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La Voix humaine: A Technology Time Warp

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LA VOIX HUMAINE: A TECHNOLOGY TIME WARP

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance
College of Fine Arts
at the University of Kentucky

By
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ABSTRACT

LA VOIX HUMAINE: A TECHNOLOGY TIME WARP

In 1959 French composer Francis Poulenc composed the opera La Voix humaine based on Jean Cocteau’s original play (1928). La Voix humaine is a one-act opera for soprano. The main character, Elle, spends the opera on the phone with her ex-lover who is marrying another the next day. Many musicians believe this opera is difficult or impossible to update, due to the use of the telephone and its dated operator system, which is a large aspect of the action and drama.

This document provides the reader with a new interpretation of the opera with modern technology. Chapter One begins with a brief history of the creators of the play and opera, Jean Cocteau and Francis Poulenc. It delves into their early years, leading up to their time involved with Les Six. Chapter Two discusses Cocteau’s vision and creation of the play and continues to his collaboration with Poulenc on the opera. Chapter Three offers a view of how the phone plays a large part in the play, continues to the telephone’s function during the time period the play was written, and concludes with a look at how current technology may be applied to an updated interpretation of the opera. Chapter Four provides a look at the sections of the libretto that is linked to the telephone, thus making its use unavoidable in certain portions of the opera while providing musical examples. It also discusses how the libretto poses a problem with a modern-day telephone system and how to address these issues. Chapter Five presents ways to incorporate the use of an iPad into the second section of the opera, through analysis and interpretation of the text. Chapter Six gives a look into modern research on technology and its effects on mental health, following with how this research can be applied to a modern interpretation of the work and Elle’s untimely suicide due to effects of technology addiction. This chapter also discusses how the text and music support these ideas. Finally, the conclusion summarizes main ideas and their application into the opera.

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LA VOIX HUMAINE: A TECHNOLOGY TIME WARP

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS........................................................................................................ iii

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS................................................................................................... vi

PART I

INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 1

CHAPTER ONE: POULENC AND COCTEAU: A FRIENDSHIP ...................................... 4
    Jean Maurice Eugène Clément Cocteau .................................................................. 5
    Francis Jean Marcel Poulenc .............................................................................. 7

CHAPTER TWO: CREATING LA VOIX HUMAINE .................................................. 11

CHAPTER THREE: COCTEAU’S INTENT: THE TELEPHONE AND ITS ROLE ... 17
    The Function of the Telephone ......................................................................... 19
    Using Modern Technology ............................................................................. 20

CHAPTER FOUR: DEPENDENCY ON THE TELEPHONE ..................................... 23

CHAPTER FIVE: INCORPORATING MODERN TECHNOLOGY .......................... 38

CHAPTER SIX: TECHNOLOGY AND MENTAL HEALTH .................................. 46

CONCLUSION ................................................................................................................. 64

PART II

PROGRAM NOTES ........................................................................................................ 66

APPENDIX: FULL LIBRETTRO AND TRANSLATION TO POULENC’S LA VOIX
    HUMAINE.................................................................................................................. 98

BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................................................................................................... 110

MEDIA BIBLIOGRAPHY .............................................................................................. 116

VITA ................................................................................................................................ 117
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Example 4.1: *La Voix humaine*, mm. 7-8 after Rehearsal 8 ..............................................24
Example 4.2: *La Voix humaine*, mm. 3-4 after Rehearsal 5 ..............................................25
Example 4.3: *La Voix humaine*, mm. 6-7 after Rehearsal 5 ..............................................26
Example 4.4: *La Voix humaine*, mm. 3-4 after Rehearsal 9 ..............................................27
Example 4.5: *La Voix humaine*, Rehearsal 18 ...............................................................28
Example 4.6: *La Voix humaine*, mm. 2-3 after Rehearsal 23 ............................................29
Example 4.7: *La Voix humaine*, mm. 13-14 after Rehearsal 36 ........................................30
Example 4.8: *La Voix humaine*, m. 3 after Rehearsal 32 ...................................................32
Example 4.9: *La Voix humaine*, mm. 5-6 after Rehearsal 42 ............................................33
Example 4.10: *La Voix humaine*, Rehearsal 101 ...............................................................34
Example 5.1: *La Voix humaine*, m. 2 after Rehearsal 51 ...................................................40
Example 5.2: *La Voix humaine*, Rehearsal 54 ...............................................................41
Example 5.3: *La Voix humaine*, mm. 2-6 after Rehearsal 73 ............................................42
Example 5.4: *La Voix humaine*, m. 3 after Rehearsal 84 ...................................................44
Example 6.1: *La Voix humaine*, “Hammering” motive, mm. 1-4 ........................................50
Example 6.2: *La Voix humaine*, “Hammering” motive, m. 5 after Rehearsal 5 .............50
Example 6.3: *La Voix humaine*, “Exasperated Waiting” motive, Rehearsal 1 ...............51
Example 6.4: *La Voix humaine*, mm. 6-7 after Rehearsal 12 ............................................52
Example 6.5: *La Voix humaine*, Rehearsal 14 ...............................................................52
Example 6.6: *La Voix humaine*, m. 4 after Rehearsal 35 ...................................................53
Example 6.7: *La Voix humaine*, mm. 5-6 after Rehearsal 42 ............................................54
Example 6.8: *La Voix humaine*, m. 12 after Rehearsal 57 ..................................................55
Example 6.9: *La Voix humaine*, mm. 5-7 after Rehearsal 61 ............................................56
Example 6.10: *La Voix humaine*, mm. 3-6 after Rehearsal 90 and mm. 1-2 after
            Rehearsal 91 ...............................................................................................58
Example 6.11: *La Voix humaine*, mm. 1-2 after Rehearsal 101 ........................................59
Example 6.12: *La Voix humaine*, mm. 1-4 after Rehearsal 105 .......................................61
Example 6.13: *La Voix humaine*, “Final Declaration” motive, pickup and mm. 1-2 of
            Rehearsal 107 .............................................................................................61
Example 6.14: *La Voix humaine*, mm. 3-6 after Rehearsal 108 ........................................62
INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century has a multitude of stage directors who attempt to modernize various operas. This approach makes them accessible for younger audiences who find it difficult to connect to antiquated aspects of operas written before the twenty-first century. Though it is important as a performer to understand the original intent of the work, it is also exciting to conceptualize new stagings of older works. Francis Poulenc’s one-act opera, *La Voix humaine*, is a captivating and intriguing opera. It demands the audience members’ imagination during the production since there is only one character, a soprano singing the role of a nameless woman we refer to as Elle. Elle is holding her final conversation with her ex-lover, who is marrying another woman the next day. The end of this conversation brings the end of Elle’s life as she strangles herself with the phone cord. The audience is left in the dark as to what the lover is saying to Elle because their only clues are Elle’s utterings. Consequently, their imaginations must assist them in determining her lover’s conversation.

The genius behind the creation of this play that demands such ingenuity from the audience will be analyzed closely throughout this document. I provide a look at the history behind Jean Cocteau and Francis Poulenc during their early lives leading up to their collaboration in creating the opera *La Voix humaine*. Furthermore, the discussions will deliver insight into Cocteau and Poulenc’s intent behind the use of the telephone and its function during the early twentieth century. Additionally, this document gives ideas on how to modernize this opera through the use of new technology after an in-depth
analysis of the libretto to understand how the telephone plays a fundamental role within the work.

The telephone plays a large part within the action of this opera as well as, the difficulties pertaining to the device during the 1920s. The phone call in the opera is littered with interruptions from party lines and other subscribers, in addition to disconnections. Understandably, these problems are difficult to negotiate with twenty-first century technology, due to the fact that telephones no longer need an operator to connect a call and there are no longer party lines. Therefore, I offer methods to solve these difficulties of the libretto with alterations of the translation, replacing parts of the text, and interpretive views to explain the dated aspects of the libretto. These creative solutions open up opportunities for the use of new technology, such as the iPad. It becomes necessary to fuse the addition of modern technology into the interpretation of Elle’s demise. The emerging research on technology and its effects on society and our manner of communication paints a new picture of technostress and its symptoms. Their application into the opera inspires a myriad of possibilities for Elle’s portrayal of a distressed and distraught woman.

Through the above methods of modernizing La Voix humaine, I offer an in-depth look at the libretto through a twenty-first century lens and demonstrate how my alterations accommodate other technology. I have reviewed numerous stagings of the opera for this project. Besides the use of a cell phone, most productions maintain the aspect of the original telephone. Though it is important to maintain the integrity of the opera in regards to the telephone, I believe it is possible to successfully stage it in a revised manner with the advantages of twenty-first century technology. However,
whether this opera is performed in a manner that honors its original intent, or whether someone chooses to modernize the work, it is a seminal work in the musical canon. It provides an exceptional opportunity for any soprano who enjoys a dramatic plot to display acting skills as well as an artistic endeavor that provides an emotional outpouring, extending beyond the stage for the singer, while impacting the audience far beyond this brief moment in time.

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In 1958, a publisher approached Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) with the play *La Voix humaine* (1930) by Jean Cocteau (1889-1963) and suggested he write an opera with this play as the libretto.¹ Poulenc and Cocteau were associated through the same artistic circles and were no strangers to each other. In fact, Poulenc had maintained a friendship with Cocteau and collaborated on projects with him prior to this suggestion. These projects were grand artistic events that linked together art, literature, music, and dance. The opera *La Voix humaine* would be another grand collaboration of Poulenc and Cocteau, with its première almost thirty years later after their first collaboration.

It is crucial to realize the importance of the telephone at the conception of this work and how Cocteau came to create the play. Cocteau incorporated the use of the telephone in quite a few of his works throughout his career, one of these works being the play *La Voix humaine*. Therefore, a look into the background of the author and the influences in Cocteau’s life, such as Francis Poulenc, will help illuminate how this opera emerged as one of the greatest contributions of the twentieth century.

Jean Maurice Eugène Clément Cocteau (1889-1963)

His energy and vitality were inexhaustible, his output prodigious, and his ability to adapt to, as well as run counter to, the various literary and artistic trends of his day was quite remarkable.

—Bettina L. Knapp, Jean Cocteau: Updated Edition

As a child, Jean Cocteau loved imagining extraordinary worlds. The invented worlds he created in his mind were just the beginning of his creative genius, one that would eventually overflow with literary ideas ranging from plays to poetry. Cocteau’s parents were influential in his writing even as an adult. He was particularly enamored of his mother and was intrigued by watching her get ready for the theater, which possibly influenced his vision for La Voix humaine later in his career. Cocteau adored his father as well, and when he passed away in 1899 it affected him emotionally for most of his life, potentially contributing to his opium addictions as an adult. Several of his darker poems and plays reflect the pain he felt from losing his father. As a child, this loss contributed to inattentiveness and distraction for Cocteau while in school.

Though Cocteau did not care for school, it did not stop him from indulging in academic activities, such as writing poetry. His first book of poetry, La Lampe d’Aladin (1909), was completed at the age of sixteen. About this same time, Cocteau was introduced to the actor Edouard de Max (1869-1924), who was impressed with the talent of Cocteau, as well as his young good looks. Max paid for public readings of Cocteau’s poetry and the works were well received. Cocteau embraced his literary side and

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3 Ibid., 2.
4 Ibid., 4-5.
founded a literary magazine with François Bernouard (1884-1948) and Maurice Rostand (1891-1968), called *Schéhérazade*.\(^5\)

Through Cocteau’s editorial ventures and other successes, he attempted to put his distressed childhood behind him or use it to his advantage. In 1912, Cocteau embraced his independence and moved into the Hotel Biron, which housed many young talents of the period, such as Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). This same year, Cocteau received a bad review of his poetry, which caused him to reassess his views and position as a literary figure.\(^6\) Cocteau was introduced to a man he greatly admired, Sergei Diaghilev (1872-1929), around this same time.\(^7\) This friendship would yield other important relationships with notable figures such as Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971). Cocteau enjoyed his friendship with Stravinsky so much that he decided to remove himself from Parisian society and go to Switzerland to board with the Stravinsky family in hopes of devoting time to his writing.\(^8\)

Following his stay with Stravinsky, Cocteau formed a companionship in 1919 with Raymond Radiguet (1903-1923). This relationship became one of the most important in Cocteau’s life. However, their time together was cut short due to Radiguet’s death from typhoid fever in 1923. Knapp believes his death created a void in Cocteau’s life, thus adding another contributor to his opium addiction, an addiction he fought the rest of his life.\(^9\) During one of Cocteau’s recovery periods from addiction, he met Christian Bérard (1902-1949) while staying in a small town near Nice. Bérard became

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\(^6\) Ibid.  
\(^7\) Ibid., 6.  
\(^8\) Ibid.  
\(^9\) Ibid., 9.
Cocteau’s preferred person for designing sets for his theater and film works. His connections with artists such as Bérard were important in building his artistic network, thus leading to his familiarity with prominent musicians of the day.

Cocteau’s ideals held immense influence within artistic circles; he had specific ideas of what French music should represent. Cocteau wanted music to move away from the romantic ideals laid out by German composers and also did not believe Debussy’s impressionistic music encapsulated the *joie de vivre* of France. Writings of Cocteau’s philosophy appeared in *Paris-Midi* which served as a platform for discussion of his ideas of music and art. In this column he applauded music contemporaries such as Poulenc, Erik Satie (1866-1925), and Darius Milhaud (1892-1974). This column started his collaboration with a group of musicians called *Les Six*. Cocteau stepped in as the champion for the composers of *Les Six* after Satie’s withdrawal from the group. This was the beginning of a life-long friendship between the composer Poulenc and Cocteau. Throughout their friendship, Poulenc set a handful of works by Cocteau to music. The most notable collaboration is the opera *La Voix humaine*.

**Francis Jean Marcel Poulenc (1899-1963)**

Francis Poulenc had the good fortune of a childhood filled with music and a mother who influenced his music career. His mother came from generations of artists

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11 Ibid, 8.
and craftsmen and was an amateur pianist. At the age of four, Poulenc started his piano studies with his mother as his teacher. At eight, Poulenc was introduced to the music of Claude Debussy, which influenced his love for music. Poulenc’s mother wanted him to study piano and composition at the conservatoire, but his father insisted that Poulenc continue his general education at the Lycée Condorcet. Though Poulenc did not enter the conservatoire for formal music education, he did start studying piano with Ricardo Viñes (1875-1943) at the age of fourteen. Viñes introduced Poulenc to the works of Erik Satie and Georges Auric (1899-1983). The works of these composers would greatly influence Poulenc throughout his career in both his social life and his compositions.

In 1917, the opera singer Jane Bathori (1877-1970) became intrigued by Poulenc and his works. She was a prodigious advocate for the unknown composer and her influence brought works such as Rapsodie nègre and Trois mouvements perpétuels to the public’s attention. Stravinsky was present at one of the performances of Poulenc’s Rapsodie nègre and was immediately impressed. Because of this, Stravinsky became an important influence in Poulenc’s musical career. Through his acquaintance with Stravinsky, social doors were opened to Poulenc that gained him a publisher and led him to other musicians with similar musical ideals. In the 1920s, these shared ideals led to the formation of Les Six. This group of composers consisted of Georges Auric, Louis Durey (1888-1979), Darius Milhaud, Arthur Honegger (1892-1955), Germaine Tailleferre

14 Bernac, Francis Poulenc, 23. In France lycée means a secondary school funded by the government.
15 Ibid., 24.
(1892-1983), and Poulenc. Though they all shared a common bond of friendship and music standards, their music was vastly different.\textsuperscript{16} Jean Cocteau acted as the spokesman for \textit{Les Six} and advocated for their music, participated in their concerts, and even programmed their music in events that he organized.

Poulenc met Cocteau in 1917 at the première of Cocteau and Satie’s collaborative work \textit{Parade} (1917).\textsuperscript{17} Poulenc came to cherish Cocteau as a “faithful and marvelous friend” throughout their lives up until both their deaths in 1963.\textsuperscript{18} Poulenc loved literature, thus it was only natural that Poulenc chose to start composing vocal music so he could interlace his two favorite things, poetry and music. Pierre Bernac said when referring to Poulenc’s musical settings of poets’ works, “He finds their speed, breathing places, inflections – grasps their feeling and emotion – reveals their profound meaning and gives them life.”\textsuperscript{19}

Bernac impeccably describes the character of Poulenc’s vocal works, and what makes them so popular among singers throughout the ages. It was natural for Poulenc to find the inflection in Cocteau’s works because they resonated with him. The first piece Poulenc composed to music with a text by Cocteau was in 1918 called \textit{Zèbre}, but the piece has since been lost.\textsuperscript{20} The next year Cocteau invited Poulenc to contribute a few compositions for a concert that Cocteau conceived called \textit{Spectacle-Concert}, which occurred February 25, 1920 at the Comédie des Champs-Elysées. The \textit{Spectacle-Concert} was the beginning of Poulenc and Cocteau’s collaboration and brought together two

\textsuperscript{17} Schmidt, \textit{Entrancing Muse}, 35.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 72.
\textsuperscript{19} Bernac, \textit{Francis Poulenc}, 39.
\textsuperscript{20} Schmidt, \textit{Entrancing Muse}, 58.
artists who eventually partnered to produce the exquisite opera *La Voix humaine* which still touches audiences to this day. This opera is the most memorable of their partnership, and remains the zenith of Cocteau’s words, Poulenc’s music, and Denise Duval’s (1921-2016) interpretation. It has left its mark on audiences around the world.

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To understand *La Voix humaine* it is important to recognize where the author and composer were creatively in their careers when collaborating on this work. France was the artistic center for musicians, writers, and artists during the early twentieth century. Artists and musicians created new styles such as Surrealism, Cubism, and Dadaism. These movements greatly affected artists of all types and helped forge future works and movements — many of these progressive movements were affected by WWI and later WWII. France was trying to make its way within the nationalist movement and separate itself from the Teutonic control over the arts. Throughout this period, Cocteau and Poulenc made their way as forerunners within their fields by working against Germanic romanticism and building a wide-ranging collection of French works. As a result the two artists drew from their life experiences and beliefs to help create the opera *La Voix humaine*. For example, Denise Duval reminisces in an interview with *Opera News* about how she and Poulenc had recently gone through break-ups during the creation of the opera. They commiserated together during the composition of the work, experiencing the turmoil of Elle together.\(^{21}\)

Cocteau was criticized for writing plays that did not give actors many opportunities to display their extensive acting skills. Therefore, Cocteau decided to create a play that required the actress not only to portray the emotion behind her lines, but

also depict reactions to a voice which the audience cannot hear. Cocteau was intrigued by the telephone, having already written a poem about the device ten years before he wrote *La Voix humaine*. Knapp says, “Since Cocteau’s plays were non-psychological for the most part and possessed of no ordinary plot, and since his characters were not socially oriented, he had to devise a new way of creating audience-actor empathy.” The use of the new device, the telephone, intermingled with the challenge of one woman keeping the interest of the audience through her emotional journey for an hour was Cocteau’s way of creating this empathy.

Cocteau’s biographer Francis Steegmuller believes Cocteau’s *La Voix humaine* is his most frequently performed work due to its emotional accessibility, affecting broad audiences. The play centers on a nameless woman, Elle, or “she” translated to English. The fact that the heroine remains nameless gives the role an “everywoman” feel, hence why it may be and has been portrayed by a variety of women throughout the work’s history. In the opera Elle’s lover has left her for another woman. He calls to inform Elle he is planning to marry the other woman the next day. One can assume he is calling Elle to see how she will handle the situation and to bring a definite conclusion to their relationship. It is not clear whether Elle’s lover is aware of her mental state before this conversation. During their telephone exchange Elle spins lies to her lover in hopes of making him think she is fine with the outcome. However, throughout the discussion and the interruptions that occur, we see her unravel, revealing that she is truly handling this news with anguish.

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23 Knapp, *Jean Cocteau*, 139.
24 Steegmuller, *Cocteau*, 399-400.
Cocteau’s vision to create a one-woman play, incorporating state-of-the-art technology and giving the actress the opportunity to display her artistry, was the culmination of many inspirations. Cocteau never fully divulged how he created the concept for *La Voix humaine*. Steegmuller believes Cocteau came up with the idea for the play after hearing a disagreement over the phone between Prince Georges and Princess Marie Anne Ghika.²⁵ Knapp determines Cocteau received inspiration from memories of his mother getting ready for the theater as motivation for the play.²⁶ It is also possible his inspiration came from the beautiful actresses he so faithfully enjoyed from the theaters of his childhood, such as Madame Réjane (1856-1920) and Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923).

Whether or not the impetus for the play came from any of the above mentioned influences, Cocteau embarked on writing a play that would impress audiences for years to come. Cocteau wrote *La Voix humaine* in 1928 before being admitted into the rehabilitation center, Saint Cloude, for an opium addiction. In March 1928, after Cocteau’s release from the clinic, he recited a copy of *La Voix humaine* at the Comédie-Française.²⁷ Though the reading was met with mixed reviews, it was accepted for performance and the play opened on February 17, 1930 with Berthe Bovy (1887-1977) playing Elle.²⁸ Knapp says about the play, “it places the female character in an unfortunate light: indeed, she is victimized on every score. The punitive weapon in this work is the telephone, the deus ex machina, the banal accessory to modern plays.”²⁹ Bovy was known to portray this banality of the phone and Elle’s tortured position so well.

