A Pedagogical Guide and Musical Analysis for Training Young Female Voices Using Ten Songs of Pauline Viardot Garcia

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A PEDAGOGICAL GUIDE AND MUSICAL ANALYSIS FOR TRAINING YOUNG FEMALE VOICES USING TEN SONGS OF PAULINE VIARDOT GARCIA

By

Stephannie Marie Moore

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty of the University of Miami in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

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A Pedagogical Guide and Musical Analysis for Training Young Female Voices Using Ten Songs of Pauline Viardot Garcia

Abstract of a doctoral essay at the University of Miami.

Doctoral essay supervised by Professor Esther Jane Hardenbergh. No. of pages in text. (100)

French classical vocal music is often underrepresented in the training of beginning singers. This essay is an instructional guide, using ten French songs composed by Pauline Viardot that are suitable for introducing French repertoire to young female voices. Pauline Viardot was an accomplished singer, teacher and composer, writing approximately 450 pieces of music including 100 art songs. Much of her work is unknown. For each song included in this project, historical context is provided as well as a complete translation of the text. Pedagogical and performance-related analyses are given, focusing upon topics related to technical development, musicianship and interpretative ideas for performance. This discussion provides thorough guidance for voice teachers who wish to explore this repertoire.
Dedicated to Calogero Piro, who would have been fiercely proud, and to Sangchen Tsomo, who has always encouraged me to be exactly who I am.
After many years away from academia, I made the bold decision to return to graduate school in 2014. Although I’d been running a thriving music studio for nearly two decades, I had all but shelved my own singing and musical studies and something within me always felt incomplete. It wasn’t easy being a “returning” student while managing a full-time teaching schedule, maintaining a household, and mothering a four-year old son. When I shared my school plans with friends and family, I was greeted with many raised eyebrows, and even, “Why in the world would you do that? It’s so much work!” from a professor on a prominent voice faculty. My response was always, “I’ll just keep going until someone tells me to stop!”

In 2014 while preparing for my Master’s degree audition, I came across a copy of “Hai luli!,” a haunting and stunning song by Pauline Viardot. I was shocked to have never heard of her and felt like I had found entry to a secret world of music that no one around me seemed to know anything about. I didn’t choose to sing the song at the time, but I made a mental note to return to the music of Viardot when there was time to explore it more deeply.

I went on to complete a Master of Music at the University of Michigan and afterward, I was admitted to the doctoral program here at the University of Miami. I packed up my family and left 45 wonderful students behind in snowy Michigan.

I never remembered to look further into Viardot’s work. It wasn’t until Spring term of 2018 that I encountered her again, in a course focused on teaching French art song literature. When I revisited “Hai luli!,” I was flooded with the memory of finding her work several years earlier and once I learned more about Viardot’s life and genius
talent, I knew that I had found my subject of research. This project was born in that moment, but this is only the beginning of what I intend to do to promote Viardot’s masterful compositions.

In many ways, this project has provided the perfect closure to my graduate years, having come full circle from my earliest days of contemplating a return to school. Viardot was there at the beginning, and Viardot is with me at the end. Having spent the better part of a year researching her personal and professional life, she now feels more like a friend.

There have been many, many people who have provided support to me throughout this process. My generous and loving husband, Christopher, is the first one on the list. He followed me on a whim to South Florida and has never once complained about having had to take over many of our family responsibilities. Instead, he has been a constant source of encouragement, urging me to pursue whatever I wish, and has made endless space for my work, practice time and any time away to decompress whenever needed. I know that if our situation were reversed, I would never have been able to respond with such grace. He is a uniquely kind person. Thank you, my love.

My sweet boy, Bodhi Elijah, was only four when I started my graduate studies. For most of his sentient life he has known me as a full-time student. I hope that seeing his mom invest in education as deeply as I have will impact his own love of learning. I’m sure that at this point he simply is looking forward to having more of my attentions. Thank you, sweet boy, for your patience.

Part of our decision to move to Miami was to be near my parents, Suzanne and Peter Piro. When I started this degree, I had no idea how much we would come to rely
on their help. There were many weekends I could not have successfully completed my work without their generous hands and hearts, always ready to swoop in to help with childcare or anything else we needed. I know it has brought them great pride to see me complete this goal, and I owe so much of my love and talent for music to their skillful and encouraging parenting throughout my life. Thank you, mom and dad.

I have felt deeply supported by the voice faculty at the Frost School of Music. From my earliest contacts with the department, I have been welcomed, respected and appreciated. My doctoral committee Chair, Dr. Esther Jane Hardenbergh, has devoted countless hours of time to supporting my research and I cannot imagine a better mentor in this process. Thank you, Dr. Hardenbergh.

I am grateful to my voice teacher, Professor Robynne Redmon, whose skillful instruction has given me tremendous vocal freedom over these last three years. It was also Professor Redmon who assigned me the task of studying Viardot. Thank you, Professor Redmon for sharing your wisdom and for setting me on this journey.

None of this would have been possible without having lived off the beaten path for many years of my life, deeply absorbed in the study of Buddhadharma and meditation under the compassionate care of my Lama, Traktung Yeshe Dorje Rinpoche. Rinpoche, your blessings always bear fruit, and the completion of this degree is just one of many ways that your guidance has increased my own capacity for compassion and wisdom. May I always live up to the first dharma name you gave me, Sangeetanada, song of bliss.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LISTING OF FIGURES........................................................................................................... ix

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................... 1
  BACKGROUND ..................................................................................................................... 1
  PROBLEM STATEMENT .................................................................................................... 8
  JUSTIFICATION ................................................................................................................ 9
  PURPOSE ........................................................................................................................... 10
  METHODOLOGY ............................................................................................................... 10
  DELIMITATIONS ............................................................................................................... 14
  INTRODUCTION TO PAULINE VIARDOT ..................................................................... 14

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE ............................................................. 17

CHAPTER 3. PEDAGOGICAL ANALYSIS ............................................................................. 21
  “L’OMBRE ET LE JOUR” .................................................................................................. 21
  Context ............................................................................................................................. 21
  Musical Analysis ............................................................................................................... 22
  Pedagogical and Performance Considerations ............................................................... 23
  Pedagogical Application ................................................................................................. 25

  “LES ATTRAIT” ............................................................................................................... 26
  Context ............................................................................................................................. 26
  Musical Analysis ............................................................................................................... 27
  Pedagogical and Performance Considerations ............................................................... 28
  Pedagogical Application ................................................................................................. 30

  “AIMEZ-MOI” ............................................................................................................... 31
  Context ............................................................................................................................. 31
  Musical Analysis ............................................................................................................... 32
  Pedagogical and Performance Considerations ............................................................... 35
  Pedagogical Application ................................................................................................. 37

  “SOLITUDE” .................................................................................................................... 38
  Context ............................................................................................................................. 38
  Musical Analysis ............................................................................................................... 39
  Pedagogical and Performance Considerations ............................................................... 40
  Pedagogical Application ................................................................................................. 43

  “J’EN MOURRAI!” ........................................................................................................... 44
  Context ............................................................................................................................. 44
  Musical Analysis ............................................................................................................... 45
  Pedagogical and Performance Considerations ............................................................... 48
  Pedagogical Application ................................................................................................. 49
“L’ABSENCE” .................................................................................................................. 49
Context ................................................................................................................................. 49
Musical Analysis .................................................................................................................. 51
Pedagogical and Performance Considerations ................................................................. 53
Pedagogical Application ..................................................................................................... 56

“SÉRÉNADE” ..................................................................................................................... 57
Context ................................................................................................................................. 57
Musical Analysis .................................................................................................................. 58
Pedagogical and Performance Considerations ................................................................. 60
Pedagogical Application ..................................................................................................... 62

“VILLANELLE” .................................................................................................................... 64
Context ................................................................................................................................. 64
Musical Analysis .................................................................................................................. 65
Pedagogical and Performance Considerations ................................................................. 66
Pedagogical Application ..................................................................................................... 69

“LA PETITE CHEVRIÈRE” ................................................................................................. 70
Context ................................................................................................................................. 70
Musical Analysis .................................................................................................................. 71
Pedagogical and Performance Considerations ................................................................. 74
Pedagogical Application ..................................................................................................... 76

“LA MAIN” ......................................................................................................................... 77
Context ................................................................................................................................. 77
Musical Analysis .................................................................................................................. 78
Pedagogical and Performance Considerations ................................................................. 80
Pedagogical Application ..................................................................................................... 84

CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSIONS ............................................................................................ 85
Additional Resources .......................................................................................................... 85
Future Initiatives .................................................................................................................. 86

BIBLIOGRAPHY .................................................................................................................. 87

APPENDIX A. SONG LISTING WITH KEY FEATURES ....................................................... 91

APPENDIX B. RESOURCES FOR FRENCH LYRIC DICTION AND FRENCH ART SONG .... 93

APPENDIX C. FRENCH PRONUNCIATION CHARTS ........................................................... 94
FIGURES

3.1. Challenging passage requiring stamina in the passaggio........................................22
3.2. Unexpected chord progressions to highlight pleurs and sourire. ......................24
3.3. Alternation of articulation ......................................................................................28
3.4. Intensified harmonic progression to emphasize repeated text ......................30
3.5. Accents on unstressed beats ..................................................................................33
3.6. Only instance of slur in voice, used with forte and tenuto .................................34
3.7. Closing chords that emerge from C major ..........................................................36
3.8. Lilting piano ...........................................................................................................41
3.9. Ascending and descending chromatic phrases ....................................................42
3.10. Example of phrase ending in schwa ....................................................................43
3.11. Accented, loud descending phrase that crosses registers ....................................46
3.12. Speech-like text setting with natural stresses .......................................................47
3.13. Driving left hand ostinato ....................................................................................47
3.14. Sustained octaves ................................................................................................52
3.15. Dramatic buildup to spilling sixteenth note ornaments .......................................54
3.16. Opening chord progression .................................................................................55
3.17. Alternation of secrecy (p) and excitement (sf) in anticipation ...........................59
3.18. Languish is emphasized through accented word choices ....................................59
3.19. The only syncopated pickup note in the song ......................................................60
3.20. Chromatic harmonies supported by F pedal tone ...............................................62
3.21. The narrator’s final emotional outburst ...............................................................67
3.22. Duple rhythm on first, second and fourth phrase pairs .....................................67
3.23. Triplet rhythm in the accompaniment on third phrase. .................................68
3.24. Frequent use of grace notes........................................................................73
3.25. Sounds of the pastoral landscape .................................................................75
3.26. Yodel that completes each of the two verses .............................................76
3.27. Repeating eighth note rhythm.......................................................................79
3.28. Unexpected chords on *nuit* and *songe* ..................................................81
3.29. Most dramatic phrase of the song ................................................................82
3.30. Second *Est belle*, diminishing from the intensity of the first.........................83
3.31. Suspense of the final *belle* .........................................................................83
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Pauline Viardot was an internationally-renowned concert pianist, operatic
celebrity and vocal pedagogue who composed approximately 450 works including one
hundred songs. Viardot wrote many of her compositions to serve purely pedagogical
purposes and address specific aspects of her pupils’ training.\(^1\) Not only did she compose
songs as training tools, but she published a pedagogical manual, *Une heure d’étude,
exercises pour voix de femmes* (An Hour of Study, Exercises for Female Voices). *Une
heure d’étude* outlines her own methodology for training female voices, much of which
came from her own study of voice under the tutelage of her father, Manuel Garcia I, and
her brother, Manuel Garcia II, both who were renowned tenors and voice pedagogues. In
this paper, ten of Viardot’s songs are examined with pedagogical considerations for the
developing female voice including categories of range, tessitura, text and diction,
dynamics, melodic and rhythmic notations, and phrase length. It is assumed that the
singers are not native French speakers and therefore, a listing of useful resources for
French language and French art song is also included. These pedagogical tools can be
used alongside the songs in any voice studio.

**Background**

In his book *Historical Pedagogy Classics*, Berton Coffin explains that for centuries, vocal
pedagogues have agreed that the early Italian art song literature represents outstanding
tools for training beginning singers.\(^2\) Collections of these pieces fill bookshelves of voice

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teachers all over the world. Many of these pieces were written during the seventeenth and eighteenth century while the development of a formal vocal pedagogy was at the forefront of an Italian style of teaching. Giulio Caccini (1551-1618), often cited as the father of vocal pedagogy, was among the first to pioneer vocal techniques that would go on to become the foundation of the time-honored style of bel canto. Caccini’s techniques were described within his collection of songs and commentary known as Le nuove musiche (New Music), where he advocated for a style that was simpler than the ornate and ornamented singing of the baroque era in which he was living. His songs, like many of the early Italian songs, emphasize legato, purity of vowel, crispness of articulation and sustained breath passages within the scope of songs that are relatively short and accessible to young singers.

The gold-standard collection of such song, which is the “most frequently owned vocal anthology in American voice studio,” is Arie antiche (Ancient Airs), assembled by the late nineteenth century composer and editor, Alessandro Parisotti (1853-1913). In the preface of Arie antiche, Parisotti wrote:

The main characteristics peculiar to the composers of the 17th and 18th centuries are clearness and simplicity of form, depth of feeling, and a suave serenity whose grateful influence permeates their entire style...The singing must be simple, unaffected, tranquil, legato; the tempi quiet, without any precipitation whatever; the embellishments executed with studious attention, to insure clearness and accuracy;...The whole delivery; in short, should show delicacy of intuition and a thorough understanding of the laws of the good Italian style; it should be at once calm, elegant, correct, and expressive, yet without coldness or heaviness.


4 Sarah Love Taylor. "The Songs we Love to Hate: A Pedagogical Analysis of Twenty-Four Italian Songs and Arias " (DMA diss., The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 2018), 1, Accessed February 10, 2019, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

5 Parisotti, Allesandro, Arie antiche (Milan: Ricordi, 1885-1890), (v).
Though originally compiled as a three-volume set, the collection has been reduced to a single volume of songs best known as *Twenty-Four Italian Songs and Arias*, a romanticized rendering of the original songs, and is still used today as a gateway into classical singing for less-experienced singers. In their original form, the songs have “structural purity and simplicity,” making them easy entry points for less experienced musicians. However, since the vocal line is often quite exposed, with little more support than an outline of *basso continuo*, the original compositions may not serve the needs of less-confident singers. In contrast, the romanticized arrangements provide fuller harmonic support, which may serve to mask vocal inconsistencies or imprecise intonation of less-experienced voices.

Most teachers will not begin young students who are not native French speakers on pieces from the canon of French literature. Carol Kimball states:

As students, most of us probably came through vocal studio repertoire via Italian song, German Lieder, and perhaps some American and British repertoire. Last on the list (if at all) was French mélodie. It is amazing how many graduate students I’ve surveyed in literature classes who sang very little or no French repertoire during four years of undergraduate training. Those students who had sung some French song had not begun to plumb its major composers. I believe that French song repertoire is a treasure house of teaching material, as well as one of the great bodies of vocal literature. Why wait until graduate study to delve into its beauties?

A variety of reasons may account for this. This paper will explore a few ideas, but not all can be addressed here.

When considering the history of art song across Europe in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there are three obvious leaders in the compositional

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world - the works that came out of Italy, Germany and France. The chronology of these three may be an important factor in teachers’ reticence to begin young singers in the French mélodie repertory, since it was the last of the three to emerge. As previously mentioned, the music that came out of the era when Italian vocal pedagogues were developing vocal technique continues to be accessible to the modern ear and the beginning music reader. In the Italian song collections, singers are able to simultaneously work on vocal technique while studying the rudimentary aspects of music theory in a medium that is again, accessible – here meaning harmonically and melodically non-complex. The rhythms are not highly irregular and many of the pieces use simple duple and triple meter that work well to educate young musicians in understanding rhythmic notation. Harmonically, the pieces often use standard, conventional Western chord progressions rooted in the foundations of four-part baroque writing that are easily understood and provide strong support to a vocal melody. The Italian pieces promote vocal elegance and are obvious supports to vocal and musical pedagogy. In his preface to the anthology Twenty-Six Italian Songs and Arias, John Glenn Paton says, “Beautiful tone is expected at all times… While it is inherently dramatic, the Italian singing that we are studying is also a courtly art, one of graciousness and good manners.”

With regard to chronology, the Germans next emerged as key players in the development of art song and even became known as the experts in the field, in terms of composition and the new executions of mood, texture and sentiment. The Lied strengthened German musical identity and developed “an art form in which musical ideas

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suggested by words were embodied in the setting of those words for voice and piano.”

Eighteenth and nineteenth century composers such as Franz Schubert, Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms, to name just a few, capitalized upon the work of the romantic poets by bringing their words into the realm of popular song.

The repertory of German Lieder may well comprise the bulk of art song literature between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, and music for all vocal levels is plentiful within this cannon. There are many options to choose from in terms of length, themes, notational complexity and vocal difficulty, with styles ranging from the more classically-based Schubert Lieder to the more complex and intense writings of Gustav Mahler and Richard Wagner. There are pieces to accommodate every style of voice and every level of singer.

