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A Poetic and Musical Analysis of Fiancailles Pour Rire By Francis Poulenc with Poems by Louise De Vilmorin

Mary Elizabeth Gasson

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A POETIC AND MUSICAL ANALYSIS OF *FIANCAILLES
POUR RIRE* BY FRANCIS POULENC WITH POEMS BY
LOUISE DE VILMORIN

Mary Elizabeth Gasson

A POETIC AND MUSICAL ANALYSIS OF *FIANÇAILLES POUR RIRE*
BY FRANCIS POULENC WITH POEMS BY LOUISE DE VILMORIN

A thesis submitted to the College of the Arts in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

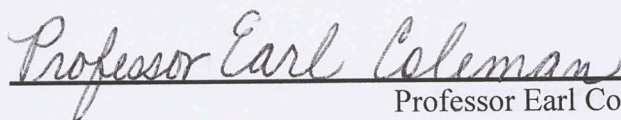
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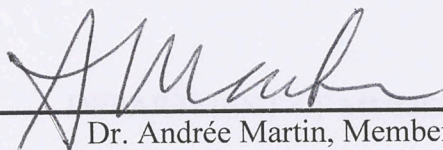
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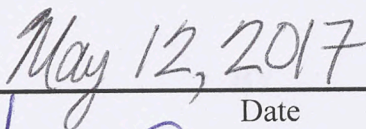
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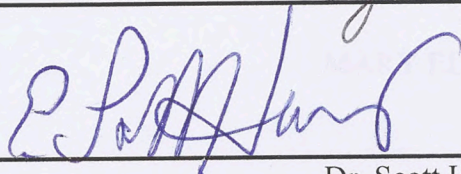
Professor Earl Coleman, Chair



Dr. Andrée Martin, Member



Date



Dr. Scott Harris, Department Chair

COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS
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BY

MARY ELIZABETH GASSON

COLUMBUS, GEORGIA

2017

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By

Mary Elizabeth Gasson

Committee Chair:

Professor Earl Coleman

Committee Member:

Dr. Andrée Martin

Signature Page Approved:

Professor Earl Coleman
Columbus State University
May 2017

ABSTRACT

Francis Poulenc is known for setting text of lesser-known poets. He set six of Louise de Vilmorin's poems from *Fiançailles pour rire* to music. The style in which Vilmorin writes is quite intriguing, while Poulenc's method of setting the text brings the mysteries of her poems to life. Their collaboration produced a charming work. The author will provide an in-depth poetic and musical analysis of Poulenc's set *Fiançailles pour rire*. This study of *Fiançailles pour rire* may be used as a performance guide.

INDEX WORDS: Francis Poulenc, Louise de Vilmorin, *Fiançailles pour rire*, French poetry, song set.

For the Glory of God

Lantern
PURE COTTON

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Paper Overview and Expectations

Francis Poulenc (1899-1963) held a significant role as a master of the French *mélodie*. His works are as pieces of art to be forever relished; his *mélodies* are some of the finest of his time. He quite enjoyed setting music to the text of lesser-known poets to music such as Louise de Vilmorin (1902-1969). He set thirteen of her poems to music; six of them are compiled in the song set *Fiançailles pour rire*. The poet compiled a book of these poetic gems and others under the same title as Poulenc's set.

This study of *Fiançailles pour rire* may be used as a performance guide. There is not a substantial amount of research regarding this set or many sources containing a full poetic and musical analysis. The style in which Vilmorin writes is quite intriguing, while Poulenc's method of setting the text brings the mysteries of her poems to life. Their collaboration produced a charming work.

Background information regarding the lives of Poulenc and Vilmorin as well as their relationship will be provided in this paper. It will include a full poetic analysis of the six poems used in Poulenc's set *Fiançailles pour rire* as well as a musical analysis of his settings. In this analysis, examples will be provided regarding syllabic count and masculine/feminine rhyme. The poet's use of word play and rhyme will also be included. The musical analysis will particularly focus on Poulenc's text painting. It is as though he vividly paints the images and mysteries of which Vilmorin describes in her poems. He accomplishes this by using different rhythms, direction of melodic lines, and specific intervals, such as augmented fourths/diminished fifths.

2. Previous Research

The research regarding the poems of *Fiançailles pour rire* and the way the composer sets them is not considerable. Abstracts of theses and dissertations pertaining to the topic can be found in ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Database.¹ There is only one viewable thesis available; another is accessible on order. Only these two copies as well as abstracts for performances of *Fiançailles pour rire* were found. There are also more than ten entries of performances including either the song set in its entirety or individual songs as a substitution for a dissertation.² The viewable thesis entitled “Selected works for soprano” is by Amy E. Mathews-Muttwill and discusses multiple works and their authors; only a portion of the study is dedicated to Poulenc’s set. There is brief analytical information on each song in the set. It also contains musical examples. In addition, Mathews-Muttwill includes biographical and historical information about the composer. There is more emphasis on the musical setting than the poems. A discussion regarding performance practice is also included.³

The dissertation that can be ordered is entitled “A study of the poems and musical settings of the songs of Francis Poulenc on the texts of Louise de Vilmorin for the female singer: A performer’s guide” and is by Renita Jane Rosser Koehn. It discusses the poems and musical settings of Poulenc using two of his sets with text by Vilmorin; these songs were composed specifically for the female singer. These include *Trois poèmes de Louise de Vilmorin* and *Fiançailles pour rire*. According to the abstract, this study appears to provide a detailed analysis of both the poet’s poems and the way Poulenc chooses to set them to music. Regarding poetic

¹ “Dissertations & Theses,” ProQuest, accessed November 4, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/dissertations/index>.

² “poulenc AND (Fiançailles pour rire),” Dissertations & Theses, last modified 2016, accessed May 8, 2017, <http://search.proquest.com/dissertations/results/71675A1286B741EEPQ/1?accountid=10196>.

³ Amy E. Mathews-Muttwill, “Selected works for soprano” (M.M. diss./thes., The University of Texas at San Antonio, 2008), 40-53.

analysis, the study of word play and literary devices are explored by Koehn. She focuses on the feminine emotion portrayed in Vilmorin's poems. The musical analysis includes aspects of vocal range and tessitura; these seem to be related to the previous study that includes songs specifically for the female singer as well as aspects such as tempi, rhythms, and melody.⁴

Aspects of the research of these previous authors are in agreement with what the reader may find in this paper. This includes Vilmorin's great use of word play in the poetry of *Fiançailles pour rire*. Other important points made include the notion that *Fiançailles pour rire* is not a song cycle but a set, and the brilliant ways in which Poulenc sets the poems to vividly paint Vilmorin's text with his use of rhythms, melodic lines, and harmonies.⁵ Since the music is a reflection of the text, it seems as though the true meaning of the poetry will be revealed in the music. Likewise, an interpretation of the poetry could further assist one in understanding the composer's setting. Poulenc even states "Each, poetry and music, should evoke the other."⁶

Pierre Bernac's book, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, provides excellent interpretation guidelines - both musical and poetic - for the set. However, the emphasis is placed on performance interpretation. He knows and understands the desires of the composer considering he collaborated with him performing his work. Elements from his book can be found intertwined throughout this research paper.⁷ Sections containing much information or translations from his book will be cited near the end of each pertaining paragraph.

⁴ Renita Jane Rosser Koehn, "A study of the poems and musical settings of the songs of Francis Poulenc on the texts of Louise de Vilmorin for the female singer: A performer's guide" (D.M.A. diss., University of Kentucky, 2003), abstract.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2006), 225.