²⁵ Steegmuller, *Cocteau*, 402.
²⁹ Ibid., 70.
that other actresses feared they could not give the role justice; hence, Bovy continued to perform this role numerous times throughout the rest of her career. Researchers believe the pain, which Bovy so eloquently depicted, seemed to be inspired by personal pain inflicted on Cocteau at some point in his life, such as the early death of his father and the loss of his beloved Radiguet. 30

In 1947, Cocteau agreed to work with Roberto Rossellini on a film version of La Voix humaine. It was one of two short films that made up Rossellini’s L’Amore (1948) anthology. The film is titled La Voce humana and stars Anna Magnani (1908-1973), with sets designed by Christian Bérard. 31 Cocteau enjoyed working with Rossellini because, like Cocteau, Rossellini enjoyed creative freedom when producing films. Cocteau and Rossellini worked side by side in creating this film version of La Voix humaine. 32

Cocteau’s next collaboration on La Voix humaine was with Poulenc. In 1958 Poulenc started to consider setting Cocteau’s La Voix humaine to music. Once Poulenc decided to set the play to music, there was no question who would sing the role of Elle. In 1946, Poulenc auditioned Denise Duval for the composition Les Mamelles de Tirésias, which had been postponed due to the lack of a suitable soprano for the piece. Though Poulenc was heavily influenced by managers to audition Maria Callas for the piece, he decided to audition an unknown soprano who had just premiered the role of Lola in Cavalleria rusticana at the Folies-Bergères. 33 After Duval’s audition she and Poulenc worked closely together for the rest of his life, even touring and performing together up

30 Steegmuller, Cocteau, 400.
32 Ibid., 33.
33 Schmidt, Entrancing Muse, 325.
until a few days before Poulenc’s death. Duval held such a special place in Poulenc’s life that Poulenc dedicated his song cycle *La Courte paille* (1960) to Duval and her son, Richard Schilling. Furthermore, Poulenc’s regard for Duval led him to compose most of his lead soprano roles with her in mind for the characters, including Elle in *La Voix humaine* and the lady in *La Dame de Monte-Carlo* (1961).

Once Poulenc had his muse Duval set to sing the role of Elle, he composed the music for *La Voix humaine*. His vision for the opera was to have the score speak emotionally to the audience while retaining the substance of the play, portraying the pain that the heroine experiences so the audience sympathizes with Elle’s emotions. Benjamin Ivry says of both Poulenc and Cocteau, “the authors of *La Voix humaine* identified with Elle’s situation. Many themes of Cocteau’s play resonated with Poulenc, such as the pills, the dread specter of suicide, and the love for a dog, even if he was not living through the kind of rejection Elle experienced.” Cocteau was exceedingly happy with Poulenc’s musical vision for his play and collaborated by sharing his ideas on the costumes, sets, and transitional changes due to omissions of text. While Poulenc was composing the opera it was pursued by several opera houses.

Poulenc finished the vocal score for the work on Thursday August 7, 1958, and then began working on the orchestration, which was completed September 19, 1958.

Poulenc’s *La Voix humaine* premiered in Paris at the Opéra-Comique on February 6,

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35 Ibid. Schmidt says Richard Schilling was Duval’s husband, but this is a mistake in the writer’s research because Duval says in an interview with *Opera News* that Richard Schilling is her son. Please take a look at this article for correct reference as to Richard Schilling’s relation to Duval: Stephen J. Mudge “Reunion: Denise Duval,” *Opera News* 74, no. 4 (October 2009): 12.
36 Ibid., 325.
39 Ibid., 425.
1959, followed by a repeat performance at La Piccola in Milan on February 18th. Cocteau was too sick to make the performance in Milan, so Poulenc and Duval had to fly to Nice to go over some last minute production issues with Cocteau before the premiere in Milan.⁴⁰

The work has seen quite an array of talented women portraying the rejected heroine: Berthe Bovy, who created the role originally with Cocteau’s stage version, Anna Magnani in Rossellini’s Italian film, Ingrid Bergman’s (1915-1982) English version for television, and Poulenc’s muse Denise Duval. The interpretations of Elle by these talented artists set the standard for Elle’s portrayal. These interpretations with the addition of Poulenc’s music and Cocteau’s words add another layer to the play and its ability to affect people’s emotions. Hence, in the analysis of the character Elle, one must push the barriers with staging and enactment, while remaining true to Poulenc and Cocteau’s original intentions.

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CHAPTER THREE
COCTEAU’S INTENT: THE TELEPHONE AND ITS ROLE

La Voix humaine is a curious, uncomfortable work which does not fit securely within the traditional boundaries of opera or play...It is a work revealing the inner thoughts, emotions, and private struggles of its creators, sentiments never intended to be completely evident to the audience. This is private music, for the in-crowd. For those able to appreciate its subtleties, it is a work [sic] of genius, revealing naked emotions rarely exhibited on the stage with such realism. And yet, it is also a difficult work to take seriously, to inhabit, because of the histrionics of Elle.

—Keith Clifton, “Mots 17écide: Autobiography in Cocteau’s and Poulenc’s La Voix humaine” Canadian University Music Review

Cocteau set La Voix humaine around a single scene with a woman who holds a conversation with her ex-lover on a telephone. The phone functions as a wedge that inhibits human interaction between these two lovers and also serves as a means to Elle’s suicide by strangulation with the telephone cord. The lover informs Elle of his upcoming marriage to another woman the following day. Before and throughout the conversation, Elle is overloaded with conflicting emotions that drive her to suicide at the end of the opera. Musicologist Keith Clifton says:

Certainly Cocteau was aware that such a work would present tremendous challenges for the performer, and so he employed another mute character, the telephone itself. Far from serving as a mere prop, the phone becomes at once the final palpable link between the two former lovers, a phallic symbol, and a possible agent of suicide.41

The telephone plays an important role in the opera: that of the lover’s unheard voice, a weapon, and an inanimate object that feeds Elle’s anxiety. The telephone is the only link

to her lover. Musicologist Lynette Miller Gottlieb describes it very well when she says, “The telephone tests the endurance and feasibility, even the possibility, of authentic human-to-human connection in a world increasingly enamored with technology.”

At the beginning of the opera, Elle’s anxiety is portrayed through her responses and reactions to calls from wrong numbers while waiting for her lover to call. Though the telephone motivates many of Elle’s emotional reactions, it would seem Cocteau intended for the actress to depict her turmoil on her own, without depending on the telephone, because without these organic reactions and feelings the play would lack impact on the audience. As a result, when Poulenc set La Voix humaine to music, he was able to enhance Cocteau’s emotional writing for Elle’s character by depicting these feelings through the music. Though the music assists in the rendering of Elle’s turmoil, Cocteau best describes how he intends the scene to be presented to the audience. Cocteau states:

Le 18ecide découvre une chambre de meurtre. Devant le lit, par terre, une femme, en longue chemise, étendue, comme assassinée. Silence. La femme se redresse, change de pose et reste encore immobile. Enfin, elle se 18ecide, se lève, prend un manteau sur le lit, se dirige vers la porte après une halte en face du téléphone. Lorsqu’elle touche la porte, la sonnerie se fait entendre. Elle s’élance. Le manteaux la gene, elle l’écarte d’un coup de pied. Elle décroche l’appareil. De cette minute, elle parlera debout, assise, de dos, de face, de profil, à genoux derrière le dossier de la chaise-fauteuil, la tête coupée, appuyée sur le dossier, arpernera la chambre en traînant le fil, jusqu’à la fin où elle tombe sur le lit à plat ventre. Alors sa tête pendra et elle lâchera le récepteur comme une pierre.


43 Francis Poulenc, La Voix Humaine, tragédie lyrique en un acte, libretto by Jean Cocteau (Paris: S.A. Éditions Ricordi, 1959). This excerpt is stated in the Preface to the opera score: “The curtain opens on a murder scene. In front of the bed on the floor, a woman in a long nightgown lays stretched out as if murdered. Silence. The woman rises up, shifts her position, and remains immobile. Finally, she decides to get up, takes a coat from the bed, and walks to the door after halting in front of the phone. When she
Through Cocteau’s statement of the presentation of the tragic scene, it is easy to see the importance of the phone throughout the opera. Clifton says it succinctly, “The telephone is also an appropriate conduit for drama because it is immediately recognizable. Everyone in an audience can relate to using this device for some negative purpose, whether to conclude a love affair, or for a more mundane purpose. The banality of the machine masks its potency.”

Hence, the audience should not misjudge the telephone’s effects on Elle and her emotions. Cocteau intends for the audience to understand the telephone’s influence on Elle and its function in the play.

**Function of the Telephone**

In the 1930’s when the play *La Voix humaine* was written, the telephone was the only option for instant vocal technological communication. At this time, the nature of the phone system was a frustration in trying to speak with other parties. It was not until the 1960s that the telephone saw advancements that benefited households. Telephone lines were controlled by switchboard exchanges, so, rather than dialing direct as in present day, an operator was required to connect calls. Many phone lines were shared by multiple subscribers, called party lines. Therefore, because the lines were shared, other subscribers could access another subscriber’s line when trying to make their own phone

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44 Clifton, “Mots cachés,” 82.
calls. For this reason, phone calls were easily interrupted by other people trying to make calls themselves.

Through all the telephone problems depicted in La Voix humaine, this device holds a significant place. The phone functions to deliver disheartening news to the heroine, which the audience cannot hear. Since the viewers see and hear only one side of the conversation, a sense of angst transfers to the audience due to their lack of hearing the other side of the conversation. Poulenc engages the audience’s imagination for the response of the other caller, while also attaching emotionally to Elle and her feelings.

The audience feels every emotion that Elle goes through, causing them to have a difficult time connecting to the other person on the line and the situation. This exacerbates the telephone’s numbing effects on the audience’s view of Elle’s lover. Therefore, it functions as a desensitizing object throughout the opera. The telephone was a new addition to households in the 1920s when the play was created. Consequently, when Poulenc decided to turn the play into an opera thirty years later, he had to assess the telephone’s place in current 1950s society. Gottlieb says Poulenc wanted to reorganize the concerns of the 1920s on technology in a current adaptation of the play, thus allowing Poulenc to “reexamine the anxiety of technological dehumanization.”

Using Modern Technology

Through a look at the libretto and score one can recognize the anxiety caused by the telephone within the opera. Though the telephone holds a significant role in this

45 Gottlieb, “Narrating Modernism,” 211.
work, there are ways to create a contemporary staging through the use of twenty-first
century technology despite the antiquated problems of the telephone depicted in the
libretto. Therefore, it is crucial to be mindful when interpreting the phone problems, such
as the party lines, in a way that accommodates updated technology. For example, while
the modern telephone has fewer instances of disconnections, cell phones still have issues
with dropped calls and dead batteries. Hence, a current adaptation using twenty-first
century devices, like a cell phone or other modern technology, will offer similar issues
and problems as in Poulenc’s time period.

Further advancements in technology, such as Facetime, add more dimensions for
a relevant interpretation. However, a director needs to consider to what extent a visual
aspect adds to the opera and the audience’s view of Elle and her situation. There are
numerous moments within the conversation where Elle and her lover are disconnected,
thus providing opportunities to change devices used for communication. A new device
within the staging adds an additional visual aspect. Due to the fact that this opera
consists of only one singer, the visual aspects may add intrigue so as not to bore the
audience. Therefore, changing devices during the disconnections allows the audience a
refreshing visual variation.

The added benefit of new devices throughout the opera makes it important to look
to the libretto for support of these changes. There are aspects of the libretto that cause
issues of interpretation with regard to using modern technology. There are moments in
the libretto that reference the telephone, thus making it hard to alter the device for
sections of the conversation without changing the libretto. Nevertheless, there are other
portions of the conversation that are malleable through interpretation of translation that
make new technology accessible in the staging. With an analysis of the libretto and its issues pertaining to old operating systems and dated verbiage, I will deliberate how to navigate the staging of this work through incorporation of new technology while also looking at parts of the libretto that are only suitable for the telephone.

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CHAPTER FOUR

DEPENDENCY ON THE TELEPHONE

Due to the time period when *La Voix humaine* was created, the telephone was the only device for instant vocal communication over long distances. Therefore, the libretto was written with the intent to use the telephone. Cocteau incorporated the telephone’s issues into this work to enhance Elle’s emotions. Following Cocteau’s vision, Poulenc took the libretto and set it to music, thus enhancing the dramatics and emotions of the play in the opera by supporting the anxiety regarding the telephone with music. If there is new technology incorporated into the staging of this opera, it must be supported by the libretto and music. The libretto can be divided into three sections, separated by the interruptions during the phone call. Each section in the opera incorporates an electronic device. The first and third sections are dependent on the use of the phone. The second section, which will be discussed in the following chapter, may incorporate a new device. In the first and third sections of the opera the use of the phone plays a significant role, which one must understand to grasp how the libretto is reliant on the device.

The libretto at times poses problems due to the time period of the play and the available technology during the early twentieth century. Significant aspects of the libretto linked only to the telephone are the numerous disconnections and disturbances of the phone call. Not only are wrong numbers dialing Elle’s line, but the operator is involved in connecting Elle’s calls, thus making the use of the telephone unavoidable. One instance of the use of the operator in the score is at the beginning of the opera when
Elle implores the operator to help disconnect an unwanted caller. This call is from a wrong number, trying to reach a Doctor Schmidt. After much deliberation over hanging up with this unknown caller, Elle asks the operator listening in on the call to, “Dites à cette dame de se retirer,” (see Example 4.1). With a production using a cell phone or other modern devices, this phrase poses a problem with a current interpretation; therefore, one can look into replacing or cutting this phrase to benefit the updated vision of the work.

Example 4.1 *La Voix humaine*, mm. 7-8 after Rehearsal 8.

A 2003 production at the Théâtre Impérial de Compiègne, with soprano Anne-Sophie Schmidt singing the role of Elle, incorporated a change in the libretto for this phrase. The above mentioned phrase, “Dites à cette dame de se retirer,” was cut and replaced with, “raccrochez” (Hang up). This production made a change to the libretto, helping to modernize the production. The replacement of this phrase removes the operator which allows for the update. Though it is best to avoid changing Cocteau’s original text, the phrase “raccrochez” is written as one of the very first utterings of Elle in

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46 Poulenc, *La Voix humaine*, 4. “Tell this lady to hang up.”
47 Francis Poulenc, *La Voix humaine*, Anne-Sophie Schmidt (soprano), Ostinato Orchestre, Théâtre Impérial de Compiègne conducted by Jean-Luc Tigaud, directed by Pierre Jourdan, performed March 2000, Compiègne, France: Kultur Video B000BP86UA, 2003, DVD.
the play. Consequently, the cut may be considered appropriate because Cocteau used this phrase at an earlier point in the libretto.

Additionally, the first few lines of text in the opera reference the telephone, which makes it difficult to use another mechanical device such as an iPad or laptop during the course of the conversation. It is essential that the first section of the conversation occur on the phone. Due to these references, the libretto and staging must be cohesive when Elle tells a wrong number to hang up. There are some phrases in the libretto that in present-day simply do not make sense in regards to a two-person telephone call. For example, Elle references the party line and being a subscriber when she says, “Nous sommes plusieurs sur la ligne,” (see Example 4.2).48

Example 4.2 La Voix humaine, mm. 3-4 after Rehearsal 5.

The above phrase is perplexing in current vernacular due to advances in the phone system, but through the manipulation of translation this phrase may be functional. The English translation for this phrase can be altered to, “I have someone on the other line.” Though this is not what the text says exactly, this translation makes sense in regards to present-day cell phone vernacular. Another phrase that poses a similar problem in a

48 Poulenc, La Voix humaine, 2. “There are several of us on the party line.”
modern version is, “Vous êt’ avec une abonnée,” (see Example 4.3).49 Again, though it is
not exact, one can fashion the translation of this phrase to, “You have a wrong number.”
Thus, the alteration of the translations of these phrases alleviates obstacles with the dated
portions of the libretto, such as subscribers and party lines.

Example 4.3 La Voix humaine, mm. 6-7 after Rehearsal 5.

Furthermore, an additional phrase that presents a dilemma in the opera occurs
three measures after rehearsal nine when Elle says, “C’était un vrai supplice de t’entendre
à travers tout ce monde,” (see Example 4.4).50 This phrase may be handled two ways.
The first possibility, similar to the alternative discussed above, is to alter the English
translation from “people” to “noise.” Though French speakers will realize this is not a
precise translation, the change is logical. The second way to handle this difficult phrase
is to anticipate the audience’s understanding of the phrase “tout ce monde” to mean the
background noise heard wherever her lover is located.

49 Poulenc, La Voix humaine, 2. “You are with a subscriber.”
50 Ibid., 4. “It was real torture not to hear you over all those people.”
Not all the libretto issues are adjustable in the matter of the translation. Some only pertain to the telephone and its limitations. For example at rehearsal eighteen Elle says, “Ma robe rose…Mon chapeau noir,” (see Example 4.5). This reference to her appearance gives the audience the impression that Elle’s lover has asked about her present attire. This exchange is best suited for the phone, because if the conversation transpires on Facetime, Elle’s response is incomprehensible. Through the use of a phone during the early parts of the conversation, the lover is not able to see Elle’s state. Therefore, he would not need to ask what she is wearing if he can see her through a Facetime conversation. Furthermore, Cocteau specifically instructs at the beginning of the opera, “Devant le lit, par terre, une femme, en longue chemise, étendue, comme assassinée.” For this reason, if Elle’s lover sees her in disarray through a Facetime conversation, he would know she is not wearing her pink dress and black hat; he would see that she is actually in a nightgown.

52 Jean Cocteau, *La Voix Humaine: Pièce en un Acte* (Paris: Éditions Stock, 1946). This is Cocteau’s preface to the play and music score. “In front of the bed on the floor, a woman in a long nightgown, is stretched out as if murdered.”
A further argument for using the phone is Elle’s reference to the sound of her voice during the conversation. Elle says two measures after rehearsal twenty-three, “Je n’ai pas la voix d’une personne qui cache quelque chose,” (see Example 4.6). Similar to the clothing argument, Elle’s reference to her voice would not be made if the conversation was held through Facetime. If she uses Facetime her face would reveal her feelings and her lover would not have to depend on the inflection of her voice. If the conversation held a visual aspect then it would consist of Elle asking if she looked like a person with something to hide. This is not how Cocteau intended the conversation to develop in regards to the limitations of the telephone in the 1930s.

53 Poulenc, La Voix humaine, 12. “I do not have the voice of a person who is hiding something.”
One additional example of a visual aspect that links the telephone to the libretto is when Elle’s lover informs her at rehearsal thirty that he is getting married the next day. Elle’s devastation at this news is most likely a visual reaction as much as it is an emotional one. As a result, it is crucial her lover not be able to see her through a Facetime interaction. If the lover sees Elle’s reaction, it will vary the rest of the conversation.

Another moment in the libretto that does not support a visual conversation is at rehearsal thirty-six, when Elle describes to her lover how she visualizes him at that moment. In her delusional mind she is imagining what he looks like at that moment of the conversation. This substantiates the use of the telephone because Facetime would allow Elle to see him, thus making this phrase lose its original intent. Additionally, Elle says, in regards to her description of him, “J’ai des yeux à la place des oreilles,” (see Example 4.7). This phrase suggests that though Elle is listening to him, she is actually able to visualize him through hearing his voice. She knows him so well that she can envision his face by the inflection and tone of his voice.

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54 Poulenc, *La Voix humaine*, 20-21. “I have eyes in the place of ears.”
An additional moment that creates a visual complication is at rehearsal thirty-nine. Elle describes to her lover how she “sees” herself in the mirror. She admits she fears she looks like an old lady with wrinkles. Though this is not reality and she is not old with wrinkles, this description is another argument against the use of a visual conversation. In fact Denise Duval said in an interview with *Opera News* that Poulenc wanted a young woman to sing the role.\(^{55}\) Duval expands on this by saying, “It should be a young woman. If she’s old, it’s normal that she’s dumped, but if she’s young, she

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doesn’t understand.” Therefore, Poulenc’s intent was for a young woman to sing the role, which would make her “old woman” delusions even more effective. It shows Elle’s insecurity in her appearance, and her fear of her lover seeing her in her disheveled state.

Besides the visual references that create a reliance on the telephone, there are interruptions and phone issues. For example three measures after rehearsal thirty-two Elle says, “Pourtant je parle très fort,” (see Example 4.8). These connection problems, though they could be staged as the Internet freezing during the conversation, are best understood as connection issues with the phone. With a Facetime conversation the problem would not be that you can’t hear the other person, but that the picture freezes during the conversation. Therefore, speaking louder as we do on cell phones to be heard would not assist in a frozen Internet connection. The above mentioned phrase works better through the use of a cell phone because hearing someone on a cell phone is still a current problem with phones today and their signals. Thus, Elle speaks louder into the phone so her lover is able to hear her. Poulenc even goes so far as to support the libretto with a fortissimo in the score to emphasize Elle’s phrase.

57 Poulenc, *La Voix humaine*, 18. “However, I am speaking very loud.”
In conjunction with visual aspects and dated telephone problems referenced in the libretto, there are also moments when the telephone is specifically mentioned in the text. One final libretto issue that solidifies the reasoning for a cell phone during the first section of the conversation occurs five measures after rehearsal forty-two. Elle says, “Le téléphone deviendrait une arme effrayante,” (see Example 4.9). The reference to the phone as a weapon creates an issue with staging if Elle references a phone and instead uses an iPad. Though some directors could choose to change the word in the libretto or just change the translation as stated before, it is best not to change Cocteau’s original text. Therefore, it is best to use a phone when it is blatantly referenced numerous times throughout the first and third sections of the conversation.

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58 Poulenc, La Voix humaine, 24. “The telephone would become a frightening weapon.”
Example 4.9 *La Voix humaine*, mm. 5-6 after Rehearsal 42.

