

Teaching French Poetry Through Music

by Judith W. Failoni

The fusion of French poetry and music has a long history from the Middle Ages to the present day. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were the golden age of “*la mélodie*” (the “art song”), consisting of pre-existing poetry set to music by distinguished French composers like Claude Debussy and Gabriel Fauré. Most of these music settings were intended for the trained singer and are often thought of as “classical music” today. However, contemporary French composers and performers have created new music settings on the same poetry, providing a great opportunity for teachers to introduce the poems through these pop-sounding songs. Though American pop singers do not seem inclined to sing the classic poetry from their heritage, this isn’t the case in France. For example, both contemporary artists Léo Ferré and Georges Chélon composed entire albums with poems from Charles Baudelaire’s *Les fleurs du mal*. Other contemporary composers/performers like Georges Brassens, Jean-Marc Versini, Marcel Moulouji, Ridan (Nadir Kouidri), and Breton folk singer Kirjuhel (Jean-Frédéric Brossard) set many poems from as far back as the Renaissance. The music styles include popular, rock, jazz and folk versions as well as recitations with music backgrounds. This wonderful phenomenon of modern music settings of French poetry gives teachers a great opportunity to introduce poets and poetry at an early level and continue throughout all levels of instruction.

This article will explore the use of musical settings of French poetry from the Middle Ages to modern times to teach language, culture, and literature.¹ While there have been articles about teaching poetry in the classroom, very few have included musical settings of the poems. In contrast, many journal articles and conference sessions have provided strategies for the use of popular songs in the classroom. Unfortunately, there can be problems with using popular-style songs. Sometimes it is difficult to understand the lyrics because of the singing style or the volume of the instruments, and often the topic of the song is narrow with little language value. Although contemporary songs may represent the current culture, they do not recognize the rich heritage of French literature. Information about the use of musical settings of poetry has been lacking.

An entire lesson can be built around the poem, or the poem could be used simply as an introduction or to reinforce a topic. It is so easy for the French teacher to use music today with the availability of YouTube and on-line sources like iTunes. In addition, there are great resources to learn about the musical settings of poems (see Appendix I). French

¹ This article grew from the presentation at the AATF Convention in Martinique in 2018, which provided a handout of 65 French poems and their musical settings with composers, performers, instruments, and styles. This article discusses some of those poems with updated information and additional performer options, which are all available on YouTube. Neither the handout nor this article is a definitive list of French poems set to music by French composers.

poems set to music by French composers give the student the total French experience. Only a few caveats exist for the musical settings of French poems: 1) occasionally composers did not set an entire poem, 2) the music setting might have repeated phrases or stanzas, and 3) pronunciation of French in singing can have some light variations from speaking, most notably the voicing of normally silent syllables.

Poetry naturally possesses some elements of music in its rhyme and rhythm, but a music composition adds pitches, arranged in a melodic formula, usually with instrumental accompaniment providing a harmonic background. The timbre of the singer's voice and type of accompanying instruments add other dimensions to the poem. The style of the music arrangement, choice of instruments, and vocal timbre help establish the tone of the poem's message, setting the ambience of the topic. Combining a poem and music creates a more intense aural experience unlike hearing the poem recited or reading it. American lyricist Yip Harburg summed up the value of a song: "Words make you think. Music makes you feel. A song makes you feel thoughts."²

Using music is a great way to vary teaching strategies and differentiate content, therefore appealing to the various learning styles of the students. All students seem to like music and everyone remembers information better when it's connected to rhyme, rhythm, and melody. For the lower-achieving student, a musical setting of a poem can give the student a head start by being able to grasp the topic and some of the vocabulary, therefore making reading the poem a little easier. Students have a personal interest in activities that appeal to them, and appealing to their senses may encourage participation, creating a more active listener. The reading and listening skill may be the same whether students read the poem or hear it recited, or whether they hear it in a song, but their reaction may be different, and thus comprehension and participation may be influenced. Cranston refers to this as engagement of the auditory sense and surmises that students will understand more of Alfred de Musset's "Ballade à la lune" from Georges Brassens' musical setting than from all the textbook versions of the poem (956)!