⁷ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001).

II. COMPOSER AND POET INFORMATION

1. Composer

Francis Poulenc was born to a wealthy family in Paris, France in 1899. He composed music for piano, chamber, orchestra, voice, and the stage, including opera, incidental, and film music.⁸ Poulenc's mélodies, song cycles, and sets seemed to mark the ending of the flourishing era of the French art song.⁹ He had a gift for setting the text of poems in such a way that enabled the audience to better comprehend the meaning of the poem itself. Claude Rostand states, "It is Poulenc who should be consulted by those who do not entirely understand the meaning of the poetry of Max Jacob, of Jean Cocteau, of Louise de Vilmorin, and above all of Guillaume Apollinaire and Paul Eluard; in his songs he uncovers all the mysteries."¹⁰

Poulenc's song cycles and sets are some of the most popular in the French repertoire. He had a tendency to use poetry of lesser-known poets, such as Louise de Vilmorin. In November of 1936 she wrote to Poulenc " 'It is you, Francis, it is you who the first (you are thus Francis I) have had the idea to 'commission' poems from me, in order to set them to music. Therefore, you decided that I was a poet!' "¹¹ The composer and poet had a unique friendship. He was quite fond of both her and her poetry; he set thirteen of her poems to music.

⁸ Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians - Second Edition*, (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited), 2001, 227-31.

⁹ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2006), 225.

¹⁰ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 39.

¹¹ Martin Néron, "Francis Poulenc and Louise de Vilmorin, a Surrealism à fleur de peau," *Journal of Singing* 69, no. 3 (January/February 2013): 278, accessed December 8, 2016, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=cd00af6f-029f-4414-adb9be0a468a68c5%40sessionmgr4006&vid=2&hid=4110>.

Why did Poulenc take so much interest in this lesser-known poet? He describes his reasoning, saying:

Few people move me as much as Louise de Vilmorin: because she is beautiful, because she is lame, because she writes French of an innate purity, because her name evokes flowers and vegetables, because she loves her brothers like a lover and her lovers like a sister...Loves, desire, joy, illness, exile, financial difficulties, are at the root of her genuineness.¹²

Poulenc was genuinely touched by Vilmorin's pure heart and humble state of being. Her aspects of love, joy, and worldly burdens made her approachable and desirable to the composer.

2. Poet

Louise de Vilmorin was born into a famous family of seed producers in Verrières-le-Buisson, France in 1902.¹³ She was a poet and novelist.¹⁴ Her family had a private tutor who encouraged her creativity. The instructor focused on teaching her literature, geography, and history in order to further cultivate her talents. She had five siblings - one sister and four brothers. Vilmorin married twice; the first time was to Henry Leigh-Hunt of Las Vegas, America in 1925 and the second to Count Paul Palffy ab Erdöd of Austria-Hungary in 1937.¹⁵ She was known to be a rather promiscuous woman in that she was the mistress of many men, presumably at different times.

¹² Martin Néron, "Francis Poulenc and Louise de Vilmorin, a Surrealism à fleur de peau," *Journal of Singing* 69, no. 3 (January/February 2013): 278, accessed December 8, 2016, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=cd00af6f-029f-4414-adb9be0a468a68c5%40sessionmgr4006&vid=2&hid=4110>.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 277.

¹⁴ Anthony Caprio and Dana Carton, *Columbia Dictionary of Modern European Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 853, GALILEO.

¹⁵ Martin Néron, "Francis Poulenc and Louise de Vilmorin, a Surrealism à fleur de peau," *Journal of Singing* 69, no. 3 (January/February 2013): 277-78, accessed December 8, 2016, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=cd00af6f-029f-4414-adb9be0a468a68c5%40sessionmgr4006&vid=2&hid=4110>.

The poet compiled five books of poetry and fifteen novels.¹⁶ Since the poetry of Louise de Vilmorin is quite witty it is occasionally a puzzle to comprehend. Her poems contain aspects of entertainment, fantasy, and suspense.¹⁷ Poulenc, however, sets the text in accordance with the style of Vilmorin's writing: lightly and wittingly. *Fiançailles pour rire* is an excellent example of this style. It was compiled in 1939 and was her first collection of poems. Twelve of the thirteen Vilmorin poems he set to music are from this collection; only six of them are in his song set entitled *Fiançailles pour rire*. The primary thematic connection of these six poems is in relation to the title, which translates as "Engagements for laughter." It should be noted that the previously mentioned twelve songs using Vilmorin's poems in this collection contain the themes of love and death. The additional six Vilmorin poems that Poulenc set are in other song collections. Three of them are in the set *Trois Poèmes de Louise de Vilmorin*, titled by Poulenc. The other set of three poems is under the name of *Métamorphoses*, which is also the original title of the third poem. Poulenc changed the title of the second and third poems for use in this set. He already had a song by one of the names, and the new title suggested by Vilmorin for the third song enabled the old title to now become the primary one of the set.¹⁸ The topic of each poem in Poulenc's *Fiançailles pour rire* is related to some type of love; however, much of the meaning of the text is masked with symbolism. Poulenc set this text to music in 1939 and brilliantly brings these hidden mysteries to the forefront of the performer and audience's imagination.

¹⁶ Marilyn McCabe, trans., "The Words Were Said: Poems by Louise Lévêque de Vilmorin," *Numéro Cinq Magazine* 3, no. 7 (July 2012), accessed May 8, 2017, <http://numerocinqmagazine.com/?s=Louise+de+Vilmorin&searchsubmit=>.

¹⁷ Anthony Caprio and Dana Carton, *Columbia Dictionary of Modern European Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 853, GALILEO.

¹⁸ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 147-48.

III. FIANÇAILLES POUR RIRE

Fiançailles pour rire is considered a song set because the only aspect completely uniting the songs is that the poems are all from the same literary collection of Vilmorin.¹⁹ Both Vilmorin's poetry collection and Poulenc's set contain the same title. A set contains songs that have a common topic or theme, such as nursery rhymes or being written by the same poet. However, the songs can be performed individually and separate from the group. There is not a storyline that one can follow throughout all songs in the set. In contrast, a song cycle is defined as a group of individually complete songs designed to be performed as a unit.²⁰ A requirement for a song compilation to be considered a cycle is that it contains some connecting factor. Examples include having poetry from the same poet, a storyline, and similar themes such as travelling, or musical connections such as keys or rhythms. Many cycles tell a complete story, or narration, from the first to last song.²¹ Regarding *Fiançailles pour rire*, Bernac states "...there is no poetic or musical link of any kind" between the songs.²² It would seem, however, that each song contains some hint of the theme of love. The type of love varies, from scandalous adoration to lost love. The possible exception is in the fourth poem, "Mon cadavre est doux comme un gant."

¹⁹ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 137.

²⁰ Matthew Hoch, *A Dictionary for the Modern Singer* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 165.

²¹ Stanley Sadie, ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians – Second Edition*, vol. 23 (London: Macmillan Publishers Limited), 2001, 716-17.

²² Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 137.

