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# The Kunkelmann Manuscripts: New Sources for Early Mélodies (1881-1882) by Claude Debussy

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# Debussy's Resonance

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Edited by François de Médicis  
and Steven Huebner

 UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER PRESS

## Chapter Three

# The Kunkelmann Manuscripts

## New Sources for Early *Mémoires* by Claude Debussy

Denis Herlin

In the highly imaginative issue of *La revue musicale* of May 1926 dedicated to “La jeunesse de Claude Debussy” we find not only an article by Charles Koechlin entitled “Some Early *Mémoires* by Claude Debussy,” but also a musical supplement with four (at the time) unpublished *mémoires* selected by Henry Prunières from the manuscripts Debussy dedicated to Madame Vasnier: *Pantomime*, *Clair de lune*, *Pierrot*, and *Apparition*.<sup>1</sup> Their publication marked the first time that works were made available from the period during which the composer was still calling himself Achille, as he did as a boy, and not yet “Claude.” Koechlin began his article by revealing that he had always been fond of the “youthful works of the great composers.” “[T]hey exhibit ideas that are fresh,” he continued, “and tender, naïve, and charming—qualities that the master [Debussy] was not always able to recapture in his later works.”<sup>2</sup> A well-known critic of the day, Constantin Photiadès (1883–1949), commented on Prunières’s discovery in an article for the *Revue de Paris*:

Some small ineptitudes here and there take away from the four charming *mémoires* that we read last May in the issue of *La revue musicale* devoted to Debussy’s youth, because these modest songs, on texts by Banville and

Verlaine, do obviously reveal the hand of the student-composer. But they also exhibit an astonishing refinement and a remarkable ability to encapsulate the very essence of the poetry, down to the slightest prolongation of a word, or a syllable. [. . .] These album leaves clearly foreshadow the mastery to follow. Such is the interest of these revelations and of all of those that are still to come—because we have by no means reached the end of our surprises. Sooner or later someone will discover the sylphlike music that Debussy wrote for *The elves*, by Leconte de Lisle, or perhaps the elegant, ornamental *mélodie* [*Fête galante*] that later became the minuet of the *Petite suite* for piano four-hands.<sup>3</sup>

Here we learn that Photiadès was aware, already in 1926, of two Debussy manuscripts, most notably including that of *Les elfes*, whose very existence was completely unknown to modern Debussy scholars until recently, when they turned up in a private collection along with eight more song manuscripts from the pen of the master whom we now affectionately refer to as Claude de France.<sup>4</sup> The appearance of these nine autographs, written in 1881 and 1882, represents the single most important addition to our knowledge of Debussy sources since the unearthing of the *Première suite d'orchestre* in 2007.<sup>5</sup>

Four of the nine new manuscripts contain *mélodies* that were previously unknown in complete versions: *L'archet*, the sole setting we have by Debussy of a poem by Charles Cros; *Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau* and the *Romance* (“Non les baisers d’amour”), both of which are settings of poems by Maurice Bouchor; and, finally, *Les elfes*, which is based on one of the *Poèmes barbares* by Leconte de Lisle, and which, along with *Séguidille* (from late 1882), is one of the longest *mélodies* that Debussy ever composed.<sup>6</sup> Sketches for two of these four songs were, however, known to specialists, as were fragments of two others. These are all preserved in a sketchbook to which I shall return below.<sup>7</sup>

As for the five other new autograph manuscripts: these offer us new sources for texts otherwise known in single versions. In question are *Rondel chinois*, *Fête galante*, *Pierrot*, *Les roses*, and *Le zéphyr* (heretofore known as *Rêverie*), all but the first being settings of poems from *Les cariatides* by Théodore de Banville.<sup>8</sup>