A musical setting of a poem can lead to the practice of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. For beginning levels, teachers should look for poems with simple vocabulary, repetition, cognates, alliteration, rhyme, and short lines. Students will find it easier to interpret unambiguous texts that are descriptive or portray action rather than vague ideas or symbolism. Teachers should find settings with clear pronunciation, instrumental backgrounds that are not too loud, and slow to medium tempos. A variety of styles is great to alternate between more "classical" settings and pop sounds. Even though some settings will be a different style than what students are used to listening to, they will be more willing to listen to the new styles if there is a reason to do so, like a prepared activity for the song.

² Edgar Ypsel "Yip" Harburg was a prolific American lyricist of popular songs and Broadway shows and movies, most notably the lyrics to all of the songs in the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*. This is a widely publicized quotation from his speech at the 92nd Street YM-YWHA in New York City, December 13, 1970. Reprinted in *Yip Harburg: Legendary Lyricist and Human Rights Activist* by Harriet Hyman Alonso, Wesleyan University Press, 2012 (x).

For listening comprehension, students can mark the frequency of words or sounds they hear, fill in missing words, mark through letters that are not pronounced, or arrange words in the order that they hear them. For pronunciation practice, students can read the words with the singer, or create their own lines with rhyme and rhythm. For vocabulary development, students can distinguish between slang and formal language, find cognates and rhymes, look for masculine and feminine clues, guess the meaning of new words, find cultural associations, or circle categories of words like food, colors, or parts of the body. Students can also underline certain verb tenses, or find adjectives, negative phrases, idioms, synonyms and antonyms, contractions, and direct objects. Teachers can use the musical setting of a poem to suit the needs of the topic, whether using the whole poem or just a portion of it.

Some music settings combine language study with history and geography. For example, Louis Aragon's poem, "C," referring to the bridges at Cé, is a powerful expression of war and history in the connection of these bridges to the Gauls' defeat by Rome in 51 BC and the German invasion in 1940. Linguistically the poem is a good example of the "é" sound throughout with a variety of spellings, agreement of adjectives and nouns, and the use of the *passé composé*. Student activities could include listening and filling in the last word of each line or determining the correct form of the word.

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

Francis Poulenc's original musical treatment of this poem amplifies the subject using the piano accompaniment as sound effects for the clearly comprehensible vocal line. The later musical setting by Jacques Bertin (titled "Les ponts de Cé") with guitar accompaniment provides a contemporary pop sound for the poem with a simple melody. His declamatory singing style with many repeated pitches makes the words very clear for

the listener. The musical setting of this poem provides visual and aural examples of the complexities of French sounds, spellings, and agreement.

For early language levels, teachers should look for musical settings of poems that have repetition, like Paul Verlaine's "Chevaux de bois," set first by impressionist composer Claude Debussy. A recent pop setting by Jean-Marc Versini is in waltz time with a sound reminiscent of a calliope at a carnival carousel. This seven-stanza poem emphasizes the imperative, numbers, and other simple vocabulary suitable for beginning students.

Tournez, tournez, bon chevaux de bois,
 Tournez cent tours, tournez mille tours,
 Tournez souvent et tournez toujours,
 Tournez, tournez au son des hautbois. Etc.

Paul Éluard's "Homme au sourire tendre" is another example that displays repetition along with plural nouns and adjectives. The song by Poulenc is sung slowly with the lyrics easily heard.

Homme au sourire tendre
 Femme aux tendres paupières
 Homme aux joues rafraîchies
 Femme aux bras doux et frais
 Homme aux prunelles calmes
 Femme aux lèvres ardentes Etc.

Short poems with simple vocabulary, like Guillaume Apollinaire's "Voyage à Paris" and "Hôtel," have been set by Poulenc in aria-like settings. Two other short poems by Jean Cocteau, the whimsical "Danseuse," which compares the movement of a dancer to that of a crab, and "Polka," have musical settings by Erik Satie in which the music is quite descriptive of the theme of the poems. Composer/poet Olivier Messiaen's "Pourquoi?" is another short poem with simple vocabulary and all eleven lines beginning with *pourquoi*. A modern musical arrangement based on Messiaen's melody is the jazz version by Thomas Bergeron featuring Becca Stevens.