1. Poetic Analysis

Lines of French poetry are not measured by beats as in English poetry since the text does not contain stressed syllables. Instead, French poetry is measured by the number of syllables in each line.²³ Unaccented ending syllables such as in the word *dame* are only counted when in the middle of a phrase before a consonant; they are eliminated when at the end. Vilmorin makes frequent use of octosyllabic lines, or lines containing eight syllables, in the poems chosen for Poulenc's set *Fiançailles pour rire*. The enclosed, or envelope, rhyme scheme is popular in this collection of Vilmorin's poetry. This style consists of having an ABBA BCCB etc. pattern.²⁴ In French poetry, the use of alternating lines ending with masculine and feminine words is popular.²⁵ For example, the second quatrain of poetry in "La Dame d'André" is as follows:

Au retour d'un bal campagnard
S'en allait-elle en robe vague
Chercher dans les meules la bague
Des fiançailles du hasard?²⁶

The ending words *campagnard* and *hasard* are masculine because they end with a consonant. The final words *vague* and *bague* are feminine because they end with a vowel. This pattern tends to follow the rhyme scheme. For example, this quatrain is labeled as BCCB since it is the second in the poem. The gender line alterations are as follows: masculine, feminine, feminine, masculine. This exact pattern could continue throughout the poem, or it could alternate each quatrain with every other system beginning in the opposite gender than which the previous one began. It should also be noted that the ending words themselves do not have to be masculine

²³ "French poetry," last modified October 27, 2016, accessed November 5, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_poetry.

²⁴ "Rhyme Scheme," Literary Devices and Terms, accessed November 5, 2016, <http://literarydevices.net/rhyme-scheme/>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 138.

or feminine to follow the alternating pattern. If a final word ends with a consonant but is feminine, it still *appears* to be masculine in form. The opposite is also true. An example is the first stanza of “La Dame d’André”:

André ne connaît pas la dame
Qu’il prend aujourd’hui par la main.
A-t-elle un cœur à lendemains,
Et pour le soir a-t-elle une âme?²⁷

This quatrain appears to have two feminine lines encompassing two masculine lines. However, the word *main* in the second line is feminine. Since it contains a consonant as the ending syllable, it appears to be masculine. Thus, this quatrain is a feminine-masculine rhyme. Many examples of this can be found in *Fiançailles pour rire*.

The first poem in this set is entitled “La Dame d’André” and means “The Woman of André.” Ironically, Vilmorin’s supposedly favorite sibling was her brother, André.²⁸ It is not certain as to whether or not this poem is directly about him. For character purposes, the author of this paper prefers to act as though he is indeed the poet’s brother. The type of love expressed is that of an immature, adolescent boy. André is in love with an older woman, as suggested by the use of the word *dame* meaning “woman” rather than *mademoiselle*, or “young lady.” The speaker asks herself if this woman will actually remain in a relationship with the young boy. She mentions André not knowing her; they have just recently met. It is considered scandalous because the poet suggests the speaker is asking if the woman sought an engagement ring while being intimate with André in the haystacks (...*Chercher dans les meules la bague / Des fiançailles du hasard*). The third stanza asks if she was afraid or regretful of past decisions,

²⁷ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 137.

²⁸ Martin Néron, “Francis Poulenc and Louise de Vilmorin, a Surrealism à fleur de peau,” *Journal of Singing* 69, no. 3 (January/February 2013): 277, accessed December 8, 2016, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=cd00af6f-029f-4414-adb9be0a468a68c5%40sessionmgr4006&vid=2&hid=4110>.

perhaps insinuating her recent intimacy with the young boy. In the final stanza, the speaker wittingly wonders if André will be lucky and actually keep a woman by his side, or will the dame leave him?

This poem contains an enclosed rhyme scheme, or ABBA BCCB, etc. It is octosyllabic. There are four isomorphic quatrains, meaning each one follows the same form. It follows the alternating masculine and feminine rhyme method. The first quatrain's pattern is feminine, feminine, masculine, and feminine in regard to ending words; however, it follows the pattern of words ending with an unstressed syllable, consonant, consonant, and unstressed syllable. This particular alternation pattern is "enclosed," just as the rhyme scheme. As previously mentioned, the second quatrain contains lines of masculine, feminine, feminine, then masculine ending words. The next quatrain is vice versa, beginning with feminine and following the same alternating pattern. The final one begins with a feminine word ending. This poem is considered a *rime riche* (rich rhyme) since the ending syllables, as well as many of their preceding syllables, of final words in the lines are very closely related in both spelling and pronunciation.²⁹ (See Appendix, page 33, for the full poem and poetic translation.)³⁰

The second poem, "Dans l'herbe," translates as "In the grass." It is about lost love. From the outside, it appears as though it is about a friend of the speaker's death. However, this is symbolism for the true meaning of the poem; the speaker's relationship with her lover has died.³¹ In the first sentence she says she cannot do anything else for "him," or her former lover. She then states, "He died a beautiful death / outside / under the tree of the Law" (*Il est mort de sa mort*

²⁹ "Rime riche," Definitions, accessed November 5, 2016, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/rime-riche>.

³⁰ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 137-38.

³¹ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2006), 229.

belle / Dehors / Sous l'arbre de la Loi). This is an idiomatic French expression that means to die a natural death.³² In the following stanza she states that he died unnoticed while crying out, calling for her. She did not hear him because she was too far away. She says there is nothing more she can do for him. This indicates that the couple was already greatly distanced in their relationship; there was nothing more they could do to mend it.

This poem is *vers libre*, or free verse, so it does not contain a set number of syllables per line or a masculine-feminine rhyme. It is considered to be a mock-elegy since it is seemingly a lament for the dead, but the death is actually symbolic of lost love.³³ There are several occasions of word repetition. *Il est mort de sa belle* is first stated in the third line of the poem. It is repeated with the addition of the word *mort*, transforming it into the idiomatic expression of *Il est mort de sa mort belle* meaning “He died a natural death.” The first statement translates as “He died for his beautiful one.” Another example of repetition is the text *En appelant* followed by *En m'appelant* in the phrase *Il est mort inaperçu / En criant son passage / En appelant / En m'appelant*. The full translation is “He died unnoticed / crying out in his passing / calling / calling me.” The last two lines of the poem are exactly the same as the first two, with the added conjunction of *et*, or “and,” before the phrase. The original text is *Je ne peux plus rien dire / Ni rien faire pour lui*. (See Appendix, page 34, for the full poem and poetic translation.)³⁴

“Il vole,” the third poem Poulenc sets to music in *Fiançailles pour rire*, means “He flies.” The title is a play on words, for *vole* can mean either “he flies” or “he steals.” Vilmorin’s first love, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, was a pilot. They were engaged in 1923 until she broke it off

³² Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature*, (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2006), 229.

³³ “Elegy,” Dictionary, accessed May 8, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/elegy>.

³⁴ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 138-39.

with him.³⁵ Perhaps there is even more hidden context behind the words... It is very playful, as is hinted by its riddles. It is five quatrains long and contains elements of the fable *Le Corbeau et le Renard*, or *The Crow and the Fox* by Jean de La Fontaine. It is in the collection entitled *Æsop's Fables*, which contains works by numerous poets. The story in the fable is a fox smells a piece of cheese that is in a bird's beak. The fox flatters the bird, convincing it to sing a song and thus dropping the cheese to open its beak. The fox then gets the cheese and warns the bird to beware of flatterers, for they live at the expense of those who take their comments seriously.³⁶ Snippets of this fable are especially portrayed in the first quatrain of "Il vole." It states "...it is the round cheese of the fable in the beak of my scissors. But where is the crow? It flies." The setting sun is being compared to this piece of cheese; the reflection of the sun shines on the tabletop in-between the beak of the speaker's scissors.