Let me note, finally, that joined to this group of nine new manuscripts are six others, in the hand of a copyist, with six of the songs mentioned above—*L'archet*, *Fête galante*, *Romance* (“Non les baisers d’amour”) *Le zéphyr*, *Pierrot*, and *Les roses*—and one other, the *Chanson des brises*, a setting for solo voice and women’s choir of a poem by Louis Bouilhet. These copies contain corrections and additions in Debussy’s hand, something that is of particular importance in the case of the *Chanson des brises*, for which the autograph has never been found.<sup>9</sup>

These sixteen manuscripts listed in appendix 3.1, the autographs and the copies, belonged to Henry Kunkelmann. They complete a corpus of Debussy’s

early *mélodies* that is really quite imposing, but that is too often neglected, for if the *mélodies* of Debussy's maturity are very well known indeed, notably the *Ariettes* and the *Chansons de Bilitis*, those that he composed between 1879 and 1885, when he was a student at the Conservatoire, are not at all familiar. And yet these same *mélodies*, largely unpublished during the composer's lifetime, constitute approximately *one half* of his total song repertory—approximately fifty, that is, of the one hundred or so songs that he composed. This mere statistic speaks to the preponderant role played by the setting of poetic texts to music in the artistic development of the young Achille Debussy.

### Henry Kunkelmann, Composer and Collector

Unlike the numerous autographs of his youthful *mélodies* that he dedicated and gave to Marie Vasnier, who inspired them,<sup>10</sup> all nine new autographs carry a dedication to Henry Kunkelmann (1855–1922), whose name, until this recent discovery, has never appeared among those of Debussy's close associates. We do not know precisely when Debussy made Kunkelmann's acquaintance, but it is highly likely that the two young men became friends during their years at the Conservatoire. Although his name does not appear in Constant Pierre's encyclopedic volume on the Conservatoire,<sup>11</sup> Kunkelmann was clearly a student in the eighteen-eighties in both the harmony class of Théodore Dubois<sup>12</sup> and the composition class of César Franck.<sup>13</sup> He was born in Reims on July 4, 1855, into a family that hailed from the Grand Duchy of Baden. Like other German entrepreneurial families from that region, including the more famous Bollingers and Roedereres, the Kunkelmanns made a great deal of money cultivating and selling champagne. Henry's parents, Théodore Kunkelmann (1811–81) and Marie Dietz (1827–1915), cousins of the Pipers and the Heidsiecks, owned a magnificent townhouse in Reims, at no. 1, rue Piper, which was demolished only in 1968. Of the three Kunkelmann children, the oldest, Ferdinand (1851–1930), took over the family business on the death of his father, while the youngest, Lucie (1863–1948), was married in January 1888 to Count Maximilien de Cafarelli.<sup>14</sup> The middle child, Henry, devoted himself to music. Already a passionate Wagnerian, he made a first pilgrimage to Bayreuth in 1876, for the initial performance of the *Ring*, and he returned to the Wagnerian mecca on four subsequent occasions, in 1886, in 1888 (when Debussy, too, attended the festival), in 1892, and in 1896.<sup>15</sup> He had become close to Vincent d'Indy, who in 1906 dedicated his symphonic poem *Un jour d'été à la montagne* (op. 61) to Kunkelmann; and he published with Tellier several compositions under the pseudonym of Henry Kerval,<sup>16</sup> notably an *Ave Maria* for mezzo-soprano or baritone, with either organ or piano, in 1885 and, in 1886, a *Valse* in D-flat Major for piano, dedicated to his "cher maître, Théodore Dubois."<sup>17</sup> In 1889 he

published an *Andante*, for violin and piano, dedicated to Jean Gounod, Charles Gounod's son.<sup>18</sup>

Kunkelmann soon became the “great white hope” for the publisher Richault, as the critic Henry Gauthier-Villars, known as Willy, amusingly put it, but his publications were few and far between.<sup>19</sup> A *Wedding March* for organ appeared in 1891, written specifically for the marriage of his sister as she became Countess Cafarelli, and two *mélodies* appeared in 1893.<sup>20</sup> The last evidence we have of Kunkelmann's musical career comes from a review by that same Willy:

