

Mélodies passagères

Samuel BARBER (1910-1981)

Puisque tout passe / Since all things flit by

Puisque tout passe, faisons
la mélodie passagère;
celle qui nous désaltère
aura de nous raison.

*Since all things flit by,
let's create a fleeting melody;
the one that slakes our thirst
shall be the one to win us.*

Chantons ce qui nous quitte
avec amour et art;
soyons plus vite
que le rapide départ.

*Let us sing what leaves us
with love and art;
let us be swifter
than a swift departure.*

Un cygne / A swan

Un cygne avance sur l'eau
tout entouré de lui-même,
comme un glissant tableau;
ainsi à certains instants
un être que l'on aime
est tout un espace mouvant.

*A swan moves over the water
ringed all around by itself,
like a painting that glides;
thus, at certain moments,
a being that one loves
is a whole moving space.*

Il se rapproche, doublé,
comme ce cygne qui nage,
sur notre âme troublé ...
qui à cet être ajoute
la tremblante image
de bonheur et de doute.

*It draws near, bent double,
like the drifting swan,
over our troubled soul ...
adding to that being
the trembling image
of happiness and doubt.*

Tombeau dans un parc / Tomb in a park

Dors au fond de l'allée,
tendre enfant, sous la dalle,
on fera le chant de l'été
autour de ton intervalle.

*Sleep at the end of the row,
dear child, beneath the stone;
around your space we shall sing
the song of summer.*

Si une blanche colombe
passait au vol là-haut,
je n'offrirais à ton tombeau
que son ombre qui tombe.

*Should a white dove
pass overhead,
as sole offering for your tomb,
I'll present its falling shadow.*

Le clocher chante / The bell tower sings

Mieux qu'une tour profane,
je me chauffe pour mûrir mon carillon.
Qu'il soit doux, qu'il soit bon
aux Valaisannes.

Chaque dimanche, ton par ton,
je leur jette ma manne;
qu'il soit bon, mon carillon,
aux Valaisannes.

Qu'il soit doux, qu'il soit bon;
samedi soir dans les channes
tombe en gouttes mon carillon
aux Valaisans des Valaisannes.

Départ / Departure

Mon amie, il faut que je parte.
Voulez-vous voir
l'endroit sur la carte?
C'est un point noir.

En moi, si la chose
bien me réussit,
ce sera un point rose
dans un vert pays.

*Better warmed than a secular tower
am I to ripen my carillon.
May it be sweet, may it be good
for the girls of the Valais.*

*Every Sunday, tone by tone,
I cast to them my manna;
may it be good, my carillon,
for the girls of the Valais.*

*May it be sweet, may it be good;
into their beers on Saturday nights
my carillon falls, drop by drop,
for the boys of the girls of the Valais.*

*My love, I must leave.
Would you care to see
the place on the map?
It's marked in black.*

*In me, if things
work out, it will be
a pink mark
in a green land.*

Le Colibri / The Hummingbird

Ernest CHAUSSON (1855-1899)

Le vert colibri, le roi des collines,
Voyant la rosée et le soleil clair
Luire dans son nid tissé d'herbe fines,
Comme un frais rayon s'échappe dans
l'air.

Il se hâte et vole au source voisines,
Où les bambous font le bruit de la mer;
Où l'açoka rouge, aux odeurs divines,
S'ouvre, et porte au cœur un humide
éclair.

Vers la fleur dorée il descend, se pose,
Et boit tant d'amour dans la coupe
rose,
Qu'il meurt, ne sachant s'il l'a pu tarir.

Sur ta lèvre pure, ô ma bien-aimée,
Telle aussi mon âme eut voulu mourir
Du premier baiser qui l'a parfumée!