The question of the second quatrain is "Where is my lover?" The answer is "He flies." The double meaning of the poem is revealed in the third quatrain when the poet states she has a thief for a lover; her lover flies away and steals her heart. Her happiness is now what flies away. The sadness of the speaker is revealed in the next quatrain when she proclaims how she cries under the willow because she wants to be desired; love has fled. She is not pleasing to her thief. The final quatrain challenges the reader to find the meaning behind the poet's riddle. She wants her "flighty lover" to return to her; she finally says she wishes that her thief would steal her.

"Il vole" contains an enclosed rhyme scheme. There are five quatrains with each containing nine syllables per line. There is a single line of eight syllables after each quatrain. It

³⁵ Matthew Guerrieri, "'Il vole,' a treat when poems set to music," *The Boston Globe*, March 1, 2014, accessed November 5, 2016, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/2014/03/01/unsparingly-fast-vole-just-one-many-treats-when-vilmorin-poems-are-set-music/LuB0jIpeMeOCB6fOpM5GIN/story.html>.

³⁶ "The Crow and The Fox," last modified October 22, 2014, accessed November 6, 2016, <http://www.aesopfables.com/cgi/aesop1.cgi?jdlf&i2ms&i3m.jpg>.

asks the question of *Mais où est ...* or “But where is ...” every time. It can be considered a mock-elegy since it poses as a poem of reflection. Even though it is reflective of the poet’s lover, it is whimsical as it consists of play on words. For example, the word *vole* can mean both to fly and to steal. Her lover is a thief as he flies away with her heart.

There are masculine and feminine rhyme alterations in this poem. All five quatrains begin and end with masculine rhyme while the two middle lines are feminine. The single lines after each quatrain are all masculine. It is a *rime riche* since the last and often its preceding syllables are closely related in spelling and pronunciation. There is alliteration, such as use of the letter “m” in the line *Je mêle mes larmes à ses feuilles* which means “I mingle my tears with its leaves.” This sound paints the text by giving it a sensation of moaning. The “v” in the last line of the poem is frequently used. It states *Je veux que mon voleur me vole* and translates as “I wish that my thief would steal me.” There is also play on words. In the second quatrain, the word *aimant* or “magnet” is mentioned. The single line following the quatrain uses the word *amant*, or “lover.” It is possible the physical magnet on the table is used in correlation with the poet’s lover, meaning he takes away or steals. The words *pleure* and *pleureur* are strikingly similar. The first means to weep and the second refers to a weeping willow as the full descriptive text is *Je pleure sous le saule pleureur* or “I weep under the weeping willow.” Finally, the word *vole* can mean either to steal or to fly. The word *voleur* used in the last line means “thief.” In this poem, the thief flies away with his stolen goods, particularly the poet’s heart. (See Appendix, page 35, for the full poem and poetic translation.)³⁷

The fourth poem Poulenc sets is “Mon cadavre est doux comme un gant,” which means “My corpse is as limp as a glove.” Similarly to “Dans l’herbe,” it contains aspects of death. The

³⁷ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 139-40.

mysteriousness of some of Vilmorin's poetry is revealed in this poem. The woman who sings is already dead. She describes her physical state; it sounds as if she is in a casket. Her limpness is mentioned in the first stanza. Her eyes are hidden behind her eyelids. Her hands rest on her chest, above her stopped heart. Her feet are "mountains," further insinuating her resting position in a casket. This poem is whimsical since the unlikely happens; a dead person is speaking. However, perhaps it could be seen as symbolism for a woman who has lost her sense of emotion and longs to once again be touched and desired. If the former is true, then all songs in this set do not contain aspects of love as a primary emotion. If indeed the woman is dead to all emotions, she desires for her senses to be awakened - to be touched. The evidence of this is in the fact that she continues to mention the feeling of her body; she is limp, or soft (*doux*). It is as though she is inviting someone to touch her skin. She states how her fingers once strayed but now they finally rest in a "saintly pose" (*attitude sainte*). Perhaps this is symbolism for a previous lifestyle in which she strayed from the path of morality. In the end of the poem, she longs for children to have a pleasant memory of her; she wants to be desired.

This poem contains an enclosed rhyme scheme for all five quatrains and is octosyllabic. It is considered to be a rich rhyme since the ending words of the lines are similar in sound and spelling. It has masculine and feminine rhyme, just as two of the previously mentioned poems. It follows the pattern of beginning and ending with one gender while the second and third verses are of opposite gender. The first, fourth, and fifth quatrains begin with masculine rhyme while the second and third begin with feminine rhyme. There is text repetition within the poem. The phrase *doux comme un gant* found in the end of the first line of the first quatrain is repeated at the beginning of the following line. The words *cailloux blancs* at the end of the fourth line of the first quatrain repeat at the beginning of the next quatrain: *Deux cailloux blancs*. The final line of

the poem is the exact same as the first. This is similar to the repetition found in “Dans l’herbe.” However, the final line that states *Mon cadavre est doux comme un gant* is also the title of the poem. (See Appendix, page 36, for the full poem and poetic translation.)³⁸

“Violon,” or “Violin,” is the title of the fifth poem. It is about an elegant woman who goes to a restaurant and is swept away by the playing of the violin. Poulenc sets this poem to music with a Hungarian restaurant on the Champs-Élysées in mind; Vilmorin’s husband, Count Palffy, and she actually visited such a restaurant in which he hired a *tzigane*, or Hungarian gypsy, orchestra from Budapest.³⁹ The woman in the poem becomes increasingly drunk as it continues. The subject of love in this poem is portrayed through the woman and violin. She uses symbolism to describe the heart, comparing it to a strawberry. It surrenders itself to love as if it were unknown and experiencing a new sensation.

The rhyme scheme of “Violon” does not seem to be an organized pattern. There are two quatrains. The first could be labeled as ABAC and the second as ABCA. It can be considered a rich rhyme as the rhyming words are very closely related in spelling and pronunciation. For example, the ending words of the lines labeled as “A” are: *méconnus*, *tendus*, *pendus*, and *inconnu*. They could even be further subdivided. *Méconnus* and *inconnu* are very closely related while *tendus* and *pendus* are quite similar. Regarding syllabic verse, there is a mixture of octosyllabic and decasyllabic lines. They do not follow any particular order. There is also no distinct organization of masculine and feminine rhyme. (See Appendix, page 37, for the full poem and poetic translation.)⁴⁰

³⁸ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 141-42.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁴⁰ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 143-44.

The final poem of the set is entitled “Fleurs,” or “Flowers.” It is nostalgic. The speaker is watching the flowers her former lover gave her burn in the fireplace. She thinks about the past - how this boy gave her many promises - but now all are broken. It is thought that these flowers may have come from the beach in Brittany.⁴¹ This knowledge helps to paint the picture and provides the reader with an image of pink flowers. Her heart longs for the past and burns, just as the flowers in the fireplace. *France. This was in the year 1939 - the beginning of World War II.*

The rhyme scheme of “Fleurs” is in couplets. There are two quatrains of four lines each. They do not have a consistent syllable pattern; the first two lines are in ten, the next two in eight, the following two in twelve, and the final two in eight. The eight syllable lines are referred to as octosyllabic, the ten as decasyllabic, and the twelve as alexandrine.⁴² It does not contain a set pattern of masculine or feminine rhyme. The first quatrain consists of two masculine lines followed by two feminine while the second quatrain begins and ends with masculine lines that enclose two feminine lines. *meter of Poulenc's melodies. The first performance was in the Salle*

There is repetition of text in this poem. The word *fleurs* or “flowers” is spoken five times. However, it is sung a total of eight times in Poulenc’s setting as he chooses to repeat beginning lines of the poem at the end of the song. “Fleurs” is both the title and primary symbolic image of the poem. The word *sable* or “sand” is also repeated. The sand of the seas is compared with the sand of the former lover’s kisses. (See Appendix, page 38, for the full poem and poetic translation.)⁴³

⁴¹ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 137; “Faucailler pour rire, song cycle *Francis Poulenc*, accessed November 5, 2016.