The third section of the conversation starts at rehearsal ninety-eight. This section of the conversation is the final time the two lovers speak before Elle’s impending suicide. This section holds numerous moments that complicate the use of any other device besides the phone. One such moment happens at rehearsal 101 when Elle says, “J’ai le fil autour de mon cou,” (see Example 4.10). Elle wraps the wire around her neck which is the first step towards her death at the end. Therefore, if the conversation happens on Facetime, Elle’s lover would see this action and one would hope he would call for assistance for Elle. Therefore, through a telephone conversation he does not know she is physically wrapping the cord around her neck in a harmful manner. For this reason, the staging works best if Elle’s lover is not able to see her wrapping the cord around her neck.

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59 Poulenc, *La Voix humaine*, 66. “I have the wire around my neck.”
The admission of Elle wrapping the cord around her neck is the beginning of her ending. Throughout the last moments of the conversation Elle does not say anything else about the phone, though the phone plays a large part in the staging at the end of the opera. At rehearsal 106 Poulenc marks directions in the score, “Elle se lève et se dirige vers le lit avec l’appareil à la main.”\(^{60}\) Though the staging in the score uses the word “device,” there are distinctive reasons why the phone should be the primary device. The final device plays an integral role in the final moments of the conversation and staging.

A phone charger serves as the cord that wraps around Elle’s neck in a modern staging. Though it is possible to use a laptop power cord, it still poses a problem if Elle

\(^{60}\) Poulenc, *La Voix humaine*, 69. “She gets up and goes to the bed with the device in hand.”
is not talking through the web camera of a laptop. As discussed earlier, a visual interaction between the lovers at this point in the drama does not serve as an effective ending. If Elle has a Skype chat on the laptop or a Facetime conversation, it allows her lover to see her tangibly wrapping the cord around her neck, thus changing Cocteau’s original intent of a dramatic lonely ending. Additionally, the cord Elle uses around her neck must be the cord to the device that she uses to talk to her lover or the dramatic “charge” of the phrase is lost. Therefore, the wrong cord or a visual interaction ruins the original intent of the author. Throughout Cocteau’s career he was not afraid to use technology to help inspire his dramatic purposes, for example using a telephone cord as a means of suicide.

The final moments of the opera present Elle in a light that is heart wrenching, and the technology used in the opera plays a large part in that despair. Lydia Crowson says in her book *The Esthetic of Jean Cocteau*,

Throughout Cocteau’s theater, the image of the machine dominates in many forms. His literal representation of machines, his use of language and of dramatic irony, and the structure of his plays all underscore the presence of controlling forces and create works of art that are themselves machines.61

*La Voix humaine* is a prime example of Cocteau’s mechanical genius. With the advancements in technology in the twenty-first century, it is vital that this opera is given a technological revision to maintain its prevalence in the opera industry. Had Cocteau written this opera in present day, one may believe he would not be averse to using the technology available to him. Hence why using iPads, cell phones, laptops, and the

programs these devices offer are creative ways to enhance this opera and assist in its revision.

The première of the opera, *La Voix humaine*, in 1959 portrayed a one-sided phone conversation with the use of a rotary telephone as the means of communication. Our technology has advanced in ways that leaves this opera dated. Our society has many means of interpersonal communication such as a web camera, email, and Facetime on an iPad. Through current technology, it is possible to modernize dated operas, such as *La Voix humaine*, to create a relatable situation for present-day society. Due to references to the old telephone system in the libretto, *La Voix humaine* poses problems in regard to its ability to be modernized. Still, stage directors make attempts to refashion this opera by using a modern cell phone instead of a rotary telephone. For example, Nic Muni produced a version in 2003 of *La Voix humaine* with Cincinnati Opera and set the opera at the scene of a car crash with Elle talking to her lover on a cell phone.

Erica Jeal said when discussing Nic Muni’s 2003 production of *La Voix humaine* at Cincinnati Opera, “Some aspects of the work – the references to party lines, for a start – are always going to resist update.”62 Though these aspects of the libretto make it difficult in terms of updating this work, there are ways to make it modern. As discussed in this chapter, one can use slight word changes or translation adjustments to manipulate the text to serve in a twenty-first century presentation of the opera. The libretto for this work also allows for the integration of new technological devices, though there needs to be strict analysis of the text to understand where these integrations can be made and how they may be applied. Finally, though this opera was written in a time when technology

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was new and still mysterious in comparison to today’s booming Silicon Valley-dominated society, this opera can be updated with progressive technology to maintain its relevance in present-day society.
CHAPTER FIVE

INCORPORATING MODERN TECHNOLOGY

*La Voix humaine* is written as an intimate scene with a soprano as the only character and her telephone as the sole means of communication with her invisible lover. Throughout their conversation, Elle experiences disturbances and numerous disconnections. These disconnections give a stage director the opportunity to incorporate new technology in place of the phone. During these disconnections, it is even possible to switch between types of devices, such as between the telephone and the iPad. A variety of modern devices may be incorporated into the drama with the use of iPads, web cameras, laptops, and cell phones, thus giving the opera a connection to present-day audiences. While certain sections of the opera specifically require the use of the telephone, the second section of the opera is an opportunity for effective incorporation of modern technology.

To modernize the opera with the latest technology, it is vital to analyze the libretto and understand how it will function in regards to Cocteau and Poulenc’s original intent. The technology used in this section of the opera must not create confusion in regards to the staging and the libretto. For example, if the libretto mentions the telephone then the singer cannot use an iPad. These situations would create confusion if the libretto does not match the staging. It is imperative to understand what the sources of issues are in regards to new technology. A change of device in the second section, such as an iPad,
needs flexible support by the libretto, which was originally written for the use of a telephone and dated operator system.

Incorporating new technology requires a director to consider the seven moments when the phone rings. One measure before rehearsal fifty is one of the moments when the phone is marked to ring. This signals the second section of the opera and the moment when the libretto supports a change of device. At this point, a switch of device adds a fascinating addition to the interpretation of this opera. Elle’s alternation of “gadgets” within the show brings a modern approach to the libretto and demonstrates a similar present-day situation. Elle’s use of multiple devices throughout the conversation also provides a parallel to today’s society and our addiction to technology and its benefits. The intensity of emotional drama provided by the multiple modern devices present the modern audience with situations and stress they understand.

However, these changes come with challenges. Switching to a new device may confuse the audience as to why Elle’s lover does not simply call her back on the telephone. In present-day, people have many choices when it comes to communication devices. Therefore, Elle’s lover could call her from his iPad on Facetime, Skype on his computer, or his cell phone. In the updated version, it is possible to assume Elle’s lover left the house without his phone, thus an interaction through Facetime on his iPad might be the only way for Elle’s lover to contact her. If Elle is staged as an iPhone user, her lover is able to call her through Facetime from his iPad if his phone is not available.

The second section of the conversation works effectively on an iPad because there are no references to a phone or phrases that allude to issues that are linked to a phone.
Though Elle does not mention the telephone itself within the second section of the conversation, she does say, “Tu es bon d’avoir téléphoné,” (see Example 5.1).63 The French verb “téléphoner” is translated as “to telephone” or “to call,” thus making the reference of “calling” work contextually. Today people still use the verb “to call” when talking about communication on Facetime. The French verb “appeler” is another verb that functions as a universal way to say “to call.” Therefore, it is also possible to change the word “téléphoné” to “appelé” through the adjustment of the rhythm.

Example 5.1 La Voix humaine, m. 2 after Rehearsal 51.

Other moments in the libretto that allow flexibility of device include Elle’s “truthful admittances.” Elle’s confessions make the use of a Facetime conversation suitable, while also verifying the function of the phone in the first section of the conversation. For example, at rehearsal fifty-four Elle says, “C’est parce que je viens de te mentir là, au téléphone,” (see Example 5.2).64 This lie occurs in the first section of the conversation, which is held on the phone. The second section of the conversation, though, is on the iPad, hence, her lover can see her. Therefore, the visual component of

63 Poulenc, La Voix humaine, 30. “You are good to have called.”
64 Ibid., 31-32. “This is because I have just lied to you there, through the telephone.”
this conversation gives reason for Elle to admit to her lies in the first section of the conversation when he was unable to see her. Consequently, he sees her disarray and knows she was not honest with him earlier in the conversation about what she is wearing. Elle’s admission of what she is actually wearing also justifies the discourse for the use of the phone in the first section of the conversation.

Example 5.2 *La Voix humaine*, Rehearsal 54.

Another example from the libretto which supports the incorporation of visual features is at rehearsal seventy-three when Elle says, “Je sais que cette scène est intolérable et que tu as bien de la patience,” (see Example 5.3). 65 This phrase gives evidence that a Facetime conversation works well with the libretto due to a reference

65 Poulenc, *La Voix humaine*, 46. “I know this scene is intolerable and that you have patience.”
about a scene — a visual image. One may interpret the “intolerable scene” that Elle describes as a scene that her lover views through the device. The use of a Facetime conversation thus gives Elle one last “face-to-face” conversation in hopes of swaying his decision. She hopes that seeing her tears and reactions as she talks about her suicide attempt will cause him to second guess his decision of leaving her and marrying another woman.

Example 5.3 *La Voix humaine*, mm. 2-6 after Rehearsal 73.

![_music_score.png]

Though there are moments where the libretto supports a visual part of the conversation, there are several disturbances on the phone that would create issues with the use of an iPad. Yet, it is possible to address these issues. A specific example arises at rehearsal eighty-four. There is an interruption in the conversation when someone on the
party line listens to the conversation. This issue may be alleviated through Skype. Skype allows the addition of other parties to a conversation. Therefore, if two lovers are having a Skype conversation it is possible to add another person in to the conversation. This explains Elle speaking to a “Madame” during the conversation with her lover. Using Skype gives the director a chance to use new technology in the staging of the opera, while still remaining true to the libretto in regards to staging.

Another phrase from the above-mentioned dialogue, “Vous êt’ avec des abonnés,” creates a problem when Elle speaks to an unknown woman while on the phone with her lover (see Example 5.4). Elle makes snide responses to the lady for listening in on the conversation. The above-mentioned phrase can be adjusted to, “Vous êt avec mes amis.” Therefore, similar translation adjustments that are used in the first and third sections of the conversation may be applied to the second section of the conversation to create cohesion with the libretto and staging. Additionally, this replacement works with an adjustment of two sixteenth notes into one eighth note on the word “mes” (my). Due to the phone systems and devices going through changes and advancements throughout the last century, this alteration makes the phrase function accurately within a twenty-first century production by removing references to the antiquated telephone system.

66 Poulenc, *La Voix humaine*, 55. “You are with subscribers.”
67 “You are with my friends.”
Example 5.4 *La Voix humaine*, m. 3 after Rehearsal 84.

The previous examples demonstrate that the phone, alone, is not entirely necessary in the second section of the opera. Additionally, the phrases within the second section of the conversation reference visual aspects such as “scenes” and help support the use of new technology. Furthermore, the iPad provides an opportunity for Elle to see her lover during their conversation. It also provides a visual picture of someone on the iPad for the audience; a visual aspect to attach to the unheard voice.

The intensity builds until the final moments of the opera, when Elle ends her own life. The way in which she proceeds with her death is quite dramatic and shows a lack of stable reasoning. With the abundance of research on mental health, it is possible to look to how Elle’s use and dependence on technology promotes her untimely death. A modern adaptation with twenty-first century technology affords an added support of mental health issues for Elle, mental health issues that can be attributed to technology and its effects on people.

The re-working of this piece could be timely, as present-day society sees an overwhelming abundance of new technology and its benefits and drawbacks. Modern technology, though it has enhanced aspects of day-to-day life, such as research, also has
its detriments. It is easy to become dependent on what our technology provides us. Addiction to technology and its effects on mental health are relevant issues in terms of Elle and her suicide at the end of *La Voix humaine*. New technology incorporated into the opera adds another way to interpret Elle’s mental deterioration from a twenty-first century perspective. Her suicide may be linked to more than just depression; it is possible technology addiction and all the symptoms that pertain to this new field of mental health research play a role in her choice to commit suicide. By adding the latest devices to a modern staging of *La Voix humaine*, the portrayal of addiction intensifies her downfall.

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CHAPTER SIX

TECHNOLOGY AND MENTAL HEALTH

We can’t tear ourselves away from the highly addictive, highly compelling world of cyberspace.

— Larry Rosen, Nancy Cheever, and L. Mark Carrier, *iDisorder: Understanding Our Obsession with Technology and Overcoming Its Hold on Us*

The examination of technology, old and new, within the confines of *La Voix humaine* demonstrates dramatic effects on Elle’s character. In the twenty-first century, technology functions as an everyday part of life, with scientists studying the digital universe and its capabilities. Researchers with the International Data Corporation say, “Like the physical universe, the digital universe is large…doubling in size every two years, and by 2020 the digital universe…will reach 44 zettabytes, or 44 trillion gigabytes.”

44 trillion gigabytes is an overwhelming amount of data that without the creation of computers and memory devices this generation would not be capable of retaining. In 2016, the world’s information is at one’s fingertips with a simple Google search. Therefore, this generation, referred to as “Digital Natives” by Marc Prensky, is clearly developing more dependence upon technology and the Internet.

Elle’s character in *La Voix humaine* is no different than any other Digital Native in a modern interpretation of the opera. This updated version of the opera is built on the

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69 Marc Prensky, “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants,” *On the Horizon* 9, no. 5 (October 2001): 1-6. Prensky coined the term “Digital Natives” in this article, and the term since then has been accepted and used by professionals throughout the field.
idea that Elle lives her life enveloped in technology. Our present Internet and other technological resources have “irreversibly changed the way we work, play, see the world, and relate to one another.”70 Because of this, it is pertinent to understand how technology and Elle’s addiction to it affects her mental health, thus driving her eventual suicide attempts.

Through the use of Facetime and other forms of communication in our century, Elle is able to build a romantic relationship that ultimately falls apart. This century has seen the creation of dating websites that make it easy to meet potential matches. In this modern interpretation of La Voix humaine, it is possible that Elle meets her lover through a dating website. Online dating and the creation of personal profiles give people the opportunity to create idealized versions of themselves in a digital community. This distance and anonymity creates spaces where “people are denied the use of their natural instincts to guide them on whether there is any personal chemistry that can drive a romance.”71 This statement assists an understanding of why online dating is detrimental to communication and to the establishment of a healthy relationship based on a person’s character.

In my production of the opera, Elle and her lover communicate through technology and online dating for a period of time before meeting in person. Talking online prolongs their initial meeting, thus they do not use their “natural instincts” that assist in deciding relationship potential. Gary Small believes communication through technology brought about a decline in hand written notes as a way to express our

feelings. Communication through technology not only decreases our appreciation of intimate communication, it also stunts our ability to communicate in person in a clear manner. The use of technology as our primary source of communication is spoiling our capabilities to communicate as a society in a healthy way. Elle is a prime example of society’s dependence on technology for communication and its effects on relationships.

A relationship is based on intimate exchanges, and “spontaneous face-to-face reactions from others help shape our own intuitive responses.” Small suggests that these interactions assist in defining “an accepted array of behavioral social norms.” Elle’s repeated use of technology instead of direct human contact inhibits her physical intuitions. Therefore, her prolonged primary physical introduction to her lover is an example of Elle choosing digital communication over a tête-a-tête. These reasons lead the viewer to believe the heroine in this opera became dependent or even addicted to technology and how these devices serve her. She depends on devices for communication, for example, the entire opera is spent on the phone or other technology instead of meeting her lover for in-person discussions. Elle’s addictive personality and her dependence on technology support the view of psychological instability.

Many doctors and psychologists label psychological diseases of this digitized century: “Internet addiction, information fatigue syndrome, and information overload are among the terms being thrown around to describe the new psychological diseases of the digital age.” Doctors are looking at how technology affects our society, especially its effects on mental health. Doctors conclude that technology addiction causes something

72 Small and Vorgan, iBrain, 96.
73 Ibid., 117.
they refer to as “technostress,” which results in symptoms similar to depression or manic depression. Elle, throughout *La Voix humaine*, shows symptoms of technostress such as anxiety, delusions, obsessive compulsive actions, and self-harm. The libretto supports the technostress conclusion. The relationship with her lover abates Elle’s technostress by raising her dopamine levels, thus making it seem as if she is of sound mind. However, by the end of the relationship, Elle reverts, showing unhealthy signs of technostress, such as anxiety and depression, which are magnified by her pain from the end of the relationship. Small claims that after the end of a relationship, people hold strong feelings about the romance. These failed romances activate areas of the brain that are related to “risk taking, anger expression, obsessive-compulsive symptoms, and physical pain.”

The beginning of the opera finds Elle suffering from anxiety brought on by her overwhelming emotions over the end of the relationship. She waits in her apartment for a call from her former lover. The waiting drives Elle’s anxiety to an unhealthy level. The musical introduction to the opera contains two motives that function as anxiety motives. Denis Waleckx refers to these two motives as the “Exasperated Waiting” and “Hammering” motives. Poulenc uses the abrupt short rhythms and the German diminished third chord in the “Hammering” motive to enhance Elle’s anxiety (see Examples 6.1 and 6.2). This motive returns more than ten different times throughout the opera. Each time the motive returns, it is to denote a problem with the phone or the connection.

75 John Palfrey and Urs Gasser, *Born Digital*, 190.
76 Small and Vorgan, *iBrain*, 96.
Example 6.1 *La Voix humaine*, “Hammering” motive, mm. 1-4.

Example 6.2 *La Voix humaine*, “Hammering” motive, m. 5 after Rehearsal 5.

The “Exasperated Waiting” motive gives Elle the courage to act on her situation (see Example 6.3). Thus, Elle gets up to leave for her lover’s house, wanting to alleviate the suspense of waiting for him to contact her. The waiting motive not only causes Elle to react, but it also draws a strong emotional reaction. The motive functions to show the passage of time and Elle’s anger and impatience in waiting for her lover to call. Therefore, both motives work to show a level of anxiety in Elle that is brought on from waiting for a notification from any of her devices (such as a ring or a buzz) that her lover is contacting her. Psychologist and expert in technology’s effects on the brain, Rosen says “An iDisorder related to technology anxiety and OCD is becoming increasingly
prevalent as we become attached to devices for all aspects of our life.” Elle’s attachment to her devices causes mental distress that leads to her self-inflicted pain, delusions, and anxiety. She shows throughout the opera, through Poulenc’s musical portrayal, how dependent she is on her technology to give her relief from her pain.

Example 6.3 La Voix humaine, “Exasperated Waiting” motive, Rehearsal 1.

Once Elle receives a phone call from her lover, she hides her symptoms and feelings. She lies to him, telling him that she just returned home ten minutes ago, when in fact, she has not left her apartment at all in hopes of a call from him. The waiting and obsessing causes Elle’s anxiety to build to a point where she hurts herself. At rehearsal sixty-one the libretto alludes to a suicide attempt the previous night, where Elle swallows pills to end her pain. Psychiatrist Aboujaoude discusses technology addiction and believes the results of addiction include signs of mental illness and substance abuse. Elle admits to her lover six measures after rehearsal twelve, “J’ai pris un comprimé,” (see Example 6.4). Elle believes taking a pill would answer her problems with her inability to sleep. Sleep loss is a symptom that arises from battling anxiety; therefore, Elle masks

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79 Aboujaoude, Virtually You, 214.
80 Poulenc, La Voix humaine, 6. “I took a pill.”
one problem with another by taking pills to bring rest to her anxious mind. At rehearsal fourteen Elle sings, “J’avais un peu mal à la tête,” 81 (see Example 6.5) which is another justification for her taking the pill. Elle follows the justification with a tale of shopping with her friend Marthe. Most would consider this story a lie because these events never happened, but in Elle’s delusional mind these actions seem real to her. Whether or not Elle believes this story is real, or she is blatantly telling a lie, both actions are a sign of the toll technology is taking on her mentally.

Example 6.4 La Voix humaine, mm. 6-7 after Rehearsal 12.

Example 6.5 La Voix humaine, Rehearsal 14.

81 Poulenc, La Voix humaine, 7. “I had a bit of a headache.”
Elle’s anxiety is an underlying problem for her throughout the opera as demonstrated by the anxiety motives. It is always present within her, but it becomes pronounced during certain situations, such as not being able to hear her lover properly through the phone. Four measures after rehearsal thirty-five, while Elle’s anxiety is heightened during a moment in the conversation with connection issues, Elle comments, “On dirait que ce n’est pas ton appareil,” (see Example 6.6). Elle is intuitively picking up on the fact that her lover is not at his house. This belief feeds her fear that he is at his betrothed’s house.

Example 6.6 *La Voix humaine*, m. 4 after Rehearsal 35.

In Elle’s anxiety-driven state she tells her lover that she can “see” him with descriptions of how she imagines him at that moment. These accounts are part of her delusional longings and a way to escape her reality. In truth, Elle’s symptoms are brought on by technostress, which is leading her to an untimely death. Another instance of Elle’s delusional thoughts occur at rehearsal thirty-nine when Elle admits to her lover that she is afraid to look at her reflection. She admits that her reflection in the mirror presents the image of an old lady with white hair and wrinkles. This vision is Elle’s

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82Poulenc, *La Voix humaine*, 19. “One would say that it is not your device.”
dread manifesting into delusions, hence providing additional reasons that drive her to a technology addiction.

Elle’s loneliness opens a void in her life that she fills with technology, thus making it a weapon in the end. For example, Elle admits five measures after rehearsal forty-two that the telephone is a weapon when she says, “Le téléphone deviendrait une arme effrayante,” (see Example 6.7).⁸³ This phrase provides a different view of Elle’s beloved devices. Not only does the phone serve her by delivering her emails, texts, and calls, it serves as a weapon that produces trepidation in her heart.