Pourquoi les oiseaux de l'air,
 Pourquoi les reflets de l'eau,
 Pourquoi les nuages du ciel,
 Pourquoi?
 Pourquoi les feuilles de l'Automne,
 Pourquoi les roses de l'Été,
 Pourquoi les chansons du Printemps, Etc.

The musical version of a poem can help students remember language patterns. For example, Joseph Kosma's setting of Robert Desnos' short poem, "La fourmi," gives the student practice at hearing phrases like "ça n'existe pas" and "pourquoi pas."

Another good poem for language instruction is the traditional text set by Darius Milhaud, “Berceuse” (number 4 from *Chants Populaires Hébraïques*). The repetitious, four-stanza text provides good examples of the future tense and provides an opportunity for discussion of the diversity in French music. Milhaud was a twentieth-century French composer who called upon his Jewish heritage in his music. To avoid persecution, he fled to the United States during World War II.

Dors, dors, dors,
 ton papa ira au village
 et rapportera une pomme
 et caressera ta petite tête.
 Dors, dors, dors,
 ton papa ira au village
 et rapportera une noix
 et caressera ton petit pied. Etc.

The musical setting of a poem can be the stimulus for conversation or students can write a summary of the poem, or express their viewpoint. Proficient students could expand a song with new lines. Students might also like to find a poem and recite it to a musical background of their choice. A good example to demonstrate this technique is Verlaine’s “Chanson d’automne,” recited by Jeanne Mas with jazz background music.

Many poems have been set by more than one composer with different vocal timbres, tempos, instrumental accompaniment, dynamics, and dramatic intensity. Students could determine which singer or composer best conveys the content of the poem. The different settings of the same poem beg the question of why a poem would have inspired composers to create a musical version. For example, Verlaine’s short poem, “Green,” was set by two of his contemporaries, Fauré and Debussy. Fauré’s version of “Green” contains a mostly chordal piano accompaniment with some melodic fragments recalling the vocal line. Debussy’s setting of the same poem has a much more animated piano part with melodic figures independent of the vocal melody. His song begins louder and faster and the voice part contains more wide leaps and uses both extremes of the vocal range. The two versions of “Green” would be obviously different to a student upon first hearing them, allowing a comparison of piano accompaniments, treatment of melody, tempo, and dynamics. Students might determine which, in their opinion, matches the mood and content best. The same two composers’ settings of Verlaine’s “C’est l’extase” also provide musical contrast. In this case it is Debussy’s setting which is slower, with more dramatic accompaniment in the low sustained chords of the piano supporting a florid vocal line. Fauré’s version has a faster tempo and a more traditional accompaniment. Verlaine’s “Clair de lune” also inspired both composers. Fauré’s version has been recorded by jazz artist, Louise Rogers. Pop composer and performer, Jean-Marc Versini, has updated the poem with a new melody and recorded it with guitar accompaniment. “En Sourdine” is another Verlaine poem set by both Debussy and Fauré and also by Reynaldo Hahn, all with contrasting styles.

A great example of updated music from an original composition is the four-verse poem by Maurice Bouchor, “Le temps des lilas.” Originally set to music by Ernest Chausson in 1886, it has had operatic, pop, and jazz interpretations. A good contemporary choice is that of Nilda Fernandez, singing the original beautiful melody with a jazz piano, electric keyboard and guitar. The text has some repetition and simple vocabulary and students will enjoy the ambience of the music that suits the somber theme.

Le temps des lilas et le temps des roses
 Ne reviendra plus à ce printemps-ci;
 Le temps des lilas et le temps des roses
 Est passé, le temps des oeilletts aussi. Etc.