France was the last of the three countries to develop an independent and unique style of art song. In the late seventeenth century, the prominent songs of France were known as brunettes. The brunette was a simplistic, sentimental song that led to the tradition of the romance, which all but replaced the brunette by 1750. Romance had its roots in opéra comique and reflected a popularized style of vocal music with simple keyboard accompaniment that was realized through figured bass. By the 1780s, romances were largely separated from the theater context and became stand-alone works of their own.

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In 1833, the first book of German *Lieder* was published in France with French translations. Before long, French musicians were taking a serious interest in *Lieder*. Possibly due to the popularity of the new German music, French musicians began to lose interest in the tradition of the *romance* and this may be reflected by the fact that any remaining eighteenth and nineteenth century *romances* are few and far between in the present day.\(^\text{12}\) They simply do not seem to have had sustaining popular interest. The German songs of the same period have been preserved in much greater numbers, which might imply the public view that *Lieder* had greater musical stature.

Early composers of *mélodies* such as Hector Berlioz, Gabriel Fauré, Charles Gounod and Henri Duparc were brought up with the *romance* as the dominant form of solo vocal music. By 1860, *mélodie* had taken its place. Certainly, the socio-political trends of nationalism had an influence on the development of France’s burgeoning musical identity. With *mélodie*, France was able to claim the stage across Europe in the realm of song literature.\(^\text{13}\) Viardot’s “works have stylistic characteristics that bridge the two genres of the simpler *romance*…and the *mélodie*, whose vocal lines, patterned after the inflection of French language, are couched in complex and exotic harmonies.”\(^\text{14}\)

The original definition of the term *mélodie* had everything to do with the texts utilized, which were most often writings of the then-modern Parnassian and Symbolist poets.\(^\text{15}\) The composer Hector Berlioz is most often credited with coining the term

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\(^\text{12}\) Ibid.

\(^\text{13}\) Ibid, 36.


\(^\text{15}\) Pennington, “A Historical and Stylistic Study of the Melodies of Gabriel Fauré,” 37.
mélodie but Charles Gounod and Henri Fauré are often considered the original composers of mélodie\textsuperscript{16}. Mélodie eventually became a term used to more generically describe French art song.

The poems themselves were of great importance to the development of mélodie – at least as important as the composers’ contribution to the works. Parnassians and symbolists used themes of nature and objective views of existence rather than the romantic tendency to focus on topics of subjective emotionality. The Parnassians, including such poets as Gautier, de Lisle, Verlaine and Mallarmé, rebelled against what they considered to be excessive sentimentality and drama of the previous reigning French poets like Hugo, de Vigny and Lamartine. Mallarmé, and others, went on to further refine this view into what became known as the symbolist movement. Symbolists aimed for an aesthetic that evoked experience through symbolic means, rather than describing it concretely or directly. Kenneth Pennington explains, “The symbolist poet sought to transcend the boundaries of the individual arts, to write with color and tone rather than mere words.”\textsuperscript{17}

Co-emergent with the development of new poetic themes, the French were vying for their own musical language. Just as the artistic French impressionists experimented with new brush strokes and palettes, the impressionist composers used tonal color in ambiguous and experimental ways. Harmonies were not always supportive to melodies in a conventional sense and melodic lines frequently utilized non-chord tones. Tone clusters and exotic melodic motifs created sensuous and evocative timbres in vocal and

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, 51-52.
instrumental music. Chromaticism and new scales, such as whole-tone and pentatonic scales, were used innovatively. Cadences were often left unresolved and intervals such as ninths, elevenths and thirteenths were newly embraced. Musical sonorities were used to represent sounds of nature such as water, clouds and night, and successions of harmonic colors and rhythms were explored as “a series of sensations rather than the deductions of a musical thought.”

**Problem Statement**

French classical song music is not frequently used as an early access point to classical vocal technique. A significant cause for this could be that although French is a sonorous language, there are sounds that feel foreign in young mouths – most remarkably the French nasal vowels – which may require many hours of mastery. When young students are working to develop pure, unrestricted vowel sounds with consistency in tone up and down their vocal range, the addition of extra vowels that vibrate with different sensations in the resonance chambers may prove difficult and frustrating to early singers. In Thomas Grubb’s well-known manual of French lyric diction, he warns against over-nasalization and reminds the reader that “The most distinctive feature of each of the four nasal vowels is its basic vowel quality, not its nasalization.” Pierre Bernac states,

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“English-speaking singer are sometimes reluctant to attempt their interpretation because of ideas they may have about the difficulties of singing in the French language.”

Secondarily, unfamiliar sonorities such as the use of polytonality in late nineteenth century French song repertoire might present challenges to singers in their musical youth. While French music does emphasize the use of legato, it also often employs speech-like rhythms that are at times unintuitive and difficult for inexperienced music-readers to ingest. Thematically, the oblique nature of the French poetry may prove to be inaccessible or off-putting to inexperienced students.

**Justification**

The music of Pauline Viardot is a valuable gateway to classical voice training for young female singers. The songs analyzed in this essay use French poems that are set with simple melodies and rhythms. All of the texts are sung at manageable speeds, providing ample time for the inexperienced singer to negotiate a new language. The piano accompaniment in these songs directly support the vocal line, and although there are many instances of unexpected and innovative harmony, none of them approach the complexity of later French romanticism and impressionism.

Viardot’s own training in the Garcia method, training which derived from the Italian school of pedagogy, allows access to the highest and most respected ideals of voice pedagogy through the lens of the French musical style. Viardot earned the respect of prominent composers of her time including Camille Saint-Saëns, Robert Schumann, Frédéric Chopin, Hector Berlioz, Charles Gounod and many others and actively collaborated with many of these men, an extraordinary detail considering the expected

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21 Ibid, xiii-xiv.
role of women in the nineteenth century. Of Viardot’s artistry, Hector Berlioz said, “Madame Viardot is one of the greatest artists…in the past and present history of music.” Clara Schumann once stated, “Viardot is the most gifted woman I have ever met in my life.”

Additionally, her numerous publications, annotations and compilations include some of the most direct extant insights about nineteenth century performance styles. Viardot’s scholarly contributions and compositions designed specifically for teaching purposes deserve a prominent place in the training of female singers.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to present pedagogical analysis as well as increase awareness of ten solo vocal songs that are useful in training young female voices.

**Methodology**

Repertoire for analysis was selected according to guidelines set forth by pedagogue, Joan Frey Boytim. Boytim’s series, *The First Book of Solos*, is a well-respected group of anthologies for each voice type, providing valuable examples of repertoire for young voices, and designating her an expert in the task of choosing

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appropriate songs for developing voices. In her book, *The Private Student Handbook: a Practical Guide to All Aspects of Teaching*, Boytim gives an explanation of features to be considered:

Beginning literature needs to be limited in range and have a comfortable tessitura. There should be no excess of breath demands or extremes in tempo or dynamics. Songs should be at an easy level of musical difficulty with moderation in all areas. Short songs are desirable with slower learners as well as for other students as they learn the discipline of practicing and memorizing. Songs with movement and melodic skips are much easier for beginning students than slow, sustained pieces. The music can be challenging but not frustrating to the student.  

These guidelines were used when selecting pieces from Viardot’s body of work that could be considered moderately-easy.

A quick search on the most frequented public audio recording sites (i.e., YouTube, iTunes, Spotify) will show that recordings of Viardot’s art songs most often include the same handful of pieces. For this reason, one other guideline was used when selecting songs for analysis – lesser known pieces were chosen to expose teachers and singers to a greater breadth of Viardot’s work. Hopefully, this will inspire readers to further explore compositions not included in this guide, most of which are virtually unknown.

The songs are presented in no particular order; they have been chosen purely on the basis of their level of difficulty – moderately-easy – and the order does not reflect the

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chronological sequence in which they were composed. Since many of Viardot’s pieces were not published until long after they were written, the date of composition is often not known.

Each song is analyzed in the following manner:

I. Context

This section includes a brief discussion of historical or publication data that may be useful to studying the song. The source of the poetry is given, when known, and the full text of each song in both French and English is provided.

II. Musical Analysis

Musical Analysis may include such topics as:

A. Form – The overall song structure of each composition is discussed.

B. Vocal range – Range includes an assessment of the outer limits of the vocal registers, using the standard of C4 to represent middle C.

C. Tessitura – The melodic line is evaluated in order to identify a range where the voice tends to “sit” frequently, also taking into account approaches to and sustained dwelling within the passaggii.

D. Melodic line and phrase characteristics – Vocal line melodic contour is assessed and described including remarkable intervallic leaps, repetitive patterns, and overarching phrase characteristics.

E. Dynamics and articulation – Notational markings that impact song interpretation and production of tone in terms of onset, breath flow and release are discussed.
F. Rhythm – With regard to the rhythms used, commentary is provided regarding the difficulty level in terms of music reading as well as voice production.

G. Phrase length – Phrases are evaluated in terms of technical development of breath support for young singers, i.e., opportunities to breathe within the score, length of phrases, breath release needed according to ascending, descending or sustained passages.

III. Pedagogical and Performance Considerations

Pedagogical and Performance Considerations may include such topics as:

A. Expressive characteristics – Notated characteristics within the musical score including tempo and other expressive markings are discussed. Also, commentary is given with regard to dramatic or interpretative ideas that might be useful to a student.

B. Text and diction – Important considerations related to difficulty of pronunciation, speed of pronunciation, notable issues related to certain consonant or vowel sound production within specific vocal registers are addressed.

C. Notable harmonic features - Instances where harmonic progression or harmonic color provides text-painting or interpretative support to the singer’s line are explored. The piano accompaniment is not discussed at length, nor is chordal analysis provided unless these topics relate to the singer’s learning or vocal process.
IV. Pedagogical Application

The performance and pedagogical analyses bring to light key issues of consideration for each song that may be involved in training young voices. Some of these issues are discussed and suggested remedies are offered, where appropriate. Since each singer has an entirely unique instrument, all possible issues cannot be addressed in this essay.

**Delimitations**

This paper does not discuss any of Viardot’s operas, instrumental works or art songs in languages other than French. It focuses exclusively on ten of Viardot’s moderately-easy French art songs. Accordingly, it focuses on the training of young voices – i.e., teenage through young adult – rather than necessarily applying to the training of older adult beginners or young children. Although many aspects of the discussion would apply to the training of older singers or even child singers, this paper is written about the developing voice, not the pre-pubescent voice or the older adult’s voice. Likewise, this paper does not address Viardot’s compositional style for the remaining ninety art songs or any other compositional works, unless in cases where the discussed pieces have thematic overlap, i.e., when they are part of a song cycle.

**Introduction to Pauline Viardot**

Pauline Viardot (née Michelle Ferdinande Pauline Garcia) was born in Paris on July 18, 1821. She was a mezzo-soprano of Spanish descent who spent most of her life in France, and she came from a family of accomplished singers. The most famous was her father, Manuel García I, an operatic tenor. Her brother, the younger Manuel García, went on to become an important figure in the development of vocal pedagogy, and her sister,
mezzo-soprano Maria Malibran was one of the most famous singers of the 19th century. Viardot’s mother, Joaquina Stiches, was also a singer and served as young Pauline’s vocal coach after the death of Manuel Garcia I.

Viardot’s intelligence and gifts for music were obvious at an early age. By time she was six years old, she was fluent in Spanish, Italian, French and English. Although she may be best remembered as a singer, she was also an accomplished concert pianist whose primary teacher was Franz Liszt, and she composed approximately 450 pieces of music including operas, solo piano, choral, and instrumental works during her lifetime.

Viardot is known to have collaborated with many prominent composers of her day including Chopin, Berlioz, Meyerbeer, Gounod, Saint-Saëns, Liszt, Wagner and Schumann. In 1839, she made her operatic debut as Desdemona in Giaocchino Rossini’s *Otello* in the Queen’s Theatre in London. Viardot was admired for her musical versatility, dramatic presence and a vocal range of over three octaves. Her artistry was highly respected and Franz Liszt declared that Pauline Viardot was among the most brilliant dramatic stars of his time.²⁶

In 1840, Viardot married Louis Viardot, a writer and theater director who was more than twenty years her senior. Together they had four children, all who went on to become musicians. Viardot was known for her charismatic personality and although she was not considered to be conventionally attractive, she attracted the attention of many men, even after her marriage. The most famous of her suitors was Ivan Turganev, a Russian writer, who left Russia to live in close proximity to the Viardots until his death.

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Although Viardot composed for much of her life, it was never her aim to become a composer. In addition to instrumental, choral and chamber music, she wrote approximately one hundred songs for solo voice and piano, songs that were written mainly for her own purposes and as teaching pieces for her students. She also wrote five operas, with two of them using her own libretti.

Viardot was not only versed in many languages; she also composed in different nationalistic styles. Russian, Spanish and French musical idioms can be heard throughout her compositions. Additionally, Viardot’s musical versatility enabled her to collaborate with other composers in their work. For instance, Viardot was actively involved with Charles Gounod’s composition process for the opera Sapho as well as creating its title character, and she assisted Hector Berlioz in writing the piano reduction for his opera Les Troyens. Viardot also had creative influence on other operas such as Meyerbeer’s Le prophète, Berlioz’s Béatrice et Bénédict, and Massenet’s oratorio, Marie-Magdeleine.

At the age of forty-two, Viardot retired from performing and moved with her family to Baden-Baden, Germany. She built an art gallery and small opera hall in her garden where she, her pupils and her children gave concerts and performed their own dramatic works. Her concert salon was a highly regarded performance venue. In 1871, Viardot returned to Paris and remained there until her death in 1910 at the age of eighty-nine years old.

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CHAPTER 2: RELATED LITERATURE

This paper focuses on pedagogical considerations for ten songs composed by Pauline Viardot. The consulted reference material includes scholarly writings from textbooks, peer-reviewed journals, voice methodologies and musical scores. While many of Viardot’s songs exist in the public domain, academic research related to teaching her songs is not widely available.

Contextual and Historical References

The first category of resources provides historical and musical overviews of the genre of French art song. One of the best-known sources is Pierre Bernac’s *The Interpretation of French Song*. Bernac’s discussion of Viardot’s music is brief, yet his entire book provides his scholarly as well as personal opinions about the entire genre. Another book is Graham Johnson and Richard Stoke’s *A French Song Companion*. Johnson’s experience as a pianist who has worked with countless professional singers provides the perspective of having coached singers through the learning process, which adds additional layers of insight about pedagogical considerations. Carol Kimball’s book *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* is an often-consulted resource in music studios and within university voice programs. Kimball explores more than just French language songs, but she does devote a considerable portion of her book to *mélodie* and has a short section focused on some of Viardot’s songs. Two dissertations that were of import to this essay include “A Historical and Stylistic Study of the Mélodies of Gabriel Fauré” by Kenneth Pennington and “The Songs of Pauline Viardot” by Jamée Ard. Pennington’s dissertation contains a comprehensive discussion of 19th century French
song from many points of view including harmonic features, poetry and the origins of *mélodie*, and Ard provides an in-depth discussion of compositional styles and influences Viardot’s songs.

**Analysis References**

Several dissertations were consulted as models for various aspects of the song analysis. The first is Esther Jane Hardenbergh’s dissertation “The Solo Vocal Repertoire of Richard Hundley: A Pedagogical and Performance Guide to the Published Works.” In this paper, Hardenbergh provides a thorough analysis of Hundley’s songs including topics related to pedagogy, musicianship and performance. Another useful essay was Jeffrey Wienand’s “Pedagogical Instruction for Beginning Male Singers Addressed Through Analysis and Application of Stephen Foster’s Song Repertoire.” Wienand explored eight of Foster’s songs, providing analysis similar to Hardenbergh’s, as well as including practical methods and vocalises for working beginning singers through the learning process of the selected Foster songs.

**Biographical References**

In the last few decades, a considerable amount of scholarship has been published about Pauline Viardot. Although this paper primarily discusses the use of Viardot’s music in the voice studio, aspects of Viardot’s lifetime, musical training, personal experiences and other compositions were also researched. The largest biographical work on Viardot is Barbara Kendall Davies’ two-volume set called *The Life and Work of Pauline Viardot Garcia*. Volume 1 is called *The Years of Fame* and covers Viardot’s life between 1836-1863, the main years of Viardot’s career as a performer. Volume 2 is called *The Years of Grace* and covers her life between 1863 and 1910, during which she primarily focused on
her teaching work and her compositions. Another source of biographical material is Michael Steen’s *Enchantress of Nations: Pauline Viardot: Soprano, Muse and Lover.* Steen’s book contains more than just the outward biographical facts of Viardot’s life. He also includes background about the social issues of the time, on-stage and off. A third biographical resource is *The Price of Genius: A Life of Pauline Viardot* by April Fitzlyon. Fitzlyon focuses her book around Viardot’s professional and personal relationships and impacts, the role she played in nineteenth century European musical culture, as well as her artistic ties between western Europe and Russia, where Viardot also had a strong presence.