*The green humming-bird, the king of
the hills,
On seeing the dew and gleaming sun
Shine in his nest of fine woven grass,
Darts into the air like a shaft of light.*

*He hurries and flies to the nearby
springs
Where the bamboos sound like the
sea,
Where the red hibiscus with its
heavenly scent
Unveils the glint of dew at its heart.*

*He descends, and settles on the
golden flower,
Drinks so much love from the rosy cup
That he dies, not knowing if he'd drunk
it dry.*

*On your pure lips, O my beloved,
My own soul too would sooner have
died
From that first kiss which scented it!*

Le rossignol des lilas / The nightingale among the lilac

Reynaldo HAHN (1874-1947)

Ô premier rossignol qui viens
Dans les lilas, sous ma fenêtre,
Ta voix m'est douce à reconnaître!
Nul accent n'est semblable au tien!

*O first nightingale to appear
Among the lilac beneath my window,
How sweet to recognise your voice!
There is no song like yours!*

Fidèle aux amoureux liens,
Trille encor, divin petit être!
Ô premier rossignol qui viens
Dans les lilas, sous ma fenêtre!

*Faithful to the bonds of love,
Trill away, divine little being!
O first nightingale to appear
Among the lilac beneath my window!*

Nocturne ou matinal, combien
Ton hymne à l'amour me pénètre!
Tant d'ardeur fait en moi renaître
L'écho de mes avrils anciens,
Ô premier rossignol qui viens!

*Night or morning—O how
Your love-song strikes to my heart!
Such ardour re-awakens in me
Echoes of April days long past,
O first nightingale to appear!*

Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis / Three beautiful birds from Paradise

Maurice RAVEL (1875-1937)

Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis,
(Mon ami z-il est à la guerre),
Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis
Ont passé par ici.

Le premier était plus bleu que le ciel,
(Mon ami z-il est à la guerre),
Le second était couleur de neige,
Le troisième rouge vermeil.

"Beaux oiselets du Paradis,
(Mon ami z-il est à la guerre),
Beaux oiselets du Paradis,
Qu'apportez par ici?"

"J'apporte un regard couleur d'azur,
(Ton ami z-il est à la guerre)"
"Et moi, sur beau front couleur de
neige,
Un baiser dois mettre, encore plus
pur."

"Oiseau vermeil du Paradis,
(Mon ami z-il est à la guerre),
Oiseau vermeil du Paradis,
Que portez-vous ainsi?"

"Un joli cœur tout cramoisi,
(Ton ami z-il est à la guerre)."
"Ha! je sens mon cœur qui froidit . . .
Emportez-le aussi."

*Three beautiful birds from Paradise,
(My friend is at the wars),
Three beautiful birds from Paradise
Have passed this way.*

*The first was bluer than the sky,
(My friend is at the wars),
The second was the colour of snow,
The third vermilion red.*

*'Beautiful little birds from Paradise,
(My friend is at the wars),
Beautiful little birds from Paradise,
What are you bringing here?'*

*'I bring a pair of blue eyes,
(Your friend is at the wars),
I, upon your fair snowy brow,
Must place a still purer kiss.'*

*'Vermilion bird from Paradise,
(My friend is at the wars),
Vermilion bird from Paradise,
Tell me what you are bringing?'*

*'A pretty heart, all crimson,
(Your friend is at the wars).'*
*'Ah, I feel my heart growing cold . . .
Bear it away as well.'*

La colombe poignardée / The stabbed dove

Louis BEYDTS (1895-1953)

Si Dieu n'avait pas fait le soleil et les
mondes,
Il n'y aurait pas eu les douleurs, ni ma
blonde.
Pas de coups, de sang rouge et ni ma
bien-aimée . . .
Il n'y aurait sur terre colombe
poignardée.

Si Dieu n'avait pas fait la lune et les
orages,
Il n'y aurait pas eu de pleurs aux doux
visages,
Ni de couteau farouche et ni ma bien-
aimée . . .
Il n'y aurait sur terre colombe
poignardée. . .

Si Dieu n'avait pas fait les jours après le
jour,
Il n'y aurait pas eu d'amour, ni mon
amour !
Il n'y aurait sur terre colombe
poignardée.
Et ni, Seigneur ! ma bien-aimée.

If God hadn't made the sun and the
worlds,
There would have been no pain, no
blonde.
No blows, no red blood, nor my
beloved...
There would be no stabbed dove on
earth.

If God had not made the moon and the
storms,
There would have been no tears in sweet
faces,
Nor a fierce knife nor my beloved...
There would not have been a stabbed
dove on earth...