“La vie antérieure” by Baudelaire, originally set by Henri DuParc with piano accompaniment and designed for the trained singer, has inspired new melodies by contemporary artists. Léo Ferré’s setting has orchestral accompaniment, while Georges Chélon’s setting is faster with just a guitar. DuParc’s setting of another of Baudelaire’s poems, “L’invitation au voyage,” with piano accompaniment can be compared with the new versions by Ferré and Chélon.

Charles Trenet, a popular French singer of the 1940s and 1950s, composed and recorded Arthur Rimbaud’s “Les corbeaux.” This poem continues to inspire musicians. Contemporary artist Marcel Mouloudji sings Trénet’s melody in a slow tempo with only a piano accompaniment (stanzas 3 and 4 only). Jean-Marc Versini has created a novel musical setting in a faster tempo with sound effects that recall the screeching of birds.

Although many poems might be more complex than pop songs, students can still appreciate the music and poem topic even if they cannot understand all the vocabulary or grammatical structures. Tucker makes a good argument that teachers should not restrict poetry to upper levels since poems can create awareness and appreciation even if on a simpler level (264). I would extend that thought here because a poem can spring to life in a musical version. For example, Verlaine’s “Chanson d’automne” inspired several composers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and even beginning students will grasp the sad tone of the poem. Good comparisons are Reynaldo Hahn’s slow, haunting melody performed by Anne Sofie von Otter with Versini’s pop version of the same melody. Hahn’s contemporary, Frederick Delius conceived the poem in a slow setting, also, but with a totally different melody. Trénet composed a new melody (song titled “Verlaine”) for Maurice Chevalier in the big band style of the 1940s. Completely different is the pop group Les Discrets’ recording that lasts seven minutes alternating speech and singing with electronic instruments. Students could determine which composition suits the poem in their opinion, or which one they prefer to listen to.

The above poem, “Chanson d’automne,” could be grouped with others featuring similar thematic content like “l’automne.” Poems using more advanced vocabulary and symbolism like “Automne” by Armand Silvestre, originally set by Fauré, can be heard in a jazz version by Louise Rogers. Fauré also set “Chant d’automne” by Baudelaire for the trained singer (stanzas 1, 3, 4), and pop artist Georges Chélon set all seven stanzas with

guitar accompaniment. Groups of students could be given different poems on the same theme to decipher and comment on the musical style.

Another example of grouping poems around themes is “Aubade,” the title of two different poems, one by Victor Hugo (music by Charles Gounod) and one by Louis Pommey (music by Fauré), and “Crepuscule” by Charles Van Lerberghe (music by Fauré). Poems could be grouped by opposites as well, using “Crepuscule” with Hugo’s “L’aurore” (music by Fauré). Bradshaw suggests several thematic poems of “*l’eau*” including “Le lac” by Alphonse de Lamartine with music by Niedermeyer (18).

Some musical settings of poems can be linked to the visual arts for a total arts experience. Paul Éluard’s poem, “Le travail du peintre” portrays seven painters and each of the short poems has been set to music by Poulenc. This could open a discussion about French artists and students’ opinions about their musical representation. Noland connects the poems of Blaise Cendrars to the visual arts and some of his poems have been musically set by Arthur Honegger (46-49). Audigier suggests connecting some of Baudelaire’s and Rimbaud’s poems to paintings and music with suggestions for classroom activities (529-530).

Besides the language and content of a poem, musical settings of poems can be useful to demonstrate French culture with the musical style and instruments, providing a mirror of the francophone world. A song from the Caribbean sure to excite the students is “Le bal masqué” by La Compagnie créole. The fast tempo, complex rhythms, and percussive instruments provide an authentic sound. The song details the preparation of costumes depicting characters like Napoléon, Joséphine, Dracula, Arlequin, among others. This song would be a good contrast to Verlaine’s poem about costumes and characters, “Colombine,” composed and performed by Georges Brassens with guitar accompaniment.

Zouk Machine is another Martinique/Guadeloupe group with many island hits. While the music is exciting and will appeal to students, the native language may be difficult to understand. However, the music alone gives students a feel for the island style with its polyrhythms and variety of instruments. There are many images of Caribbean instruments and performances of native groups on YouTube. For example, Joëlle Ursull from Guadeloupe sings the hit “White and Black Blues” (lyrics mostly in French) that speaks of being Black in the islands. This topic would contrast with Milhaud’s musical setting, “Trois chansons de négresse” based on Jules Superville’s poem.