**Pedagogical References**

There are countless books and dissertations written on the topic of bel canto. One book that was useful to this paper was *Bel Canto in its Golden Age: A Study of its Teaching Concepts* by Philip A. Duey. Rather than focusing only on the historical aspects of the bel canto era, Duey writes about the actual techniques that were taught such as breathing and registration, addressing these from the point of view of the laryngology and vocal hygiene science that was known at the time. Richard Miller’s *Training Soprano Voices* was a valuable guide, and Anthony Frisell’s *The Soprano Voice: A Personal Guide to Developing a Superior Singing Technique* added additional perspectives to the topic. Both of these texts include analytical discussion as well as suggestions for vocal development. Fewer texts are available that specifically address the unique features of alto and mezzo-soprano voices, but these guides discuss issues universal to all female voice types. Sergius Kagen’s text *On Studying Singing* provided valuable practical information during the research process. Rather than focusing on the technical aspects of
vocal development, Kagen discusses the entire development of vocal musicianship including topics such as language study and music reading, also giving tangible advice about how to practice intelligently. With regard to French diction, many articles were explored but the most useful text for this project was Thomas Grubb’s and Pierre Bernac’s respected manual, *Singing in French: A Manual of French Diction and French Vocal Repertoire*. In terms of vocal methods, three were consulted. The first is Viardot’s own method, *Une heure d’étude, exercises pour voix de femmes*, a system that she created specifically for female voices. The second was her brother Manuel Garcia II’s *Garcia’s New Treatise on the Art of Singing: A Compendious Method of Instruction, with Examples and Exercises for the Cultivation of the Voice*. The third was Mathilde Marchesi’s *Bel Canto: A Theoretical and Practical Vocal Method*. Marchesi was a student of Manuel Garcia II, so her perspective provided additional insight into the vocal ideals that would have been encouraged in the Garcia family vocal tradition. All three consist of many vocalises for vocal development as well as commentary on physiology, registration and physicality of healthful singing.
CHAPTER 3: PEDAGOGICAL ANALYSIS

“L’Ombre et le jour”

Context

“L’Ombre et le jour” (Night and Day), also known as “La Nuit et la jour,” was first published in 1843 within Viardot’s collection of songs *Album de Mme. Viardot-Garcia*. There is little historical information available about this song. Viardot dedicated the piece to Catherine Stephens, Countess of Essex, who was an English actress and opera singer, but there is no discussion of their relationship in any of the Viardot biographies. In 1869, the song was published with a Russian translation completed by Viardot’s companion, Ivan Turgenev, bearing the name “Noch’ i den’.” The original poetry is by Édouard Turquety, a nineteenth century French poet. Viardot must have admired his writing, for she used a number of his poems in her songs – several that will be discussed in this paper - but there is no information available about a personal connection between the two. “L’Ombre et le jour” tells a tender story of lovers who will be parted by the light of day.

Translation

Vois-tu la nuit qui se retire,  
Do you see the night receding?
Vois-tu l'Orient qui se teint?  
Do you see the Orient alighting with color?
Pleurs et sourire,  
Tears and smiling,
C'est le matin.  
It is morning.
C'est d'un coté la brume épaisse,  
It is on one side the thick mist,
De l'autre une blanche lueur;  
On the other a white glow;
C'est la tristesse  
It is sadness
Près du bonheur.  
Near happiness.

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29 Ibid, 145.
De notre union douce et sombre
Voilà l'image, ô mon amour!
Moi je suis l'ombre,
Et toi le jour.

Of our sweet and somber union
There is the image, oh my love!
Me I am the shadow,
And you the day.

Musical Analysis

The overall form of “L’Ombre et le jour” is A-A-B. It encompasses a vocal range of F4-F5, only one octave, which is likely to be manageable for most young female singers. The majority of notes remain within the middle voice region of F4-Bb4 and there are only five measures in total containing notes of B4 or above. The most challenging vocal region of the song begins in measure twenty-nine at “De notre union” where the singer begins on B4 and remains within the span of B4-F5 for five measures. Many soprano voices will be approaching the second passaggio and mezzo-soprano and contralto voices will be dwelling directly within it for that section of measures. An additional challenge here is that there are no rests written into the music, so singers will need to find appropriate moments to breathe, most likely between sombre and Voilà (See Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1. Challenging passage requiring stamina in the passaggio, mm. 29-34
With the exception of these five measures, the rest of the song has short phrases of three measures, each with ample rests and breathing time in between.

Most of the melodic movement happens in seconds and thirds allowing the singer to gracefully move through registers. Intervals larger than this happen infrequently, the largest being several ascending and one descending fourth. Each of the ascending fourths bring emotional intensity to the text. An example of this is on the final word of the phrase *Pleurs et sourire* (crying and smiling). The ascent brings emphasis and attention to the juxtaposition of such opposite actions. The descending fourth leads into the final phrase *Moi, je suis l’ombre, Et toi le jour*. Here, the descending interval is almost plaintive, the narrator’s story finally ceding to the unavoidable truth of separation. It also offsets and explains the meaning for the song’s title.

**Pedagogical and Performance Considerations**

“L’Ombre et le jour” is given a tempo indication of *Andantino*, a speed that should not present difficulty for students’ enunciation. The text is set in a *parlando* style with simple and smooth rhythms.

While the song is primarily in Bb major, Viardot changes harmonic color on two occasions that could be useful to a singer’s interpretation. The first is in the piano interlude of measures eight and nine, where there are three eighth notes that act as a cadential progression toward G minor and lands on D major, the dominant. This D major is somewhat unexpected. Had the cadence resolved into the G minor, this would have maintained the sensuality of the opening two phrases. Instead, the D major throws the listener off course, like a clarion call announcing the importance of the next phrase where the contrast of the words “tears” and “smiling” first reveal the song’s true meaning – the
bittersweet union of love and separation. The singer re-enters on a D minor chord with the word *pleures* (tears) on B natural, the beginning of a phrase that leads to C Minor. This unique harmonic moment matched to the text of “tears” is an opportunity for the singer to express a new vocal color (See Figure 3.2).

![Figure 3.2. Unexpected chord progressions to highlight *pleurs* and *sourire*, mm. 8-10.](image)

The second instance that provides a similar opportunity is during measures twenty-nine to thirty-four, which were previously discussed (See Figure 3.1). This is the song’s climax. Additional accidentals of C sharp and E natural are introduced and the piece moves from C minor into D minor. With the *forte* dynamic of measure thirty-two and the vocal line dwelling within the threshold of the secondo *passaggio*, the fateful words of “*Voilà l’image, ô mon amour!*” add to the dramatic musical intensity.

Viardot’s dynamic notation in the vocal line is minimal. In measures thirteen and fourteen, there is a sustained Bb4 with a *crescendo* and *diminuendo* across the two measures, allowing for a *messa di voce* effect. This is the end of verse one. Identical notation is given above the sustained Bb4 in measure twenty-six that completes verse two. The only additional dynamic marking in the piece is a *forte* in measure forty-three
on the word Voilà, which is likely the first word of a new phrase if the singer takes the breath indicated above. A new breath will allow the student plenty of air to produce a louder volume.

Very little articulation is notated in the vocal line. Above the word douce (sweet) in measure thirty-one, there is a slur over two notes, possibly asking the singer to convey the meaning of the word through smooth articulation. This slur may only be an indicator of the notation standard of connecting notes with a slur when they remain on the same syllable, but there is the opportunity to text paint the word through a caressing vocal color. A similar marking occurs over the syllable -mage of image in measure thirty-three. The only other marking is again a slur, this time expressing finality as the descending fourth that was previously discussed.

“L’Ombre et le jour” is written in 6/8 meter and contains simple rhythms using primarily eighth and quarter notes. The rhythms notated should present little challenge to a young singer. In the event that a singer does not have considerable experience with 6/8 meter, this song is an accessible training tool.

**Pedagogical Application**

The greatest technical challenge for “L’Ombre et le jour” is found in measures thirty to thirty-five, where breath stamina is required along with consciously balanced registration. In Mathilde Marchesi’s well-known book, *Bel Canto: A Theoretical & Practical Vocal Method*, she writes “To equalize and blend the chest and medium registers the pupil must slightly close the last two notes of the former in ascending, and open them in descending.”

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assume that she is referring to the sensations of widening and narrowing of the vocal tract during this transitional regions. This is useful to consider in measures thirty to thirty-five as there is a fair balance of ascending and descending intervals and ample opportunity for teacher and singer to identify exactly which notes will require a sense of “closing” on the ascent and “opening” on the descent. These transition points will change from student to student.

For all female voice types, the challenge is in keeping the neck and larynx free from tension during the ascent and making sure not to carry up heavy mechanism production. Also, the singer must monitor the tendency to “hold” air during these measures and instead must maintain awareness of breath flow release. With proper guidance, “L’Ombre et le jour” will be extremely useful in the voice studio. It can be used as a tool for mitigating habits of bodily tension and negotiating difficulties in the passaggio. Even so, these challenges are brief and should be manageable even for inexperienced singers.

“Les Attraits”

Context

“Les Attraits” (Qualities) was written in 1893. It is a lyrical setting of the short poem “Ce que j’aime” (What I like) also known as “An Impromptu Made at Dessert,” words that the French writer Victor Hugo supposedly recited spontaneously just as he was about to have dessert. Viardot dedicated the song to her daughter, Claudie

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Chamerot, a girl who was rumored to have been fathered by either Charles Gounod or Ivan Turgenev. Claudie would have been 41 years old when “Les Attraits” was composed. The text describes the qualities of a peach, until they are likened to the qualities of a woman, Phyllis. The text is a sensuous expression of words and music, and some might interpret it as overtly sexual.

Translation

D’attraits ravissants pourvue,  Filled with exquisite qualities,
Seule, elle réunit tout; Singly uniting all of them;
Ses appas charment la vue, Its lure enhancing the view,
Chacun vante son bon goût. Everyone praising its excellent flavor.
Sa peau, veloutée et fraîche, Its skin, velvety and fresh,
Joint toujours la rose au lys: Always joining the rose with the lily:
Ce pourrait être Phyllis, This could be Phyllis,
Si ce n’était une pêche. If it wasn’t a peach.

Musical Analysis

“Les Attraits” is brief and through-composed. Its relatively small range – E4 to E5 – makes it accessible to nearly every developing female voice and its melody is equally distributed across the staff. There are no large intervals in the melodic line, with most of the movement in seconds and thirds, an occasional fourth and one instance of a sixth. The short phrases are often slurred, but in some instances a slurred phrase is followed by one without articulation and the effect is one of playful call and response.

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This alternation of legato phrasing and non-articulated patter give the song a conversational quality, as well as an opportunity for the singer to rapidly adjust articulatory style (See Figure 3.3).

![Figure 3.3. Alternation of articulation, mm 5-8.](image)

The only other remarkable articulation is the use of five accents on the final page with the text “Ce pourrait être Phyllis” (It could be Phyllis) perhaps emphasized since it is the first line the listener hears the name of the woman being compared in metaphor to a peach.

The rhythms in “Les Attraits” are quite simple, primarily using eighth and quarter notes in patterns of two-measure phrases. Some of the phrases end with a sustained note of no more than three beats, so this piece will not be taxing for most students. There are opportunities to breath after every short phrase, notated by either rests or breath markings. Viardot clearly intended for each line of poetry to have its own, differentiated space – each one naturally occurring with the spontaneity of speech.

**Pedagogical and Performance Characteristics**

“Les Attraits” bears the tempo marking of Allegretto tranquillo. From the start of the song, sixteenth note arpeggios convey the bright simplicity of the fresh, crispness of a spring day. Though Viardot notated instances of crescendi and even one forte, one must interpret these instructions in the context of tranquility and freshness – never with a heavy sound or excessive intensity in terms of volume or phrase momentum. These
should be interpreted as momentary flutters of emotional inflection, just as one might inflect when speaking contemporaneously.

The text is concise and the first four lines repeat, so this is an ideal song for a singer who is new to French and not yet comfortable memorizing long verses. Since the rhythms are quite basic and performed at a moderate rate, inexperienced singers will have time to prepare the syllables carefully, accustoming themselves to the feeling of the language at a tempo that will aid their success. Thematically, the poem is appropriate for a singer of any age since its communication is rather innocent, although one could also explore the obvious double entendre as vocal color in the delivery of the text.

On paper, this song reads simply. There are no complicated rhythms or sections that would be difficult for a young musician to read. The repetition of gently arpeggiated sixteenth notes in the treble register span the entire accompaniment, creating a constant twinkling or glistening effect of sound like the sparkle of spring sunlight on morning dew. This sparseness, while soothing to hear, often leaves the vocal line exposed, so the performer must have enough confidence to sing her independent line over an accompaniment that provides minimum harmonic support and no doubling.

If one looks more deeply into the harmonic progressions that Viardot used in “Les Attraits” it is apparent that this is not a conventional or simplistic piece of music. Though the beginning and ending of the song use simple progressions using I, V and V7, the middle section is a lush array of tone color that uses added intervals of sixths, ninths and sevenths in constantly changing sequence. These rich sonorities are used with the repeated text of Ses appas charment la vue, Chacun vante son bon gout (Its lure enhancing the view, Everyone praising its excellent flavor). Since this phrase is repeated,
it clearly has significance and Viardot emphasized its importance through intensified harmonies. Since the full intent of the words could not be satisfied with a single hearing, they are joined with the sensuousness of new chord colors, each one sounding like a fresh, opening blossom (See Figure 3.4). For example, measure fifteen uses the chords F#m7/A, G#m6/B, A/C#, and measure sixteen uses B/D#, E6, B7/F#. Not only do these ascending progressions sound fresh and surprising, most of the chords are not in root position and the inversions add an element of unique color, as though the blossoming is not fully complete. *Ses appas charment vue* describes the peach’s luring and attractive qualities, just as the chords catch the listener’s attention with their sonorous qualities.

![Figure 3.4. Intensified harmonic progression to emphasize repeated text, mm. 15-18.](image)

Through the vivid and unanticipated musical colors, the singer is provided with emotion and momentum that must inspire response with vocal expression.

**Pedagogical Application**

Generally speaking, this is an accessible piece for most levels of vocal development. There are a few potential challenges, however, that are important to address. In terms of pronunciation, most of the lines contain universal vowel and consonant sounds that should not be excessively difficult for young singers. There are, however, a few instances where there are multiple uniquely French sounds within a single phrase and these sections may require assistance from the teacher, in terms of properly...
demonstrating the successive sounds and helping the student to drill them correctly. Most of these pronunciation challenges are found in the middle section of the song. A notable example is *Chacun vante son bon gout*, an instance where there are four words using nasal vowel sounds successively in a row, with three of them different – [a] [œ] [ə] [ɔ] [ɔ̃] [ɔ̃] [u].

“Les Attraits” will expose the degree of a student’s mastery of *legato* singing. During measures of little accompaniment, the voice must carry the continuous sound and phrase momentum through the development of sustained breath flow and release. Since Viardot chose to use slurs on some phrases but not others, this is also a chance for the singer to experiment with different articulatory styles without ever leaving the ideal of regulated breath management. There are subtle differences between these phrasing choices, and with “Les Attraits” students have the opportunity to go deeper into the subtle command of their instrument’s capabilities.

“Aimez-moi”

**Context**

In 1886, Viardot wrote a set of songs known as *Six chansons du XVe siècle* (Six Songs from the 15th Century). The songs come from an anthology of ancient songs that were compiled by the French writer Gaston Paris in 1875.34 Among these pieces is the

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tranquil love song, “Aimez-moi” (Do you love me?). Viardot used the original words, but her melody is nothing like the original 15th century song. The source of the ancient poetry is unknown.

**Translation**

En regardant vo gracieux maintien  
Et vos doux yeux  
qui tant me font de joye,  
Amours m'ont mis en l'amoureuse voye;  
Mais c'est si fort  
que mon cœur n'est plus mien.

Car quand je pense la vertu et le bien  
Qui sont en vous, en quelque lieu que soye  
Mon cœur et moi du tout je vous octroye:  
Il est à vous, certes je n'y ai rien.

Mon bel ami du tout je retiens  
Comme celle qui suis où que je soye  
Vostre à jamais, car myeulx je ne pourroye  
Avoir choisy, cela cognays-je bien.

Looking at your graceful countenance  
And your sweet eyes  
which make me so joyful,  
Love has put me in the loving way;  
But it is so strong  
that my heart is no longer mine.

For when I think of the virtue and the good  
Which are in you, in whatever place you are  
My heart and myself completely I grant to you:  
It is yours, certainly I have none of it.

My beloved, I hold him completely  
As the one who I follow wherever I am  
Yours forever, because better I could not be.  
Having chosen, that I know well.

**Musical Analysis**

“Aimez-moi” is strophic. There are three verses, each separated by a brief musical interlude. The range is C₄ to Eb₅, making it an accessible piece to most female singers. Because the entire piece is peaceful with a meditative quality, the lower notes are perfectly acceptable if sung with a head voice-dominant mechanism. There is no need for young sopranos to attempt a heavy, chest-dominant sound around middle C. Each verse consists of four phrases and the melodic and range pattern repeats almost identically for all verses.