If God had not made the days after the
day,
There would have been no love, nor my
love!
There would be no stabbed dove on
earth.
Nor, Lord, my beloved.

Reine des mouettes / Queen of seagulls

Francis POULENC (1899-1963)

Reine des mouettes, mon orpheline
Je t'ai vue rose, je m'en souviens
Sous les brumes mousselines
De ton deuil ancien.

Rose d'aimer le baiser qui chagrine
Tu te laissais accorder à mes mains
Sous les brumes mousselines
Voiles de nos liens.

Rougis, rougis mon baiser te devine
Mouette prise aux nœuds des grands
chemins.

Reine des mouettes, mon orpheline
Tu étais rose,
accordée à mes mains
Rose sous les mousselines
Et je m'en souviens.

*Queen of seagulls, my little orphan,
I recall you blushing pink,
Beneath the muslin mists
Of your ancient sorrow.*

*Blushing pink at the kiss which
provokes you,
You surrendered to my hands
Beneath the muslin mists,
Veils of bond between us.*

*Blush, blush, my kiss finds you out,
Seagull caught where great highways
meet.*

*Queen of seagulls, my little orphan,
You blushed pink, surrendered to my
hands,
Pink beneath the muslin
And I recall the moment*

Oiseaux tristes, for piano

Maurice RAVEL

La Dame de Monte Carlo
Francis POULENC (1899-1963)

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!
J'ai fini ma journée.
Je veux dormir au fond de l'eau
de la Méditerranée.
Monte-Carlo ! Monte-Carlo !

Après avoir vendu à votre âme
et mis en gage des bijoux
que jamais plus on ne réclame,
la roulette est un beau joujou.
C'est joli de dire: "je joue".
Cela vous met le feu aux joues
et cela vous allume l'œil.
Sous les jolis voiles de deuil
on porte un joli nom de veuve.
Un titre donne de l'orgueil!
Et folie, et prête, et toute neuve,
on prend sa carte au casino.
Voyez mes plumes et mes voiles,
contemplez les strass de l'étoile
qui mène à Monte-Carlo.

The lady of Monte-Carlo
Francis POULENC (1899-1963)

*When you're dead amongst the dead,
when you're withering in the land of the
living,
when everything kicks you out
and the wind slams the door shut,
when you're no longer young and loved ...
when behind a closed door
there's nothing left but to drown
or buy a pistol—
Yes, gentlemen, that's what's left
for cowards and bastards.
But if the thought of suicide
makes you tremble like a leaf,
if you baulk at slashing your veins,
you can always take the gamble
of a trip to Monte Carlo.*

*Monte Carlo! Monte Carlo!
I've done with life.
I want to sleep on the bed
of the Med.
Monte Carlo! Monte Carlo!*

*Having sold your soul,
and pawned your jewellery
once and for all,
roulette is a pretty plaything.
It's fun to say: 'I gamble'.
It makes your cheeks flush
and lights up your eyes.
Beneath your fine widow's veil,
you've a fine widow's name.
Such a title gives you pride!
Crazy, prepared, and wholly restored,
you take out your card at the casino.
Just look at my feathers and my veils,
behold the bejewelled star,
leading to Monte Carlo.*

La chance est femme. Elle est jalouse
de ces veuvages solennels.
Sans doute elle m'a cru l'épouse
d'un véritable colonel.
J'ai gagné, gagné sur le douze.
Et puis les robes se découtent,
la fourrure perd des cheveux.
On a beau répéter: "Je veux",
dès que la chance vous déteste,
dès que votre cœur est nerveux,
vous ne pouvez plus faire un geste,
pousser un sou sur le tableau
sans que la chance qui s'écarte
change les chiffres et les cartes
des tables de Monte-Carlo.

Les voyous, le buses, les gales !
Ils m'ont mise dehors ... dehors ...
et ils m'accusent d'être sale,
de porter malheur dans leurs salles,
dans leurs sales salles en stuc.
Moi qui aurais donné mon truc
à l'œil, au prince, à la princesse,
au Duc de Westminster, au Duc,
parfaitement. Faut que ça cesse,
qu'ils me criaient, votre boulot !
Votre boulot ? ...