⁴² Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 145.

⁴³ “French poetry,” last modified October 27, 2016, accessed November 5, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_poetry.

⁴³ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 144-145.

2. Musical Analysis

The composer brilliantly sets Vilmorin's text to music as it paints images in the listener's mind and reveals the mysteries of the poetry. Poulenc said he composed this work so he may think more frequently of the poet, Louise de Vilmorin. At the time she was grounded in her castle in Slovakia with her new husband Count Palffy due to enemy lines of the war.⁴⁴ Poulenc was at his house in Noizay, France. This was in the year 1939 - the beginning of World War II. This work is considered to be a song set since there is no poetic or musical link between the songs.⁴⁵ There does seem to be a pattern of placement of the songs. The first, third, and fifth songs are more light-hearted than those situated between them. All six may be performed individually or as a whole. He writes each song either to or for a different woman; most of them are sopranos, perhaps to sing his work. The first performer of *Fiançailles pour rire* was soprano Geneviève Touraine with Poulenc at piano. The singer was the sister of Gérard Souzay, a French baritone and frequent interpreter of Poulenc's mélodies. The first performance was in the Salle Gaveau of Paris, France in 1942.⁴⁶ Regarding the musical analysis, it should be noted that there will be a citation near the end of the paragraph in which each song or section therein is mentioned.

⁴⁴ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 137; "Fiançailles pour rire, song cycle for voice & piano, FP 101," Francis Poulenc, accessed November 5, 2016, <http://www.allmusic.com/composition/fian%C3%A7ailles-pour-rire-song-cycle-for-voicepiano-fp-101-mc0002370981>.

⁴⁵ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 137.

⁴⁶ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2006), 229.

“La Dame d’André” is written to Marie-Blanche, Countess of the royal Polignac family. She was a fine musician who was both a singer and pianist.⁴⁷ There is record of her communicating with Poulenc via letter.⁴⁸ The text of this poem is very questioning; the poet poses questions throughout the work. In response, Poulenc composes music that is inquiring in nature. Because of his use of dissonance it feels uneasy at times. The opening introduction of descending eighth notes that ascend at specific points, such as on beat two of the first two measures, creates a sensation of uncertainty. This opening line ends with an A major chord, but then the song continues in the key of A minor. The repetition in both the voice and piano lines can represent the idea that this is not the first time André has met and fallen in love with a female; he may be a girl-crazy teenage boy. There are constant eighth notes throughout this song. Musically, there is a feeling of searching for the key when the character sings *Chercher dans les meules la bague...* (to seek in the hay stacks the ring...). There is a G minor region for these two measures.⁴⁹

When the poet asks if André’s new woman is fearful (*A-t-elle eu peur, la nuit venue*), Poulenc writes an augmented fourth between the Ab in the bass and the D in the vocal line. This pattern occurs in the latter part of the phrase when she says *Dans son jardin lorsque l’hiver*, continuing the thought of the previous phrase by asking if she was haunted by her past and afraid in her garden when winter entered through the large avenue. Here the bass note is Bb and the voice E. However, the starting voice note is A on *lorsque* and ascends to the E on *l’hiver*.

⁴⁷ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 130.

⁴⁸ “Lettre de Marie-Blanche de Polignac à Francis Poulenc, Kerbastic, 1er mars [1941],” accessed November 5, 2016, <https://columbusstateuniversity.on.worldcat.org/search?queryString=no%3A+494251382>.

⁴⁹ Francis Poulenc, *Francis POULENC: Intégrale des Mélodies et Chansons publiées aux Éditions Salabert* (Paris, France: Éditions Salabert, 1989), 132-33.

Poulenc also paints the image of fear by writing a line consisting of minor seconds in the bass with all the same text previously quoted in this paragraph. The rhythmic pattern consists of an eighth note followed by an eighth rest. The repeated notes in the first phrase are G-F#-G-Ab and then A-G#-A-Bb in the second phrase. The last phrase of the poem poses the question of whether or not this lady will stay with André. Finally, after much eighth note movement throughout the song, the postlude contains steady quarter notes. This creates the sense of settlement and pondering. The key returns to that of the introduction - A major - in the first measure of the postlude four measures from the end of the song. Then it is as though the thoughts of the character are once again questioned with the appearance of a V9 chord; she is still unsure about the lady of André.⁵⁰

Above the title of "Dans l'herbe," Poulenc marks "à Freddy," or "to Freddy," who is Frédérique Lebedeff, presumably the mother of his daughter, Marie-Ange.⁵¹ This song begins and ends in the key of C# minor. It is written in a very slow tempo with the quarter note equaling a metronomic marking of fifty-six. Within the song, modulations and different key regions are encountered. Once again, he makes use of dissonance to illustrate the discord in the relationship of the character and her former lover. He paints the text *Dans l'herbe* within the poem by placing a descending diminished fifth between the words, which mean "in the grass." In context, the character is saying the boy died in the grass.⁵² The descending melodic line portrays the lower location of and the descension into the grass. Diminished fifths are often utilized to be symbolic

⁵⁰ Francis Poulenc, *Francis POULENC: Intégrale des Mélodies et Chansons publiées aux Éditions Salabert* (Paris, France: Éditions Salabert, 1989), 133-34.

⁵¹ "1940s: war and post-war," Francis Poulenc, last modified October 24, 2016, accessed November 6, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Poulenc.

⁵² Francis Poulenc, *Francis POULENC: Intégrale des Mélodies et Chansons publiées aux Éditions Salabert* (Paris, France: Éditions Salabert, 1989), 135.

of something that is scary or tragic. In this situation, it marks tragedy as the relationship between the character and boy has died.

The middle of the song mirrors that of a chorale as the piano part contains full block chords. In general throughout this section, there are three notes in the treble clef and one to three in the bass. The text is *Il est mort inaperçu / En criant son passage / En appelant / En m'appelant. / Mais comme j'étais loin de lui / Et que sa voix ne portait plus*. It translates as "He died unnoticed / crying out in his passing / calling / calling me. / But as I was far from him / and because his voice no longer carried..."⁵³ This chorale is comparable to a hymn of remembrance. However, it begins in the key of E major and modulates to Gb major - perhaps an unexpected choice for a lament, but a fitting one for a chorale. The French text for "calling, calling me" is set on a gradually ascending line of half steps, dramatizing the text and enhancing the emotions. The next word "but" or *mais* and its phrase are subito piano and very connected. This is the portion in Gb major and continues the chorale ambience. The poet is describing how she was far from her former lover when he died and could not hear his calling. The soft dynamic marking illustrates the mood of helplessness. The dynamic markings of the phrases thereafter increase to mezzo forte but then die away to piano and finally pianissimo at the end of the song, just as the boy - or the poet and her former lover's relationship - died.⁵⁴

Poulenc dedicates "Il vole" to Suzanne Peignot, his friend, soprano, and interpreter of his *mélodies*.⁵⁵ He sets the text of the next poem, "Il vole," at a very fast tempo, marked as *presto implacable*, which means "fast persistent" and signifies to perform quickly with forward

⁵³ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 139.