Example 6.7 La Voix humaine, mm. 5-6 after Rehearsal 42.

Elle’s fear grows after a disconnection when Elle realizes her lover has deceived her as to his whereabouts. Therefore, when the conversation continues through Facetime, Elle admits to her earlier lies. For example, originally she told him she was wearing her pink dress and black hat but now discloses that she is wearing an overcoat and nightdress. Her tale of dining and shopping with Marthe is also not true. This is an important moment for Elle because she drops her façade, thus revealing that she is mentally unwell.

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⁸³ Poulenc, La Voix humaine, 24. “The telephone would become a frightful weapon.”
Elle admits the telephone has made her anxious from waiting all night for his call. Elle acknowledges her anxiety and its manifestations of pacing and watching the phone. Poulenc musically enhances the anxiety in Elle’s admission twelve measures after rehearsal fifty-seven by writing the vocal line as an arpeggiated chord that leaps to a C6 on “folle” (see Example 6.8). The music enhances this moment of drama, thus intensifying Elle’s state.

Example 6.8 La Voix humaine, m. 12 after Rehearsal 57.

Elle also admits to taking more than one pill the night before to help her sleep. Elle claims if she took more pills, “je dormirais sans rêve, sans réveil, je serais morte,” (see Example 6.9). These admissions of her attempted suicide are as close to reality as Elle gets throughout the opera. Elle declares that after the Doctor came to tend to her suicide attempt, she sent her friend Marthe away. Even while sick and being cared for, Elle’s obsessive thinking drives her actions to cater to her lover and beloved technology.

84 Poulenc, La Voix humaine, 34. “Crazy!” Elle admits in that phrase, “Je devenais folle!” which translates to, “I became crazy!”
85 Ibid., 37. “I would sleep without dreaming, without waking, I would be dead.”
Example 6.9 La Voix humaine, mm. 5-7 after Rehearsal 61.

The music and libretto serve Elle’s mental break-down and help the audience understand the brevity of the situation. Symptoms of a nervous break-down are anxiety, depression, and hallucinations—all warnings of Elle’s circumstances that she shows throughout this opera. These symptoms are described in research on technology and its effects on the brain. For example, Small says habitual Internet users show symptoms such as, “loneliness, confusion, anxiety, depression, fatigue, and addiction.”\(^86\) Therefore, it is arguable whether Elle is suffering from a general mental imbalance or from chronic use and dependence on technology. Other symptoms of technology addiction are obsessive thinking and stalking. These are both acts that Elle commits throughout the

\(^{86}\) Small and Vorgan, *iBrain*, 117.
opera. For example, Elle divulges she planned on going to her lover’s place and watch him from outside his window.

Elle presents obsessive activities when two measures after rehearsal seventy-five she admits to sleeping with the telephone. She declares to her lover that the telephone is a direct link to him, thus, portraying another way in which Elle lets technology engross her life and relationships. The infatuation stems from her need to connect to her lover. This leads to Elle obsessively checking her technology devices in hopes of communication. She hoped this happy relationship would fix her nervous mind and behavior but it only exacerbated her loneliness. Elle heartbreakingly describes her feelings since the separation and how hard living every day is while knowing her lover is no longer part of her life.

Elle’s diatribe of feelings eventually leads to her proclaiming that if the two lovers were to see each other they would forget everything. A kiss would send the lovers back to the way they were. Elle acknowledges the reality of the situation though when she says, “Mais avec cet appareil, ce qui est fini est fini,” (see Example 6.10). After Elle comes to this moment of clarity she says, “On ne se suicide pas deux fois,” (see Example 6.10). This admission alludes to Elle’s decision to end her life. It is interesting to note that the technology Elle is so dependent on is what is keeping them apart. Elle blames her cherished technology on their permanent separation. Victims of mental illness often blame or react harshly to the ones they love the most during pressing

87 Poulenc, *La Voix humaine*, 60. “But with this device [between us], what is finished is finished.”
88 Ibid. “One does not commit suicide two times.”
Therefore, blaming the technology Elle is so dependent on shows how prominent these inanimate objects are in her life.

Example 6.10 *La Voix humaine*, mm. 3-6 after Rehearsal 90 and mm. 1-2 after Rehearsal 91.

The final example of Elle’s technostress occurs at the end of the opera. Elle wraps the phone cord around her neck preparing to end her life. Due to the call losing service, Elle has nine measures of music that build her anxiety and feeds her decision to end her life. This new segment of the conversation is the realization of Elle’s complete break down and her need for a permanent ending. The anxiety she feels leads her to the

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decision to make this the last conversation. Elle says at rehearsal 101, “J’ai le fil autour
de mon cou. J’ai ta voix autour de mon cou,” (see Example 6.11).  

Example 6.11 *La Voix humaine*, mm. 1-2 after Rehearsal 101.

Elle’s anxiety and mental break-down leads to serious delusions towards the end of the opera. Elle asks her lover not to stay at the same hotel they stayed at during their time in Marseilles during what can be assumed is his honeymoon. Elle reasons at rehearsal 105 that, “Parce que les choses que je n’imagine pas n’existent pas, ou bien elles existent dans une espèce de lieu très vague,” (see Example 6.12). In Elle’s mind it

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90 Poulenc, *La Voix humaine*, 66. “I have the wire around my neck. I have your voice around my neck.”
91 Ibid., 68-69. “Because the things that I do not imagine do not exist, or well, they exist in a type of very vague place.”
is easier for her not to know what is to come after this conversation is over. She wants to die with peace believing that she is loved by her lover. This leads to what Waleckx refers to as the “Final Declaration” motive (see Example 6.13). Rehearsal 107 consists of an ascending line over the accompaniment; this is Elle’s final farewell, and this is her final motive. It symbolizes her decision to end the conversation and her life. With the chord wrapped around her neck, Elle tells her lover, “Coupe! Coupe vite! Je t’aime,” (see Example 6.14).

92 Waleckx, “‘A Musical Confession,’” 338.
Example 6.12 *La Voix humaine*, mm. 1-4 after Rehearsal 105.

Example 6.13 *La Voix humaine*, “Final Declaration” motive, pickup and mm. 1-2 of Rehearsal 107.
Elle’s suicide is exactly how she wants it. She dies with her lover’s voice and her beloved technology wrapped around her. As she cuts off her breathing she utters her final declarations of love. The admittance of love can also be directed at the devices that help bring about her demise. Helen Fisher believes romantic love can lead an abandoned
lover to commit atrocious acts such as stalking, suicide, or to become depressed. Fisher also thinks addiction can inhibit how one responds in a romantic relationship. Through Elle’s addiction to technology and her heartbreak, she acquired unhealthy thoughts and reactions that led her to end her life.

We have seen that, “Symptoms of loneliness, confusion, anxiety, depression, fatigue, and addiction can emerge and further erode their social skills. The anonymous and isolated nature of online communication does not provide the feedback that reinforces direct human interaction.” In regards to Elle, her use of technology has distanced her from society and stunted her ability to communicate properly with not only her lover, but also people in general. The inability to properly communicate does not serve her well during this conversation, especially since her anxiety further stunts her ability to communicate in a healthy manner. These aspects cloud Elle’s judgement to a point where she believes and feels she has no other alternative than to end her life. That when she dies, she dies on her terms believing he still loves her. It is common to believe Elle is just prone to mental instability. But, through Cocteau’s libretto it is easy to see that Elle’s description of technology, such as the phone being a weapon, has helped lead to her eventual mental break-down and suicide.

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95 Small and Vorgan, *iBrain*, 117.
CONCLUSION

The opera *La Voix humaine* is not a work that “resists update.” 96 An in-depth look at the libretto gives an understanding of what is and is not possible in regards to staging and interpretation liberties. Throughout this document, I have provided ideas on how to incorporate new technology into the staging of this opera. I have also given suggestions on how to adjust the text or translation to make way for an updated understanding of this work, thus leaving behind the outdated operator system portrayed in the text. Yet, these alterations must be supported through the music, text, and staging to maintain the original nature of the opera.

Through the analysis of *La Voix humaine* I have offered ways to update this work, even though I have found certain sections of the opera to be eternally linked to the telephone. However, as discussed, through the division of the opera into three sections, divided by the dropped phone calls, the entire opera does not necessarily need to be sung into a telephone. It is possible to integrate devices such as the iPad into the staging. Though the telephone plays an integral role in this opera, the near future may hold more new devices as the scientific world continues to produce innovative technology. I hope that this project inspires future directors looking to stage *La Voix humaine* to use other devices, besides the phone.

Additionally, this document draws a parallel to the new research being conducted on technology and its effect on mental health and communication. It is important to

contemplate technology’s effects on society, communication, and most importantly, mental health. If technology is impeding society’s healthy idea of communication, then it is possible to draw parallels on how technology effects Elle’s mental deterioration. The idea of technology adding an additional level to Elle’s depression and suicide is a concept that has scarcely been considered in regards to this work. Further research into technology and its effects may open doors to an enhanced look at Elle’s mental instability.

This paper is just the beginning of a deeper analysis of La Voix humaine and its possibilities in regards to updating the work through the use of new technology, hopefully maintaining the opera’s prevalence on opera stages across the world. Analyzing La Voix humaine has been a dream of mine for many years and finally putting my ideas onto the stage has been a rewarding venture. Poulenc and Cocteau’s collaboration has contributed a significant work that still titillates audiences to this day with its poignant look into the last moments of a heart-broken woman and her final conversation.

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PROGRAM NOTES
The University of Kentucky
School of Music
Presents

Whitney Myers
In a DMA Voice Recital
with Cliff Jackson
Piano

September 16, 2013
Singletary Center for the Arts Recital Hall
7:30 p.m.

PROGRAM

Ellens Gesang I, Op. 52  Franz Schubert
(1797-1828)
Ellens Gesang II, Op. 52
Ellens Gesang III, Op 52

Quatre Chansons de Jeunesse  Claude Debussy
Pantomime  (1862-1918)
Claire de lune
Pierrot
Apparition

-INTERMISSION-

Becoming a Redwood  Lori Laitman
(b. 1955)
The Song
Pentecost
Curriculum Vitae
Becoming a Redwood

Cikánské Melodie, Op. 55  Antonín Dvořák
(1841-1904)
Má píseň zas mi láskou zní
Aj! Kterak trojhranec můj přerozkošně zvoní
A les je tichý kolem kol
Když mne stará matka
Struna naladěna
Široké rukávy a široké gate
Dejte klec jestřábu ze zlata ryzého
This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctor of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance. Whitney Myers is a student of Dr. Noemi Lugo.

**Program Notes**

**Ellens Gesang**

These three pieces were composed in 1825 by Franz Schubert (1797-1828) as part of his Op. 52, which consists of seven songs based on texts from Walter Scott’s (1771-1832) *The Lady of the Lake*. The text for these songs was loosely translated from the songs in *The Lady of the Lake* into German by Adam Storck (1780-1822). This set of songs contains the *Ave Maria*, which is famous for its Latin version, though the Latin version was not conceived until later. The first two songs of the cycle are from *Canto I* of the poem. A huntsman, James Fitz-James, is left stranded after his horse dies during a hunt; he stumbles upon the shore of Loch Katrine where he encounters Ellen Douglas. Fitz-James believes this young lady to be the daughter of his enemy, James Douglas. Ellen sings Fitz-James a lullaby, *Ellens Gesang I*, as an attempt to calm him and distract him so that he does not figure out who she really is. *Ellens Gesang II* is a continuation of the first song. *Ellens Gesang III*, also known as the *Ave Maria*, was extracted from *Canto III* of the poem. In this part of the poem Ellen has gone to live in the caves with her father, James Douglas, who has refused to join the fighting between the clans. As Rhoderick Du, who was refused Ellen’s hand in marriage, leaves for battle, he overhears in the distance Ellen singing the *Ave Maria*, and realizes that he may never be able to hear her voice again. These three pieces show how intimately Schubert understood the drama Scott was trying to create in *The Lady of the Lake*, and was still able to infuse his own sense of simplicity and beauty into these poems.

**Franz Schubert:**
Text by Adam Storck (1780-1822)

*Ellens Gesang I*

Raste, Krieger! Krieg ist aus,
schlaf’ den Schlaf,
nichts wird dich wecken,
träume nicht von wildem Strauß,
nicht von Tag und Nacht voll Schrecken.

In der Insel Zauberhallen
wird ein weicher Schlafgesang
um das müde Haupt dir wallen,
zu der Zauberharfe Klang.

Feen mit unsichtbaren Händen
werden auf dein Lager hin
holde Schlummerblumen senden,
die im Zauberlande blüh’n.

Raste, Krieger! Krieg ist aus,

*Ellen’s Song I*

Rest, warrior! War is over,
sleep the sleep,
which nothing can waken you,
dream not of wild battle,
not of days and nights filled with terror.

In the island’s magic halls
will a soft lullaby
float around your weary head,
to the magic harp’s sound.

Fairies with invisible hands
will send to your bedside
lovely flowers of sleep,
which bloom in the magic land.

Raste, warrior! War is over,
Schlaf’ den Schlaf, 
   nichts wird dich wecken, 
   träume nicht von wildem Strauß, 
   nicht von Tag und Nacht voll Schrecken.

Nicht der Trommel wildes Rasen, 
   nicht des Kriegs gebietend Wort, 
   nicht der Todeskörner Blasen 
   scheuchen deinen Schlummer fort.

Nicht das Stampfen wilder Pferde, 
   nicht der Schreckensruf der Wacht, 
   nicht das Bild von Tagsbeschwerde 
   stören deine stille Nacht.

Doch der Lerche Morgensänge 
   wecken sanft dein schlummernd Ohr, 
   und des Sumpfgefieders Klänge 
   steigend aus Geschilf und Rohr.

Raste, Krieger! Krieg ist aus, 
   schlaf’ den Schlaf, 
   träume nicht von wildem Strauß, 
   nicht von Tag und Nacht voll Schrecken.

Ellens Gesang II

Jäger, ruhe von der Jagd! 
   weicher Schlummer soll dich decken, 
   träume nicht, wenn Sonn’ erwacht, 
   daß Jagdhörner dich erwecken.

Schlaf’, der Hirsch ruht in der Höhle, 
   bei dir sind die Hunde wach, 
   schlaf’, nicht quäl’ es deine Seele, 
   daß dein edles Roß erlag.

Jäger, ruhe von der Jagd! 
   weicher Schlummer soll dich decken, 
   wenn der junge Tag erwacht, 
   wird kein Jägerhorn dich wecken.

Ellens Gesang III

Ave Maria! Jungfrau mild! 
Erhöre einer Jungfrau Flehen! 
Aus diesem Felsen, starr und wild, 
   soll mein Gebet zu dir hinwehen.
Wir schlafen sicher bis zum Morgen, 
   ob Menschen noch so grausam sind. 
O Jungfrau, sieh’ der Jungfrau Sorgen, 
   O Mutter, hör’ ein bittend Kind!

Ave Maria!

Ave Maria! Unbefleckt!

sleep the sleep, 
   which nothing can waken you, 
   dream not of wild battle, 
   not of days and nights filled with terror.

Not the drum’s wild crashing 
   not the war’s commanding word, 
   not the death horn’s blaring 
   shall drive your slumber away.

Not the stamping of wild horses, 
   not the frightening cry of the watch, 
   not the image of the day’s difficulties 
   shall disturb your quiet night.

But the lark’s morning songs 
   shall gently awaken your slumbering ear, 
   and the marsh bird’s sounds 
   Rising up out of rush and reed.

Rest, warrior! War is over, 
   sleep the sleep, 
   which nothing can waken you, 
   dream not of wild battle, 
   not of days and nights filled with terror.

Ellen’s Song II

Hunter, rest from the hunt! 
   soft slumber shall cover you, 
   dream not that when the sun rises, 
   that hunting horns awaken you.

Sleep! The stag rests in his cave, 
   the hounds are awake with you, 
   sleep, do not let your soul be tormented, 
   that your noble steed has died.

Hunter, rest from the hunt! 
   Soft slumber shall cover you, 
   when the new day breaks, 
   no hunter’s horn will awaken you.

Ellen’s Song III

Ave Maria! Gentle Virgin! 
   Listen to a virgin’s prayer! 
   from these rocks, hard and wild, 
   shall my prayer to you drift-up.
   We shall sleep safe till the morning, 
   whether mankind is still so cruel. 
   Oh Virgin, look upon the cares of this virgin 
   Oh Mother, hear a pleading child! 
   Ave Maria!

Ave Maria! Pure!
Wenn wir auf diesen Fels
hinsinken zum Schlaf,
und uns dein Schutz bedeck,
wird weich der harte Fels uns dünken.
Du lächelst, Rosendüfte wehen
in dieser dumpfen Felsenluft.
O Mutter, höre Kindes Flehen,
O Jungfrau, eine Jungfrau ruft!
Ave Maria!

When we upon this rock
sink down to sleep,
and your protection covers us,
we will believe this hard rock has become soft.
You smile, the smell of roses wafts
in this musty rocky cave,
Oh Mother, hear a child’s plea,
Oh Virgin, a virgin calls!
Ave Maria!

Quatre Chansons de Jeunesse

Achille-Claude Debussy (1862-1918) was one of the most prominent figures working within the field of impressionist music, though he himself disliked the term when applied to his compositions. His music virtually defines the transition from late-Romantic music to 20th century modernist music. Debussy’s works were heavily influenced by the French symbolist movement. More influential, though, was Debussy’s close friendship with Madame Marie Vasnier (1848-1923). In late 1880 at the age of 18 Debussy met the 32 year old coloratura soprano, Marie Vasnier, in a vocal class that he accompanied. She became his first love and muse for whom he composed many of his early melodies. The poems used for these pieces were inspired by the Fêtes Galantes paintings by Antoine Watteau (1684-1721). These paintings often portrayed idyllic scenes, and frequently infused characters from the Commedia dell’arte, such as Pierrot and Harlequin. Pantomime and Pierrot contain vignettes of the lives and theater of these memorable characters. The Quatre Chansons de Jeunesse were composed in 1882 and were written for and dedicated to Madame Vasnier. The inscription at the beginning of the songs translates as such: “To Madame Vasnier: These songs which she alone has made live and which will lose their enchanting grace if they are never again to come from her singing fairy lips. The eternally grateful author. C.D."

Claude Debussy:
Quatre Chansons de Jeunesse

Pantomime
Text by Paul Verlaine (1844-1896)

Pierrot, qui n'a rien d'un Clitandre,
Vide un flacon sans plus attendre,
Et, pratique, entame un pâté.

Cassandre, au fond de l'avenue,
Verse une larme méconnue
Sur son neveu déshérité.

Ce faquin d'Arlequin combine
L'enlèvement de Colombine
Et pirouette quatre fois.

Colombine rêve, surprise
De sentir un cœur dans la brise
Et d'entendre en son cœur des voix.

Pantomime

Pierrot, who is no Clitandre,
empties a flask without delay,
and, practical, cuts into a pâté.

Cassandre, at the end of the avenue,
sheds an unnoticed tear
for his disinherited nephew.

Harlequin, that scoundrel, plots
the abduction of Colombine
and pirouettes four times.

Colombine dreams, surprised
to feel a heart in the breeze
And to hear voices in her heart.
Clair de lune  
Text by Paul Verlaine (1844-1896)

Votre âme est un paysage choisi  
Que vont charmant masques  
Et bergamasques,     
Jouant du luth et dansant,  
Et quasi tristes sous leurs  
Déguisements fantastiques!

Tout enchantant sur le mode mineur  
L'amour vainqueur et la vie opportune,  
Ils n'ont pas l'air de croire à leur bonheur  
Et leur chanson se mêle au clair de lune.

Au calme clair de lune triste et beau,  
Qui fait rêver, les oiseaux dans les arbres,  
Et sangloter d'extase les jets d'eau,  
Les grands jets d'eau sveltes  
Parmi les marbres.  
Au calme clair de lune triste et beau.

Pierrot  
Text by Théodore de Banville (1823-1891)

Le bon Pierrot, que la foule contemple,  
Ayant fini les noces d'Arlequin,  
Suit en songeant le boulevard du Temple.  
Une fillette au souple casaquin  
En vain l'agace de son oeil coquina;  
Et cependant, mystérieuse et lisse,  
Faisant de lui sa plus chère délice,  
La blanche lune aux cornes de taureau  
Jette un regard de son oeil en coulisse  
À son ami Jean Gaspard Deburau.

Apparition  
Text by Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898)

La lune s'attristait. Des séraphins en pleurs  
Rêvant, l'archet aux doigts,  
Dans le calme des fleurs  
Vaporeuses, tiraient de mourantes violes  
De blancs sanglots glissants  
Sur l'azur des corolles.  
C'était le jour béni de ton premier baiser.  
Ma songerie Aimant à me martyriser  
S'enivrait savamment du parfum de tristesse  
Que même sans regret et sans déboire laisse  
La cueillasson d'un rêve  
Au coeur qui l'a cueilli.  
J'errais donc, l'œil rivé sur le pavé vieilli.  
Quand avec du soleil aux cheveux,  
Dans la rue et dans le soir,

Moonlight

Your soul is a chosen landscape  
that is charmed by masqueraders and bergamasques,  
playing the lute and dancing,  
and almost sad beneath their fantastic disguises!

Even while they sing in a minor mode of love triumphant and life opportune,  
they do not seem to believe in their happiness and their songs mingle with the moonlight.