Ma découverte.
J'en priverai les tables vertes.
C'est bien fait pour Monte-Carlo, Monte-Carlo.
Et maintenant, moi qui vous parle,
je n'avouerai pas les kilos que j'ai perdus, que
j'ai perdus
à Monte-Carle, Monte-Carle, ou Monte-Carlo.
Je suis une ombre de moi-même ...
les martingales, les systèmes
et les croupiers qui ont le droit
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.

*Luck is a woman. She's jealous
of these solemn widows.
She no doubt took me for the wife
of a real colonel.
I won, won on the twelve.
Dresses then become unstitched,
fur loses its hair.
No matter how often you say: 'I want',
once fortune hates you,
once you're highly strung,
you can no longer make a move,
push a coin on the board,
without luck beating a retreat
and changing numbers and cards
on the tables at Monte Carlo.*

*The scoundrels! The fools! The scabs!
They threw me out ... threw me out ...
They accuse me of being dirty,
of bringing misfortune to their saloons,
to their dirty stucco saloons—
I, who would have told them my trick
for free, to the Prince, the Princess,
the Duke of Westminster,
this must stop,
this has to stop, they screamed at me,
this business of yours! This business? ...*

*My discovery—
I'll deprive the green tables of it.
Serves Monte Carlo right. Monte Carlo.
And now, I who am talking to you,
I shan't admit how many kilos I've lost
at Monte Carle, Monte Carle, or Monte
Carlo.
I am a shadow of myself ...
The martingales, the systems
and the croupiers who have the right
to rap your knuckles,
when you're about to pinch the stake.
And the money you owe at your digs,
and always the same wet night-shirt
drenched with anguish.*

Ils peuvent courir. Pas si bête.
Cette nuit je pique une tête
dans la mer de Monte-Carlo, Monte-Carlo.

*Let them pursue me. I'm not that stupid.
Tonight I'll hurl myself head first
into the sea at Monte Carlo, Monte Carlo.*

Intermission

Gian-Carlo MENOTTI (1911-2007)

"Steal me, sweet thief" from The Old Maid and the Thief

What a curse for a woman is a timid man!
A week has gone by
He's had plenty of chances
But he made no advances
Miss Todd schemes and labors to get him some money
She robs friends and neighbours, the club and the church
He takes all the money
With a smile that entrances
But still makes no advances
The old woman sighs and makes languid eyes
All the doors are wide open
All the drawers are unlocked!
He neither seems pleased or shocked
He eats and drinks and sleeps
He talks of baseball and boxing
But that is all!
What a curse for a woman is a timid man!

Steal me, oh steal me, sweet thief
For time's flight is stealing my youth
And the cares of life steal fleeting time
Steal me, thief, for life is brief and full of theft and strife
And then, with furtive step
Death comes and steals time and life
O sweet thief, I pray make me glow
Before dark death steals her prey

Steal my lips, before they crumble to dust
Steal my heart, before death must
Steal my cheeks, before they're sunk and decayed
Steal my breath, before it will fade

Steal my lips, steal my heart, steal my cheeks
Steal, oh steal my breath
And make me die before death will steal her prey
Oh steal me!
For time's flight is stealing my youth.

"Monica's Waltz " from *The Medium*
Gian-Carlo MENOTTI (1911-2007)

Bravo! And after the theatre, supper and dance
Music! Oom pah pah, oom pah pah...

Up in the sky, someone is playing a trombone and a guitar
Red is your tie, and in your velveteen coat, you hide a star
Monica, Monica, dance the waltz
Monica, Monica, dance the waltz
Follow me, moon and sun
Keep time with me, one two three one

If you're not shy, pin up my hair with your star and buckle my shoe
And when you fly, please hold on tight to my waist
I'm flying with you, oh...
Monica, Monica, dance the waltz
Monica, Monica, dance the waltz
Follow me, moon and sun
Follow me, follow follow me
Follow me, follow follow me

What is the matter, Toby?
What is it you want to tell me?
Kneel down before me
And now tell me

Monica, Monica, can't you see
That my heart is bleeding, bleeding for you?
I loved you Monica all my life
With all my breath, with all my blood
You haunt the mirror of my sleep, you are my night
You are my light and the jailer of my day

How dare you, scoundrel, talk to me like that!
Don't you know who I am?