The dynamics of the vocal line range from piano to forte, though it might be more useful to think of this range in terms of emotional intensity rather than strictly in terms of volume. While supporting the vocal line, the piano has a consistent pattern of droning
chords that remain *piano*, a backdrop representing the peace of the narrator’s mind. With this constant stillness in the background, it is the singer’s line that shows emotional inflection through descriptions of the beloved. In between verses, the pianist has some melodic movement, an organic response to the narrator’s welling emotion, but there is no indication that this should ever affect the overall volume. There are only a few accented words in the vocal line, which means that the song rarely strays from a placid soundscape. In most cases, the accents are on the highest notes of a phrase, though not on a typically stressed beat. This irregularity allows the narrator’s thoughts to sound spontaneous, unplanned and authentic. At times, they are placed on words that bring obvious meaning, such as the accent on *son* in the phrase *Qui sont en vous*, emphasizing that virtue and goodness are undoubtedly part of the beloved’s qualities (See Figure 3.5).

![Figure 3.5. Accents on unstressed beats to emphasize spontaneous quality of text, mm. 25-26.](image)

This unexpected syllable stress, combined with the metric alternation of 3/4 and 4/4 time signatures, create an asymmetrical, conversational rhythmic style that is reminiscent of settings of vocal music of the renaissance. Since the poetry emerged from the 15th century, Viardot may have wanted to honor the music of that time by choosing to set in this style. It’s also possible that Viardot found the text to be so elegant on its own that an elaborate musical setting was not needed.
While not difficult to perform, inexperienced musicians may not find the reading of the phrases to be intuitive and attention must be paid to the metric and articulatory variations. These subtle and occasional changes in timing and word stress are an indispensable part of what makes the narrator’s speech sound authentic and unconstrained by convention. Without observing these notations, the song will tend to sound simplistic and formulaic.

While the phrases all have an implied legato quality, there is only a single phrase with an actual slur – (Mon) coeur et moy du tout” ((My) heart and all of myself). This phrase also has a tenuto marked and one of only two forte indications in the entire song. This is possibly the most significant moment of “Aimez-moi” – the proclamation of selflessness and surrender, and the richness of this emotion requires the emphasis of syllable stress and volume (See Figure 3.6).

![Figure 3.6. Only instance of slur in voice, used with forte and tenuto to stress importance of text, mm. 28-29.](image)

All three verses provide ample breathing opportunities between each of the four phrases. Each phrase ends with a comma in the text or a breath mark indicated by Viardot. These separations allow each phrase to sound like the narrator’s impromptu thoughts, unrehearsed and without concern for the contrivance of grandiose proclamations of love.
Pedagogical and Performance Considerations

There are additional vocal breaks indicated via breath marks or rests that appear during some of the phrases which allow for a more nuanced communication of certain words. The singer must make note of these instructions and allow them to inform the dramatic delivery of the text. For example, on the line *Mon coeur et moy du tout de vous octroye* (My heart and myself completely, I grant to you), Viardot places a breath mark after *tout*. This offsets the importance of what is being given – the narrator’s heart and complete self. If one does not observe this breath mark, it makes the sentiment ordinary. With Viardot’s skillful notation of breath – one that is probably not needed since it is so close to the beginning of the phrase – the sentence avoids sounding cliché.

As previously mentioned, the meter changes frequently and syllables are emphasized irregularly. This feeling of free meter should be interpreted organically, never metronomically; the text should be delivered at a rate that resembles speech and the natural arising of thoughts. Viardot’s tempo choice of *Andante* supports this, indicating a moderate, easy pace that most singers will comfortably be able to accommodate.

In its original 15th century setting, “Aimez-moi” used an older form of French, one that is presumably Middle French since that was the language used from the fourteenth through the seventeenth centuries. Viardot’s text has subtle spelling variations from the original 15th century poem, making it somewhat more contemporary. For example, the original title “Aimez-moy” has been replaced by “Aimez-moi.” For those who are familiar with modern French language, most of the older text that Viardot chose to retain is easy to recognize, for instance, the word *joye* (joy) is not difficult to intuit as *joie*. Other cases are less obvious, for instance, the word *myeulx* (better) may not remind
modern French students of the word *mieux*. Pronunciation differences between the older and present languages surely exist, though resources for singers on this topic are not abundant. On recordings of “Aimez-moi,” one will hear modern French pronunciation.35

“Aimez-moi” remains in C minor throughout with the exception of the final piano solo, which uses C major and then completes the song with three open chords, each without the third present. C major has often been cited to be a key that represents purity, and music scholars such as Christian Schubart in *Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkust* (Ideas for the Aesthetic in the Art of Sound) have written to this effect. Schubart called C major “…quite pure. It’s character is innocence, simplicity, naivety, children’s talk.”36 A sense of utter purity pervades the final three chords of “Aimez-moi,” as though the narrator’s emotions have come to rest in perfect peace (See Figure 3.7).

![Figure 3.7. Closing chords that emerge from C major. These are the same chords used in the opening that led into C minor, mm. 57-59.](image)

Remarkably, these are the same chords that opened the piece, but the opening led us into C minor. While the opening chords and final chords are harmonically identical,

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35 For those students who are not comfortable with the older language, Louis Pomey provided a modern text adaptation that is also an option.

their moods are completely different within context - the first group foreshadowing C minor and the final group echoing C major. The C major fully resolves whatever sentiments might not have been completely satisfied in C minor.

All of the lyrics of “Aimez-moi” portray love, joy and contentment, but the predominance of C minor might suggest a different emotional color to the listener, since most western ears have not come to associate minor keys with happiness and positive feelings. Viardot’s genius reframes this convention, creating an introspective, lyrical meditation. From the performance perspective, the singer might view this as an opportunity to portray a shift in the narrator’s emotions as the modulation occurs. Although her words depict only positive emotion in every verse, perhaps the minor key represents her vulnerability, or the unfamiliar experience of resting in love’s surrender. Schubart’s commentary on C states, “Every languishing, longing, sighing of the love-crazed soul lies in this key.”

In this song, C major might symbolize the narrator’s resolve to live in surrender, and the dissipation of any lingering apprehensions about being so vulnerable to the one she loves.

**Pedagogical Application**

The song’s simplicity should not be interpreted as plain or lacking in sophistication. Instead, the expressivity must come from within, from the singer’s own emotional and lyrical momentum. The narrator’s line is extremely exposed, and every subtlety of the voice will be heard over the droning accompaniment, the sound of her unceasing peaceful mind, that never goes any higher than the dynamic piano during the sung sections. This means that continuous legato and vowels that are consistently placed
and shaped are an absolute necessity. Any inconsistency will interrupt the song’s tranquility and stillness. As mentioned before, young students may have the tendency to ignore subtle markings such as accents, breath marks mid-sentence, and the subtle dynamic changes. With the teacher’s guidance, this provides an excellent opportunity to develop a singer’s refined vocal and communicative elegance, a simplicity that is a far more mature undertaking than might appear on the page.

“Solitude”

Context

“Solitude” was first published in 1845 in the French magazine, *L’Illustration*, and was later included in the collection, *Dix melodies par Pauline Viardot: Album de chant pour 1850*. (Ten Songs of Pauline Viardot: Singing Album for 1850). The text was written by Édouard Turquety, the nineteenth century poet who was previously cited for his lyrics for “L’Ombre et le jour.” “Solitude” was dedicated to Lady Theodosia Monson, a companion of Viardot’s, who was an advocate for women’s rights and a patron of theater and arts.37

Translation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>La primevère mourante</td>
<td>The dying primrose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirait la brise errante,</td>
<td>Inhaled the wandering breeze,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et le printemps de retour</td>
<td>and the returning spring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berçait d'un souffle de rose</td>
<td>carried the scent of rose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le nid où l'oiseau repose,</td>
<td>The nest where the bird rests,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quand je vins rêver d'amour.</td>
<td>When I came to dream of love.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Et l'image accoutumée
De ma jeune bien-aimée,
Aussi belle qu'un beau jour,
Glissait, comme une ombre douce,
Parmi les fleurs et la mousse,
Quand je vins rêver d'amour.

Adieu ville aux bruits sans nombre!
La campagne fraîche et sombre,
Voilà mon dernier séjour;
Pauvre oiseau de la vallée,
Je reviens chercher l'allée
Qui me fait rêver d'amour.

Musical Analysis

“Solitude” is a short song with a simplistic A-B-A form. It uses just under an octave of notes spanning from G₄ to F#₅, with most of the melody remaining between A₄ and D₅. For this reason, the tessitura may be better suited to young sopranos; young contraltos and mezzos will be approaching the second passaggio in this region and this may be taxing for undeveloped voices. A melodic theme is used throughout the song in terms of contour, though the intervals are not always the same. The basic pattern moves in seconds and thirds, using variations of the major and minor forms of these intervals. Even so, the phrase shape is generally the same whenever the theme is present. This means that the singer is not taxed by large intervallic leaps and each phrase generally stays within a fourth.

The only dynamic markings in the entire song include a piano in the opening measure of the accompaniment, a pianissimo marking in the two piano interlude that link the three sections, and a crescendo in the vocal line in the second to last phrase. The overall mood of the piece is calm, subdued and without much variation in volume or
change in articulation. The piano has a slurred, swaying right hand pattern and never strays from this until the final eight measures of the song where the phrases are still slurred, but some have downbeat accents. The lack of slurs imply less romanticized inflection, a winding down of the intensity of the narrator’s recollection. With the exception of two accents, each time on the downbeat of the phrase *Quand je vins rêver d’amour* (When I dreamed of love), the vocal line has no articulation notated. These accents provide reiteration to this repeated line of text, emphasizing that all of the descriptions take place within the context of love past, memories that now remain only in dream.

The musical notation of “Solitude” can easily be read by elementary-level singers, assuming there is experience working with 6/8 meter. Most of the notes are eighth notes, with occasional dotted-eighth and sixteenth note combinations. There are few sustained notes and many of the phrases are only two measures in length, separated by rests, breath marks and commas. A young singer with developing breath support could successfully navigate “Solitude.”

**Pedagogical and Performance Considerations**

“Solitude” is a song of stillness, with vivid, sensual descriptions of a discrete moment in time. Viardot captures this stillness with a relatively unchanging dynamic level, a repetitive, rocking rhythmic accompaniment and a placid melodic theme that never departs from spaciousness. The *Andantino* tempo marking ensures that the dotted rhythm patterns will not drive the momentum forward, as some dotted rhythms in 6/8
meter tend to do. The singer’s role is to paint the picture of a still, but viscerally vivid moment by singing with broad, emotive brushstrokes like water colors on a canvas of G minor.

The text is set at a manageable speed, with many of the syllables placed on successive eighth notes. In instances of dotted eighth note and sixteenth note combinations, the singer must keep the breath moving and the tone spinning through the short notes so that they do not fall out of the legato line that a hallmark of French song.

“Solitude” begins in G minor. It is a song about dying – the dying of love, the dying of spring and ultimately, the end of one’s life. Viardot manages to capture this in her lilting ostinato that is heard in the right hand of the piano throughout the song and in the repetitive, droning G3 in the left hand that continually returns. (See Figure 3.8).

![Figure 3.8. Lilting piano, mm. 1-2.](image)

One might also interpret the dotted right hand rhythm to be her depiction of the wandering breeze, or the resting bird no longer in flight, with the droning left hand creating the continuous shadow of love from years past. All of these images are captured in the still-life image painted by this quiet song. The vocal line, which mimics the lilting piano, is mournful and rich.

In the B section, the narrator describes the beauty of the lost beloved, and there is temporary relief as the piano gracefully modulates into G major with both hands playing
delicately in the treble staff. This relief is not sustained, however, as the vocal line has several measures of chromatic movement – there is still unrest – memories of the beloved are not fully satisfying. This chromatic ascension sounds hopeful, but its descending counterpart reminds the listener that hope cannot be fulfilled (See Figure 3.9).

![Ascending chromatic phrase of rising hope followed by descending hopelessness, mm. 23-27.](image)

Additionally, the left hand of the piano makes its first trip below the bass staff with a D2, written as a grace note to D3. These octaves have an ominous sound, foreshadowing the finality of the third section and the return to G minor. Memories cannot be sustained and cannot take the place of love in the flesh.

In the final section, the narrator says farewell to the world being left behind. The vocal and piano parts are nearly the same as the opening, with two exceptions: 1) the addition of bass notes an octave lower and 2) the absence of the eighth note-sixteenth note rhythm in the voice, which now sings the opening melody in straight eighth notes. The end sounds dark and inescapable; life force is declining. The voice’s melody, without its lilting, uneven rhythm, loses momentum. Eight measures from the end, the piano also assumes straight eighth note rhythms, also abandoning its lilt, winding down. The end approaches, further indicated by a diminished seventh chord and eventually, a *ritardando* at the final phrase. Unexpectedly, “Solitude” ends on a G major chord, which sounds like the sun’s return after a storm. With G major, there is again the symbol of the beloved, and with the peace of that gentle reminder, the song ends.
Pedagogical Application

One potential technical challenge may lie in the phrases that end with an ascending fourth and a final *schwa* sound [9]. In this song, we find this example in the words *rose*, *repose*, *mousse*, and *allée* (See Figure 3.10).

![Figure 3.10](image)

Figure 3.10. Example of phrase ending with *schwa*, mm. 25-27.

In Thomas Grubb’s manual, *Singing in French: A Manual of French Diction and French Repertoire*, he addresses the issue of stress and word rhythm:

In French, there is no tonic accent comparable to Italian, German, or English. Unlike English, the stress of the French word habitually falls on the final or last vowel sound, but never on final, unstressed -e, -es, or -ent sounding as [œ symbol] or [o].

Many singers will have the tendency to sing the ascending fourths with increased breath pressure and volume on the high note. Students must work to keep this final syllable minimized appropriately while maintaining the integrity of tone and vowel shaping of the *schwa*. Although many languages contain the *schwa* sound, each language has subtle variations and the rounded French *schwa* may feel difficult to non-French mouths. This

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will require the balancing act of conscious release of tension in the jaw, tongue and neck, negotiation of the appropriate degree of lip rounding, and skillfully managed breath regulation.

In terms of dramatic interpretation, there is always the potential pitfall of mistaking stillness for dullness. Both singer and pianist must maintain the calm serenity of a glass lake, with only an occasional ripple of inflection, and yet the performance needs to stay crisp, fresh and engaging. “Solitude” is an excellent song for a student who is learning to theatrically motivate text, and when given the right direction dramatically, even young students can present a captivating performance.

“J’en mourrai!”

Context

“J’en mourrai” (I will die) comes from the 1880 set of songs called *Six melodies et une havanais* (Six Songs and a Havanaise\(^\text{39}\)). The music was first composed with an Italian text, “Morirò.” The French setting discussed here and another in Russian (“Ya umru”) were arranged shortly afterward. The poet of the original Italian text is unknown, but the French words were translated by Victor Wilder, a nineteenth century Belgian writer and music critic.\(^\text{40}\) The French resembles the original Italian thematically, though

\(^{39}\) *Havanais* is the French translation of *habanera*, which is a form of Cuban dance music that was popular in the 19th century.

there are many differences – the major one being that in the Italian version, there is only one verse, while in the French setting, Wilder provided lyrics for two verses. The text depicts a rejected lover who threatens to die as payback for the pain she has endured.

**Translation**

J’en mourrai! J’en mourrai! de ton parjure, I will die! I will die! from your perjury,
J’en mourrai! J’en mourrai! je te le jure! I will die! I will die! I swear to you!
Plus de pleurs superflus, No more wasted tears,
Je meurs contente I will die happy
Va, tu n’entendras plus Go, you will no longer hear
Ma voix dolente! My sorrowful voice!

Mais quand la cloche sonnera But when the bell sounds
le glas des morts, the death knell,
Alors ton coeur de roche Then your heart of rock
se fondra sous les remords; will melt with remorse;
Pris de pitié soudaine, Overcome with sudden pity,
En proie à mille alarmes, Prey to a thousand alarms,

Tu verseras trop tard, You’ll be too late,
Trop tard un flot de larmes! Too late a flood of tears!

J’en mourrai! J’en mourrai! I will die! I will die!
Nul ne l’ignore; No one doesn’t know it;
J’en mourrai! J’en mourrai! I will die! I will die!
Car je t’adore! Because I love you!
Va, passe ton chemin, Go, go your way,
Sans rien entendre, Without hearing anything,
En repoussant la main Pushing away the hand
qu’on vent te tendre! that reaches out to you!

**Musical Analysis**

“J’en mourrai” is strophic, with two verses, each containing two distinct sections. The second section of each verse uses the same text. The range is C#4 to F5 with a tessitura of D4 to D5. There are frequent instances of single phrases that cross registers, requiring constant negotiation of head and chest vocal mechanisms. Few generalizations can be made about the melodic contour. Some phrases do not stray beyond the interval of
a fourth, and some include larger intervallic leaps including several descending octaves.