Many poems of Aimé Césaire from Martinique have been recorded as recitations with musical backgrounds. For example, “Blues de la pluie” is recited over a jazz combo featuring the complex island rhythms. There are several pop songs that honor Césaire like Eric Virgal’s “Aimé Césaire” and “Aime (pour Aimé Césaire)” by Julien Clerc, which would give students a starting point to discuss this important writer from the French Caribbean islands.

“Mon île” by pop artist Jacqueline Farreyrol is a good example of a simple poem about La Réunion, and accessible for beginning students. The language is easily understood due to the singer’s clear voice, slow tempo, simple guitar accompaniment and the strong rhyme scheme of the poem. The poignant description will allow students a glimpse into a different francophone region and her performance on YouTube has beautiful images of the island.

Folk poetry from Les Voyageurs who were traders traveling the rivers of Canada from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries is represented in a large body of songs passed down by oral tradition. Often the accompaniment or rhythm of the text and melody suggests the rowing rhythm and action of waves, as in the rollicking “En roulant ma boule.” This paddling song with its many verses has a triplet rhythm with strong accents, which makes memory of the text easy for students.

Refrain: En roulant ma boule roulant
 En roulant ma boule.
 Verse: Derrière chez nous y-a-t’un étang,
 En roulant ma boule.
 Trois beaux canards s’en vont baignant,
 Rouli-roulant, ma boule roulant. Etc.

An interesting substitute for the perennial favorite, “Alouette,” is the repetitious “Mon merle,” another traditional song of Les Voyageurs. The content would be appropriate when teaching parts of the body, plurals, or numbers.

Refrain: Comment veux-tu mon merle, mon merle?
 Comment veux-tu mon merle chanter?
 Verse: Mon merle a perdu son bec }2
 Un bec, deux becs, trois becs, marlo. Refrain
 Verse: Mon merle a perdu son oeil. }2
 Un oeil, deux yeux, trois yeux
 Un bec, deux becs, trois becs, marlo. Refrain Etc.

Poetic folk tales can be useful due to the use of storytelling with a lot of repetition and simple music, like “Margoton va-t-à-l’eau” from the Voyageur tradition. This story is about a girl who falls into a well. Two boys pass by and will help her out of the well if she promises them a kiss. Margoton promises, then runs away as soon as she is out of the well. Contemporary artist Hélène Bohy features a jazz combo in her rendition, which brings an old song to modern times. Sometimes old folk tunes have been used for later poems like Pierre-Jean de Béranger’s poem, “Le roi d’Yvetôt.” The humorous story is a satire about Napoléon with an unforgettable melody. It can be heard today by Hélène Baillargeon with guitar accompaniment in a fast tempo.

Some poems have been transformed into popular hits.³ For example, Jacques Prévert's "Les feuilles mortes," composed by Joseph Kosma, could be used with other poems on an autumnal theme or sad love theme, or by itself, comparing it to its English translation in American recordings. Yves Montand popularized "Les feuilles mortes," but contrasting versions by Iggy Pop (sung and spoken with rock style percussion) and Andrea Bocelli (with a Latin beat) provide variety for the students to listen to. There is even a recording by Nat King Cole singing this song in French. A good modern English version is by rock superstar Eric Clapton.

Another of Prévert's poems, "Cri du coeur," was set by Henri Crolla and became a hit for Edith Piaf. Besides being an example of a pre-rock French icon, many of Piaf's recordings can be useful in language learning due to the simple vocabulary and repetition of the lyrics. For example, Michel Vaucaire's "Non, je ne regrette rien" set by Charles Dumont is filled with various negative phrases that student will remember (and this song is currently heard in television commercials for Dove's chocolate).

Non, rien de rien
 Non, je ne regrette rien
 Ni le bien qu'on me fait
 Ni le mal, tout ça m'est bien égale. Etc.