I'm the queen of croundel!
I shall have you put in chains!

You are my princess, you are my queen
And I'm only Toby, one of your slaves
And still I love you and always loved you
With all my breath, with all my blood!
I love your laughter, I love your hair
I love your deep and nocturnal eyes
I love your soft hands, so white and winged
I love the slender branch of your throat
Toby! Don't speak to me like that...
You make my head swim

Monica, Monica, fold me in your satin gown
Monica, Monica, give me your mouth
Monica, Monica, fall in my arms!

Why, Toby. You're not crying, are you?
Toby, I want you to know that you have
The most beautiful voice in the world

Knoxville : Summer of 1915 (James Agee's text)
Samuel BARBER (1910-1981)

It has become the time of evening
when people sit on their porches,
rocking gently and talking gently
and watching the street
and the standing up
into their sphere of possession of the trees,
of birds' hung havens, hangers.
People go by; things go by.
A horse, drawing a buggy, breaking his hollow iron music on the asphalt;
a loud auto; a quiet auto;
people in pairs, not in a hurry,
scuffling, switching their weight of aestival body, talking casually,
the taste hovering over them of vanilla, strawberry, pasteboard and starched milk,
the image upon them of lovers and horsemen, squared with clowns in hueless amber.
A streetcar raising its iron moan:
stopping, belling and starting; stertorous; rousing and raising again its iron increasing
moan
and swimming its gold windows and straw seats on past and past and past,

the bleak spark crackling and cursing above it like a small malignant spirit set to dog
its tracks;
the iron whine rises on rising speed;
still risen, faints; halts; the faint stinging bell;
rises again, still fainter, fainter, lifting, lifts, faints forgone: forgotten.
Now is the night one blue dew.
Now is the night one blue dew,
my father has drained,
now he has coiled the hose.
Low on the length of lawns,
a frailing of fire who breathes ...
Parents on porches: rock and rock.
From damp strings morning glories hang their ancient faces.
The dry and exalted noise of the locusts from all the air at once enchants my eardrums.
On the rough wet grass of the backyard my father and mother have spread quilts.
We all lie there, my mother, my father, my uncle, my aunt, and I too am lying there ...
They are not talking much, and the talk is quiet,
of nothing in particular, of nothing at all in particular, of nothing at all.
The stars are wide and alive, they seem each like a smile of great sweetness, and they
seem very near.

All my people are larger bodies than mine, ...
with voices gentle and meaningless like the voice of sleeping birds.
One is an artist, he is living at home.
One is a musician, she is living at home.
One is my mother who is good to me.
One is my father who is good to me.
By some chance, here they are, all on this earth;
and who shall ever tell the sorrow of being on this earth,
lying, on quilts, on the grass, in a summer evening, among the sounds of the night.
May God bless my people, my uncle, my aunt, my mother, my good father,
oh, remember them kindly in their time of trouble;
and in the hour of their taking away.

After a little I am taken in and put to bed.
Sleep, soft smiling, draws me unto her:
and those receive me, who quietly treat me,
as one familiar and well-beloved in that home:
but will not, no, will not, not now, not ever;
but will not ever tell me who I am.

"I want magic" from *A Streetcar Named Desire*,
André PREVIN (1929-2019)

Real! Who wants real?
I know I don't want it. I want magic!
Magic! Yes! That's what I want!
That's what I try to give to people.

I do misrepresent things.
I don't tell the truth.
But I tell what ought to be the truth.
What it ought to be.

Yes, magic. Magic's what I try to give to people.
If that's a sin,
If that is such a sin, then let me be... damned for it!
Don't turn on that light!

It'll all look so ugly in that light.
Why not see by candlelight... or moonlight, or by starlight?
They are bright enough to see by.
Sometimes too bright.