⁵⁴ Francis Poulenc, *Francis POULENC: Intégrale des Mélodies et Chansons publiées aux Éditions Salabert* (Paris, France: Éditions Salabert, 1989), 136.

⁵⁵ "Francis Poulenc," Biography, accessed November 5, 2016, <http://www.poulenc.fr/en/?Biography>.

movement. The quarter note equals a metronomic marking of 120. This certainly paints the text and the title itself, as it means “He/It flies.” The pianist plays almost constant sixteenth notes throughout the entire song. In his diary he admits it is one of his most difficult songs.⁵⁶ Poulenc repeats the interjecting lines of *Mais où est...* for the song with the exception of its first occurrence. This stresses the importance of the question that is asked each time. Where is my lover? Where is the happiness? All has flown away - away from me. In the end the character states how she just desires to be wanted and that her thief, or lover, would steal her.⁵⁷

There is some type of rhythmic repetition or sequence each time the above-mentioned question is repeated within each verse. For example, the rhythm of *Mais où est mon amant? Il vole* is almost exactly repeated. There is also an ascending melodic sequence. It begins on a pitch, ascends a major second, minor second, major third, and then descends a major second. Similar ideas also happen on this interjection after the third and fourth quatrains of text.⁵⁸

“Il vole” begins and ends in the key of Eb major. It modulates throughout the song. When Vilmorin makes the direct comparison between the crow and her lover by saying *Le corbeau vole et mon amant vole*, Poulenc uses repetition of notes. Here the poet states “The crow flies and my lover flies.” When describing the crow he writes F-G-C-Bb and then F-G for the acknowledgement of the lover. Only the first half of the measure is the same tonally in the melodic line, but it is still repetitious, nonetheless.⁵⁹

In the last phrase of text, the character states her desire for the lover to steal her.

However, she is left alone. Poulenc illustrates this with the music. The word *vole* or “steal” is

⁵⁶ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2006), 230.

⁵⁷ Francis Poulenc, *Francis POULENC: Intégrale des Mélodies et Chansons publiées aux Éditions Salabert* (Paris, France: Éditions Salabert, 1989), 137-41.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 137-39.

sung for five and a half beats as it fades into the accompaniment. It should be noted that this word comes from the verb *voler*, which translates as either “to fly” or “to steal.” Thus, the mystery of the character’s riddle is revealed. The piano continues the sixteenth note rhythmic pattern softly without slowing, flying off into the distance.⁶⁰

Above the title he designates “Mon cadavre est doux comme un gant” to Ninon (Eugénie) Vallin. She was a French soprano. He composed it for her to sing, but she told tenor Hugues Cuénod “I could never sing words like that.”⁶¹ Both the text and the music of this song are similar to that of “Dans l’herbe.” They are both about the dead. Death is symbolic in “Dans l’herbe” and perhaps even in this poem. They are both set in a minor key and at a slow tempo; the quarter note equals a metronomic marking of sixty in this song. They both contain much dissonance and chromaticism.

“Mon cadavre est doux comme un gant” begins in the key of E minor and ends in E major. It becomes major when the character sings her last word *gant* or “glove.” Poulenc very clearly marks his desires regarding dynamics. This song is filled with contrasting dynamics. It begins piano, crescendos to forte in the next system and then back to piano in the following system. Such quick changes occurring throughout the song dramatize the state of the character. The stepwise ascending and descending motion as well as chromatic lines paints the atmosphere of death. It ends with a picardy third with the last note in the repeat of the opening

⁶⁰ Francis Poulenc, *Francis POULENC: Intégrale des Mélodies et Chansons publiées aux Éditions Salabert* (Paris, France: Éditions Salabert, 1989), 141.

⁶¹ Will Crutchfield, “RECORDINGS; A Wellspring from Poulenc’s Song Legacy,” *The New York Times*, January 17, 1988, accessed November 5, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1988/01/17/arts/recordings-a-wellspring-from-poulenc-s-song-legacy.html>.

phrase *Mon cadavre est doux comme un gant*.⁶² This is often used as a symbol for hope.⁶³

Therefore, one may wonder if the poem truly is symbolism for a woman with deadened emotions in that she experiences hope for the future - to feel and to be felt - at the end of the song. This could be an example of how Claude Rostand mentions Poulenc reveals the mysteries of Vilmorin's poetry.⁶⁴

"Violon" is written to Denise Bourdet, a French actress. She was first married to René de Saint-Légier de la Saussaye and then actor and writer Édouard Bourdet.⁶⁵ There are records of both her and her second husband sending letters to Poulenc.⁶⁶ The composer creates the atmosphere of an elegant woman enjoying an evening of dinner and music at a restaurant in Paris. There is a certain gypsy-feel to the music and evokes Paris.⁶⁷ Poulenc paints the image of an increasingly drunken woman through the use of slurs in both the vocal and piano lines. He instructs the singer to portando, or to sing a smooth glide from one note to another (as a portamento).⁶⁸ He makes much use of descending melodic lines, which portray the state of the drinking woman. He depicts Hungarian music using rhythmic patterns of a double-dotted eighth

⁶² Francis Poulenc, *Francis POULENC: Intégrale des Mélodies et Chansons publiées aux Éditions Salabert* (Paris, France: Éditions Salabert, 1989), 142-44.

⁶³ Peter Kivy, *Osmin's Rage: Philosophical Reflections on Opera, Drama, and Text, with a New Final Chapter* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999), 289, accessed December 2, 2016 via Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Picardy_third#cite_note-3.

⁶⁴ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 39.

⁶⁵ "Biography," Denise Bourdet, accessed November 5, 2016, http://www.imdb.com/name/nm2502148/bio?ref_=nm_ov_bio_sm.

⁶⁶ "su:Bourdet, Denise, 1899 1967," Search, last modified 2016, accessed November 5, 2016, <https://columbusstateuniversity.on.worldcat.org/search?databaseList=173,283,251,197,285,143,199,233,245,137,203,239,217&queryString=su:Bourdet,%20Denise,%201899%201967%20>.

⁶⁷ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 143.

⁶⁸ Hal Leonard Corporation, *Pocket Music Dictionary* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Publishing Corporation, 1993), 91.

note followed by a thirty-second rest and note in the accompaniment. The use of quick thirty-second notes continues throughout the song. These short rhythms also provide a swaying or jerking sensation, as one may imagine in a drunk. They are also written in such a way that resembles the playing of a violin. Poulenc writes staccato notes on the word *violon*, or “violin” to paint it; they sound comparable to pizzicato notes on the violin.⁶⁹

This song begins and ends with chords in the key of A minor. However, it is difficult to find a tonal center from the instant the voice enters until it fades. There are constant accidentals. Most of the dynamic markings are loud. It begins forte and then changes to mezzo forte near the end of the song. The only instance it becomes soft is when the character compares the heart to a strawberry (*en forme de fraise*). The singer is instructed to execute this phrase almost as if speaking. It is as if she is telling a secret. The alcohol seems to have an effect on her as illustrated through the quickly contrasting dynamic markings. She suddenly sings the next phrase regarding offering the heart to love at the dynamic level of mezzo forte. The last two very short musical phrases in the vocalist’s line of the song are each introduced with a sforzando marking. It then tapers away to mezzo forte each time before finally fading away on the last syllable. The pianist plays pianissimo in the next to last measure during the postlude. Then there is an abrupt marking of “sff” indicating to play a very loud and strong accent. The note is snatched away, while the left hand is instructed to play the final note somewhat pizzicato.⁷⁰ These symbolize notes being played on the violin.