Other songs of the pre-rock era like "C'est si bon" (lyrics by André Hornez, music by Henri Betti) has an easy listening style and repetitious lyrics. "Moulin des amours" (lyrics by Jacques LaRue, music by Georges Auric) contains lyrics that emphasize the imperfect verb tense. Both of these songs have many English interpretations for comparison.

A chansonnier in the late nineteenth century, Jean Baptiste Clément, penned the lyrics, "Le temps des cerises," that was set to music by Antoine Renard and later used in many French films. Although the music is from 1868, it sounds surprisingly like today's pop music in recordings by Piaf and more recently those of Mouloudji, Nana Mouskouri, and Ferré as well as by many American singers.

Students will find it interesting to hear "Le moribond" of popular poet Jacques Brel, with different musical versions by Brel (jazz combo), Dominique Horwitz (small combo), and the rock group Les Sans Culotte (electronic combo), and then could compare the poem with the lyrics in the American pop hit "Seasons in the Sun." In some verses American poet Rod McKuen has put a different interpretation into the song. Other songs like "Comme d'habitude" (lyrics by Gilles Thibault, music by Jacques Revaux and Claude François), known in English as "My Way," has a totally different text by Paul Anka. Other, more direct translations include "Les parapluies de Cherbourg" (Michel Legrand, English by Norman Gimbel – Umbrellas of Cherbourg") and "Et maintenant"

³ See Federici for suggestions of poems by Apollinaire, Prévert, Aragon, and others recorded by pop artists like Yves Montand and Nana Mouskouri, along with suggestions for their use in the classroom.

(lyrics by Pierre Delanoë, music by Gilbert Bécaud, English by Carl Sigman – “What Now My Love”), both of which have many French and American recordings.

Often overlooked is the era of the Middle Ages and Renaissance as a source rich in poetry and music, and yet it is often fascinating to students if approached as a sensory experience. In some ways, the songs from those eras are like the pop songs that students enjoy today. The song-poem of the Middle Ages was the pop music of the time, often written and composed by an untrained musician. It is similar today to the “man and his guitar” idea of informal music-making and singing about love. Edgington puts forth a good argument to use earlier poetry, even though there are linguistic hurdles, because of the valuable cultural and historical connection (173-174).

For an accurate aural experience of the Middle Ages, there is a lot of Troubadour music available. However, the text is usually not in modern French, but the musical style is often of the rock era. A good example is “Ahi! Amours, con dure departie” with text and music by Conon de Béthune (d.1224). An early music combo led by David Munrow will give the students the sound of the Middle Ages, while the performance by Blanche Rowen with guitar in a faster version brings it up to date musically. The song could be a prompt about the Crusades, and the life of a knight who must serve his Lord and leave his lady. Another prolific French composer/poet of the late Middle Ages, Guillaume de Machaut (1300-1377), left a large body of French love songs in rondeau form with many recordings available today. His sad story of “Puis qu’en oubli” can be heard in authentic music combos or more modern versions. Students can debate the relevance of the theme today: a man whose lover has scorned him will never love again.

One of the most fascinating French music eras is the Ars Nova (14th century). Baude Cordier provided enigmatic poems and music settings, often incorporating the visual arts, as in a love song with music notation written in the shape of a heart (no title, MS Chantilly, Musée Condé, ca. 1400). Also appealing to students would be Jacob Senleches’ poem and song, “La harpe de mélodie.” written in the shape of a harp. The staff lines of the notation form the strings of the harp and words on a ribbon entwined on the curved side of the harp give directions for performance. This idea connects to some of Apollinaire’s *calligrammes* in the twentieth century.

