Tom Gordon (Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1999): 179–80.

⁴⁶ The *barcarolle* was a favourite genre of the composer; see James William Sobaskie, ‘*Rêveries* within fantasies: the *Barcarolles* of Gabriel Fauré’, in *L’analyse musicale aujourd’hui*, ed. Mondher Ayari, Jean-Michel Bardez and Xavier Hascher (Le Vallier: Éditions Delatour France, 2015): 333–56.

⁴⁷ See Robert S. Hatten, *A Theory of Virtual Agency for Western Art Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018).

one lasts 26, and the coda (bars 345–75) features a 31-bar ‘long line’. These protracted utterances focus our attention, eliciting dramatic tension like those produced by enjambments in Symbolist poetry. Here, they’re played fleetly and eloquently, all in fine form. Gabriel Fauré, who performed this sonata with many violinists throughout his life, would have been pleased to have been so well understood.⁴⁸

Postlude

In the Age of Ravel and *In the Age of Debussy* offer opportunities to observe and assess responses elicited during engaging experiences of aural art, what I have called the ‘listener’s share’. Their audition demonstrates how this music moves us to contribute to and to collaborate in completing the communicative circle binding composer, performers and listeners. These albums also avail insights into the Symbolist aesthetic via their thoughtfully prepared and persuasively executed performances. Ransom Wilson and François Dumont exploit allusions embedded within the music, investing appropriate interpretive nuances to personalize its expression. Is another release warranted, perhaps an *In the Age of Fauré*? If so, what might serve such a project?

Gabriel Fauré’s *Deuxième Sonate pour violon et piano en mi mineur*, Op. 108 (N 181; 1917), reimagined for flute and piano, would be revelatory. The three movements of Maurice Ravel’s *Sonatine* (1905), plus selections from *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (1917), if idiomatically arranged, could contextualize. Favourites and worthies from Philippe Gaubert, Charles Koechlin and Jacques Ibert can complement. And an *In the Age of Fauré* album might offer Ransom Wilson an opportunity to revisit the *Sonate pour flûte et piano* (1957) of Francis Poulenc (1899–1963).⁴⁹ While the artistic relationship between these two composers is complex, Poulenc’s flute sonata most surely holds some of Fauré’s lyrical spirit.⁵⁰ I would not be alone in welcoming such a CD.

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⁴⁸ Jean-Michel Nectoux relates that Fauré participated in performances of his first violin sonata in charity concerts during the Great War, when the composer would have been around 70; see Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré: A Musical Life*, 404.

⁴⁹ See Ransom Wilson and Christopher O’Riley, *Flute Music of Les Six: Milhaud, Tailleferre, Auric, Poulenc, Honegger, Durey* (Etcetera, KTC 1073, 1990). Poulenc’s sonata was commissioned by the Library of Congress, dedicated to Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, and premiered by Jean-Pierre Rampal with the composer at the piano.

⁵⁰ See Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré: A Musical Life*, 433, where Francis Poulenc’s review of a 1928 recording of Fauré’s Sonata in A by Jacques Thibaud and Alfred Cortot is quoted in translation: ‘Whether it’s due to the perfection of the interpretation, the fact is that I have totally revised my opinion of this work. On reflection, I cannot think of a better violin sonata written in the last fifty years’. Poulenc’s review appeared in *Nouvelle Revue musicale* 1 (November 1928): 14. Perhaps three decades later, Poulenc’s *Sonate pour flûte et piano* embodied the admiration expressed in that review.