Viardot specified that this song should be sung by a mezzo-soprano or baritone, and while the range would be manageable by most female voices, the dramatic intensity of the passages in the lower range are probably better suited to a voice with more color and presence in the lower register.

Viardot does not notate many dynamic markings in the vocal line, with the exception of several fortís and crescendi, and the final phrase’s succession of crescendo and diminuendo. The piano does have indications of hushed agitation in the beginning of the verses and cacophonous sforzandi and fortissimi near the end of each verse, symbolizing a cathartic arch of emotion, and it’s reasonable to assume that the vocal line would follow a similar progression. Viardot uses plentiful accents throughout the vocal line and the accompaniment to support this idea. Loud, accented notes that highlight the narrator’s extreme angst will require forceful breath and phonation, which may be especially challenging to coordinate when phrases cross registers (See Figure 3.11).

![Figure 3.11. Accented, loud descending phrase that crosses registers, mm. 14-17.](image)

Rhythms in “J’en mourrai” are simplistic, the most complicated being a dotted-eighth note followed by a sixteenth note that is a recurrent rhythmic theme. In this theme, the rhythm mirrors speech, emphasizing the final syllable by placing it on the downbeat.
just as it would be stressed in spoken French, and accenting the first word of the phrase, giving the sentence emotional bite (See Figure 3.1).

![Figure 3.1](image)

Figure 3.1. Speech-like text setting with natural word stresses and emotional stresses, mm. 2-4.

While this is a straightforward rhythm to read, it may not always be easy for a young singer to execute with the requisite precision and clarity. The singer must be sure to send breath through the short notes and watch the tendency to pull off of them in favor of the long notes, which are easier to phonate. Beneath the vocal line are rhythmic piano *ostinati*, which continually push the song’s emotional momentum by providing an underlying tone of fretfulness (See Figure 3.13).

![Figure 3.13](image)

Figure 3.13. Driving left hand ostinato that propels momentum and agitation, mm. 2-4.

Phrases range from two to four measures in length. While there are plenty of rests and breath marks within the score, this does not imply that there is always ample time to take a comfortable breath. Additionally, since balanced registration may be a challenge when phrases cover large intervals, the singer must practice coordinating quick breaths that will suffice to reset and prepare for these subtle adjustments.
Pedagogical and Performance Considerations

As a perfect musical description of the narrator’s emotional frenzy, the initial tempo marking is *Agitato* (agitated), a marking that implies a quick, frenetic speed. The pianist’s left hand drives this agitation throughout the first section of each verse (See previous Figure 3.13). On the concluding vocal phrase of the first verse is *Avec toute la force* (with all forcefulness), indicating that the singer must sing as fully as possible through the F4 to D4. A mezzo-soprano or contralto voice will likely accomplish this more effectively and easily than a soprano.

“J’en mourrai” has three primary harmonic moods. The first is in D minor, centered around the left hand’s rhythmic ostinato previously noted. This theme is inwardly frenzied, with an anguished text describing the narrator’s suffering and her promise to seek revenge by dying. This emotional madness suddenly opens into D major, the second harmonic mood, an unexpected sound that is victorious and spacious, while the narrator fantasizes about how her death will cause remorse in the one to whom she sings. This section provides mild relief, a contrast to the opening agitation. There are still unsettling non-chord tones that never fully culminate into comfortable, consonant closure and although the narrator delights in her fantasy, it is obviously not a real source of sustaining comfort. Finally, the third harmonic mood emerges, again centered around D minor, but this time it is externalized lashing out, rather than the quieter, obsessive anxiety of the opening. Here, accents and *forte* dynamics erupt along with the narrator’s final threats. Both verses follow this harmonic pattern.
Pedagogical Application

Although the song moves with constant agitation, the words are sung at a moderate rate that should not be excessively difficult for a young singer. There is enough alternation between sustained passages and passages that use moderately-paced, speech-like rhythms, allowing the singer to stay in control of the articulatory demands. The highest notes of the song tend to be on open vowel sounds, or nasal vowels that can easily be modified to a more open position without losing intelligibility.

This song is obviously dramatic, practically operatic in its scope and in its character arch. It is its own mad scene, not unlike the well-known settings of the German Lied, “Gretchen am Spinnrade.” While not all young singers will have the emotional maturity to fully portray the narrator’s unraveling mental state, “J’en mourrai” could be a useful tool to work on character development and experimenting with vocal color to reflect mood. Also, the student can work to maintain vocal integrity while expressing anger and anxiety – two emotions that tend to create tension in our bodies and throats. All of these are valuable skills for singers of every level.

“L’Absence”

Context

“L’Absence” (Absence) was written in 1844 and first published in 1850 in a collection called 10 mélodies par Pauline Viardot: Album de chant pour 1850. (Ten Songs of Pauline Viardot: Singing Album for 1850). The piece was originally set in Spanish with the title “Caña española” (Spanish song), a song that Viardot herself
enjoyed performing.\textsuperscript{41} “Caña española” uses the untitled text of an anonymous Spanish poet, and since there is no mention of any writer of the French translation, it’s possible that Viardot may have supplied the translation herself. Some of the French is similar to the original Spanish and though most lines do not translate exactly, the overall theme of an abandoned lover is the same. Viardot dedicated this work to Giacomo Meyerbeer, a friend and composer with whom she enjoyed several musical collaborations. Meyerbeer was an admirer of Viardot’s talent, and he wrote the leading female role of Fidès in his opera \textit{Le Prophète} for her to sing. \textit{Le Prophète} premiered in 1849, one year before the publication of “L’Absence” so it’s possible that Viardot’s dedication of this piece was made during the opera’s production period. “L’Absence” tells the story of an angry, hurt narrator who has been rejected and betrayed by her lover.

\textbf{Translation}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
Aux longs tourments de l'absence & In long torments of absence \\
Le seul remède est mourir & The only cure is to die \\
Dans la triste indifférence & In sad indifference \\
Pourquoi si longtemps languir? & Why languish for so long? \\
Sans repos, sans espérance? & Without rest, without hope? \\
Est-ce vivre que souffrir? & Is living only suffering? \\
Aux longs tourments de l'absence & In long torments of absence \\
Le seul remède est mourir. Ah! & The only cure is to die. Ah! \\
Lorsque je tiens ma promesse, & When I keep my promise, \\
Ingrat, de t'aimer toujours, & Ungrateful one, to always love you, \\
Peut-être une autre maîtresse & Perhaps another mistress \\
T'énivre d'autres amours. & Intoxicates you with other love. \\
C'est hélas! trop de souffrance, & It is alas! too much pain. \\
Je sens mon coeur défaillir. & I feel my heart becoming faint. \\
Aux longs tourments de l'absence & In long torments of absence \\
Le seul remède est mourir. Ah! & The only cure is to die. Ah! \\
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{41} Patrick Waddington, \textit{The Musical Works of Pauline Viardot-Garcia (1821-1910)}, 5.
Musical Analysis

“L’Absence is a short piece in binary form, with the addition of a final line of music that mirrors the final line of the A section. It uses a range of C4 through F5, making it suitable for most young female voices. The A section remains primarily within the span of D4 to D5, with only four brief touches on C4, all which should be manageable even for soprano singers who do not yet have reliable command of the lower voice; the rhythmic and melodic patterns of these instances are speech-like and do not require sustained, lyrical tone. The B section moves freely in ascent and descent between G4 and F5.

The song’s intervallic motion moves almost exclusively step-wise, with the exception of two instances of D5 to D4 descents at the song’s conclusion and the conclusion of section A. The vocal line is melodically intuitive and well-supported harmonically.

Looking at the key signature of two flats, the song appears to be in Bb major or G minor, but like many songs from the Spanish music tradition, “L’Absence” utilizes the “Spanish phrygian” or “phrygian dominant” scale. In a typical, unaltered phrygian scale, the third mode of the major scale according to the key signature is used. In “L’Absence” the key signature is Bb major, but by using the third mode, the scale begins and ends on D, i.e., D-Eb-F-G-A-Bb-C-D. What changes a phrygian scale to its “Spanish” or “dominant” version is an additional adjustment - the adjustment of using the raised seventh (F#) from the key signature’s relative minor key – G minor. This gives us the note set D-Eb-F#-G-A-Bb-C-D. Viardot alternates between the unaltered and Spanish phrygian modes throughout the song. While this paper will not explore this topic at any
additional depth, it is useful for both teacher and student to understand how this piece deviates from our more conventional use of relative major and minor key signatures. Some musicians may not have familiarity with the phrygian scale, but the Spanish-sounding quality of the scale will be immediately recognizable, providing a tonal reference point for many singers.

Rhythmically, the singer’s line mimics speech and there are few sustained notes. The majority of notes are eighth notes, with nearly every line punctuated by ornamental sixteenth notes over a single syllable, a popular feature of Spanish song. The end of the A section and the song’s conclusion are the only instances where sustained singing is required. This is on the exclamation Ah! – an outcry of frustration where the dramatic intensity of the moment is matched by sustained, relentless sound on a single pitch. In both instances, this is a D5 held for four measures followed by a slurred drop to D4, which is also sustained (See Figure 3.14).

![Figure 3.14. Sustained octaves, with the option of eliminating two measures if necessary, mm. 23-30.](image)

While the A section offers very little notation in terms of dynamics or articulation, the B section has fortissimo markings as well as frequent use of marcato accents, which both serve to make this section sound like unrestrained, angry shouting. Here, the narrator
is freely emoting her disgust about her lover’s infidelity. This calls for solid breath technique that allows the student to sing fully and characterize dramatically without compromising vocal health.

With the exception of the octave Ds just discussed, the phrases throughout the song tend to be two or four measures in length and provide ample opportunity for breathing that allows each phrase a fresh start. Although rests are not written in to the phrase endings, it is appropriate for singers to breathe between them since they are often separated by commas, periods or breath marks and a quick breath will support the communication of the text. The sustained D5 to D4 sections are perhaps the most difficult in terms of breath stamina, as they hold for eight measures at the close of the A section and ten measures at the conclusion of the song. While this may sound like an extreme task, the tempo is fast enough to make this manageable with practice. Alternatively, Viardot indicates that one measure of D5 and one measure of D4 can be omitted – *Ses deux mesures peuvent être supprimées* – presumably in the event that this phrase is too difficult for the singer to sustain (See Figure 3.14 above).

**Pedagogical and Performance Considerations**

“L’Absence” requires a fiery delivery and although its tempo is marked as *Andantino*, the eighth and sixteenth note rhythms provide momentum that gives plenty of motion to the song. Viardot’s frequent use of *marcato* accents accentuate moments of contempt that naturally inspire slowing rubato until they are resolved into the spilling sixteenth note ornaments, like the buildup of the labored climbing of a mountain and the release of uncontrolled tumbling down the other side. This is a frequently-employed style
of phrasing in traditional Spanish song, but the non-Spanish singer may not intuitively understand how to negotiate the appropriate fluctuation of tempo momentum (See Figure 3.15).

![Figure 3.15. Dramatic buildup to spilling sixteenth note ornaments, mm. 31-34.](image)

Thematically, “L’Absence” requires an emotional maturity that not all young singers will relate to, as well as the ability to translate feelings of anger into musical expression. Viardot has set the phrases perfectly for this task with the buildup and release just discussed, but the best delivery of this piece will include a raw, emotional vulnerability that not all singers will find easy to convey early in their studies.

“L’Absence’s Andantino tempo is easily accomplished by inexperienced singers without a confident command of the French language. None of the words need be enunciated rapidly, and in cases where rapid rhythms are written, they take place over melismata – single vowel sounds stretched over multiple notes. Nearly every phrase includes nasal vowel sounds and schwa vowels, but the tempo will provide singers the opportunity to negotiate the foreign sounds at a reasonable speed.

Musicians with exposure to European classical music may recognize “L’Absence” as a piece styled with Spanish idioms and harmonic colors. It falls into the category of cante jondo or cante hondo, which refers to a number of Flamenco-based song styles that came out of the Andalusian region of Spain. Cante jondo can be
translated as “deep song,” and refers to a song where the harmonic color and lyrics are coupled to depict the tragic and painful aspects of life and love. The caña is just one of many types of cante jondo, so Viardot’s original Spanish title, Caña espanola, shows her intent to evoke the tradition of caña.42

Both the opening and closing sections of “L’Absence” have a plaintive quality, underscored by a repetitive harmonic progression of three chords – D-Eb/D-Cm/D – which equates to I-II-VII, all with a D pedal tone in the bass (See Figure 3.16).

![Opening chord progression](image)

Figure 3.16. Opening chord progression; narrator emotions intense but internalized, mm. 1-3.

In these sections, there are softer dynamics and the vocal line is at its lowest – as though the narrator’s emotions are being kept close to the heart, held inwardly. This harmonic progression modulates with identical patterns that tonicize around Bb, F and then G, respectively, each time increasing the emotional intensity of the voice’s melody until the song’s B section erupts into full, uninhibited sounds of rage. Here, the vocal line is at its highest and the angry sixteenth-note ornamental passages are further highlighted by fortissimo outbursts in the piano accompaniment and tumultuous tonicizations that

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shift rapidly, like the rapid alternations of a frantic mind. In the end, there is the quieted return of the opening three-chord progression with the return to the D as tonic, a sound that indicates that although the narrator has gone through an extreme emotional catharsis, all ends just as it began – unresolved, internalized and isolated.

**Pedagogical Application**

Since most of the text is set in speech-approximated rhythmic patterns, “L’Absence” lends itself perfectly to using non-sung practice sessions where the singer can focus on speaking through the words in their written rhythms. This is an ideal method for accustoming the young, non-French speaker to the unfamiliar sounds and syllabic stresses of the language. Dramatically, the singer must establish clear shifts in emotional color and intensity between the A and B sections. Viardot’s specific articulation notations in the B section, and the obvious lack of such notation in the A section, provide clear entry-points for young singers to experiment with using the voice to paint discernable differences in mood. However, the loud dynamics, frequent accents and ascent into the *passaggio* that the B section calls for may create a tendency toward using excessive breath force, strain and over-singing, in general. It is essential that the teacher watch for these tendencies in less-experienced students, especially working to keep the dramatic communication of the text supported correctly through healthy habits of breathing and relaxed bodily posture.
“Sérénade”

Context

“Sérénade” comes from the 1882 collection, *Six mélodies, Deuxième série* (Six Songs, Second Series). Viardot wrote four sets of songs that include *Six mélodies* in the title, but this song will only be found in the second series. The text was written by the nineteenth century French writer, Théophile Gautier. The depth of Viardot’s relationship with Gautier is not known, but he was an admirer of her work and was known to be present at many of her operatic performances. The story is one of secret lovers, attempting to tryst without being discovered.

Translation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sur le balcon où tu te penches</td>
<td>Onto the balcony from which you lean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je veux monter, efforts perdus!</td>
<td>I want to rise, it’s useless!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il est trop haut, et tes mains blanches</td>
<td>It is too high, and your white hands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N'atteignent pas mes bras tendus.</td>
<td>Don't reach my outstretched arms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pour déjouer ta duègne avare,</td>
<td>In order to thwart your grumpy governess,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jette un ruban, un collier d'or;</td>
<td>Throw a ribbon, a golden necklace;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ou des cordes de ta guitare</td>
<td>Or from some strings on your guitar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tresse une échelle, ou bien encor...</td>
<td>Weave a ladder, or better yet…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ôte tes fleurs, défais ton peigne,</td>
<td>Toss your flowers, undo your comb,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penche sur moi tes cheveux longs,</td>
<td>Lean your long hair onto me,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Torrent de jais dont le flot baigne</td>
<td>Torrents of jet black where the waves bathe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ta jambe ronde et tes talons.</td>
<td>Your round leg and your heels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aident par cette échelle étrange,</td>
<td>Helped by this strange ladder,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Légèrement je gravirai,</td>
<td>Gently I will climb,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et jusqu'au ciel, sans être un ange,</td>
<td>And up to the sky, without being angel,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dans les parfums je monterai!</td>
<td>In the sweet fragrances I will rise!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43 The other collections of six songs include *Six melodie et une havanaise* (1880), *Six melodies* (1887) and *Six melodies pour une voix* (1892).

Musical Analysis

“Sérénade” is through-composed, with four distinct sections. Viardot’s own description indicates that it is intended for the baritone or contralto voice, although there is nothing about the range that would preclude this piece from being sung by any female voice type. The score notates the vocal line in bass clef with a range of C3 to F4, but for the purposes of this essay I will discuss this in terms of the higher octave that would presumably accommodate a female voice, C4 to F5. Sérénade’s vocal line rests primarily in the span of F4 to C5 for most of the piece, a notably rich register for contraltos and baritones, the voice types for which this piece was written. Only the final phrase of the song requires carriage up from C5 to F5, which is during the song’s climax.