In the calm moonlight, sad and beautiful,  
which makes the birds dream in the trees,  
and sob with ecstasy the fountains,  
the tall slender fountains among the marble statues.  
In the calm moonlight, sad and beautiful.

Pierrot

Good Pierrot, gazed at by the crowd,  
being done with Harlequin’s wedding,  
walks dreamily along the Boulevard du Temple.  
A young girl in a soft blouse teases him in vain with her roguish eye;  
and meanwhile, mysterious and smooth,  
taking in him greatest delight,  
the white moon with horns like a bull casts a sidelong glance  
at her friend Jean Gaspard Debureau.

Apparition

The moon was saddening. Seraphim in tears,  
dreaming, bow in hand,  
in the calm of vaporous flowers plucked from mournful viols  
white sobs as their bows glided over the azure of the corollas.  
It was the blessed day of your first kiss.  
My fantasy that loves to torment me,  
knowingly revealed in the scent of sadness which, even without regret and disappointment,  
the gathering of a dream leaves in the heart that has gathered it.  
And so I wandered, my eyes fixed on the worn pavement.  
When with the sun in your hair,  
in the street and in the evening,
Tu m'es en riant apparue,  laughing, you appeared to me,  
Et j'ai cru voir la fée au chapeau de clarté  and I thought I saw the fairy with her luminous cap  
Qui jadis sur Mes beaux sommeils  who once through the lovely slumbers  
D'enfant gâté  as a spoiled child  
Passait, laissant toujours de ses  half-closed hands always  
Mains mal fermées  snow white bouquets  
Neiger de blancs bouquets  of perfumed stars.

**Becoming a Redwood**

Lori Laitman (b. 1955) is one of America’s most prolific composers of vocal music of this century. She has created a unique body of music commemorating the Holocaust, such as her most renowned vocal work *I Never Saw Another Butterfly* (1994) based on poems written by children in the Terezin concentration camp during the Holocaust, written for saxophone and soprano. Laitman has written many song cycles for the voice and 2 full operas. Dana Gioia (b. 1950) is one of the most insightful poets of our time. His poetry is rich in the blending of rhyme and meter with free verse. The song cycle *Becoming a Redwood* was composed in 2003 and is a prime example of Laitman’s melodically rich compositions; she encompasses the lyric and expressive quality of Gioia’s poetry by using varying barlines. The accompaniment in these pieces works hand in hand with the vocal line, often blurring the lines of where one phrase stops and another starts. When composing these pieces Laitman wanted to create a dramatic arc consisting of love, death and eventual healing. “Pentecost” is meant to be the emotional centerpiece of this cycle. The poem was dedicated to the memory of Gioia’s deceased son, and the song “Pentecost” was written after the death of Laitman’s son, so this piece holds serious emotional connections for both artists.

**Lori Laitman:**  
*Becoming a Redwood*  
Text by Dana Gioia (b. 1950)

**The Song**

How shall I hold my soul that it  
does not touch yours? How shall I lift  
it over you to other things?  
If it would only sink below  
into the dark like some lost thing  
or slumber in some quiet place  
which did not echo your soft heart’s beat.  
But all that ever touched us—you and me—  
touched us together  
like a bow  
that from two strings could draw one voice.  
On what instrument were we strung?  
And to what player did we sing  
our interrupted song?

**Pentecost**

Neither the sorrows of afternoon, waiting in the silent house,
Nor the night no sleep relieves, when memory
Repeats its prosecution.

Nor the morning’s ache for dream’s illusion, nor any prayers
Improvised to an unknowable god
Can extinguish the flame.

We are not as we were. Death has been our pentecost,
And our innocence consumed by these implacable
Tongues of fire.

Comfort me with stones. Quench my thirst with sand.
I offer you this scarred and guilty hand
Until others mix our ashes.

Curriculum Vitae

The future shrinks
Whether the past
Is well or badly spent.

We shape our lives
Although their forms
Are never what we meant.

Becoming a Redwood

Stand in a field long enough, and the sounds
start up again. The crickets, the invisible
toad who claims that change is possible,

And all the other life too small to name.
first one, then another, until innumerable
they merge into the single voice of a summer hill.

Yes, it’s hard to stand still, hour after hour,
fixed as a fencepost, hearing the steers
snort in the dark pasture, smelling the manure.

And paralyzed by the mystery of how a stone
can bear to be a stone, the pain
the grass endures breaking through the earth’s crust.

Unimaginable the redwoods on the far hill,
rooted for centuries, the living wood grown tall
and thickened with a hundred thousand days of light.

The old windmill creaks in perfect time
to the wind shaking the miles of pasture grass,
and the last farmhouse light goes off.
Something moves nearby. Coyotes hunt
these hills and packs of feral dogs.
But standing here at night accepts all that.

You are your own pale shadow in the quarter moon,
moving more slowly than the crippled stars,
part of the moonlight as the moonlight falls,

Part of the grass that answers the wind,
part of the midnight’s watchfulness that knows
there is no silence but when danger comes.

Cigánské melodie

Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904), composed seventy songs for voice and piano and his songs are considered to be the voice of the people. Most of his works were heavily influenced by the German Lied. One of his heaviest influences was his friendship with Johannes Brahms (1833-1897), who also created his own set of Gypsy songs, the Zigeuenerlieder. Dvořák’s melodies and vocal lines are his driving force in his compositions. His accompaniments are full of rich harmonies and consist of beautifully composed text painting. These pieces were composed in 1880 to be performed in Vienna by the German tenor Gustav Walter (1834-1910). Since they were to be premièred in Vienna, Dvořák wanted to compose pieces with German text, so he commissioned the poet Adolf Heyduk (1835-1923) to write German translations of these poems, while staying true to the original meter of the Czech verse. Around a year later the original publisher of the Cigánské melodie came out with a new edition that contained a version of the songs in the original Czech. The Cigánské melodie show a break-through in Dvorak’s emotional depth and are quite dramatic, while also revealing the deep pride of the gypsy culture.

Antonín Dvořák:  
Cikánské Melodie  
Text by Adolf Heyduk (1835-1923)

Má píseň zas mi láskou zní  
My Song Sounds with Love

Má píseň zas mi láskou zní,  
My song sounds to me
Když starý den umírá,  
with love when the old day dies,
A chudý mech kdy na šat  
and when the poor moss secretly
Sí tajně perle sbíra.  
gathers pearls into its guise.

Má píseň v kraj tak toužně zní,  
My song so longingly rings into the country,
Když světem noha bloudí;  
when I wander through the world;
Jen rodné pusty dálinou  
only over the distance of my native plain
Zpěv volně z řadě proudí.  
does my singing flow freely from my breast.

Má píseň hlucně láskou zní,  
My song sounds loudly with love,
Když bouře běží plání;  
when the storm runs over the plain;
Když těším se, že bídly prost  
when I take comfort
Dlí bratr v umírání.  
that my brother dies free from want.

Aj! Kterak trojhranec můj přerozkošně zvoní  
Ah! How my triangle delightfully rings!

Aj! Kterak trojhranec můj  
Ah! How my triangle
Přerozkošně zvoní, jak cigána píseň,  
delightfully rings, like a gypsy’s song,
Když se k smrti kloní!  
when he draws near to death!
Když se k smrti kloní,  
The triangle sounds to him,
Trojhran mu vyzvání.  
it is the end of song,
Konec písni, tanci, láscě, bědování.  
of dance, of love, and of lamenting!
A les je tichý kolem kol

The forest is quiet all around

A les je tichý kolem kol,
Jen srdce mír ten ruší,
A černý kouř, jenž spěchá v dol,
Mé slze v lících, mé slze suší.

Však nemusí jichusušit,
Necht' v jiné tváře bije.
Kdo v smutku může zazpívat,
Ten nezhylnul, ten žije, ten žije!

Když mne stará matka

When my old mother

Zpívat', zpívat' učívala,
Podivno, že často,
Často slzívala.
A teď také pláčem
Snědě líce mučem,
Když cigánské děti
Hrát' a zpívat' učím!

Struna naladěna,

The strings are tuned

Struna naladěna, hochu, toč se v kole,
Dnes, snad dnes převysoko, zejtra,
Zejtra, zejtra zase dole!
Pozejtří u Nilu za posvátným stolem;

Struna již, struna naladěna,
Hochu, toč, hochu, toč se kolem!

Široké rukávy a široké gatě

Wide sleeves and wide trousers

Široké rukávy a široké gatě
Volnější cigánu nežli dolman v zlatě.
Dolman a to zlato bujná prsa svírá;
Pod ním volná píseň násilně umírá.
A kdo raduje se, tvá kdy píseň v květě,
Přej sí, aby zašlo zlato v celém světě!

Dejte klec jestřábu ze zlata ryzého

Given a cage to live in made of gold

Dejte klec jestřábu ze zlata ryzého;
Nezmění on za ni hnízda trněného.
Komoni bujnému, jenž se pustou žene,
Zřídka kdy připnete uzdy a třemene.
A tak i cigánu příroda cos dala:
K volnosti ho věčným poutem, K volnosti ho upoutala!

it has bound him by an eternal bond to freedom! 97

The University of Kentucky
School of Music
Presents

Whitney Myers
In a DMA Voice Recital

with Cliff Jackson
Piano

May 16, 2015
Singletary Center for the Arts Recital Hall
7:00 p.m.

PROGRAM

Six Poèmes de Guillaume Apollinaire
À la "Santé"
Clotilde
Automne
Saltimbanques
L'adieu
Les cloches

Arthur Honegger
(1892-1955)

Cinq Chansons de Lise Hirtz
Il était une petite pie
Une petite pomme
Les pâquerettes
La poule noire
Les petits ânes

Georges Auric
(1899-1983)

La Dame de Monte-Carlo

Francis Poulenc
(1899-1963)

-INTERMISSION-

“Air de Créuse” from Médée, Op. 191

Darius Milhaud
(1892-1974)

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctor of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance. Whitney Myers is a student of Dr. Noemi Lugo.

**Program Notes**

*Les Six* was a group of French composers consisting of Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc, and Germaine Tailleferre. This group of composers burst onto the Parisian musical scene in December of 1917 giving recitals under the title ‘Les nouveaux jeunes’ and later received their official name ‘Les Six’ from an article published in the journal, *Comœdia*, in 1920. This group of composers was formed under the guidance of Erik Satie (1866-1925) and Jean Cocteau (1889-1963) around the same time as the major surrealist artists and writers such as André Breton, Guillaume Apollinaire, and Pablo Picasso became the avant-garde. *Les Six* was part of the postwar rebellion and though these musicians were not united by their compositional aesthetics, they were bound by friendship and a common goal in redefining French music. This goal was a reaction against the impressionistic and romantic musical qualities of Claude Debussy (1862-1918), Maurice Ravel (1875-1937), and Richard Wagner (1813-1883), though *Les Six* had a great respect for Debussy and Ravel and had all been raised listening to these composers’ works. Political and cultural tensions affected this group’s musical styles. The group would meet on Saturday evenings at Milhaud’s house to discuss trends in music at the time. Despite the group’s collective success and friendship they all still followed their own paths that sometimes led them in opposite directions from the group. This group of composers wanted to incorporate everyday life into their compositions and did not shy away from popular music influences such as jazz and cabaret music.
Arthur Honegger (1892-1955)

Born in Le Havre, France to German-speaking Swiss parents, Honegger would spend his career in both countries attending the Conservatoire in Zurich before moving to the Conservatoire de Paris. He, unlike some other members of Les Six, did not reject the aesthetic ideas of composition that he learned from his teacher Vincent d’Indy (1851-1931). Out of all of the composers in Les Six Honegger was known as the most serious both personally and aesthetically, and through all the group’s aesthetic differences all the members held a deep respect for Honegger and his compositions. Honegger was the best contrapuntist in the group. His music was tonal for the most part, but Honegger did like to play with dissonance in a way that was all his own. The Six Poèmes de Guillaume Apollinaire were based on poems from Apollinaire’s Alcools (1913). These pieces were composed between 1915 and 1917 while Honegger was still a student. Honegger’s Mélodies are the most neglected genre of his output. These pieces show Honegger’s sophisticated poise and unpretentious expressivity in his composition, there is an architectural structure to these pieces that show an influence of Beethoven and d’Indy. The pieces were premièred as a whole set by Jane Bathori (1877-1970) and Andrée Vaurabourg (1894-1980) at the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier on January 15, 1918. This cycle was orchestrated by Arthur Hoérée (1897-1986), all except for the second piece, and was performed on January 25, 1930. These songs demand an independence between the voice and the piano, but this independence leads to an interesting unity. The first piece, “À la Santé,” utilizes a poem written by Apollinaire during his stay in Santé Prison for suspicion of stealing the Mona Lisa. It centers around A, though there is no sense of tonality to the piece. Honegger admitted to Apollinaire, whom he was in contact with while composing these pieces, that he related with the piece “Automne” the most, because he lived this poem while in his army uniform plodding under a November sky as if he were the sad farmer and his ox. In “Automne” one can imagine the thickness of the air and the grey coloring of the sky, thus giving this piece a nostalgic emotional affect. “Saltimbanques” is a grotesque and quirky look at the circus with a colorful use of polytonal combinations. “L’adieu” is polytonal and is reminiscent of “Automne” in its melancholy and muted pain. “Les Cloches” shows a Debussian influence through the use of whole tone scales and the free vocal line.

Arthur Honegger:
Six Poèmes de Guillaume Apollinaire
Text by Guillaume Apollinaire (1880-1918)

À la “Santé”

Que lentement passent heures
Comme passe un enterrement
Tu pleureras l’heure où tu pleures
Qui passera trop vitément
Comme passent toutes les heures.

Six Poems by Guillaume Apollinaire

At “Santé”

Slowly pass the hours
As passes a funeral procession
You will mourn the hour when you weep
That passes too quickly
As pass all the hours.

77
Clotilde

L'anémone et l'ancolie
Ont poussé dans le jardin
Où dort la mélancolie
Entre l'amour et le dédain

Il y vient aussi nos ombres
Que la nuit dissipera
Le soleil qui les rend sombres
Avec elles disparaîtra

Les déités des eaux vives
Laissent couler leurs cheveux
Passe, il faut que tu poursuive
Cette belle ombre que tu veux

Automne

Dans le brouillard s'en vont un paysan cagneux
Et son bœuf lentement dans le brouillard d'automne
Qui cache les hameaux pauvres et vergogneux
En s'en allant là-bas le paysan chanteonne
Une chanson d'amour et d'infidélité
Qui parle d'une bague et d'un cœur que l'on brise
Oh! l'automne, l'automne à fait mourir l'été
Dans le brouillard s'en vont deux silhouettes grises

Saltimbanques

Dans la plaine les baladins
S'éloignent au long des jardins
Devant l'huis des auberges grises
Par les villages sans églises

Et les enfants s'en vont devant
Les autres suivent en rêvant
Chaque arbre fruitier se résigne
Quand de très loin ils lui font signe

Ils ont des poids ronds ou carrés
Des tambours des cerceaux dorés
L'ours et le singe animaux sages
Quêtent des sous sur leur passage

L'adieu

J'ai cueilli ce brin de bruyère
L'automne est morte souviens t'en
Nous ne nous verrons plus sur terre
Odeur du temps brin de bruyère
Et souviens toi que je t'attends

Clotilde

The Anemone and Columbine
Have grown in the garden
Where sleeps melancholy
Between love and disdain

There come also our shadows
Which the night dispelled
The sun that makes them darker
With them will disappear

Gods of the spring water
Let flow their hair
Go, that you must follow
This beautiful shadow that you desire

Autumn

Through the fog there goes a limping farmer
And his ox slowly through the fog of autumn
That hides the poor and shameful villages
While going along the peasant sings
A song of love and infidelity
Which speaks of a ring and of a heart that is broken
Oh! The autumn, has killed the summer
Through the fog there go two grey silhouettes

Acrobats

On the plain traveling players
They wander throughout the gardens
In front of the doors of grey inns
Through the villages without churches

And the children go before
The others follow while dreaming
Every fruit tree resigns itself
When from far away they beckon

They have some weights round or square
Some drums some golden hoops
The bears and the monkeys, wise animals
That beg for money on their passing

The Farewell

I have picked this sprig of heather
The autumn is dead, remember this
We shall no longer see each other on earth
The scent of the season, a bit of heather
And remember that I await you
**Les cloches**

Mon beau tzigane mon amant
Écoute les cloches qui sonnent
Nous nous aimions éperdûment
Croyant n'être vus de personne

Mais nous étions bien mal cachés
Toutes les cloches à la ronde
Nous ont vu du haut des clochers
Et le disent à tout le monde

Demain Cyprien et Henri, Marie,
Ursule et Catherine
La boulangère et son mari
Et puis Gertrude ma cousine

Souriront quand je passerai
Je ne saurai plus où me mettre
Tu seras loin je pleurerai
J'en mourrai peut-être.

**The Bells**

My beautiful gypsy my lover
Listen to the bells that ring
We loved each other madly
Believing not to be seen by anyone

But we were very badly hidden
All the church bells in the round
We were seen from the top of the towers
And they tell everyone

Tomorrow Cyprian and Henry, Marie,
Ursula and Catherine
The baker and her husband
And then Gertrude my cousin

They will smile when I pass by
I will no longer know where to hide
You will be far away, I will weep
I will die perhaps.

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**Georges Auric (1899-1983)**

Auric started composing music at the age of ten, thus prompting his parents to move the family to Paris so he could study music at the Paris Conservatoire. By the age of fifteen he was already acquainted with the members of Les Six. Auric eventually left the Conservatory so as to study composition with Vincent d'Indy at the Schola Cantorum de Paris. Auric became known as the aesthetic spokesman for Les Six. He was involved in postwar spiritualism and started running in the surrealist circle led by André Breton (1896-1966), the “Father” of Surrealism. Auric became a collaborator for Breton’s journal *Littérature*. This relationship with Breton put a strain on Auric’s relationship with Cocteau when Breton publicly spoke out against Cocteau. Though much is still to be learned about Auric and his compositions, as he led a public though private life, his *Cinq Chansons de Lise Hirtz* show a playful and relatable side to him. These works were written for children and are based on poems by Lise Hirtz (1898-1980). Madame Hirtz was a writer associated with the surrealist movement and was most known as being a muse for Breton. These poems are tiny tableaus that were originally published in a book in 1928 with surrealist sketches by Joan Miró (1893-1983). They are brief and directed by the voice and intended to be accompanied by a small orchestra. The accompaniment has been reduced to solo piano by the composer.

**Georges Auric:**

*Cinq Chansons de Lise Hirtz*
Text by Lise Hirtz (1898-1980)

*Il était une petite pie*
Il était une petite pie
Toujours au désespoir
Et toujours dans son lit.

*Five Songs of Lise Hirtz*

*There Was a Little Magpie*
There was a little Magpie
Always in despair
And always in her bed.
Elle était toute noire
Mais quand même très jolie.
Elle partit à cheval,
A cheval sur une souris,
S’en revint au plus mal
Et mourut dans son lit.

Une petite pomme
Une petite pomme, un jour d’été,
S’en est allé rouler, rouler
Loin du verger, des dents cruelles
Et loin des piqûres d’abeilles.
Une grosse pierre voulut l’arrêter,
Elle s’est dépêché de la manger
Et dans le ciel s’en est allé.

Les pâquerettes
Les pâquerettes trop simplettes
Sont de petites dames
Sans âme;
Elles font des rondes le jeudi
Et sont mangées par les brebis
Le vendredi.

La poule noire
La poule noire dans le potager,
A crié comme une enragée.
Les fermiers sont allés la voir,
Elle a dit qu’il allait pleuvoir.
On ne l’a pas cru, lanturlu.
Et mon beau chapeau est perdu.

Les petits ânes
Les petits ânes des Champs Elysées
S’en vont le cœur tout apaisé
Aux Champs Elysées des ânes
Et je n’ai rien à ajouter.

Darius Milhaud (1892-1974)

Milhaud was a prolific composer, composing over 400 works from almost every genre. He was born into a family of amateur musicians and Milhaud himself started performing at the age of three, and studied violin at the Paris Conservatoire before moving into composition. Before Les Six, Milhaud accompanied the poet Paul Claudel to Brazil as attaché for propaganda. He returned to Paris in 1919 and joined the group Les Six. Milhaud spent many years traveling and performing all over the world, though he started suffering from rheumatoid arthritis at a rather early age. During the war he was a target of the Germans for being a Jewish artist, which prompted Milhaud to emigrate to the US in 1940. His career in the US consisted of teaching mainly; one of his most prestigious
students was Dave Brubeck (1920-2012). Milhaud had quite an imagination for musical expression and a mastery of composition. Milhaud remained faithful to traditional forms, but mixed them with modern music influences. He employed jazz, polytonality, and percussive elements in his music. He composed around fifteen operas and chamber operas. In 1938 Milhaud received a commission from the director of the Beaux-Arts to compose a one act opera. He took this opportunity to write an opera with a vengeful theme, which he had wanted to do for some time. His wife Madeleine Milhaud (1902-2008) wrote the libretto for Médée Op. 191 and incorporated the character Créuse from Pierre Corneille’s Médée (1635), Madeleine also used scenes from Euripides and Seneca’s Medea. Médée is Milhaud’s finest work of this period, showing some of his most expressionist and angular music. Médée was premièred on October 7, 1939 by the Flemish Opera in Antwerp, but the complete premiere was at the Paris Opera in March 1940 during the war and was constantly interrupted by anti-aircraft guns throughout the performance. This aria, Air de Créuse, falls towards the beginning of the opera. It is a moment of exaltation of love; defined through a floating, delicate, and voluptuous vocalize. In the story of Médée, Créuse, the daughter of Creon, is about to marry Jason, who has renounced his lover Médée after she gave birth to his two children. Médée decides to avenge her broken heart in a terrifying way. Médée eventually kills Créuse by giving her a cursed dress, thus starting a vengeance so inconceivable that this text has grasped people emotionally for hundreds of years. The story ends with Médée committing the one act that could hurt Jason the most, murdering their children.