At the Odéon, which is these days offering very serious competition to the Opéra, we very much enjoyed the elegant stage music by which Monsieur Henry Kerval enhanced Moreto's play *San Gil de Portugal* (ingeniously translated into French by Monsieur Gassier). [. . .] The young baritone Coste offered us a delightful Serenade, and Mademoiselle Lapacerie was warmly applauded for her recitation of the satanic verses composed by Kerval, whose “*Marche au Calvaire*” also resonated, not without a certain grandeur, in harmonies reminiscent of those of *Parsifal*.<sup>21</sup>

According to Willy, Kunkelmann's “supercilious appearance,” with “eyes sparkling beneath his Mephistophelean eyebrows,”<sup>22</sup> was a fixture on the musical landscape of that decade, from 1889 to 1898, which the writer so richly sketched for us in so many caustic remarks peppered with wordplay and puns. Identified as an amateur collector by *Le ménestrel*,<sup>23</sup> and as a collector of autographs by the *Annuaire de la curiosité et des beaux-arts*,<sup>24</sup> Kunkelmann looked after Debussy's manuscripts very carefully and at his death bequeathed them, along with his entire music library, to his lifelong friend, the organist and composer Gabriel Saint-René Taillandier (1861–1931), who had also been a student of César Franck.<sup>25</sup> Those manuscripts are today preserved in a private collection.

### An Artistic Friendship

What I have discovered about Kunkelmann suggests that he and Debussy did not usually frequent the same artistic and social circles, and that in all probability their relationship was short-lived. Indeed, the manuscripts that Kunkelmann possessed date uniquely from 1881 and 1882; there is no trace of Kunkelmann in Debussy's subsequent correspondence. The only proof we have of the ephemeral friendship that developed between the nineteen-year-old musician and the twenty-seven-year-old apprentice composer are the markings on these manuscripts. Four of them carry the rather neutral dedication of “à Henry” (to Henry), but a fifth, *Pierrot*, is slightly more evocative: “à mon bon ami Kunkelmann” (to my good friend Kunkelmann). And a sixth, *Rondel*

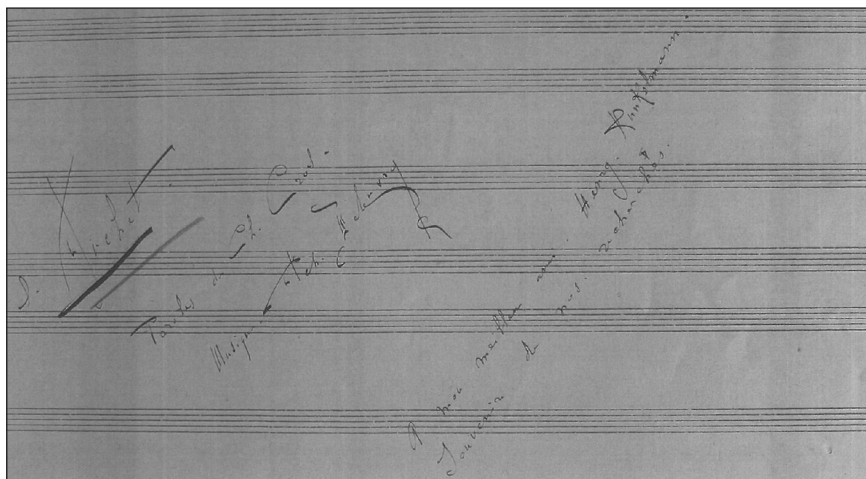


Figure 3.1. *L'archet*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), title page with inscription. Paris, private collection.