The melody line is a rollicking 6/8 built primarily around eighth and quarter notes. Most of the motion is stepwise or skipping by thirds, like the climbing or skipping of the visitor’s footsteps. There is only one interval larger than a fourth, meaning that the singer will not need to traverse registers quickly; transitions up and down the vocal range take place gradually. The singer’s dynamics range from piano to forte with several instances of crescendi as well as crescendi followed by diminuendi. This dynamic variation mirrors the inward and outward emotionality of the lovers – secretive at times, and at other times, uninhibited. The piano accompaniment has dynamic notations that range from pp to sf, with an interesting play between piano and sforzando throughout the piece, and even using both within a single measure. Again, this interplay of volume extremes reflects the two aspects of mood that the lover’s feel – the secrecy that aims to conceal their meeting, and the unavoidable jolts of excitement that anticipate the tryst (See Figure 3.17).
Viardot notates articulation sparingly. Accents are strategically placed on syllables that fall on beats one and four, often on words that could be considered key to the plot of the text. For example, in measure eight there are accents on the words *est* and *haute*, which serve to bring out the line *Il est trop haute* (It is too high) and emphasize the languishing burden of being unable to reach one’s beloved who is perched far above on a balcony (See Figure 3.18).

Although one could posit that the entire piece is intended to be sung *legato*, only the second section has slurs written in to the score. This adds a blurry, mysterious color to the music, appropriate to the text where the narrator is scheming to find a way around the separation.

Rhythmically, this song should not present much challenge to a young singer unless she is inexperienced in reading 6/8 meter. The contagious swing of the piano part
will naturally guide the singer into a feeling of two to prevent any tendency to over-emphasize the subdivision of six beats. The only instances of sixteenth notes are on short, single-syllable melismata, intended as flirtatious ornamentation.

For most of the song, the singer has two-measure phrases that are punctuated by commas, breath marks or rests. There is adequate time to prepare the breath and the phrase entrances tend to be either on the downbeat, or else as eighth note pickups to the downbeat. The breath timing should be intuitive to most singers. The only exceptional entrance is in measure five, where the entrance is a quarter note on beat five after an eighth rest. While this syncopation adds drama and intrigue to the song, the entrance may be awkward for less-experienced musicians, or it may be easily overlooked (See Figure 3.19).

![Figure 3.19. The only syncopated pickup note in the song, one that is easy to overlook, m. 5.](image)

**Pedagogical and Performance Considerations**

The tempo marking for “Sérénade” is simply Moderato. While this vague instruction doesn’t convey much in terms of mood or speed, the meter and harmonic coloring will help to set the pace. The rich colors and swinging rhythms of the piano provide a certain gravitas that will keep the pulse steady and prevent the singer from rushing.

While the tempo is not exceedingly fast, it is a bit wordy – that is to say, nearly every note of the rhythmic, jaunty melody has its own syllable. With four distinct
sections, there are a lot of colorful images using words that are not often seen in elementary-level French. This may provide challenge in the memorization process. Additionally, the physical coordination of so many consecutive syllables may be a challenge for a young student who is not familiar with French, and many syllables are nasal vowels sung throughout the singer’s range and within the passaggio.

Each of the four sections of “Sérénade” has its own harmonic language. The first is in F minor, with a rhythmic piano introduction that alternates between the tonic chord and minor dominant. The progression slinks through a variety of unexpected tonal centers throughout the verse, finally ending with the opening alternation of F and Cm. The mysterious movement, rich with chromaticism and deep bass notes, provides the perfect backdrop for the scene that is taking place – the narrator’s longing for his beloved, and his painful conundrum – how can he ever reach her balcony? The second section begins with a chromatic, descending bassline with the indication of piano, like cautiously placed footsteps, as the narrator hatches the plan to sneak around the governess. Next, with the mention of crafting a ladder made of guitar strings, the accompaniment becomes arpeggiated much like the broken chords of a guitar.

The third section is a dramatic departure from the first two. Suddenly, the parallel major key – F major – predominates, with broken chord clusters that sound other-worldly. These chromatic harmonies are supported by an F3 pedal tone in the bass, adding rich color that supports the text. (See Figure 3.20).
The text sung on top of this progression is equally sensuous – a description of flowers and cascading hair. Eventually, the accompaniment winds itself around the text of the beloved’s shapely leg and high heel shoe, opening into section four – treble staff sixteenth notes that twinkle like stars and *staccati* in the left hand that are plucked with a *pizzicato*-like touch. Here, the narrator’s voice ascends higher and higher, describing his ascent into the heaven of the balcony, as though lifted by angels, and finally the song ends simply in F major.

**Pedagogical Application**

Thoughtful consideration of the piano score is always useful to the singer, but young singers may not yet have developed this habit. There is great benefit in thorough study of piano accompaniment of “Sérénade,” as Viardot has skillfully built in sensuality, mystery and anticipation into the piano score – all qualities that the singer must also convey through the delivery of text. As described above, each of the four sections convey distinctive aspects of the tryst, and both emotional and musical maturity is required of the singer in order to bring the unique qualities of each section to life. This piece offers an additional opportunity to guide a young student in the storytelling and character-development aspects of performing art song.
In terms of vocal challenge, there is the obvious issue of frequent syllable changes that was previously mentioned. The many variations of vowel and consonant shape should be practiced slowly so that each distinctive sound is heard and can be seamlessly blended into its successive sound. It may also be useful to practice at a slow tempo when approaching the phrases with pickup notes, since singers may tend to throw these notes away in favor of emphasizing the downbeat the follows. The rollicking meter might further contribute to this potential pitfall. Being conscientious about phonating through the pickup and continuing to roll tone into the downbeat will eliminate this tendency.

The final phrase of the song, *Dans les parfums je monterai*, may prove to be the most difficult passage and there are several reasons for this. During this phrase, most female voices will be climbing through their second *passaggio*, a region of the voice that is already tenuous for young singers. The sustained, chromatic ascent requires consistent breath flow without neck, tongue or jaw tension – a particularly difficult task in the C5-F5 range - and Viardot has compounded this difficulty by notating diminuendo on the second half of the phrase. Additionally, the final syllable “-ai,” may lead to excess tongue tension or else breathy, diffused tone in young singers, both habits that inhibit the possibility of a healthfully produced, *piano* dynamic on F5. This single phrase, however, could be valuable teaching opportunity and by continually encouraging the mechanics of breath support and applying techniques to enhance focused tone (i.e., semi-occluded vocal tract exercises), students are sure to find success.
“Villanelle”

Context

“Villanelle” is part of the collection *Dix melodies par Pauline Viardot: Album de chant pour 1850*. The text comes from the 1829 poetry collection *Esquisses poétiques* by Édouard Turquety, a poet previously discussed, and the song is dedicated to General Alexei Lvoff, a Russian composer who was a close friend of Viardot’s. The villanelle is traditionally known to be a nineteen-line poem with a strict rhyming scheme consisting of five tercets (three lines of verse) followed by a quatrain (four lines of verse), but according to the American Academy of Poets:

French poets who called their poems “villanelle” did not follow any specific schemes, rhymes, or refrains. Rather, the title implied that…their poems spoke of simple, often pastoral or rustic themes.

Viardot’s setting follows this trend, rather than the traditional formula.

Translation

Voici venir sur la pelouse
Les rayons du soleil qui meurt:
Avec son murmure enchanteur,
Voici venir l'ombre jalousie.
J'écoute, et les voix du printemps
Font gémir la feuille éveillée;
J'aime le soir et la veillée,
La veillée est douce, et j'attends.

J'attends que la forêt se voile,
Et qu'au fond du ciel mon regard
Se perde et rencontre au hasard
Le regard tremblant d'une étoile.

Here come on the lawn
The dying rays of the sun:
With his enchanting murmur,
Here comes the jealous shade.
I listen, and the voice of spring
Makes the waking leaves sigh;
I like the evening and the vigil,
The vigil is sweet, and I wait.

I wait for the forest to become veiled,
And at the bottom of the sky my gaze
Gets lost and in a random meeting
Sees the trembling of a star.


In the middle of floating worlds,
Alone in its melancholy,
The pale moon will glide;
The vigil is sweet and I wait.

If, at least, in the same valley
Where in the evening I come to call him,
I would hear softly speaking
The one for whom I cry and who loves me!
I believe I hear him at times,
But it’s some blowing leaves.
Ah! I no longer like the vigil,
The vigil is sad and I wait.

Musical Analysis

“Villanelle” is strophic with three verses separated by a two-measure piano interlude. The range is C4 to Eb5 and the same melodic pattern is followed for each verse. The full range of notes is equally distributed across the melody, which makes “Villanelle” suitable for most female singers.

Each verse includes eight lines, broken into four pairs of antecedent and consequent phrases. The first and fourth pairs have similar melodic contour, the second is a variation, and the third has an entirely different melodic shape. Most of the motion is stepwise, with any larger intervallic leaps occurring at the beginnings and endings of phrases.

There are few dynamics notated in the score. “Villanelle” begins quietly with a piano marking in the accompaniment, a gentle sound of melancholy to mirror the narrator’s sentiments. There are no other dynamics indicated until a crescendo leads to forte in the third phrase pair of the second verse, Au milieu des mondes flottants (In the middle of floating worlds), which reflects the narrator’s intensified sorrow. This intensity is short-lived, however, and soon diminishes back to piano once the narrator has
expressed the pain of *Seule, dans sa mélancolique* (alone, in its melancholy). The only other phrase with a *forte* noted is in the third phrase pair of the final verse, *Je crois l’entendre par instants* (I believe I hear him at times), the sorrowful expression of grief and longing for the beloved who is not present, and the piano supports this with a *crescendo* over four measures. Only a single articulation marking is present throughout the score – an accent on the second syllable of *pâlie* (pale) at the end of verse two, emphasizing the colorlessness of the moon, like the colorless, empty feeling of grief. With so few dynamic or articulatory changes called for, “Villanelle” remains tranquil for most of its duration.

A gently driving 2/4 meter is maintained throughout the song, and the vocal phrases consists of mainly eighth and quarter note combinations, with sustained notes at the ends of phrases. The rhythm should be readable to all levels of musicians.

Since “Villanelle” has formulaic phrasing, it is easy for the singer to breathe every four measures if needed. With a time signature of 2/4, sustaining tone for four short measure should pose no problem for most singers. For expressive purposes, singers may choose to take breaths at the mid-sentence commas that are used frequently, but in most cases this will not be necessary.

**Pedagogical and Performance Considerations**

The tempo marking is *Allegretto*, which is sustained for most of the piece without fluctuation. The only exception to this is in the third and fourth phrase pairs of the final verse, where the narrator’s emotions reach their peak. There are several notations in the vocal line to support this emotional outburst – the dynamic increases in volume, the voice reaches into and remains within the threshold of the second *passaggio*, and a slight
increase in tempo is indicated with the marking *pressé*. This acceleration only lasts for four measures, when a *piano* dynamic returns along with the tempo marking *rallentando*. For the very last phrase pair, the original tempo recurs along with *ritardando*, a slowing that couples with the diminished volume of the piano and the quiet resurfacing of the narrator’s melancholy (See Figure 3.21).

![Figure 3.21. The narrator’s final emotional outburst, mm. 86-102.](image)

The third phrase pair of each verse – the pair that differs completely in contour and range from the other three – presents the greatest opportunity for expansion in terms of volume and emotional intensity. Here, the singer’s melody conveys frustration, temporarily breaking out of the static grieving of the other phrase pairs. This frustration is supported by the pianist, as the repetitive, duple piano rhythm that underscores the other three phrases (See Figure 3.22) suddenly shifts into arpeggiated triplets (See Figure 3.23), adding a new texture, density and rhythmic drive.

![Figure 3.22. Duple rhythm in the accompaniment that underscores the first, second and fourth phrase pairs in each verse, mm. 37-40.](image)
Additionally, the left hand introduces a lower octave of sound, emphasizing this brief moment of catharsis. Above all of this, the voice sings in its highest register and the overall effect is a dramatic interruption to the rest of the song’s tranquility. It is within these phrases that the narrator’s inward emotions temporarily expand outwardly, interrupting the stillness of grief. Once the piano returns to duple rhythm, the emotionality becomes stoic as before.

“Villanelle” is wordy. There are three eight-line verses with only partial text repetition on the final line of each verse. Memorization may not come easily to the inexperienced singer of French. Further, while the tempo is not overly fast, there are few sustained notes and generally each note has its own syllable, so vowel and consonant changes are constant. The highest notes are Eb5 and F5, and most of the vowel sounds on these notes should be manageable and easily modified while keeping a relaxed and open throat.

“Villanelle” follows the same harmonic progression for each of the three verses that closely ties to the narrator’s emotional catharsis. It revolves around a tonic of C minor for the first phrase, then a transformation into tonicization around G major for the
second, an expansive opening into Eb major on the third phrase that alternates with D diminished seventh, and C minor re-tonicized for the fourth phrase, which was foreshadowed by the diminished seventh chords of phrase three. This progression provides rich emotional variation for each verse that could be described as: 1) inward melancholy (C minor), 2) melancholy that evolves into a glimmer of hope (G major), 3) externalized emotionality that alternates like the struggle of light and dark (Eb major and D diminished-seventh) until it resolves back into 4) inward melancholy (C minor), which has prevailed.

**Pedagogical Application**

Since the text is set conversationally, it is useful to rehearse the diction by speaking in rhythm. Students may adjust the tempo as needed to account for the frequent vowel and consonant changes until the muscle memory of the diction can take root. Continuing to send breath through the spoken syllables while ensuring that the vowel sound is maintained for the entire duration of the syllable will prevent the tendency of many singers who are inexperienced in French, namely, the added diphthong effect that occurs when the next syllable’s beginning consonant is anticipated early. In *The Art of French Song: 19th and 20th Century Repertoire*, Roger Nichols addresses this potential pitfall:

> Perhaps the most important one [principle] for an English-speaking singer is that vowels and diphthongs before a consonant retain their pure character and do not anticipate the mouth shape of that consonant: the vowel sounds in ‘sou’ [su] and ‘ri’ [ri] remain unchanged in ‘sourire.’ The English tendency is to bastardise the vowels into something approaching ‘soueriere’ [souəriərə].

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Since “Villanelle” is strophic, singers will need to find new dramatic motivation for each verse, avoiding the temptation of getting caught up in the repetition of the formulaic melody. While the overall emotional mood does not change significantly across the three verses, it is important that the performers of the song go further than the notes and rhythms on the page and identify nuances of color and meaning in the text. This type of subtle score study is an invaluable tool to singers of all levels and it must be consciously cultivated.

“La Petite chevrière”

Context

“La Petite chevrière” (The little goatherd) is the second song in the collection Dix melodies par Pauline Viardot: Album de chant pour 1850. The poet of the text is unknown, but there is a dedication written in the score to Madame Émilie Gaveaux Sabatier, a nineteenth century soprano who had an extensive career of over twenty years singing in chamber and salon concert throughout Paris, occasionally performing alongside Viardot. Sabatier was known as La fauvette de salons (The songbird of salons), since it seemed she was born with a voice that was made for singing – just like a bird. Viardot certainly pays tribute to Sabatier by citing her nickname – fauvette – in the

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49 Ibid, 260.
opening phrase. “La Petite chevrière” is a light-hearted song that shows a moment in the life of a happy goatherder who joyfully wanders the grasslands with only the company of goats and a loyal dog.

Translation

Ah! c'est déjà ma fauvette 
Qui chante sur le pommier; 
J'ai dormi longtemps; 
Allons il est temps! 
Il est temps, car la clochette 
Sonne au cou de mon bélier. 
Allons, mes chevreaux gentils, 
Suivez-moi, grands et petits, 
Allons faire la dinette, 
Sous les chênes du sentier. 
Hé là bas, là bas, 
Ne vous battez pas Ah! 
La la hi-o la la ha, etc. 
Qu'il fait bon dans la montagne 
Où personne ne me voit 
De jolis oiseaux 
Boivent aux ruisseaux. 
Mais là-bas dans la campagne 
On étouffe sous un toit 
On ne voit que des méchants 
Qui maltraitent les enfants. 
Là-haut Finaut m'accompagne, 
Et me mène au bon endroit; 
C'est qu'il m'aime bien, 
Mon bon petit chien. Ah! 
La la hi-o la la ha, etc.

Musical Analysis

This song is strophic, with two verses that both use the identical piano accompaniment. The vocal phrases for each verse follow an irregular, though somewhat repetitive pattern: 1) an A phrase for eight measures, 2) a B phrase for four measures, 3) an A phrase for eight measures, 4) a C phrase for eight measures that bears resemblance
to phrase B, 5) an A phrase for eight measures, 6) a B phrase for three measures and 7) a coda that suddenly changes style completely into the yodel of a goatherd.

The vocal range of “La Petite chevrière” includes D4 to F5, but the tessitura is primarily G4 to F5. This song would suit a young soprano with a light, nimble voice that is comfortable in using middle voice and the entry to head voice. “La Petite chevrière” tends to use small intervals – thirds, seconds and occasionally fourths – and most of the motion descends, often using a recurring broken Bb triad that at times resembles a yodeling pattern.