Darius Milhaud:
Excerpt from Médée
Text by Madeleine Milhaud (1902-2008)

Air de Créuse
Chers Corinthiens!
Après tant de menaces
Mon Coeur peut enfin s’abandonner
à la joie
Le Bonheur aux ailes rapides
M’entraîne vers toi,
Mon Jason bien aimé
A présent notre amour triomphe
Et bientôt notre vie s’écoulera
Calme paisible sereine et douce
Belle étoile qui précède le jour et la nuit
Etoile de Vénus
Toujours trop lente au gré des amants
Lève toi.

Air of Créuse
Dear Corinthians!
After so many threats
My heart can finally surrender
To joy
Happiness with rapid wings
Leads me to you,
My beloved Jason
Presently our love triumphs
And soon our lives will pass
Calm peaceful serene and gentle.
Beautiful star that preceded the day and the night
Star of Venus
Always too slow to suit lovers
Arise.

Louis Durey (1888-1979)

Durey was born in Paris. His career spanned over 60 years and he composed over 100 works. His compositional skills were largely self-taught. His most productive composition period consisted of the years he collaborated with his fellow Les Six composers. In 1921 Durey decided to leave Les Six because of conflicting ideas with Cocteau and moved to Saint-Tropez, where he stayed until his death. Durey is also noted
as one of the first composers to turn to the communist movement, no surprise after his critical reaction to the war when he was drafted for sixteen months of service as a soldier. Mélodies and choral works made up a large portion of his compositional output, most of them composed during his years with Les Six and into his later years. Durey’s Trois Poèmes de Pétrone was composed in 1918. These three pieces show a Satie influence with exposed parallel fourths and fifths. There is a great unity and amplitude in the vocal line of these three pieces. These poems are based on fragments from what is to be believed a work written by Petronius entitled Satyricon. The work once known as a “Roman novel” moves through prose that tends towards the romantic, serious, erotic and comic. These three poems were translated into French by Charles Héguin de Guerle (1793-1881), a Latin scholar at the Académie de Lyon. The first piece, “La boule de neige,” shows a vulnerable and naïve side of the discovery of love, while the second piece, “La Métémpsychose,” shows a deeper level of love. The final piece, “La grenade,” shows a form of fascination that manifests itself from love.

Louis Durey:
Trois Poèmes de Pétrone
Text by Charles Héguin de Guerle (1793-1881)

La boule de neige

Je ne croyais pas que la neige renfermât du feu;  
Mais, l'autre jour, Julie me jeta de la neige,  
Et cette neige était de feu.  
Qu'y-a-t-il de plus froid que la neige?  
Et pourtant, Julie, la neige lancée par tes mains embrassa mon coeur.  
Où trouver à présent un refuge  
Pour m'abriter des pièges de l'amour,  
Si même cette eau glacée recèle sa flamme?  
Julie, tu peux éteindre cependant l'ardeur qui me consume,  
Non pas avec la neige,  
Non pas avec la glace,  
Mais en brûlant d'un feu pareil au mien.

La Métémpsychose

Tandis que je cueillais un suave baiser sur les lèvres de mon ami,  
Et que j'aspirais sur sa bouche entr'ouverte  
Le parfum de son haleine,  
Mon âme, enivrée, se précipita sur mes lèvres,  
Et, s'insinuant entre les siennes,  
S'efforça de m'échapper.  
Ah! Si la tendre union de nos lèvres  
Eût duré un instant de plus,  
Mon âme, enflammée d'amour,  
Passait dans la sienne et m'abandonnait.  
Ainsi, o merveille! Mort par moi-même,  
J'aurais continué à vivre dans le sein de mon ami.

Three Poems by Petronius

The Snowball

I did not think that snow contained fire;  
But the other day, Julie threw snow at me,  
And this snow was made of fire.  
What could be colder than snow?  
However, Julie, the snow thrown by your hands kindled my heart.  
Where can I find a refuge now  
To protect me from the snares of love,  
If even this icy water contains its flame?  
Julie, you can extinguish this fire which consumes me,  
Not with snow,  
Not with ice,  
But by burning with a flame like mine.

Metempsychosis

While I picked a sweet kiss from the lips of my beloved,  
And inhaled from his half-open mouth  
The refreshing perfume of his breath,  
My intoxicated soul rushed to my lips,  
And, slipping through his,  
Tried to escape from me.  
Ah! If the tender union of our lips  
Had lasted one more instant,  
My soul, enflamed by love,  
Would have joined his and abandoned me.  
Thus, oh marvel! Dead on my own account,  
I would have lived on in the breast of my love.
Lesbie, lumière de mon âme,
M’a envoyé une grenade;
Maintenant, je fais peu de cas des autres fruits:
Je dédaigne le coing au blanc duvet,
Et la châtaigne hérissee de dards;
Je ne veux ni des noix ni des prunes luisantes.
De tels presents sont assez bons pour
le grossier Corydon.

Lesbie m’a envoyé aussi des gateaux
Que ses dents ont legereement mordus;
Le miel de ses lèvres
En a augmenté la douceur.
Je ne sais ce qui est meilleur à respirer,
Du doux parfum du miel ou de son haleine,
Plus embaumée que le thym de Cécropie.

Lesbia, light of my soul,
Sent me a pomegranate;
Henceforth, I have no consideration for other fruits:
I disdain the quince with the white down,
And the chestnut bristling with prickles;
I want neither nuts nor shiny plums.
Such presents are good enough for
crude Corydon.

Lesbia also sent to me some sweetmeats
Which her teeth had gently bitten;
The honey of her lips
Have increased their sweetness.
I don’t know which is better to inhale,
The sweet perfume of honey or her breath,
More perfumed than Cecropian thyme.

Germaine Tailleferre (1892-1983)

Tailleferre was born in Paris and was an exceptional artist and piano player from an early age. Satie was so impressed with her he referred to her as his ‘musical daughter’ and introduced her to the rest of Les Six, thus making her the only female member of the group. She composed over 400 works, though this is not widely known today. She studied under Maurice Ravel and held a close friendship with him for many years. She composed in older conventional forms and had very clear formal structures and lines and erred away from the experimental side of composition, unlike her colleagues. She was the most similar to Poulenc in taste and style. Tailleferre, being the only woman in Les Six, found herself caught in contradictory gender conceptions, thus creating a female identity that we refer to as “feminist” today. During the summer of 1929, while married to New York caricaturist Ralph Barton (1891-1931), Tailleferre found out she was pregnant. Her husband was jealous of her career and did not want a child; therefore he asked her if he could shoot her in the stomach to end the pregnancy while promising nothing bad would happen to her. Though her husband’s plan did not come to fruition, she ended up having a miscarriage from all the stress. She never saw her husband again. He returned to New York and they eventually divorced, and he committed suicide soon after. By August 1929 she had composed her Six Chansons Françaises. These six songs are a documentation of her response to this traumatic experience. Though Tailleferre herself has avoided linking the songs to her tumultuous personal life, there is no denying their autobiographical relevance. These pieces show a critique on marriage and patriarchy and invoke a quietly humorous look at the female persona. Though the pieces are not connected as a narrative, they each show meditations on marriage, morality, infidelity, and passion. These pieces praise infidelity and invoke sadness. The first piece, “Non, la fidélité,” is traditional in melody and form but the harmony works throughout most of the piece in a non-functional manner. There are sudden unexpected shifts in the harmonies; these musical ideas show Satie’s influence. One can also hear the influence of Stravinsky in the use of the ostinati. Jane Bathori claims to have insisted that
Tailleferre compose this cycle. Bathori’s marriage to Pierre-Émile Engel (1847–1927) was probably one reason she pushed for the composition of these pieces; she could sympathize with Tailleferre. Each of these songs is dedicated to a different woman.

**Germaine Tailleferre:**

*Six Chansons Françaises*

*Non, la fidélité…*

Text by Lattaignant (1697-1779)

Non, non, la fidélité
N’a jamais été qu’une imbécillité.
J’ai quitté par légèreté plus d’une beauté,
Vive la nouveauté!
Mais quoi… la probité!
Tra la la la la la la la

Puérilité,
Le serment répété!
Style usité;
A-t-on jamais compté sur un traité
Dicté par la volupté.
Sans liberté? La la la la

On feint, par vanité, d’être irrité;
L’amant peu regretté
Est invité;
La femme, avec gaité,
Bientôt s’arrange de son côté.

*Souvent un air de vérité*

Text by Voltaire (1694-1778)

Souvent un air de vérité
Se mêle au plus grossier mensonge;
Une nuit, dans l’erreur d’un songe,
Au rang des rois j’étais monté.
Je vous aimais alors et j’osais vous le dire.
Les dieux, à mon réveil, ne m’ont pas tout ôté;
Je n’ai perdu que mon Empire.

*Mon mari, m’a diffamée*

15th century text

Mon mari m’a diffamée
Pour l’amour de mon ami,
De la longue demeurée
Que j’ai faite avec que lui.

Hé! Mon ami,
En dépit de mon mari
qui me va toujours battant,
Je ferai pis que devant.

**Six French Songs**

*No, Fidelity…*

No, no, fidelity
Has never been anything but foolishness.
I casually left more than one beauty,
Long live novelty!
But what… integrity!
Tra la la la la la la la

Childishness,
The repeated promise!
Usual style;
Has one ever counted on a treaty
Dictated by pleasure.
Without freedom? La la la la

One pretends, out of vanity, to be irritated;
The lover hardly missed
Is invited;
The woman, with gaiety,
Soon arranges herself at his side.

Often an air of truth
Is mixed in the most blatant lie;
One night in the error of a dream,
I climbed to the rank of kings.
I loved you then and I dared to tell you so.
The gods, on my awakening, did not take away everything;
I only lost my empire.

My husband has defamed me
For the love of my lover,
For the long time
That I remained with him.

Ah! My love,
In spite of my husband
Who is forever beating me,
I will do worse than before.
Aucunes gens m’ont blâmée,  
Disant que j’ai fait ami;  
La chose très fort m’agrée,  
Mon très gracieux souci.

Hé! Mon ami,  
En dépit de mon mari  
Qui ne vaut pas un grand blanc,  
Je ferai pis que devant.

Quand je suis la nuit couchée  
Entre les bras de mon ami,  
Je deviens presque pamée  
Du Plaisir que prends en lui.

Hé! Mon ami  
Plût à Dieu que mon mari  
Je ne vise de trente ans!  
Nous nous don’rions du bon temps.

Si je perds ma renommée  
Pour l’amour de mon ami,  
Point n’en dois être blâmée,  
Car il est coïnc et joli.

Hé! Mon ami,  
Je n’ai bonjour ni demi  
Avec ce mari méchant.  
Je ferai pis que devant.

Vrai Dieu, qui m’y confortera  
15th century text

Vrai Dieu, qui m’y confortera  
Quand ce faux jaloux me tiendra  
En sa chambre seule enfermée?  
Mon père m’adonné un vieillard  
Qui tout le jour crie: Hélas!  
Et dort au long de la nuitée.  
Il me faut un vert galant  
Qui fût de l’âge de trente ans  
Et qui dormit la matinée.  
Rossignolet du bois plaisant,  
Pourquoi me va ainsi chantant,  
Puisqu’au vieillard suis mariée?  
Ami tu sois le bienvenu;  
Longtemps a que t’ai attendu  
Au joli bois, sous la ramée.

On a dit mal de mon ami  
15th century text

On a dit mal de mon ami,  
Dont j’ai le cœur bien marri.  
Qu’ont-ils affaire quell il soit,  
Ou qu’il soit beau ou qu’il soit laid,

No one has blamed me,  
Saying that I have a lover;  
The situation is acceptable to me,  
My most gracious concern.

Ah! My love,  
In spite of my husband  
Who is not worth a damn,  
I will do worse than before.

When I am lying in my bed at night,  
In the arms of my love,  
I almost swoon  
From the pleasure that I have with him.

Ah! My love  
Would to God that my husband  
I had not seen for thirty years!  
We would have had a good time.

If I lose my reputation  
For the love of my loved one,  
I can hardly be blamed,  
Because he is nice and handsome.

Ah! My love,  
I never have a minute’s peace  
With this wicked husband.  
I will do worse than before.

Dear God, who will comfort me  
When this jealous man holds me  
In his room alone and locked up?  
My father married me to an old man  
Who yells all day: Alas!  
And sleeps all through the night.  
I need a gallant young gentleman  
Who is thirty years old  
And who sleeps the morning away.  
Little nightingale of the pleasant wood,  
Why are you singing to me so,  
Knowing that I am married to an old man?  
Lover you are welcome;  
So long I have waited for you  
In the pretty woods beneath the boughs.

They speak ill of my love,  
For whom my heart is still aching.  
What business is it of theirs,  
If he is handsome of if he is ugly,
Quand je lui plais et qu’il me plait?
When I like him and he likes me?

Un médinsant ne veut onc bien:
When this doesn’t wish anyone well:
Quand le cas ne lui touche en rien,
Why is he slandering me?
Pourquoi va-t-il médire?
He makes a martyr
Il fait vivre en martyre
Of those who ask nothing of him.
Ceux qui ne lui demandent rien.

Quand j’ai tout bien considéré,
When I have considered everything,
Femme n’est de quoi n’est parlé.
Womankind is not the problem.
Voilà ce qui m’avance
This is what leads me
De prendre ma plaisance.
To take my pleasure.
Aussi dit-on bien que je l’ai.
Which they say that I have.

Plût or à Dieu qu’il fut ici
Please God, that he were here
Celui que j’ai pris et choisi,
He whom I have taken and chosen,
Puisqu’on en a voulu parler!
Since they want to talk about it!
Et, dussent-ils tous enragé,
And, though they all might be enraged,
Je coucherais avec que lui!
I would sleep only with him!

Les trois presents
The three presents
Text by Sarasin (1611-1654)

Je vous donne, avec grand plaisir,
I give you, with great pleasure,
De trois présents un à choisir.
Three presents, one to choose.
La belle, c’est à vous de prendre
Beautiful one, it is for you to take
Celui des trois qui plus vous plait.
Which of the three that most pleases you.
Les voici, sans vous faire attendre:
Here they are without waiting:
Bonjour, bonsoir et bonne nuit.
Good morning, good evening and good night.

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)

Poulenc was introduced to piano and classical music at the early age of five by his
mother, who was an amateur pianist. As a child he listened to and studied music by
Debussy and Stravinsky. In 1914 Poulenc started taking piano lessons from Ricardo
Viñes (1875-1943), who eventually introduced Poulenc to Satie, Cocteau, and the rest of
Les Six. Poulenc, an avid reader, also ran in a circle of renowned writers such as Éluard,
Claudel, Breton, and Apollinaire. Out of all the Les Six members, Poulenc had the
closest relationship with Jean Cocteau; they both shared an attraction to popular music.
Poulenc held a close working relationship and friendship with two famous French
singers, the first being Pierre Bernac (1899-1979) whom Poulenc traveled and performed
with for many years and composed over 90 Mélodies for the two of them to perform on
their recitals together. The other singer Poulenc worked closely with was soprano Denise
Duval (b. 1921). Duval created the lead soprano roles in all three of Poulenc’s operas.
Poulenc’s last significant vocal work, La Dame de Monte-Carlo, was written in 1961 for
Duval. It is a monologue for soprano and orchestra, and resembles his one act opera for
soprano also based on a text by Cocteau entitled, La voix humaine (1958). La Dame de
Monte-Carlo was premièred with Duval first in Monte-Carlo in November 1961 and then
in Paris on December 5. Poulenc wanted a work to go with the aria from Les mamelles
de Tirésias for Duval to sing in their recitals together. Poulenc came across the
monologue La Dame de Monte-Carlo in a book while visiting his acupuncturist. After
reading the monologue he was unable to think of anything else other than this pitiful woman. Poulenc said, “I adore Monte-Carlo and its old ladies covered with jewels, playing roulette.” Monte-Carlo was a very special place to Poulenc. He went there many times as a young child with his parents, and at the age of 23 he went with Auric to Monte-Carlo to write a ballet for Diaghilev. Poulenc even replaced “Zanzibar” in the aria from Les mamelles de Tirésias with “Monte-Carlo” because Apollinaire had lived there till he was 18. Poulenc intended for La Dame de Monte-Carlo to be sung like the Prayer in Tosca. He had to portray this sad woman’s emotional rollercoaster in a short period of time, while avoiding monotony. Poulenc said he had to “…give a different colour to each verse of the poem. Sadness, pride, lyricism, violence and sarcasm. In the end miserable tenderness and a splash into the sea.”

In 1917 Poulenc was in attendance of the première of Apollinaire’s Les mamelles de Tirésias, and in 1939 Poulenc reread the text, thus prompting him to compose his first opera. This two act opera was premieréd at the Opéra-Comique on June 3, 1947 and was the first time he ever worked with his muse, soprano Denise Duval, who became his favorite female interpreter. The opera was dedicated to his friend Milhaud and his return to France after the war. This work is described as an opéra bouffe, and though the story seems bizarre and trivial, Apollinaire's underlying message is the need for procreation and a distaste for the women's liberation movement. Sexual ambiguity plays a large part in many works by Poulenc, and it is blatantly endorsed in this opera. Poulenc liked to see himself in the protagonists in his works and loved to portray women going through emotional breakdowns. This is one of the main reasons why this opera and La Dame de Monte-Carlo are so enticing; Poulenc has laid the emotions out in a raw way that makes it hard for the listener to distance themselves. In “Non, Monsieur mon mari” Thérèse is sick and tired of being a woman, and eager to practice any profession she chooses. Thérèse rids herself of her breasts and instantly grows a beard. No longer her husband’s wife, she will henceforth be known by her masculine name: Tirésias. With all the women following in Tirésias’s footsteps, this now leaves the responsibility of procreation to the men.

Francis Poulenc:
La Dame de Monte-Carlo
Text by Jean Cocteau (1889-1963)

Frédéric Chopin:

Quand on est morte entre les mortes,
Qu'on se traîne chez les vivants
Lorsque tout vous flanque à la porte
Et la ferme d'un coup de vent,
Ne plus être jeune et aimée…
Derrière une porte fermée,
Il reste de se fiche à l'eau
Ou d'acheter un rigolo.
Oui, messieurs, voilà ce qui reste
Pour les lâches et les salauds.
Mais si la frousse de ce geste
S'attache à vous comme un grelot,
Si l'on craint de s'ouvrir les veines,
On peut toujours risquer la veine
D'un voyage à Monte-Carlo
Monte-Carlo, Monte-Carlo.

The Lady of Monte-Carlo

When you are dead amongst the dead
When you drag yourself amongst the living,
When everything kicks you out
And the wind slams the door shut,
No longer young and loved…
Behind a closed door,
There’s nothing left but to drown oneself
Or buy a revolver.
Yes, Gentlemen, that’s what’s left
For cowards and bastards.
But if fear of this gesture haunts you
Like a tinkling bell,
If you are scared to slash your wrists,
You can always take the gamble
Of a trip to Monte Carlo
Monte Carlo, Monte Carlo.
De taper de loin sur vos doigts
Quand on peut faucher une mise.
Et la pension où l’on doit
Et toujours la même chemise
Que l’angoisse trempe dans l’eau.
Ils peuvent courir. Pas si bête.
Cette nuit je pique une tête
Dans la mer de Monte-Carlo,
Monte-Carlo…

Francis Poulenc:
Excerpt from *Les mamelles de Tirésias*
Text by Guillaume Apollinaire

**Non, Monsieur mon mari**

Non, Monsieur mon mari,
Vous ne me ferez pas faire ce que vous voulez.
Je suis féministe,
Et je ne connais pas l’autorité de l’homme.
Du reste je veux agir à ma guise,
Font ce qui leur plait.
Après tout, je veux aussi aller me
battre contre les enemis.
J’ai envie d’être soldat, Un’ deux, un’ deux.
Je veux fair’ la guerre et non pas faire des enfants.
Non, Monsieur mon mari,
Vous ne me commanderez plus.
Ce n’est pas parce que vous m’avez fait la cour
Dans le Connecticut
Que je dois vous faire la cuisine à Zanzibar.
Vous l’entendez, il ne pense qu’à l’amour.
Mais tu ne te doutes pas, imbécile,
Qu’après avoir été soldat
Je veux être artiste, je veux être aussi
Député, Avocat, Sénateur, Ministre,
Président de la chose publique;
Et je veux, médecin physique ou bien Psychique,
Diafoirer à mon gré l’Europe et l’Amérique.