Poulenc designates “Fleurs” to Solange d’Ayen, Duchess from the Noailles family in Ayen, France. Further information regarding her relationship to the composer is unknown to the author. This song is in the key of Db major. Poulenc suggests to always attempt to precede this

⁶⁹ Francis Poulenc, *Francis POULENC: Intégrale des Mélodies et Chansons publiées aux Éditions Salabert* (Paris, France: Éditions Salabert, 1989), 145-47.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

song with another that is either in the key of A major, similarly to “Violon,” or another distant key. This is because he wants to give the impression that the sound is far away in this song.⁷¹ It begins with the right hand doubling the octave above the left hand; it all begins in the treble clef and transitions to bass in the third phrase beginning with *Fleurs sorties*... The doubling is primarily in the first two phrases as well as at the end when Poulenc chooses to repeat certain lines of the text from the first quatrain.⁷²

The music set to this poem is the least dissonant of them all; it is rather consonant and a beautiful way to end the work. It creates a lovely atmosphere for nostalgia as the character remembers her past love. The doubled chords in the beginning and end as well as the block quarter note chords throughout the song create a sensation of floating, almost as a memory. This assists Poulenc’s desired atmosphere of distance. Another contributing element to his wishes is that the majority of the dynamics are marked as either piano or pianissimo. The singer only reaches mezzo-forte on two occasions, and never louder. The first is when she says *Les beaux yeux sont de cendre*, meaning “the beautiful eyes are ashes.” The second is on the text *Brûle avec ses images saintes*, translated as “burns with its treasured pictures.” These phrases are more intense because they are the climax of the character’s emotions. The latter is both the poetic and musical climax. Poulenc inserts a breath after the word “burns” as if to paint the passion of the character.⁷³ Her heart still burns for her former lover, along with all her memories of him.

⁷¹ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 144.

⁷² Francis Poulenc, *Francis POULENC: Intégrale des Mélodies et Chansons publiées aux Éditions Salabert* (Paris, France: Éditions Salabert, 1989), 148-49.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

IV. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study of *Fiançailles pour rire* has proven to be highly beneficial to the author. It serves as a performer's guide regarding both poetic and musical interpretation to students of voice, voice teachers, and vocal coaches. It provides detailed information regarding the method in which Vilmorin writes as well as how Poulenc correlates the music with the vibrant text. Therefore, this research will also be beneficial to those desiring to learn more about French poetry, particularly that of Vilmorin, as well as how Poulenc composed music to portray the text as intended by the poet. This also benefits those studying Poulenc and his style of setting text.

Researching the poet's writing methods as well as the frequently found qualities of her work assisted in the interpretation of her poems. Her use of word play and wittiness are some of the primary characteristics of her poems. Discovering Poulenc's reasons for being so fond of this lesser-known poet shone light on the character of Vilmorin and added a more in-depth perception to her poetry. The poems he selected to set are combined to create a song set rather than a cycle since there is no poetic or musical link.⁷⁴ However, the theme of love and Vilmorin's wit is found throughout the text. Therefore, this paper is helpful to anyone desiring to understand the components of a song set rather than a song cycle. It could even be used as a comparison to other studied song sets. Bernac's book proved to serve as an excellent guide and instigator of questions to finding answers regarding interpretation of the text.⁷⁵ The music and text compliment each other since Poulenc so vividly and mindfully set the text. These findings should prove to be

⁷⁴ Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 137.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 129-150.

profitable to those performing this work or songs within it as they provide information to help the performer accurately create and portray the character of each song, especially since so much symbolism is used in the poetry.

This research generated a number of questions. One, how do the French count or meter poetry? Rhythm and meter are utilized in English, using patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables to measure how many feet are present per line.⁷⁶ The French, as discussed, use a form of syllabic count.⁷⁷ The ways in which the composer set the poems were of keen interest since multiple sources praise his ability to paint the text and match the style of the poets whose work he chose to set.⁷⁸ The musical settings were analyzed in order to find the desired answers, but some questions still remain.

Available information consists of Bernac's book, previously mentioned theses, and this research paper assisting with interpretation and meaning of the poems and their settings. However, further research can still be done regarding the interpretation of the text. One consideration is the true meaning behind the words of "Mon cadavre est doux comme un gant." Is the woman mentioned in the poem actually physically dead, or is it symbolism for her being dead to all emotions? Or is there another possibility for interpretation? These questions could possibly be answered through further research, specifically regarding the poem itself. The answers would assist singers in gaining a clearer understanding of the purposes of their character in performance. This would be beneficial to both the performer and audience, but perhaps it is meant to be mysterious - a common quality of the poet's work. Other remaining questions are

⁷⁶ "Poetic Feet and Line Length," Creative Writing, last modified April 3, 2013, accessed November 5, 2016, <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/570/03/>.

⁷⁷ "French poetry," last modified October 27, 2016, accessed November 5, 2016, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_poetry.

⁷⁸ Carol Kimball, *Song: A Guide to Art Song Style and Literature* (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard Corporation, 2006) 225; Pierre Bernac, *Francis Poulenc: The Man and his Songs*, trans. Winifred Radford (London, Great Britain: Kahn & Averill, 2001), 39.

why did Poulenc choose to set only six of the songs from Vilmorin's collection *Fiançailles pour rire* under the same title of his set, and how did he select those that were chosen? Knowing the answer to this inquiry could help interpreters gain a better understanding of Vilmorin's collection of poems.

Vilmorin's enchanting poems are portraits of her life. They certainly are gems that should be further explored. Poulenc's setting of this text provides a collaboration of Vilmorin's poems with his music. This research is beneficial to those desiring to interpret *Fiançailles pour rire*.

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Au retour d'un bal champêtre
 S'en allait-elle en robe vagar
 Chercher dans les meules la bague
 Des fiançailles du hasard?

A-t-elle eu peur, la nuit venue,
 Quotée par les ombres d'êtres,
 Dans son jardin, lorsque l'hiver
 Entraîna par la grande avenue?

Il l'a aimée pour sa couleur,
 Pour sa bonne humeur de Dimanche.
 Pâlira-t-elle aux feuilles blanches
 De son album des temps meilleurs?

Oncoming from a country ball
 Did she go in her flowing dress
 To seek in the hay stacks the ring
 For the random betrothal?

Was she afraid, when night fell,
 Haunted by the ghosts of the past,
 In her garden, when winter
 Entered by the wide avenue?

He loved her for her colour,
 For her Sunday good humour.
 Will she fade on the white leaves
 Of his album of better days?

APPENDIX

Poems and English Poetic Translations

"La Dame d'André"

André ne connaît pas la dame
 Qu'il prend aujourd'hui par la main.
 A-t-elle un cœur à lendemains,
 Et pour le soir a-t-elle une âme?

Au retour d'un bal campagnard
 S'en allait-elle en robe vague
 Chercher dans les meules la bague
 Des fiançailles du hasard?

A-t-elle eu peur, la nuit venue,
 Guettée par les ombres d'hier,
 Dans son jardin, lorsque l'hiver
 Entraît par la grande avenue?

Il l'a aimée pour sa couleur,
 Pour sa bonne humeur de Dimanche.
 Pâlira-t-elle aux feuilles blanches
 De son album des temps meilleurs?