Joachim du Bellay’s “Heureux qui, comme Ulysse” is available in many different versions. Composer Alain Jacques’s setting is slow with one guitar while that of Ridan (Nadir Kouidri) is fast with a pop combo (song titled “Ulysse”). An updated version of the topic of the poem and new music has been created by Georges Brassens.⁴ Brassens also turned to François Villon’s “Ballade des dames du temps jadis” for musical inspiration and several artists have recorded his composition. Villon’s “Ballade des femmes de Paris” has had numerous settings in the past and has inspired a large number of more recent interpretations: Alain Armal with accordion and guitar, Chris Papin with

⁴ See Cranston (960-961) for a comparison of the text of Du Bellay’s “Heureux qui, comme Ulysse” and Brassens’ updated version.

one guitar, Alfred Polansky in a fast setting with guitar, and Café Louise, a spoken version with a jazz/pop combo and lots of percussion in the background.

Pierre de Ronsard's poem "Mignonne allons voir si la rose" was first set to music by his contemporary, Guillaume Costeley, and can be heard by the Alfred Deller Consort with an authentic musical sound recalling that era. Jean-Baptiste Lully, the court composer for Louis XIV at Versailles, later set the poem to new music. The performance by pop artist Mouloudji gives Lully's melody a contemporary flavor that belies its eighteenth-century origin.

De Ronsard's short poem, "Bon jour, mon coeur," was set by Renaissance composer Roland de Lassus. The performance by Mignarda with just a lute for accompaniment has clear pronunciation that will allow students to grasp the vocabulary and use of *mon/ma* with nouns.

Bon jour, mon coeur, bon jour, ma douce vie,
 Bon jour, mon oeil, bon jour ma chère amie!
 Hé! Bon jour, ma toute belle,
 Ma mignardise, bon jour, mes délice, mon amour,
 Mon doux printemps, ma douce fleur nouvelle
 Mon doux plaisir, ma douce colombelle,
 Mon passereau, me gente tourterelle,
 Bon jour, ma douce rebelle.

Other de Ronsard poems for more advanced students are Milhaud's musical setting of "Tais-toi, babillarde arondelle" and "À cupidon," and Poulenc's setting of "À sa guitare."

As illustrated in all of the musical settings of poems throughout this article, the songs are flexible. The same song can be used at different levels utilizing different activities, since basic language activities for beginner levels can become more sophisticated for advanced levels. Many of the songs reflect history, geography, or other cultural aspects, making the musical settings an interdisciplinary approach to language study that captures students' interest. With so many poems/songs to choose from, teachers can find just the right example (see Appendix II for a selected list of French poets and the composers that have set their poems). Organization of the poems, perhaps by content or language lesson and marked for various levels, will enable the teacher to easily insert musical settings of poems into a lesson as appropriate. With music, a text that was written to be read or recited, is transformed into a new experience and may stimulate a new appreciation for literature and language. Music can provide the opportunity for many students to enjoy French literature and language in new ways and at an earlier instructional level.

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APPENDIX I

SELECTED RESOURCES for MUSIC SETTINGS OF FRENCH POEMS

Bernac, Pierre. *The Interpretation of French Song*. London: Kahn & Averill, 1977. This contains hundreds of French poems (and translations) and information about the music and how it should be performed.

Johnson, Graham and Richard Stokes. *A French Song Companion*. Oxford: Oxford UP, Press, 2000. This is an excellent compilation of over 500 French poems (with English translations) that have been set to music by over 150 composers. The indices provide poem title, poet, and composer for easy reference. There is a lot of information about the composers and their collections of French songs, and their choice of French poets.

Kimball, Carol. *Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music*. Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2013. This provides a good summary of the connection of poetry and music. French songs are a portion of the book, with suggestions for musical interpretation.

APPENDIX II

SELECTED FRENCH POETS AND FRENCH COMPOSERS

Middle Ages and Renaissance:

Poets/composers: **Troubadours, Trouvères, Adam de la Halle, Machaut**
Charles d'Orléans – Bréville, Caplet, Debussy, Hahn, Honegger, Ibert, Indy, Milhaud, Poulenc, Ravel, Roussel, Saint-Saëns
Du Bellay, Joachim – Brassens, Caplet, Françaix, Jacques, Milhaud. Ridan
Marot, Clément – Françaix, Honegger, Ravel, Sermisy
Ronsard, Pierre de – Auric, Bizet, Bréville, Costeley, Kirjuhel, de Lassus, Lully, Milhaud, Poulenc, Ravel, Roussel, Sermisy
Villon, François – Brassens, Debussy, Ferré, Kirjuhel, Messiaen