Faire des enfants, faire la cuisine,
Non c’est trop;
Je veux être mathématicienne,
Groom dans les restaurants,
Petit télégraphiste, et je veux,
S’il me plait, entretenir à l’an
Cette vieille danseuse qui a tant de talent.
Vous l’entendez, il ne pense qu’à l’amour.
Mais il me semble que la barbe me pousse.
Ma poitrine se détache.
Ah! Envolez-vous, Oiseaux de ma faiblesse.
Comme c’est joli, les appas féminins.
C’est mignon tout plein, on en mangerait.
Comme c’est joli. Ah!
Mais trêve de bêtises,
Ne nous livrons pas à l’aéronautique.
Il y a toujours quelque avantatge à pratiquer la vertu;
Le vice est après tout une chose dangereuse.
C’est pourquoi il vaut mieux sacrifier une
Beauté qui peut être une occasion de pêché.
Débarrassons-nous de nos mamelles.
Mais qu’est-ce à dire,
Non seulement la barbe me pousse
Mais ma moustache aussi?
Eh diable, j’ai l’air d’un champ de blé qui attend
la moissonneuse mécanique.
Je me sens viril en diable, je suis un étalon.
De la tête aux talons
Me voilà taureau, me ferai’ toréro.
Mais n’étalons pas mon avenir au grand jour.
Héros, Cache tes armes,
Et toi, mari moins viril que moi,
Fais tout le vacarme que tu voudras.

we will not give over to aeronautics.
There is always some advantage to practicing virtue;
Vice is after all a dangerous thing.
That is why it is better to sacrifice a
Beauty which may be an occasion for sinning.
Let us get rid of our breasts.
What is this,
Not only my beard grows
But my moustache also?
What the devil, I look like a field of wheat
that awaits the combine machine.
I feel manly as hell, I am a stallion.
From head to hooves
Now I’m a bull, I am a bull fighter.
But let’s not spread out my future in broad daylight.
Hero, hide your weapons,
And you, husband, less manly than me,
Make all the noise you like.
The University of Kentucky
School of Music
Presents

Whitney Myers
In a DMA Vocal Recital

with Nan McSwain
piano

assisted by
Christine Sallas
Oboe

March 12, 2016
Singletary Center for the Arts, Recital Hall
1:00 p.m.

PROGRAM

Les Chemins de l’amour (1940)  Francis Poulenc
C from Deux Poèmes de Louis Aragon (1943)  (1899-1963)

In Sleep the World is Yours (2014)  Lori Laitman
Lullaby  (b. 1955)
Yes
Tragedy

Christine Sallas, Oboe

-INTERMISSION-

La mort de Cléopâtre, Scène lyrique H. 36 (1829)  Hector Berlioz
Allegro Vivace Con Impeto-Recitativo  (1803-1869)
Lento Cantabile-Recitativo
Méditation. Largo Misterioso
Allegro Assai Agitato
Moderato Recitativo Misurato

This recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctor of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance. Whitney Myers is a student of Dr. Noemi Lugo.
Program Notes

Francis Jean Marcel Poulenc (1899-1963)

Poulenc composed many different types of works such as art song, solo piano, chamber music, oratorio, opera, ballet music and orchestral music. Poulenc was a member of a group of composers called Les Six. Their music was a reaction against Teutonic music, Impressionism and intellectualism. He composed Mélodies that challenged what was considered appropriate for Parisian music halls. “Les Chemins de l’amour” was written for the great chanteuse Yvonne Printemps (1894-1977). The text is from Jean Anouilh’s drama Léocadia, which is about a prince who romances a miller’s daughter, who happens to bear a striking resemblance to his former love who is deceased. Poulenc’s incidental score for this play is a valse chantée about the ways of love. Poulenc avoided many of his characteristic compositional and aesthetic devices in this work, such as his highly pianistic accompaniments, frequent harmonic turns, and his blending of foreground and background into one integrated world. However, this song is unusually conservative and typically tuneful; it is simply a vehicle for text rather than commentary on its meaning. The effect of the song is very much like that of a popular or cabaret piece, but still unmistakable Poulenc with the use of careful melodic nuance and expressive concision and poignancy. “C” is one of two songs from Deux Poèmes de Louis Aragon. Louis Aragon (1897–1982) was a French Surrealist poet. He wrote for the underground press during WWII and published this poem as one of the underground works. Poulenc set this piece the same year it was published. The song is named after Les Ponts-de-Cé near the Loire River. This region saw many battles, such as the Romans against the Gauls in 51 BC, a noteworthy battle of the Hundred Year War in 1432, the end of a civil war in 1620, and finally the Germans overtaking the French during WWII in 1940. This piece personifies the rottenness in French chivalric history, as well as depicting the destruction and spoils of war.

Francis Poulenc:
Les chemins de l’amour
The paths of love

Text by Jean Marie Lucien Pierre Anouilh (1910-1987)

Les chemins qui vont à la mer
Ont gardé de notre passage
Des fleurs effeuillées
et l’écho sous leurs arbres
de nos deux rires clairs
hélas! des jours de Bonheur
radieuses joies envelopées
je vais sans retrouver traces
dans mon coeur.

Les chemins de mon amour
Je vous cherche toujours
Chemins perdus, vous n’êtes plus
Et vos échos sont sourds.
Chemins du désespoir,
Chemins du souvenir,

The paths that lead to the sea
Have retained from our passing
The flowers that shed their petals
And the echo beneath their trees
Of our clear laughter.
Alas! No trace of those happy days,
Those radiant joys now flown,
Can I find again
In my heart.

Paths of my love,
I search for you always,
Lost paths, you are no more
And your echoes are muted.
Paths of despair,
Paths of remembrance,
Chemins du premier jour
Divins chemins d’amour.
Si je dois l’oublier un jour,
La vie effaçant toute chose,
Je veux dans mon coeur qu’un souvenir
Repose plus fort que l’autre amour.
Le souvenirs du chemin,
Où tremblante et toute éperdue,
Un jour j’ai senti sur moi brûler tes mains.

Deux Poèmes de Louis Aragon
Text by Louis Aragon (1897-1982)

C

J’ai traversé les ponts de Cé
C’est là que tout a commencé
Une chanson des temps passés
Parle d’un chevalier blessé
D’une rose sur la chaussée
Et d’un corsage délacé
Du chateau d’un duc insensé
Et des cygnes dans les fossés
De la prairie où vient danser
Une éternelle fiancée
Et j’ai bu comme un lait glacé
Le long lai des gloires faussées
La Loire emporte mes pensées
Avec les voitures versées
Et les armes désamorcées
Et les larmes mal effacées
O ma France, ô ma délaissée
J’ai traversé les ponts de Cé.

Two Poems of Louis Aragon

C

I have crossed the bridges of Cé
This is where it all began
A song of times past
Speaks of a wounded knight
Of a rose upon the ground
And a bodice unlaced
Of the castle of a foolish duke
And of the swans in the moat
Of the meadow where they come to dance
An eternal fiancée
And like cold milk I drank
The long lay of false glories
The Loire carries off my thoughts
With the overturned coaches
And the defused weapons
And the poorly erased tears
Oh my France, oh my forsaken
I have crossed the bridges of Cé.

Lori Laitman (b. 1955)

Lori Laitman is one of America’s most prolific composers of vocal music of this century. Laitman has written many song cycles for the voice, choral works, an oratorio, and 3 operas. She has created a unique body of music commemorating the Holocaust, such as her most renowned vocal work I Never Saw Another Butterfly (1994) based on poems written by children in the Terezin concentration camp during the Holocaust, written for saxophone and soprano. She recently added the cycle of songs titled In Sleep the World is Yours to her compositions memorializing the lost voices of the Holocaust. In Sleep the World is Yours was commissioned by Music of Remembrance and premiered on May 12, 2014 at Benaroya Hall, Seattle, WA. The poems are taken from a collection of poetry entitled Harvest of Blossoms by Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger. Selma was born in Romania and enjoyed studying literature which led to her writing poetry at the age of 15. She died at the age of 18 in a concentration camp from typhus fever. Laitman depicts the clear text through her composition while also painting the emotional depth hidden within the text, and using the voice, oboe, and piano timbres to enhance the mood of these pieces. Like
many of her song cycles, these three pieces create an arc. “Lullaby” portrays the little bit of hope through dark days. “Yes” deals with memories of loved ones, but can be traced to a deeper otherworldly meaning, while “Tragedy” speaks of the reality of our existence. As Laitman says of Selma, “How lucky for us that she did leave a trace.”

Lori Laitman:
In Sleep the World is Yours
Text by Selma Meerbaum-Eisinger (1924-1942)

Lullaby
Sleep, my child, just fall asleep,
Please sleep and don’t cry anymore.
Just look, in sleep the world is yours,
Please sleep and don’t cry so hard.
Close your eyes and fall asleep,
Listen, the forest is rustling.
In sleep there is no hate and no scorn,
And in sleep you are not cold.
Sleep, my darling, and smile my child,
Listen, the river is singing.
Sleep, then the wind will sing of joy
And sing of the blossoming spring.
Sleep my child and forget your ails,
For you the day is dark.
Bright is the night when a dream cuddles you,
So sleep my child, so sleep.

Yes
You are so distant.
As distant as a star I thought I’d grasped.
And yet you are near –
Just a little dusty
Like time that’s past.
Yes.
You are so huge.
As huge as the shadow of that tree.
And still you’re just here too –
Just pale like a dream
In my bosom.
Yes.

Tragedy
This is the hardest: to give yourself away
And then to see that no one needs you,
To give all of yourself and realize
You’ll fade like smoke and leave no trace.

Hector Berlioz (1803–1869)

Hector Berlioz was the ideal French Romantic composer of the 19th century and was a musical pioneer of his time. He is renowned for his Symphonie fantastique (1830), his contributions to the orchestra and instrumentation, and his use of the idée fixe. He was known to be emotional and opinionated, which shows in his music. In 1828 Berlioz won the coveted Prix de Rome competition, thus giving him confidence for his second attempt at the prize in 1829. This endeavor led to the cantata La mort de Cléopâtre, which was full of genius and ingenuity. The academy was not ready for Berlioz’s genius, especially since they were still trying to come to terms with Beethoven’s ideals, thus no prize was awarded that year. The Cleopatra subject was a welcome challenge for Berlioz’s dramatics; the subject was the last moments of the Queen’s life after her defeat at Actium in 31 BC by Octavian. This theme gave way to the greatest of his Prix de Rome cantatas. The form of the work is set up with two arias prefaced by recitative. Berlioz believed the second aria, the Méditation, good enough to win him first prize. Berlioz chose to separate the Méditation, and preface it with Juliet’s prayer and reflections in the Capulet vaults, “What if when I am laid,” which he believed to hold significant parallels to the situation depicted in this cantata of Cleopatra’s final prayers. Following this grand prayer
and the bite of the asp the accompaniment portrays Cleopatra’s wavering pulse as the poison courses through her body. This piece is full of grand enharmonic progressions, insistent rhythms, and juxtaposition of keys. The rhythms help to paint the text and the dramatics of Cleopatra’s final moments, where one can hear in the accompaniment her final spasms of death.

Hector Berlioz:
*La mort de Cléopâtre*, H. 36

*The Death of Cleopatra*

**Text by Pierre-Ange Vieillard (1778-1862)**

**Scène lyrique**

So it is done! My shame is assured.
Widow of Anthony and widow of Caesar,
Delivered into the power of Octavian,
I could not captivate his fierce gaze.
I was vanquished, and am now dishonored.

In vain, to revive the brilliance of my charms,
I profaned the mourning of my tragic widowhood;
In vain, I have exhausted all secrets known to art,
And hidden beneath flowers the shackles of slavery;
Nothing has succeeded in weakening the conqueror’s decrees.

I have dragged my oppressed grandeur to his feet.
My very tears streamed down his spread hands,
And the daughter of Ptolemy
Has suffered the insult of refusal!

Ah! How distant are those days, which torment my memory,
Where on the bosom of the waves, comparable to Venus,
Reflecting the glory of Anthony and of Caesar,
I emerged triumphant on the banks of the Cydnus!

Actium delivered me into the power of the defiant victor;

My scepter, my treasures passed into his hands;
My beauty remained, and Octavian’s scorn
Did more to defeat me than the Roman sword.

My very tears streamed down his spread hands,
I have suffered the insult of refusal!

I!...Who from the bosom of the waves, comparable to Venus,
Sprang in triumph onto the banks of the Cydnus!

Reine coupable, que dis-tu?
Guilty queen, what say you?

Du destin qui m'accable est-ce à moi de me plaindre?
Have I the right to complain of my overwhelming fate?

Ai-je pour l'accuser les droits de la vertu?
Have I in excuse the privileges of virtue?
J'ai d'un époux déshonoré la vie.  
C'est par moi qu'aux Romains l'Égypte est asservie,  
Et que d'Isis l'ancien culte est détruit.  
Quel asile chercher? Sans parents! sans patrie!  
Il n'en est plus pour moi que l'éternelle nuit!

Méditation

Grands Pharaons, nobles Lagides,  
Verrez-vous entrer sans courroux,  
Pour dormir dans vos pyramides,  
Une reine indigne de vous?  
Non!... non, de vos demeures funèbres  
Je profanerais la splendeur!  
Rois, enco au sein des ténèbres,  
Vous me fuiriez avec horreur.

Du destin qui m'accable est-ce à moi de me plaindre? Have I the right to complain of my overwhelming fate?

Ai-je pour l'accuser le droit de la vertu?  
Par moi nos dieux ont fui d'Alexandrie,  
Et d'Isis le culte est détruit.  
Une reine indigne de vous?  
Non, j'ai d'un époux déshonoré la vie.

Sa cendre est sous mes yeux, son ombre me poursuit.  
C'est par moi qu'aux Romains l'Égypte est asservie.  
Par moi nos dieux ont fui les murs d'Alexandrie,  
Et d'Isis le culte est détruit.

Osiris proscrit ma couronne.  
A Typhon je livre mes jours!  
Contre l'horreur qui m'environne  
Un vil reptile est mon recours.

Dieux du Nil... vous m'avez... trahie!  
Octave... m'attend... à son char.  
Cléopâtre en... quittant... la vie,  
Redevient digne de... César!

Meditation

Mighty Pharaohs, noble Lagides,  
Will you without wrath watch her enter,  
To rest in your pyramids,  
A queen unworthy of you?  
No!... no, I profane the splendor  
of your funereal homes!  
Kings, even amidst the darkness,  
You would fly from me in horror.

Have I the right to complain of my overwhelming fate?

Have I in excuse the privileges of virtue?  
Because of me our gods fled from Alexandria,  
And the cult of Isis is destroyed.  
A queen unworthy of you?  
No, I was the dishonor of my spouse

His ashes are before my eyes, his shadow pursues me.  
Because of me, Egypt is enslaved by Rome.  
Because of me our gods fled from Alexandria,  
And the cult of Isis is destroyed.

Osiris banished my reign.  
To Typhon I give up my life!  
In the face of the horror that surrounds me  
A vile reptile is my resort.

Gods of the Nile... you have... betrayed me!  
Octavian... awaits me... at his chariot.  
Cleopatra by... leaving... her life,  
Is once more worthy of... Caesar!

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The University of Kentucky
School of Music
Presents

Whitney Myers
In a DMA Vocal Lecture Recital

with Cliff Jackson
piano

June 20, 2016
Singletary Center for the Arts, Recital Hall
6:00 p.m.

PROGRAM

La Voix humaine (1958)  
Francis Poulenc  
(1899-1963)

-INTERMISSION-

I. Introduction
II. Background and History
III. Creating La Voix humaine
IV. The Telephone and Its Role
V. Dependency on the Telephone
VI. Incorporating Modern Technology
VII. Conclusion

This lecture recital is presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctor of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance. Whitney Myers is a student of Dr. Noemi Lugo.
APPENDIX

Full Libretto and Translation to Poulenc’s *La Voix humaine*

Allô, allô…Mais non, Madame, nous sommes plusieurs sur la ligne, raccrochez…Vous êt’ avec une abonnée…

Mais, Madame, raccrochez vous-mêm’…
Allô, Mad’moisel’!… Mais non, ce n’est pas le docteur Schmit…
Zéro huit, pas zéro sept…Allô!… c’est ridicul’…
On me demande; je ne sais pas…
Allô!…Mais Mad’am’, que voulez-vous que j’y fass’?…
Comment, ma faut’?…pas du tout…
Allô, Mad’moisel’!…
Dites à cette dame de se retirer.
Allô, c’est toi?…Oui…très bien…
C’était un vrai supplice de t’entendre à travers tout ce monde…
oui…oui…non…
c’est une chance…
Je rentre il y a dix minutes…
Tu n’avais pas encore appelé?…

Ah!…non, non…J’ai dîné dehors…
chez Marthe.
Il doit être onze hour’ un quart…
Tu es chez toi?…
Alors regarde la pendula électrique…
C’est ce que je pensais…
Oui, oui, mon chéri…Hier soir?
Hier soir je me suis couchée tout de suite et comme je ne pouvais pas m’endormir, j’ai pris un comprimé…
Non… un seul…à neuf heures…
J’avais un peu mal à la tête, mais je me suis secouée.

Marthe est venue.
Elle a déjeuné avec moi.
J’ai fait des courses. Je suis rentrée à la maison.
J’ai…Quoi?…Très forte…
J’ai beaucoup, beaucoup de courage…

Hello, hello…But no Madame, there are several of us on the line, please hang up…You are with a subscriber…
But Madame, you hang up…
Hello, Miss! But no, this is not Doctor Schmit…
Zero eight, not zero seven…Hello!…
This is ridiculous…
One wonders why; I do not know…
Hello!…But Madame, what do you want me to do?…
How is it my fault?…Not at all…
Hello, Miss!…
Tell this lady to hang up.
Hello, is it you?…Yes…Very good…
It was torture not being able to hear you over all those people…
Yes…Yes…No…
There is a chance…
I returned ten minutes ago…
Perhaps you called while I was out?…
Ah!…No, no…I dined out…
At Martha’s house.
It must be a quarter past eleven…
Are you at home?…
Then look at the electric clock…
That is what I thought…
Yes, yes, my dear…Last night?
Last night I went to bed early and since I could not go to sleep, I took a pill…
No…Only one…At nine o’clock…
I had a little bit of a headache, but then it went away, Martha came.
She had lunch with me.
I went shopping. I returned home.
I went…What?…Very strong…
I have lots and lots of courage…

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99 Poulenc, *La Voix humaine*. The text is from the score and the translations are my own.
Après? Après je me suis habillée,

Marthe est venue me prendre…
Je rentre de chez elle.
Elle a été parfait…
Elle a cet air,
mais elle ne l’est pas.
Tu avais raison, comme toujours…
Ma robe rose…Mon chapeau noir…
Oui, j’ai encore mon chapeau sur la tête…
Et toi, tu rentres?…
Tu es resté à la maison?…
Quel procès?…Ah, oui…
Allô! chéri…Si on coupe,
redemande-moi tout de suite…
Allô! Non…je suis là…
Le sac?…Tes lettres et les miennes.
Tu peux le fair’ prendre quand tu veux…
Un peu dur…Je comprends…
Oh! mon chéri, ne t’excuse pas,
c’est très naturel
et c’est moi qui suis stupide…
Tu es gentil…Tu es gentil…
Moi non plus, je ne me croyais pas si forte…

Quelle comédie?…Allô!…Qui?…
Que je te joue la comédie, moi!…

Tu me connais,
je suis incapable de prendre sur moi…

Pas du tout…Pas du tout…
Très calme…Tu l’entendrais…
Je dis: Tu l’entendrais.
Je n’ai pas la voix d’une personne
qui cache quelque chose…
Non. J’ai décidé d’avoir du courage
et j’en aurai…
J’ai ce que je mérite.
J’ai voulu être folle
et avoir un bonheur fou…
Chéri…écoute…allô!…
chéri…Laisse…allô!…
laisse-moi parler.
Ne t’accuse pas.

After? Afterwards I got dressed for the evening,
Martha came to take me…
I returned from her home.
She was perfect…
She has this air to her,
but she’s really not.
You were right, as always…
My pink dress…My black hat…
Yes, I still have my hat on…
And you, are you back?…
You stayed at home?…
What trial?…Ah, yes…
Hello! Dear…If we are cut off,
call me back immediately…
Hello!…No…I’m still here…
The bag?…Your letters and mine.
You can send for it when you like…
A little hard…I understand…
Oh! My dear, you don’t need to apologize,
it is very natural
and it is I who am stupid…
You are kind…You are kind...
Neither did I, I did not believe I am strong…
Putting on an act?…Hello!…Who?…
You think I am putting on an act,
me!…

You know me well,
I am not the type who would ever pretend…
Not at all…Not at all…
Very calm…You would hear it…
I said: You would hear it…
I do not have the voice of someone
who has something to hide…
No. I have decided to have courage
and I will…
I got what I deserved.
I wanted to be foolish
and have a crazy happiness…
Dear…Listen…Hello!…
Dear…Let me…Hello!…
Let me speak.
Do not blame yourself.
Tout est ma faute. Si, si…
Souviens-toi du dimanche de Versailles
et du pneumatique…Ah!...Alors!...
C’est moi qui ai voulu venir,
c’est moi qui t’ai fermé la bouch’,
c’est moi qui t’ai dit que tout m’était égal…

Non…non…là tu es injuste…
J’ai…J’ai téléphone la première…
on mardi… j’en suis sûre.
Un mardi vingt-sept…
Tu penses bien que je connais ces
dates par coeur…
ta mère? Pourquoi?...
Ce n’est vraiment pas la peine…
Je ne sais pas encore…
Oui…peut-être…
Oh! non, sûrement pas tout de suite, et toi?…

Demain?…Je ne savais pas que c’était si rapide…

Alors, attends…c’est très simple…
demain matin le sac sera chez le concierge.