"André's Woman Friend"

André does not know the woman
 Whom he took by the hand today.
 Has she a heart for the tomorrows,
 And for the evening has she a soul?

On returning from a country ball
 Did she go in her flowing dress
 To seek in the hay stacks the ring
 For the random betrothal?

Was she afraid, when night fell,
 Haunted by the ghosts of the past,
 In her garden, when winter
 Entered by the wide avenue?

He loved her for her colour,
 For her Sunday good humour.
 Will she fade on the white leaves
 Of his album of better days?

"Il vole"

"Dans l'herbe"

Je ne peux plus rien dire
 Ni rien faire pour lui.
 Il est mort de sa belle
 Il est mort de sa mort belle
 Dehors
 Sous l'arbre de la Loi
 En plein silence
 En plein paysage
 Dans l'herbe.
 Il est mort inaperçu
 En criant son passage
 En appelant
 En m'appelant.
 Mais comme j'étais loin de lui
 Et que sa voix ne portait plus
 Il est mort seul dans les bois
 Sous son arbre d'enfance.
 Et je ne peux plus rien dire
 Ni rien faire pour lui.

Mais où est le bonheur? Il vole.

Je pleure sous le voile pleureux
 Je mille mes larmes à ses feuilles.
 Je pleure sur le vent qu'on me vole
 Et je ne pleure pas à mon voleur.

Mais où date est l'amour? Il vole.

Traverse le ruisseau à ma débâche
 Et par les routes du paysage
 Ramenez-moi mon volant volage
 Qui prend les cœurs et perd ma raison.

Je veux que mon voleur me vole.

"He flies"

"In the grass"

I can say nothing more
 Nor do anything for him.
 He died for his beautiful one
 He died a beautiful death
 Outside
 Under the tree of the Law
 In deep silence
 In open countryside
 In the grass.
 He died unnoticed
 Crying out in his passing
 Calling
 Calling me.
 But as I as far from him
 And because his voice no longer carried
 He died alone in the woods
 Beneath the tree of his childhood.
 And I can say nothing more
 Nor do anything for him.

But where is happiness? It flies.

I weep under the weeping willow
 I arrange my tears with its leaves.
 I weep because I want to be desired
 And I am not pleasing to my thief.

But where does love date? It flies.

Find the rhyme for my lack of reason
 And by the roads of the countryside
 Bring me back my flighty lover
 Who takes hearts and drives me mad.

I wish that my thief would steal me.

“Il vole” *Il vole comme un gant*

En allant se coucher le soleil
Se reflète au vernis de ma table
Et ses prunelles sifflent

C'est le fromage rond de la fable
Au bec de mes ciseaux de vermeil.

Deux cailloux blancs dans mon visage
Mais où est le corbeau? Il vole.

On dirait encore d'un secret

Je voudrais coudre mais un aimant
Attire à lui toutes mes aiguilles.

Sur la place les joueurs de quilles
De belle en belle passent le temps.

Sont joints en saintly pose

Mais où est mon amant? Il vole.

Au bord de mon cœur aride.

C'est un voleur que j'ai pour amant,
Le corbeau vole et mon amant vole,
Voleur de cœur manqué à sa parole
Et voleur de fromage est absent.

La course que les années gagnent.

Mais où est le bonheur? Il vole.

Mon souvenir est ressemblant.

Je pleure sous le saule pleureur
Je mêle mes larmes à ses feuilles.
Je pleure car je veux qu'on me veuille
Et je ne plais pas à mon voleur.

Mais où donc est l'amour? Il vole.

Trouvez la rime à ma déraison
Et par les routes du paysage
Ramenez-moi mon amant volage
Qui prend les cœurs et perd ma raison.

Je veux que mon voleur me vole.

“He flies” *He is as limp as a glove*

As the sun is setting *as a glove*
It is reflected in the polished surface of
my table *hidden pupils*

It is the round cheese of the fable
In the beak of my silver scissors.

Two white pebbles in my face
But where is the crow? It flies.

Still shadowed by a secret

I should like to sew but a magnet
Attracts all my needles.

On the square the skittle players
Pass the time with game after game.

Are joined in a saintly pose

But where is my lover? He flies.

At the centre of my arid heart.

I have a thief for a lover,
The crow flies and my lover steals,
The thief of my heart breaks his word
And the thief of the cheese is not here.

The years win.

But where is happiness? It flies.

I still resemble myself

I weep under the weeping willow *quickly*
I mingle my tears with its leaves.
I weep because I want to be desired
And I am not pleasing to my thief.

But where then is love? It flies.

Find the rhyme for my lack of reason
And by the roads of the countryside
Bring me back my flighty lover
Who takes hearts and drives me mad.

I wish that my thief would steal me.

“Mon cadavre est doux comme un gant”

Mon cadavre est doux comme un gant
Doux comme un gant de peau glacée
Et mes prunelles effacées
Font de mes yeux des cailloux blancs.

Deux cailloux blancs dans mon visage
Dans le silence deux muets
Ombres encore d'un secret
Et lourds du poids mort des images.

Mes doigts tant de fois égarés
Sont joints en attitude sainte
Appuyés au creux de mes plaints
Au nœud de mon cœur arrêté.

Et mes deux pieds sont les montagnes
Les deux derniers monts que j'ai vus
A la minute où j'ai perdu
La course que les années gagnent.

Mon souvenir est ressemblant,
Enfants emportez-le bien vite,
Allez, allez ma vie est dite.
Mon cadavre est doux comme un gant.

“My corpse is as limp as a glove”

My corpse is as limp as a glove
Limp as a glove of glacé kid
And my two hidden pupils
Make two white pebbles of my eyes.

Two white pebbles in my face
Two mutes in the silence
Still shadowed by a secret
And heavy with the burden of things
seen.

My fingers so often straying
Are joined in a saintly pose
Resting on the hollow of my groans
At the centre of my arrested heart.

And my two feet are the mountains
The last two hills I saw
At the moment when I lost the race that
The years win.

I still resemble myself
Children bear away the memory quickly,
Go, go my life is done.
My corpse is as limp as a glove.

"Violon"

Couple amoureux aux accents
méconnus
Le violon et son joueur me plaisent.
Ah! j'aime ces gémissements tendus

Sur la corde des malaises.
Aux accords sur les cordes des pendus
A l'heure où les Lois se taisent
Le cœur, en forme de fraise,
S'offre à l'amour comme un fruit
inconnu.

"Violin"

Enamoured couple with the misprized
accents
The violin and its player please me.
Ah! I love these wailings long drawn
out

On the cord of uneasiness.
In chords on the cords of the hanged
At the hour when the Laws are silent
The heart, formed like a strawberry,
Offers itself to love like an unknown
fruit.

"Fleurs"

Fleurs promises, fleurs tenues dans tes
bras,

Fleurs sorties des parenthèses d'un pas,

Qui t'apportait ces fleurs l'hiver

Saupoudrées du sable des mers?

Sable de tes baisers, fleurs des
amours fanées

Les beaux yeux sont de cendre et
dans la cheminée

Un cœur enrubanné de plaints

Brûle avec ses images saintes

"Flowers"

Promised flowers, flowers held in your
arms,

Flowers sprung from the parenthesis of a
step,

Who brought you these flowers in winter

Powdered with the sand of the seas?

Sand of your kisses, flowers of faded
loves

The beautiful eyes are ashes and in the
fireplace

A heart beribboned with sighs

Burns with its treasured pictures.

Strathmore
PURE COTTON