Post-Renaissance :

Anouilh, Jean – Kosma, Poulenc
Apollinaire, Guillaume – Bessière, Durey, Honegger, Poulenc
Aragon, Louis – Auric, Ferré, Gérard, Kosma, Poulenc
Balzac, Honoré de – Chausson
Banville, Théodore de – Auric, Chausson, Debussy, Gounod, Hahn, Widor
Baudelaire, Charles – Caplet, Chabrier, Charpentier, Chélon, Debussy, DuParc, Fauré, Ferré, Indy, Kirjuhel, Sauguet, Séverac
Béranger, Pierre Jean de – Berlioz, Gounod, Lalo
Bouchor, Maurice – Bréville, Chausson, Dubois
Bourget, Paul – Chausson, Debussy, Koechlin, Widor

Bussine, Romain - Fauré
Carême, Maurice – Absil, Poulenc, Sauguet
Cendrars, Blaise – Honegger
Chalupt, René – Auric, Milhaud, Roussel, Satie
Char, René - Boulez
Claudé, Paul – Honegger, Milhaud
Chateaubriand, Vicomte de – Franck, Cocteau, Auric, Durey, Honegger, Milhaud, Poulenc, Satie
Cocteau, Jean – Auric, Durey, Honegger, Milhaud, Poulenc, Satie, Sauguet
Colette, Sidonie Gabrielle – Poulenc
Daudet, Alphonse - Hahn
Desnos, Robert – Kosma, Poulenc
Dommenge, René - Roussel
Eluard, Paul – Auric, Durey, Gérard, Poulenc, Sauguet
Gautier, Théophile – Berlioz, Bizet, Chausson, Debussy, DuParc, Fauré, Gounod, Hahn, Lalo, Massenet, Offenbach
Gide, André – Durey, Milhaud
Giraudoux, Jean – Honegger, Jaubert
Hugo, Victor – Berlioz, Bizet, Caplet, Chabrier, Delibes, Fauré, Gounod, Hahn, Lalo, Kirjuhel, Massenet, Saint-Saëns
Jammes, Francis – Durey, Honegger, Milhaud
La Fontaine, Jean de – Caplet, Françaix, Gounod, Saint-Saëns, Trenet
Lammartine, Alphonse – Bizet, Gounod, Niedermeyer, Satie
Leconte de Lisle (René Leconte) – Chausson, Debussy, Duparc, Fauré, Hahn, Ravel, Roussel
Louÿs, Pierre - Debussy, Kosma
Maeterlinck, Maurice – Chausson, Debussy, Fauré, Ibert, Séverac
Mallarmé, Stéphane – Boulez, Debussy, Durey, Milhaud, Ravel, Sauguet, Séverac, Boulez, Kirjuhel
Monnier, Marc – Dubois, Fauré
Musset, Alfred de – Bizet, Brassens, Chabrier, Debussy, Delibes, Franck, Gounod, Ibert, Lalo, Milhaud
Nerval, Gérard de – Auric, Kirjuhel
Pommey, Louis – Fauré
Prévert, Jacques – Crolla, Kosma
Régnier, Henri de – Caplet, Fauré, Poulenc, Ravel, Roussel
Rimbaud, Arthur – Bréville, Ferré, Kirjuhel, Milhaud, Trenet
Rostand, Edmond – Chabrier
Ségalen, Victor – Ibert
Silvestre, Armand – Chabrier, Chausson, Delibes, DuParc, Fauré, Lalo, Massenet
Sully Prudhomme – DuParc, Fauré, Franck, Widor
Valéry, Paul – Asso, Françaix, Mompou, Poulenc
Van Leberghe, Charles - Fauré
Verlaine Paul – Aubert, Brassens, Charpentier, Chausson, Fauré, Debussy, Delius, Durey, Fauré, Hahn, Honegger, Kirjuhel, Kosma, Massenet, Milhaud, Ravel, Saint-Saëns, Trénet

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