Joseph n’aura qu’à passer le prendre…
Oh! moi, tu sais, il est possible que je reste,
comme il est possible que j’aille passer
quelques jours à la campagne,

chez Marthe…Oui, mon chéri…
mais oui, mon chéri…
Allô!…et comme ça?…
Pourtant je parle très forte…
Et là, tu m’entends?…
Je dis: et là, tu m’entends?…
C’est drôle parce que moi je t’entends
comme si tu étais dans la chambre…
Allô!…allô!…Allons, bon!
maintenant c’est moi qui ne t’entends plus…

Si, mais très loin, très loin…
Toi, tu m’entends.
C’est chacun son tour…
Non, très bien…
J’entends même mieux que tout à l’heure,

It was all my fault. Yes, yes…
Do you remember that Sunday in
Versailles
and I sent the wire…Ah!...Then!…
It was I who wanted to come,
it was I who would not let you speak,
it is I who told you that I did not
mind…
No…No…Now you are unfair…
I have…I called you first…
A Tuesday…I’m quite sure.
A Tuesday the twenty-seventh…
You think I know these
dates by heart…
Your mother? But why?…
It’s really not worth it…
I honestly do not know…
Yes…Perhaps…
Oh! No, surely not right away, and
you?…

Tomorrow?…I did not know it was
so soon…
Well then, wait…It is very simple…
Tomorrow morning the bag will be
with the concierge.
Joseph will only have to pick it up…
Oh! Me, you know, it is possible that
I will stay awhile in the city
or I may decide to spend some time
in the country
with Martha…Yes, my dear…
But of course, my darling…
Hello!… What is wrong?…
I am speaking loud…
And now, do you hear me?…
I said: and now do you hear me?…
It’s funny because I hear you
as if you were here in this room…
Hello!...Hello!...Well, good!
Now it is I who cannot hear you
anymore…
Yes, but far, far away…
Now can you hear me.
It is each of us in turn…
No, very good…
I can hear even better than earlier,
mais ton appareil résonne.
On dirait que ce n’est pas ton appareil…
Je te vois, tu sais…Quel foulard?…
Le foulard rouge…
Tu as tes manches retroussées…
ta main gauche?…le récepteur.
Ta main droite?
Ton stylographe.
Tu dessines sur le buvard, des profils,
des coeurs, des étoiles. Ah! Tu ris!

J’ai des yeux à la place des oreilles…
Oh! non, mon chéri, sur tout ne me regarde pas…

Peur?…Non, je n’aurais pas peur…
c’est pire…
Enfin je n’ai plus l’habitude de dormir seule…

Oui…oui, oui…je te promets…
je te promets…
tu es gentil…Je ne sais pas.
J’évite de me regarder.
Je n’ose plus allumer dans le cabinet de toilette.

Hier, je me suis trouvé
nez à nez avec une vieille dame…
Non, non!
une vieille dame avec des cheveux blancs
et une foule de petites rides…
Tu es bien bon! mais, mon chéri,
une figure admirable, c’est pire que tout,
c’est pour les artistes…
J’aimais mieux quand tu disais:
Regardez-moi cette vilaine petite gueule!…
Oui, cher Monsieur!…Je plaisantais…
Tu es bête…
Heureusement que tu es maladroit
et que tu m’aimes.
Si tu ne m’aimes pas et si tu étais adroit,
le téléphone deviendrait une arme effrayante.

Une arme qui ne laisse pas de traces,
qui ne fait pas de bruit…
Moi, méchante?…

but there is an echo in your device.
It doesn’t sound like your device…
I see you, you know…What scarf?…
The red scarf…
You have your sleeves rolled up…
In your left hand?…The receiver.
And your right hand?
Your fountain pen.
You draw on the blotter, profiles,
hearts, and stars. Ah! You’re laughing!
I have eyes in the place of ears…
Oh! No, my dear, above all don’t look at me…
Afraid?…No, I wouldn’t be afraid…
It’s worse…
I am no longer in the habit of sleeping alone…
Yes…Yes, yes…I promise you…
I promise you…
You are kind…I don’t know.
I avoid looking at myself.
I no longer dare to turn on the light in the bathroom.

Yesterday, I found myself
face-to-face with an old lady…
No, no!
An old lady with white hair
and a host of small wrinkles…
You are very good! But my darling,
an admirable face, it is worst of all,
that is for artists…
I liked it better when you said:
Look at this little ugly mouth!…
Yes, dear Sir!…I was joking…
You are silly…
Fortunately you are awkward
and you love me.
If you did not love me and you were clever,
the telephone would become a frightening weapon.
A weapon that does not leave any traces,
that does not make noise…
Me, mean?…
Allô!...allô, chéri...
ô es-tu?...
Allô, allô, Mad’moisell’,
allô, Mad’moisselle, on coupe.
Allô, c’est toi?...Mais non, Mad’moiselle.
On m’a coupée…
Je ne sais pas…c’est à dire…
si, attendez…
Auteuil zéro quat’ virgul’ sept...
Allô!...Pas libre?...Allô, Mad’moisell’,
il me redemand’…Bien…
Allô! Auteuil zéro quat’ virgul’ sept?
Allô!...C’est vous, Joseph?...
C’est Madame…
On nous avait coupés avec Monsieur…
Pas là?...Oui...oui…
il ne rentre pas ce soir…
c’est vrai, je suis stupide!
Monsieur me téléphonait
d’un restaurant, on a coupé
et je redemande son numéro…
Excusez-moi, Joseph…
Merci…merci…
Bonsoir, Joseph…
Allô! ah! chéri! c’est toi?...
On avait coupé…
Non, non. J’attendais. On sonnait,
je décrochais et il n’y avait personne…

Sans doute…Bien sûr…
Tu as sommeil?...
Tu es bon d’avoir téléphoné…
très bon…
Non, je suis là…Quoi?...
Pardonne…c’est absurde…
Rien, rien…je n’ai rien…
Je te jur’ que je n’ai rien…
C’est pareil…
Rien du tout. Tu te trompes…
Seulement, tu comprends,
on parle, on parle…
Ecoute, mon amour.
Je ne t’ai jamais menti…
Oui, je sais, je sais, je te crois,
j’en suis convaincue…
non, ce n’est pas ça…

Hello!...Hello, dear…
Where are you?…
Hello, hello Miss,
hello, Miss, hang up.
Hello, is it you?...But no, Miss.
Someone cut me off…
I do not know…That is to say…
Yes, wait…
Auteuil zero four, seven…
Hello!...Not free?...Hello, Miss,
he’s trying to call me back…Good…
Hello! Auteuil zero four point seven?
Hello! Is that you Joseph?…
It’s Madame…
Monsieur and I were cut off…
Not there?...Yes…Yes…
He’s not returning tonight…
That’s right, I am stupid!
Monsieur called me
from a restaurant, we were cut off
and I called his number…
Excuse me, Joseph…
Thanks…Thanks…
Good evening, Joseph…
Hello! Ah! Darling! Is it you?…
We were cut off…
No, no. I waited. Someone rang.
I hung up and there was no one there…
No doubt…Of course…
Are you sleepy?…
You are good to have called…
Very good…
No, I am here…What?…
Forgive me…That is absurd…
Nothing, nothing…I have nothing…
I swear I have nothing…
It’s the same…
Nothing at all. You are mistaken…
Only, you understand,
we speak, we speak…
Listen, my love.
I never lied to you…
Yes, I know, I know, I believe you,
I am convinced of it…
No, that’s not it….
Je n’ai pas dîné,
je n’ai pas ma robe rose.
J’ai un manteau sur ma chemise,
parce qu’à force d’attendre
ton téléphone,
à force de regarder l’appareil,
de m’asseoir, de me lever,
de marcher de long en large,
je devenais folle!
Alors j’ai mis un manteau
Et j’allais sortir, prendre un taxi,
me faire mener sous tes fenêtres,
pour attendre…eh bien! attendre,
attendre je ne sais quoi…
Tu as raison…
Si…je t’écoute…
Je serai sage…
je répondrai à tout, je te jure…
Ici…je n’ai rien mangé…
Je ne pouvais pas…j’ai été très malade…
Hier soir, j’ai voulu prendre un comprimé
pour dormir; je me suis dit que si j’en prenais plus,
je dormirais mieux
et que si je les prenais tous,
je dormirais sans rêve,
sans réveil,
je serais morte…
J’en ai avalé douze…
dans de l’eau chaude… Comme une masse.
Et j’ai eu un rêve.
J’ai rêvé ce qui est.
Je me suis réveillée toute contente
parce que c’était un rêve,
et quand j’ai su que c’était vrai,
que j’étais seule, que je n’avais pas
la tête sur ton cou...
J’ai senti que je ne pouvais pas vivre…
Légère, légère et froide et je ne sentais
plus mon coeur battre et la mort était longue
à venir et com’ j’avais une angoisse épouvantable,
au bout d’une heure j’ai téléphoné à Marthe.
Je n’avais pas le courag’
de mourir seule…
Chéri…Chéri…
Il était quatre heur’ du matin.
Elle est arrivée avec le docteur
qui habite son immeuble.
J’avais plus de quarant’.
Le docteur a fait une ordonnance
et Marthe est restée
jusqu’à ce soir.
Je l’ai suppliée de partir
parce que tu m’avais dit que tu téléphonerais
et j’avais peur qu’on
m’empêche de te parler…
Très, très bien…
Ne t’inquiète pas…Allô!…
Je croyais qu’on avait coupé…
Tu es bon, mon chéri…
Mon pauvre chéri à qui j’ai fait du mal…
Oui, parle, parle, dis n’importe quoi…
Je souffrais à me rouler par terre
et il suffit que tu parles pour
que je me sente bien,
que je ferme les yeux.
Tu sais, quelquefois
quand nous étions couchés
et que j’avais ma tête à sa petite place
contre ta poitrine,
j’entendais ta voix,
exactement la même que
ce soir dans l’appareil…
Allô! J’entends de la musiq’…
Je dis: J’entends de la musique…
Eh bien, tu devrais cogner au mur
et empêcher ces voisins de jouer

I dreamed what is.
I woke up happy
because it was a dream,
and when I realized that it was true,
that I was alone, that I did not have
my head on your shoulder…
I felt that I could not go on living…
Light, light and cold and I no longer
felt my heart beat and death was
long coming, I had a terrible anguish,
after an hour I called Martha.
I did not have the courage
to die alone…
Darling…Darling…
It was four o’clock in the morning.
She arrived with the doctor
who lives in her building.
I had more than forty.
The doctor wrote a prescription
and Martha stayed
until this evening.
I begged her to leave
because you said that you would call
and I was afraid she would prevent
me from talking to you…
Very, very well…
Do not worry…Hello!…
I thought we were cut off…
You are good, my dear…
My poor darling whom I’ve hurt…
Yes, speak, speak, say anything…
I have suffered enough
yet you only have to speak to me
and I feel good,
I close my eyes.
You know, sometimes
when we were in bed
and I had my head in that small place
against your chest,
I heard your voice,
exactly the same
as tonight through the phone…
Hello! I hear music…
I said: I hear music…
Well, you should bang the wall
and stop your neighbors playing
du gramophone
à des heur’ pareil’…
C’est inutile.
Du reste le docteur de Marthe reviendra demain…

Ne t’inquiète pas…Mais oui…
Ell’ te donnera des nouvelles…
Quoi?...Oh! si, mil’ fois mieux.

Si tu n’avais pas appelé,
Je serais morte…
Pardonne-moi.
Je sais que cette scène est intolérable
et que tu as bien de la patience,
mais comprends-moi, je souffre, je souffre.
Ce fil, c’est le dernier
qui me rattache encore à nous…
Avant-hier soir? J’ai dormi.
Je m’étais couchée avec le téléphone…
Non, non. Dans mon lit…Oui.
Je sais. Je suis très ridicule,
mais j’avais le téléphone dans mon lit
et malgré tout, on est relié par le téléphone…

Parce que tu me parles.
Voilà cinq ans que je vis de toi,
que tu es mon seul air respirable,
que je passe mon temps à t’attendre,
à te croir’ mort si tu es en retard,
à mourir de te croir’ mort,
à revivre quand tu entres
et quand tu es là,
enfin, à mourir de peur que tu partes.

Maintenant j’ai de l’air parce que tu me parles…

C’est entendu , mon amour; j’ai dormi.
J’ai dormi parce que c’était la première fois.
Le premier soir on dort.
Ce qu’on ne suppor te pas c’est
la seconde nuit,
hier, et la troisièm’, demain
et des jours et des jours
à fair’ quoi, mon Dieu?…

their gramophone
at these late hours…
It is useless.
Besides, Martha’s doctor is coming back tomorrow…
Do not worry…But yes…
She will give you news…
What?...Oh! Yes, a thousand times better.
If you had not called,
I would be dead…
Forgive me.
I know this scene is intolerable
and that you have great patience,
but understand me, I suffer, I suffer.
This wire, this is the last thing
that still binds me to us…
The night before last? I slept.
I went to sleep with the telephone…
No, no. In my bed…Yes.
I know.
I am very ridiculous,
but I had the telephone in my bed
and in spite of everything, we are
connected by the telephone…
Because you speak to me.
It’s five years now that I lived for you,
you are my only breathable air,
I spend my time waiting for you,
thinking you were dead if you were late,
to die believing you are dead,
to revive when you enter
and when you are there,
at last, to die for fear that you will leave.
Now I have breath because you
speak to me…
It is understood, my love; I slept.
I slept because it was the first time.
The first night you sleep.
What is really hard to bear is
the second night,
last night, and the third, tonight
and then days and days
to do what, my God?…
Et…et en admettant que je dorme,
après le sommeil il y a les rêves
et le réveil et manger et se lever
et se lever et sortir
et aller où?...
Mais, mon pauvre chéri,
je n’ai jamais eu rien d’autre à faire que toi…

Marthe a sa vie organisée…
Seule… Voilà deux jours qu’il ne quitte pas l’antichambre…
J’ai voulu l’appeler, le caresser.
Il refuse qu’on le touche.
Un peu plus, il me mordrait…
Oui, moi! Je te jure qu’il m’effraye.
Il ne mange plus.
Il ne bouge plus.
Et quand il me regarde,
il me donne la chair de poul’…
Comment veux-tu que je sache?
Il croit peut-être que je t’ai fait du mal…
Pauvre bête!...
Je n’ai aucune raison de lui en vouloir.
Je ne le comprends que trop bien.
Il t’aime. Il ne te voit plus rentrer.

Il croit que c’est ma faute…
Oui, mon chéri. C’est entendu;
mais c’est un chien.
Malgré son intelligence,
il ne peut pas le deviner…
Mais, je ne sais pas, mon chéri!
Comment veux-tu que je sache?
On n’est plus soi-même.
Songe que j’ai déchiré tout le Paquet de mes photographies
d’un seul coup, sans m’en apercevoir.
Même pour un homme ce serait un tour de force…
Allô! Allô! Madam’,
retirez-vous.
Vous êt’ avec des abonnés.
Allô! Mais non, Madam’…
Mais, Madame, nous ne cherchons

And…And while admitting that I sleep,
after sleep there are dreams
and waking up and eating and getting up
and getting up and going out
and to go where?...
But, my poor darling,
I’ve never had anything else in my life besides you…
Martha has an organized life…
Alone…For two days he has not left the hallway…
I tried to call him, to pet him.
He refuses to let me touch him.
Even more, he would bite me…
Yes, me! I swear, he scares me.
He won’t eat anything.
He does not move.
And when he looks at me,
it gives me goosebumps…
How do you expect me to know?
Maybe he thinks I hurt you…
Poor animal!...
I have no reason to blame him.
I understand too well.
He loves you. He doesn’t see you come back anymore.
He thinks it is my fault…
Yes, my darling. It is understood;
but he is a dog.
Despite his intelligence,
he cannot guess
But I do not know my darling!
How do you expect me to know?
I am not myself.
Remember, I tore up the whole package of my photographs
in one go, without realizing.
Even for a man it would have been a feat…
Hello! Hello, Madame,
will you hang up.
You are with subscribers.
Hello! But no, Madame…
But Madame, we are not trying
pas à être intéressants.  
Si vous nous trouvez ridicules,  
pourquoi perdez-vous votre temps  
au lieu de raccrocher?...  
Oh!...Ne te fâche pas...Enfin!...  
Non, non. Elle a raccroché  
après avoir dit cette chose ignoble...  
Tu as l’air frappé...  
Si, tu es frappé...  
je connais ta voix...Mais, mon chéri,  
cette femme doit être très mal  
et elle ne te connaîta pas.  
Ell’ croit que tu es comme les autres hommes...  

Mais non, mon chéri,  
ce n’est pas du tout pareil...  
Pour les gens, on s’aime ou on se déteste.  
Les ruptures sont des ruptures.  
Ils regardent vite.  
Tu ne leur feras jamais comprendre...  

Tu ne leur feras jamais  
comprendre certaines choses...  
Le mieux est de faire comme moi  
et de s’en moquer...  
complètement...Oh!...Rien.  
Je crois que nous parlons comme d’habitude  
et puis tout a coup la vérité me revient...  

Dans le temps, on se voyait.  
On pouvait perdre la tête,  
oublier ses promesses,  
risque l’impossible,  
convaincre ceux  
qu’on adorait en les embrassant,  
en s’accrochant à eux.  
Un regard pouvait changer tout.  
Mais avec cet appareil,  
ce qui est fini est fini...  
Sois tranquille.  
On ne se suicide pas deux fois...  
Je ne saurais pas acheter un révolver...  
Tu ne me vois pas achetant un révolver...  
Où trouverais-je la force de combiner un mensonge, Where would I find the strength to  
think up a lie,  
mon pauvre adoré?...
Aucune…J’aurais dû avoir du courage.
Il y a des circonstances où le mensonge est utile.

Toi, si tu me mentais pour rendre
la séparation moins pénible…
Je ne dis pas que tu mentes.
Je dis: si tu mentais et que je le sache.
Si, par exemple, tu n’étais pas chez toi,
et que tu me dises…
Non, non, mon chéri! Écoute…
Je te crois…
Si, tu prends une voix méchante.
Je disais simplement que si tu me
troupaïs par bonté d’âme
et que je m’en aperçoive,
je n’en aurais que plus de tendresse pour toi…
Allô!…allô!
Mon Dieu, fait’ qu’il redemande.
Mon Dieu, fait’ qu’il redemande.
Mon Dieu, fait’ qu’il redemande.
Mon Dieu, fait’ qu’il redemande.
Mon Dieu, fait’…
On avait coupé.
J’étais en train de te dire que si tu me
mentais par bonté et que je m’en aperçoive,

Je n’en aurais que plus de tendresse pour toi…
Bien sûr…Tu es fou!
Mon amour…Mon cher amour…
Je sais bien qu’il le faut,
mais c’est atroce…
Jamais je n’aurai ce courage…
Oui. On a l’illusion d’être l’un contre l’autre

et brusquement on met des caves, des égouts,
toute une ville entre soi…
J’ai le fil autour de mon cou…
J’ai ta voix autour de mon cou.
Ta voix autour de mon cou…
Il faudrait que le bureau nous coupe par hasard…

Oh! mon chéri!
Comment peux-tu imaginer
que je pense une chose si laide?

No…I should have had the courage.
There are circumstances where lying is useful.
You, if you lied to me to make
the separation less painful…
I am not saying you lie.
I said: if I knew you lied,
If, for example, you were not at home,
and you said to me…
No, no, my dear! Listen…
I believe you…
Yes, you take a nasty voice.
I was simply saying that if you told
a lie out of kindness
and I knew that you did,
I would only love you more for it…
Hello!…Hello!…
Dear God, make him call back.
Dear God, make him call back.
Dear God, make him call back.
Dear God, make him call back.
Dear God, make him…
We were cut off.
I was saying to you that if you lied to
me out of kindness and that I
noticed,
I would only love you more for it…
Of course…You are crazy!
My love…My dearest love…
I know it is necessary,
but it is awful…
I shall never have the courage…
Yes. I have the illusion we are beside
each other
and abruptly there are cellars and
sewers,
a whole city between us…
I have the cord around my neck…
I have your voice around my neck…
Your voice around my neck…
It would require them to cut us off by
mistake…
Oh! My darling!
How can you imagine
that I think an ugly thing like that?
Je sais bien que cette opération est encore plus cruelle à faire de ton côté que du mien…
non…non…A Marseill’?
Ecoute, chéri,
puisque vous serez à Marseill’ après-demain soir,
je voudrais…enfin j’aimerais…
j’aimerais que tu ne descendes pas à l’hôtel
où nous descendons d’habitude.  
Tu n’es pas fâché?...
Parce que les choses que je n’imagine pas n’existent pas,
ou bien elles existent dans une espèce de lieu très vague et qui fait moins de mal…

tu comprends?...
Merci…merci.
Tu es bon. Je t’aime…
Alors, voilà…
J’allais dire machinalement:
à tout de suite…
J’en doute… Oh!...
C’est mieux. Beaucoup mieux…
Mon chéri…mon beau chéri…

Jes suis forte.
Dépêche-toi. Vas-y. Coupe!
Coupe vite! Je t’aime,
je t’aime, je t’aime,
je t’aime, t’aime.

I know this situation is even more difficult for you than for me…
No…No… In Marseilles?
Listen, darling,
since you will be in Marseilles the day after tomorrow,
May I ask…I would like…
I wish you would not stay at the hotel
where we usually stayed.
You are not angry?...
Because the things that I cannot imagine do not exist, or well they exist in a type of very vague place and that does less harm…
Do you understand?...
Thanks…Thank you.
You are kind. I love you…
So here…
I was about to say out of habit:
See you soon…
I doubt it…Oh!…
Much better. A lot better…
My darling…My handsome darling…
I am strong.
Hurry up. Go ahead. Hang up!
Hang up quickly! I love you,
I love you, I love you,
I love you, love you.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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Doctorate of Musical Arts in Vocal Performance, August 2016
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