*chinois*, is even more explicit: “au plus sympathique de ceux que j’appelle mes amis” (to the most likeable of all of those whom I call my friends). Finally, on the title page of *L’archet*, one of the four unpublished songs, we find, next to the dedication of “à son meilleur ami Henry Kunkelman” (to his best friend Henry Kunkelman), a most intriguing addition: “souvenirs de nos recherches” (recollections of our research; see fig. 3.1). To what, one wonders, does Debussy’s comment refer?

In fact we know, from a manuscript in Kunkelmann’s hand (see fig. 3.2) that is preserved with those of Debussy, that their “research” was of a compositional sort. This manuscript is nothing other than a copy of Debussy’s setting of *Les roses*, a poem by Théodore de Banville. The document, which carries on the first page the siglum “AD” (Achille Debussy) is all the more significant because it gives us the song in an intermediate stage that stands between the version in the manuscript that Debussy gave to Madame Vasnier and the version in the manuscript that he gave to Kunkelmann himself. The passage at measures 13–18, among others, proves that Kunkelmann copied the music from a text nearly identical to that of the Vasnier manuscript. The vocal line at measure 18 (“On sent brûler”; see ex. 3.1a) is similar to that of the Vasnier manuscript, while in the version Debussy gave to his friend that vocal line is transformed into two Bbs followed by two Dbs (see ex. 3.1b). At measures 13–14, the situation is somewhat different: the last two quarter notes of the vocal line (m. 14), two E#s in the Vasnier manuscript (see ex. 3.2a), become E#–D# in the Kunkelmann copy (see ex. 3.2b). This progression is retained in the version Debussy gave to Kunkelmann (see ex. 3.2c).

Example 3.1a. *Les roses*, autograph manuscript (Vasnier) and manuscript in Kunkelmann's hand, m. 18.

18

On sent brû - ler sous ses ma - gi - ques traits

Example 3.1b. *Les roses*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), m. 18.

18

On sent brû - ler sous ses ma - gi - ques traits

Example 3.2a. *Les roses*, autograph manuscript (Vasnier), mm. 13-14.

13

Quand sa cha - leur dé - dai-gneuse et fa - rou - che

Example 3.2b. *Les roses*, manuscript in Kunkelmann's hand, mm. 13-14.

13

Quand sa cha - leur dé - dai-gneuse et fa - rou - che



Example 3.2c. *Les roses*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), mm. 13–14.

13

Quand sa cha - leur dé - dai-gneuse et fa - rou - che

The piano writing at measures 13–14 is likewise somewhat different in the three manuscripts, while the harmony remains the same. The disposition of the sixteenth notes in the right hand progresses from the C# (on the first and second beats) to B# (on the third and fourth beats) of the Vasnier manuscript (see ex. 3.2a), to the A# to A $\natural$  of the Kunkelmann copy (see ex. 3.2b), and to the F# to E# of the manuscript offered to Kunkelmann (see ex. 3.2c). These changes allowed for the playing of full chords in the left hand on the second and third beats, where in the Vasnier manuscript there were only single notes. Nevertheless, the chords apparently suggested by Kunkelmann, as per his copy, were redistributed by Debussy when he gave his own manuscript to his friend.

Finally, we observe the transformation of measure 17, which in the Vasnier manuscript is in  $\frac{4}{4}$  (see ex. 3.3a), and which in the Kunkelmann copy is in  $\frac{2}{4}$  (see ex. 3.3c). This leads to an alteration of the harmony in that copy, which we may see in example 3.3b. Were we to attend in this kind of detail to other passages in this *mélodie*, we would understand with even greater clarity what Debussy meant when he mentioned “nos recherches” in the dedication of *L'archet*. The friendship between Kunkelmann and Debussy, though brief, was by no means superficial: it resulted in a cordial and meaningful exchange of ideas between two composers in search of their mature compositional voices.