Viardot notates very little in the vocal line other than notes and rhythms. There are no dynamic markings given, only two fermata, and a single marcato accent in the final phrase. The first fermata indicates the end of the shouted commands to the goats, just before the goatherd spontaneously yodels. The second appears over an eighth rest during the yodel, providing playfulness and suspense for the listener just before the final V7-I cadence.

The piano score adds minimal interpretive instruction to this – an opening dynamic of pianissimo, which lends itself to the serenity of a peaceful day of herding, a slight increase to piano, and a crescendo that is indicated over ten measures. In verse one, the increase in volume mirrors the intensity of commands given to the goats, getting louder and louder until the goatherd relaxes and pauses on the first fermata. In verse two, the crescendo underlies the narrator’s description of her beloved dog up until the fermata, where she pauses and then returns to the task of calling out to the herd with a yodel.

Accompanying the yodel, the piano return to a softer dynamic, allowing the singer’s line to be showcased. Although the volume is low, there are frequent marcato
accents and dotted rhythms that provide an entirely different character in the piano score. This creates a playful duet between singer and pianist, with the jovial spontaneity of a herder singing freely into the open air, and the bouncy steps of frolicking goats and an energetic dog.

“La Petite chevrière” uses simplistic rhythms during the A, B and C sections of each verse ranging from dotted half notes to the occasional sixteenth note. What may intimidate inexperienced musicians is the frequent use of grace notes that are added to otherwise straightforward, uncomplex rhythms (See Figure 3.24).

Figure 3.24. Frequent use of grace notes, mm. 27-28.

These should not present an issue, but the teacher may need to explain their implementation. On the final yodel phrase, there are eight groupings of sixteenth notes interspersed over the eight measures – the most rapid rhythms of the song represented. These are intended to be spontaneous and playful – exuberant sounds on non-sensical syllables, and the singer should not overthink or over overcomplicate this section technically.

With the exception of the A phrases, breathing opportunities are plentiful and most phrases provide the option to reset the breath every two measures if needed. The A phrases would better be served by less frequent breathing, as there are stretches of six and eight measures that do not have rests, commas or breath marks expressed. At the same time, if the student needs to take more frequent breaths during the A phrases, this is not
problematic to the text or the music. However, the contrast of long A phrases with the shorter B and C phrases would provide an interesting textural variation that might be useful to explore.

**Pedagogical and Performance Considerations**

“Le Petite chevrière” is marked *Allegretto moderato*. It is intended to be a joyfully-sung, carefree tune about a pleasant day in the mountains, tending goats and enjoying the moment. It’s worth noting that the title feminizes the word that is typically *chevrier*, so this is definitely intended to be the story of a female goatherd. Since there are few articulatory or dynamic markings for the singer, there is freedom to personalize one’s presentation of the song. As discussed above, there are two strategically-placed *fermate* in the vocal line. Both of them are unexpected to the listener, and a performer could enjoy these moments dramatically with a bit of playful audience teasing.

The A section text is set at a moderate pace using half notes and quarter notes and allowing plenty of time for enunciation. Since these are the longest phrases of the song and they are sustained in the threshold of the second *passaggio*, this section will likely be the most taxing for young singers. It is helpful to note, however, that the text during these sections uses many open vowel sounds and easily modified nasal vowel sounds which will assist in keeping the jaw and tongue relaxed. The B and C sections use uneven rhythms set at a quicker pace, but these are still delivered at a reasonable speed that should not cause issue for most singers.

“La Petite chevrière” is in the key of Bb major and until the final yodel, there are no significant modulations, just as there are no significant changes in mood or scene for the narrator. For most of the song, both hands play an octave above the treble clef staff.
affecting a buoyant, lively sound of pastoral landscape – sparkling sunshine, the humming of insects, or the jumping of goats as they play and roam. This is accomplished via a bouncy rhythmic motif that alternates between the hands on every half beat (See Figure 3.25).

Figure 3.25. Sounds of the pastoral landscape, mm. 1-4.

During the yodel – la la hi-o la ha la ya la la ha la ha la ha la hio la la haou yao la yao, yao – the piano changes significantly to reflect the joyful call of the goatherd. Rather than hearing the spontaneous narration of her experience in the bouncing Bb section, there is a sudden shift to alternating measures of F and F7 chords. This is also the first time in the entire song that the left hand has played in the bass clef, providing a richness to her joyful call and a weight to emphasize her authority. Presumably, the goats respond to her summons. Although this part of her song is commanding, there is still a happy buoyancy portrayed by the piano’s dotted rhythms as her goats playfully bound to the herd (See Figure 3.26).
Figure 3.26. Yodel that completes each of the two verses, mm. 47-54.

The busy piano accompaniment constantly motivates the vocal line, which enters with a swaying melody that is quite a different from the piano. The vocal line has the feel of a nursery rhyme, a children’s song or the natural way that a child might spontaneously sing. The swaying motion is further accentuated by triple meter that allows the measures to be felt in one, in spite of the busy piano accompaniment, which also conveys a childlike character. Although the phrase lengths and pattern of phrases are irregular, they work perfectly in the context of this song to express the animated, uncontrived mind and song of a happy child.

**Pedagogical Application**

“La Petite chevrière,” while not complicated, does require a fair amount of vocal flexibility. The unconventional phrase pattern includes quick and frequent shifts in vocal style – sometimes smooth, sometimes syncopated and of course, a florid section of rapidly-moving notes that effect a yodel. Although there are plenty of opportunities to
breathe between the phrases, without the predictability of traditional four-measure phrases, the singer must prepare breath at different speeds and intervals. This will require practiced coordination.

Some singers may shy away from this song because it narrates a child’s point of view and may be perceived as unsophisticated, especially by young students who are anxious to sing vocally impressive repertoire. “La Petite chevrière,” may not be the show-stopping song in a recital set, but when programmed around dramatically or vocally-dense music, it would certainly provide a welcomed contrast to both singer and listener alike.

“La Main”

Context

“La Main” (The Hand) was published in 1880 within the collection, *Six mélodies et une havanaise*.50 The poetry was written by Henri-Charles Read, and is included in the book *Poésies posthumes de Henri-Charles Read* (Posthumous Poetry of Henri-Charles Read), which was published in 1886. Read lived a short life, from 1857 to 1876, dying at the age of only nineteen.51 Viardot’s song, “La Main,” was written six years before the anthology of Read’s poems was published. Although there is no information available about Viardot’s connection to Read, she was certainly aware of this poem long before it

50 See “J’en mourrai!” for description of havanaise.

was published. Although written from a conventional male gaze, Viardot specified that
the song should be sung by a tenor or soprano. The text describes the subtle beauty of a
woman’s hand.

Translation

J’aime la blancheur de la main, I like the whiteness of the hand,
Le doigt bien fin, The thin finger,
L’ongle bien rose, The pink nail,
La pâleaur auprès du carmin Resting!
Repose!

Quand je vois une belle main, When I see a beautiful hand,
La nuit je la retrouve en songe At night I find it again in dream
Et souvent And often all the next day
tout le lendemain I reflect upon it!
J’y songe!

Et si quelque femme, demain, And if any woman, tomorrow,
Me plait et m’attire auprès d’elle, Pleases me and attracts me to her,
On pourra dire que sa main One could say that her hand
Est belle.

Musical Analysis

The original poem of “La Main” is clearly set in three sections, and while the start
of each of Viardot’s verses begin with similar melodies, each one transforms uniquely.
One might consider this song to be strophic, but each strophe is through-composed. The
range of “La main” is F#4 to F#5, and the voice remains on the treble staff for the entire
song. Until the final phrases of Est belle!, the song follows a pattern of ascending lines
that start on either F#4 or A4 and climb to E5, F5, or F#5. These climbs mirror the
narrator’s feelings of desire and anticipation, progressing through harmonies that are
often unexpected, using frequent accidentals. Most of the phrases use quarter notes and
eighth notes, and along with the piano’s constant eighth note rhythm that continues up to the final two measures, one hears the sound of graceful fingertips, the *doigt bien fin* of a woman’s hand (See Figure 3.27).

![Figure 3.27. Repeating eighth note rhythm, mm. 1-3.](image)

Viardot marks dynamics ranging from *pp* to *f*, with numerous indications of *crescendo* and *diminuendo* on a single phrase, expanding and contracting emotionally. Most of the song, however, maintains a softer dynamic with the piano murmuring delicately beneath the vocal line. There are no articulation markings in the voice, an indication that none of the notes should jump out of the line or be specifically emphasized. Similarly, the only articulatory indications for the piano are slurs that are used almost continually through the song, providing a smoothly flowing elegance that underscores the narrator’s graceful descriptions. All of the vocal phrases span two measures, providing obvious breathing opportunities indicated by rests. Most of the vocal onsets begin in mid-range, and end on notes between C#5 and F5. The phrases are quite manageable for most soprano voices, though the mezzo-soprano or alto singer may find it difficult to release the ascending phrases without tension in this area that approaches and is within the second *passaggio*. 
Pedagogical and Performance Considerations

“La Main” has a key signature of D major and a tempo marking of Moderato, but the final verse is marked un peu plus lent (a little slower). This is the moment that the narrator expresses the anticipation and sweetness of finding his future love – his words are less hypothetical now – and the slowed tempo adds poignancy and an added quality of lyricism.

The text is delivered at a moderate pace on simple rhythms that a young student should find manageable. There is a repetitive nasal vowel [ɛ̃] that is used at the end of nearly every ascending phrase on such words as main, fin, carmin, lendemain, and demain. It is important that the singer remember that although these word endings are spelled -in and -ain, the vowel sounds must be identical so that the rhyming scheme of the text is made clear. Dr. François Germain of The Diction Police, a website devoted entirely to lyric diction, reminds singers that “the focus should be on the underlying vowel: [ɛ]” and that “[ɛ̃] should not be over-nasalized and the soft palate shouldn’t be lowered too much.” This will also allow the singer to maintain an open resonance space that will contribute to a free, relaxed quality of tone.\(^\text{52}\)

A singer might study this song in four sections. The opening has a placid, dreamy quality, with the narrator speaking hypothetically about beauty in a somewhat obtuse manner. The listener hears his vision in the quiet legato and the simplicity of the vocal line that doesn’t stray from the key signature. It is not until measure seven that we hear a

hint of unexpected color – an F#7 chord, which is the unexpected second dominant of vii – that begins at the height of a crescendo on the second syllable of carmin (carmine). Carmin is the bright color that most English-speakers would call “crimson.” The color is bold and unapologetic, and the new chord is daring, even risky, in the same way that it would be risky to share such an intimate vision.

With the exception of the rhythm in the vocal line, verse two begins identically to verse one. The narrator seems to have regained emotional composure after the burst of crimson, but the word nuit (night) is showcased by a Bdim7 chord, that evokes the mystery and sensuality that nighttime often reveals. Even less expected is the word songe (dream), which lands on an F major and highlights the unreality and spontaneity of the dream state (See Figure 3.28).

The rest of verse two adds increasingly frequent accidentals and suggestions of modulation, adding to the elusive description of the narrator’s dreams and reflections.

Verse three is no more about the past, nor is it a hypothetical description of the narrator’s feelings. In verse three, the vision becomes more concrete. The narrator describes the possibility of meeting an attractive woman tomorrow, and this causes the
piano to erupt into richer iterations of the repetitive eighth note motive, denser chords and octaves playing in both hands.

The fourth and final section begins in measure twenty-seven. The climax of this section is on the repetitions of the words *Est belle*, which are heard three times. The first time is showcased by a rolled Eb Neapolitan chord, which is the moment where the narrator’s emotions are finally in full expression. The piano supports this with *fortissimo* and this is the loudest moment of the entire song (See Figure 3.29).

![Musical notation](image)

Figure 3.29. Most dramatic phrase of the song, mm. 26-28.

The second *Est belle* is heard along with a C# major chord that is still filled with emotive wonderment, but since it is sonically a full step lower than the Eb, it has a less bombastic and externalized quality. Here the narrator is starting to regain his objectivity (See Figure 3.30).
The third *Est belle* begins to return to a more reserved universe of sound and feeling. It begins with a *diminuendo* in the piano score that becomes *pianissimo* after two measures. Likewise, the singing becomes softer, this time drawing out the word *belle* over three measures. There is a sense of suspense, as the narrator savors the beauty of his vision as long as possible, supported by chords that will finally resolve back into D major. The vocal suspense of *belle* is underscored by D/A, Bm7/A, Em7 with an A suspension that acts as a pedal tone into an A7 chord, so that the journey back to D major can finally be complete, just as the narrator’s vision finds completion in the gentler, softer and simpler mood in which it began (See Figure 3.31).

Figure 3.31. Suspense of the final *belle*, mm. 32-35.
**Pedagogical Application**

“La Main” has an unusual text. From a 21st century point of view, some young women might experience the objectification of a woman’s hand off-putting and may not find the sentiment of the song accessible. If the theme can be approached from the point of view of aesthetic beauty, sensuality, and appreciation, this may help to bridge the gap. The palette of chord colors that Viardot has chosen in this composition is ingenious, affective and deeply moving, and this short song would add a fresh and unique sound to a recital set. Students might be encouraged to reach beyond their modern interpretation of the lyrics and find a more subtle appreciation for language and tone color that transcends words on a page. “Le Main” could be a useful tool in training a young singer to develop this sort of maturity, and it also serves as an important reminder that one may not always agree with the points of view of texts or roles that one is asked to sing.
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

French music is underrepresented in the training of young classical singers. Voice teachers are often reticent to teach French at the start of a student’s classical vocal training and instead, many tend to rely upon the well-known Italian art songs that have become voice studio standards. The ten songs included in this study follow the guidelines set forth in this paper’s methodology, establishing them to be of moderately-easy vocal level. These songs offer valuable options for introducing less-experienced singers and musicians to the genre of 19th century French repertoire. Since Viardot herself was a voice pedagogue who composed many of her songs to address the development of her own pupils, this further supports the inclusion of such songs in the training of a young singer.

Additional Resources

Pauline Viardot’s vocal method book, Une heure d'étude, exercises pour voix de femmes (An Hour of Study, Exercises for Female Voices), is widely available through Alfred Publishing, Kalmus, and G. Schirmer, Inc. These include text in both English and French. Translations into Russian and German languages are also available, though may not be as readily accessible. A digital version of the book can be found on www.imslp.org.

As of this publication, all of the songs included in this analysis can be found digitally through IMSLP (www.imslp.org), Google Books (books.google.com) or HathiTrust Digital Library (www.hathitrust.org). Some of the songs are stand-alone compositions, and others can be found in the following Viardot anthologies: Dix
mélodies: Album de chant pour 1850, Album de Mme. Viardot-Garcia, Six Chansons du XVe-siècle, Six melodies et une havanaise and Six melodies, Deuxième série.

**Future Initiatives**

This project has opened several doors into future performance collaborations related to the compositions of Pauline Viardot. Planning is underway for a project of lecture recitals, Mémoire: A Salon of Pauline Viardot, to be given at the University of Michigan and several other universities. Another recital is in preparation that will feature Viardot’s twelve transcriptions of Chopin’s mazurkas.

There are many related topics that deserve to be researched and were not included within the scope of this project. One is to expand this guide into a complete pedagogical catalogue of all 100 art songs composed by Pauline Viardot. Since most of her songs are unknown, a comprehensive publication of this sort would provide teachers with a useful handbook for incorporating new repertoire into their voice studios.

Pauline Viardot was a close friend of the French feminist writer, George Sand, and these women researched and recorded text and melodies of French folk music. There is little information available about their project, so further research would bring to light additional historical contributions of these two unconventional 19th century women.

While most of Viardot’s songs are available digitally, the print quality of these scores is often unclear and difficult to read. New publications of Viardot’s lesser known works, with editorial comment and corrected errata, would be a valuable contribution.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


### Appendix A:

**Song Listing with Key Features**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song Title</th>
<th>Poet</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Tessitura</th>
<th>Pedagogical Issues Addressed</th>
<th>Song Characteristics</th>
<th>Timing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“L’Ombre et le jour”</td>
<td>Édouard Turquety</td>
<td>F4-F5</td>
<td>F4-Bb4</td>
<td>Breath stamina, balanced registration, tension release, <em>parlando</em> singing.</td>
<td><em>Andantino</em>. Lyrical song about lovers who will be parted by daylight. Predominantly middle voice.</td>
<td>1’50”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Les Attraits”</td>
<td>Victor Hugo</td>
<td>E4-E5</td>
<td>Treble staff</td>
<td>Alternating articulation, expression of double <em>entendre</em> through vocal color, exposed vocal line, successive nasal vowels.</td>
<td><em>Allegretto tranquillo</em>. Small intervals. Sensuous, metaphorical description of a peach.</td>
<td>1’27”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Aimez-moi”</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>C4-Eb5</td>
<td>Treble staff</td>
<td>Meter changes, irregularly emphasized syllables, use of older French language, exposed vocal line over limited piano accompaniment.</td>
<td><em>Andante</em>. Renaissance-styled song with sparse accompaniment and irregular meter. Haunting love song.</td>
<td>2’26”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Solitude”</td>
<td>Édouard Turquety</td>
<td>G4-F#5</td>
<td>A4-D5</td>
<td>Expression of stillness without tending toward dullness, frequent ascending phrase endings that require grace and the avoidance of excess breath pressure.</td>
<td><em>Andantino</em>. Limited tessitura. Lilting song with melancholic mood using metaphors of nature to express loss and separation.</td>
<td>2’29”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“J’en mourrai!”</td>
<td>Victor Wilder, trans.</td>
<td>C#4-F5</td>
<td>D4-D5</td>
<td>Large dynamic range, descending phrases that cross registers and use accents and <em>forte</em>, dramatic, agitated vocal delivery without tension.</td>
<td><em>Agitato</em>. Frenetic soliloquy of a lover betrayed. Frequent register changes and plentiful articulatory notation. Indicated for mezzo-soprano or baritone.</td>
<td>2’20”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“L’Absence”</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>C4-F5</td>
<td>D4-D5</td>
<td>Sustained, declamatory sections with an octave descent, rapid ornamental sixteenth notes, dramatic performance style, frequent ascents into the passaggio.</td>
<td><em>Andantino</em>. Flamenco-styled song of a woman scorned. Uses phrygian mode. Mostly step-wise melodic movement.</td>
<td>1’54”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piece</td>
<td>Composer/Author</td>
<td>Key</td>
<td>1st Pitch</td>
<td>2nd Pitch</td>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Tempo</td>
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<tr>
<td>“Sérénade”</td>
<td>Théophile Gautier</td>
<td>C4-F5</td>
<td>F4-C5</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Wordy” text, engaged storytelling, rapid changes of distinct emotional colors, delivery of final ascending phrase with decreased volume.</td>
<td>Moderato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Villanelle”</td>
<td>Édouard Turquety</td>
<td>C4-Eb5</td>
<td>C4-Eb5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Three verses of text to memorize, finding new dramatic motivation for each verse, changing emotions from phrase to phrase, frequent and rapid vowel change with few sustained notes.</td>
<td>Allegretto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“La Petite chevrière”</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>D4-F5</td>
<td>G4-F5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Florid passages requiring vocal flexibility, irregular phrase pattern, rapid alternation of articulation, irregular timing of breath preparation.</td>
<td>Allegretto moderato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“La Main”</td>
<td>Henri Charles Read</td>
<td>F#4-F#5</td>
<td>Treble staff</td>
<td></td>
<td>Temporary shifts in tonal centers, occasional instances of non-intuitive melodic lines, sweeping, emotive phrases requiring lyricism, unusual text requiring mature interpretation.</td>
<td>Moderato</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B:

Recommended Resources for French Lyric Diction and French Art Song


2. The Diction Police: https://www.dictionpolice.com/


5. IPA Source: https://www.ipasource.com/


Appendix C:


French Pronunciation Charts

What follows are two representations of French pronunciations: 1. a list of all the French spellings in all positions and linkings with their IPA equivalent; and 2. a list of all IPA sounds found in the French language and their spellings. In learning to correctly pronounce French without the aid of a IPA transcriptions, I find it best for the beginning student to follow the route of the French spellings rather that working from the sounds themselves. Although there are many rules and spellings, French is an extremely regular language. With the exception of a few words with variable word endings and some proper nouns, almost all French words will follow the rules to the letter.

Part one: French Spellings - Vowel Pronunciation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French spellings for the vowel -a</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>French example with IPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-a or -â</td>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>Paris [pa:riz]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-â in a few verb forms</td>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>allâtes [a.la.taz]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-â (except as above)</td>
<td>[â]</td>
<td>pale [po.l]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-â before [e] and [z] sounds</td>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>extase [eks.ta.zo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-âl, -âle, -âlis, -âlis, -âlent</td>
<td>usually [e]</td>
<td>lacer [la.s]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-âl in some verb forms of faire when before [z]</td>
<td>[a]</td>
<td>faisais [fa.z]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-âl final</td>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>gai [ge]</td>
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<tr>
<td>-âll, -âlle</td>
<td>[aj]</td>
<td>travail [tro.vil]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-âm, -âin when final or before a consonant except -m or -n, or -h</td>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>fam [fam]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-âm, -âin when followed by a vowel</td>
<td>[en]</td>
<td>aine [e.m]</td>
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<td>-âm, -âon when final or before a consonant ex. -m or -n, or -h</td>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>famant [fa.mant]</td>
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<tr>
<td>-âm, -âon when followed by a vowel or another -m or -n</td>
<td>[en]</td>
<td>manne [ma.n]</td>
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<tr>
<td>-âu</td>
<td>[o]</td>
<td>chaud [jo]</td>
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<tr>
<td>-âu before -r</td>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>Fauré [fu.re]</td>
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<td>-âve, -âve, -âves</td>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>payer [pje]</td>
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<tr>
<th>French spellings for vowel -ê</th>
<th>IPA</th>
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<tr>
<td>-ê</td>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>été [e.t]</td>
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<td>-ê, -ê, -ê</td>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>père [pe.re]</td>
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<td>-ê before a single consonant and a vowel</td>
<td>[e]</td>
<td>cheval [ka.val]</td>
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<td>-ê before two consonants</td>
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<td>elle [e.le]</td>
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<td>-ê before final pronounced consonants</td>
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-e before final silent consonants (except -s and -t)

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<th>IPA</th>
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<td>[e]</td>
<td>pied</td>
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-ér final - generally in non-verb forms

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<td>[œ]</td>
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<td>[ɛr]</td>
<td>lèver</td>
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<td>[œr]</td>
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-er final - in verb endings and some nouns and adjectives.

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-ex final

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-et (the words meaning and)

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<td>[œ]</td>
<td>beau</td>
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<td>[œ]</td>
<td>seize</td>
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-ém & -èm when final or before a consonant ex. -m or -n, or -h

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<tr>
<td>[œ]</td>
<td>plein</td>
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<td>[œ]</td>
<td>ensemble</td>
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-ém & -èm when followed by a vowel the -e is not nasal

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<tr>
<td>[œ]</td>
<td>tenir</td>
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<td>[œ]</td>
<td>tennis</td>
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-enn & -ën when initial remain nasal except ennem [œ.mɑ.mil]

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<tr>
<td>[œm]</td>
<td>ennêl</td>
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<td>[œn]</td>
<td>ennui</td>
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-en after -i

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<tr>
<td>[œ]</td>
<td>viens</td>
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<td>[œ]</td>
<td>firmament</td>
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-en final

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<td>[œ]</td>
<td>parlent</td>
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<td>[œ]</td>
<td>heure</td>
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-eu before [s]

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<th>IPA</th>
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<tr>
<td>[œ]</td>
<td>creuse</td>
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<td>[œ]</td>
<td>Georges</td>
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-eu before a back vowel (æ, ø, u)

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<th>French</th>
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<td>[œ]</td>
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French spellings for the vowel -i

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>finir [fj.nir]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>ille [il.ø]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>Aïda [ai.da]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[j]</td>
<td>bien [bje]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[j]</td>
<td>fille [fel.ø]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[j]</td>
<td>timbre [tø.brø]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[j]</td>
<td>brin [brø]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Reprinted from IPA Source, www.ipasource.com
### French spellings for the vowel -o

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French spelling</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>French example with IPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-o preceding a consonant or a vowel</td>
<td>[ɔ]</td>
<td>doter [dɔ.ter]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-o when final sound</td>
<td>[ɔ]</td>
<td>mot [mo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ô</td>
<td>[ø]</td>
<td>ôter [ø.te]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-o before [s]</td>
<td>[ɔ]</td>
<td>rose [ro.so]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-œ and -œu</td>
<td>[œ]</td>
<td>coeur [koer]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ôi</td>
<td>[wa]</td>
<td>voix [vwa]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-œi when final or before a consonant ex. -h</td>
<td>[wɛ]</td>
<td>loin [lwɛ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ôy</td>
<td>[waj]</td>
<td>royal [ra.jal]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ou are before a stressed vowel</td>
<td>[wu]</td>
<td>oui [wi]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-œm -œn when final or before a consonant ex. -m or -n, or -h</td>
<td>[œ]</td>
<td>nom [nø]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-œn</td>
<td>[o]</td>
<td>pigeon [pi.ʒø]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ou, -œi and -œi</td>
<td>[u]</td>
<td>vous [vu]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### French spellings for the vowel -u

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French spelling</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>French example with IPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-u after g and q-</td>
<td>silent</td>
<td>guitare [gi.ta.so]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-û, -û(e), and -ue</td>
<td>[y]</td>
<td>murmure [my.my.ro]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-um and -un followed by a vowel, but not -m, -n, or -h</td>
<td>[y]</td>
<td>unanime [y.na.ni.ma]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ue when followed by -il, -îl, or -île</td>
<td>[œ]</td>
<td>orgueil [ɔr.go.œj]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-œu when final or not followed by double consonants</td>
<td>[œ]</td>
<td>queue [œ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-œu after -g and -q</td>
<td>[œ]</td>
<td>vainqueur [va.ʃ.koʁ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-u before a stressed vowel</td>
<td>[u]</td>
<td>lui [lu]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-œm and -œn when final or before a consonant except -m or -n, or -h</td>
<td>[œ]</td>
<td>brun [brœn]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### French spellings for the vowel -y

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French spelling</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>French example with IPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-y or -i except when nasal</td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>martyr [mar.tir]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ym and -yn before a vowel</td>
<td>[i]</td>
<td>hymne [i.m.na]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-yn and -ym when final or before a consonant ex. -m or -n, or -h</td>
<td>[ɛ]</td>
<td>thym [tɛ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-y initial in a word</td>
<td>[j]</td>
<td>yeux [ja]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-y between two vowels</td>
<td>[j]</td>
<td>royal [ra.jal]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consonant pronunciation

While consonant pronunciation is considerably easier than for vowels, it still offers some challenges for the singer. Each individual consonant will be presented with a minimum of two pronunciation examples: first, a general pronunciation for the single and double consonant in the initial and medial position, and second, a possible final pronunciation. If such exist, pronunciation variants in liaison, and combination will also be presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter</th>
<th>French Spelling</th>
<th>IPA</th>
<th>French Word with IPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>-b or -bb initial and medial</td>
<td>[b]</td>
<td>beau [bo]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
<td>silent</td>
<td>plomb [plom]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>followed by -s or -t</td>
<td>[p]</td>
<td>absolu [absolu]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>-c before a front vowel (-e, -i, or -y)</td>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>ciel [sje]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-cc before a front vowel (-e, -i, or -y)</td>
<td>[ss]</td>
<td>accent [ak.sje]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-c or -cc before a back vowel (-u, -o, -u) or a cons. final</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>encore [en.ko.re]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final after -n</td>
<td>silent</td>
<td>blanc [blan]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-ct final</td>
<td>silent</td>
<td>respect [respekt]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-c with the cédille [çœ.dje]</td>
<td>[s]</td>
<td>garçon [gar.son]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-ch</td>
<td>[ç]</td>
<td>blanche [blana]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-ch in words of Greek origin</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>Christ [krist]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-cqu</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>acquisition [ak.sje.kjig]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>-d or -dd initial or medial</td>
<td>[d]</td>
<td>doux [dju]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
<td>silent</td>
<td>pied [pi.m]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in liaison</td>
<td>[t]</td>
<td>grand arbre [grund.ar.br]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>-fr or -ff initial or medial</td>
<td>[f]</td>
<td>enfant [a.fan]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
<td>[f]</td>
<td>comparatif [kompai.ratif]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in liaison</td>
<td>[v]</td>
<td>neuf heures [nu.m.vœ.he]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g</td>
<td>-g before a front vowel (-e, -i, or -y)</td>
<td>[g]</td>
<td>sabotage [sabote]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-gg before a front vowel (-e, -i, or -y)</td>
<td>[gg]</td>
<td>suggestion [sijong]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-g or -gg before a back vowel (-u, -o, -u) or a cons. final</td>
<td>silent</td>
<td>sang [saj]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in liaison</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>sang et eau [saj.ek]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-ge before a back vowel (-u, -o, -u) or a consonant</td>
<td>[k]</td>
<td>pigeon [pi.gje]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-gs before a front vowel (-e, -i, or -y)</td>
<td>[g]</td>
<td>gigue [gig]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-gl before a consonant</td>
<td>[p]</td>
<td>compagnon [kompajon]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-gl</td>
<td>silent</td>
<td>doigt [doj]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>h</th>
<th>Initial -h is classified as mate and aspirate - both are always silent but.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-h</td>
<td>initial mute allows liaison or elision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-h</td>
<td>initial aspirate allows no linking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-h</td>
<td>medial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i</td>
<td>[i]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k</td>
<td>founded in words of foreign origin only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l</td>
<td>-l or -li initial or medial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ballet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>soleil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ll, -ill, and -ille (but not final -ile)</td>
<td>[j]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>famille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In these words and their derivatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tranquille</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>-m or -mn initial or medial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>flamme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>after a nasal vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>-n or -nn initial or medial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>année</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>after a nasal vowel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>-p or -pp initial or medial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-mpt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-ph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>q</td>
<td>-qu initial or medial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>Spoken French makes use of the uvular [ʁ] that is appropriate for dialogue and cabaret songs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-r or -rr initial,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-r or -rr medial or final</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>terrible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hiver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-er, -ier, or -yer final in some nouns and adjectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-er in the infinitive verb form</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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|   | -s or -ss initial or medial | [s] | sémence [sə.mɑ̃].
|   | -s medial between vowels | [z] | maison [mo.zɔ].
|   | -s final | silent | toujours [tu.zyʁ].
|   | -s final in exceptions | [s] | hêlas [e.las].
|   |   | lis [lis].
|   |   | fils [fils].
|   | in liaison | [z] | mes yeux [mɛ.zjɔ].
|   | -sc before a front vowel (-c,-i, or -y) | [s] | descendre [des.dɔ̃.drɔ].
|   | -sc before a back vowel (-u,-o,-a) or a consonant | [sk] | scandale [skɑ̃.da.lə].
|   | -sch initial or medial | [ʃ] | schéma [sɛ.mɑ].
|   |   | total [tɔ.tal].
|   | -or-oi initial or medial | [t] | glotte [ɡlo.tɔ].
|   | -ë final | silent | tuot [tu].
|   | -ë in liaison | [t] | tout un [tu.tɔ̃].
|   | -ô | [t] | Thomas [tɔ.mo̞].
|   | -ti in endings -tion and -tience | [sj] | attention [a.tɔ̃.sjɔ̃].
|   | -tie when final | [ti.ə] | sortie [sɔʁ.ə].
|   |   | souvenir [su.vɔ.nir].
|   | -v initial or medial | [v] | Wagon [va.go].
|   | -v found in words of foreign origin | [v] | texte [tek.ste].
|   | before consonants | [ks] | exemple [e.plo].
|   | before vowels or -h | [gz] | deuxiéme [du.zje.mo].
|   | in numbers | [z] | deux enfants [du.zo.lø].
|   | in liaison | [z] | sémence [sə.mɑ̃].
|   | initial or medial | [z] | zèle [ζə.lə].
|   |   | douze [du.zo].
|   | final | silent | chez [ʃe].
|   | Final as an exception | [z] | Berlioz [ber.lio].

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**Part two: A list of French sounds with some of the more common French spellings.**

Adapted and expanded from *Le Petit Robert* CD-Rom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowels</th>
<th>Consonants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[i] iː, ē, é, lye</td>
<td>[p] pêre, soupe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[o] blé, aller, chez, et, j’ai, tes</td>
<td>[t] terre, vite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɛ] lait, merci, fête, Noël, forêt, hiver, Seigneur soleil, hotel, bouquet</td>
<td>[k] coua, qui, sac, képi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[a] am, patti,</td>
<td>[b] bon, robe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɑ] pas, pâte</td>
<td>[d] dans, aide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɔ] fort, donner, sol</td>
<td>[ɡ] gar, bagne, gui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[o] mot, dôme, eau, saule</td>
<td>[f] feu, neuf, photo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[u] genou, roue</td>
<td>[s] sale, celui, ça, dessous, tasse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ø] peu, deux, creuse</td>
<td>[ʃ] chat, tache schéma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[œ] peur, meuble, ceuile</td>
<td>[v] vous, rêve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɛ] brin, plein, bain</td>
<td>[z] zéro, maison, rose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ʊ] sans, vent</td>
<td>[ʒ] je, gilet, geôle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɔ] ton, ombre, honté</td>
<td>[l] lent, sol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[œ] lundi, brun, parfum</td>
<td>[r] rue, venir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Semi-vowels</strong></td>
<td>[n] nous, tonne, animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[ɔ̃] yeux, paille, pied, panier</td>
<td>[p] agneau, vigne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[w] oui, fouet, joua, joie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[u] huile, lui</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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