The question remains as to the *raison d'être* of the copies of the six songs—*L'archet*, *Fête galante*, *Romance* (“Non les baisers d’amour”), *Le zéphyr*, *Pierrot*, and *Les roses*—that Kunkelmann made, and that Debussy then revised, for several of these do carry corrections and additions in Debussy’s hand.<sup>26</sup> Presumably, the copies were made with the intention of sending them to a publisher. In June 1882 Debussy received from Bulla, of the Société Artistique d’Éditions d’Estampes et de Musique, the sum of fifty francs for the printing of *Nuit d’étoiles*—his first published work.<sup>27</sup> He would obviously have hoped for further income from further publications. Oddly enough, Kunkelmann possessed *two* copies of that Bulla edition: the first, with an inscription that reads “à Henry. Beaucoup de notes et beaucoup

Example 3.3a. *Les roses*, autograph manuscript (Vasnier), m. 17.

Example 3.3b. *Les roses*, manuscript in Kunkelmann's hand, m. 17.

Example 3.3c. *Les roses*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), m. 17 (third system, measure 4).

d'amitié. Ach. Debussy" (to Henry: a lot of notes and a lot of friendship, from Achille Debussy), and the second with an inscription to the original dedicatee of the song: "à Madame Moreau-Sainti. Souvenir bien affectueux de l'auteur. Ach. Debussy" (to Madame Moreau-Sainti, with the affectionate regards of the author, Achille Debussy; see fig. 3.3). Now, we know that Debussy met Marie Vasnier at one of Victorine Moreau-Sainti's classes, where he served as accompanist. That Kunkelmann had two copies of this song suggests that he, too, knew the history of its publication and that he, too, had a friendly relationship with Madame Moreau-Sainti. It is likely that, after making copies of six of Debussy's songs, he intended to show them to Madame Moreau-Sainti, and thus to help his young friend take a step forward in his career.

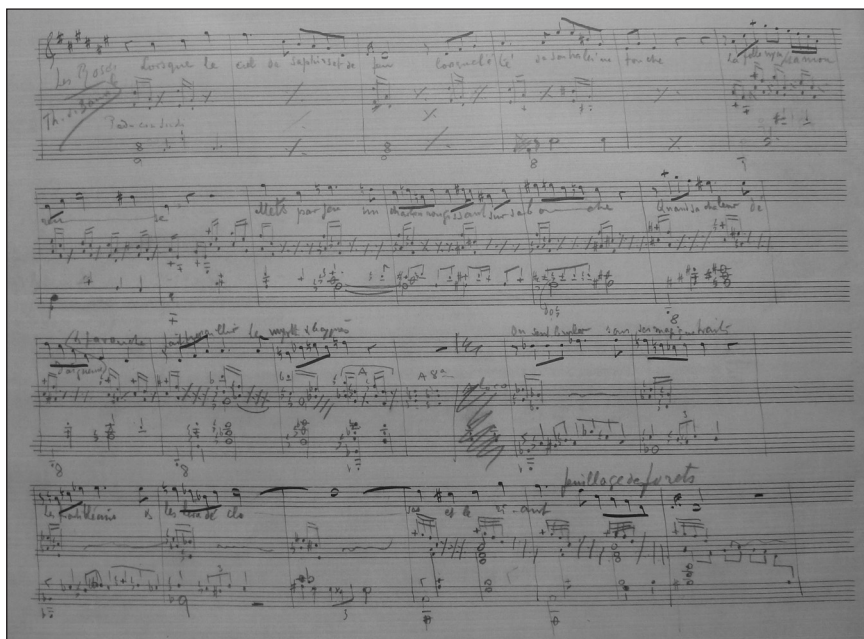


Figure 3.2. *Les roses*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), m. 17 (third system, measure 4). Paris, private collection.

## A Brief Chronology

Before looking individually at some of the songs under discussion, I should like to sketch the chronology of their composition. Unfortunately, none of the Kunkelmann manuscripts bears the slightest trace of a date. Only the forms of Debussy's various signatures, therefore, can offer assistance in dating, as they may be compared with those on the list compiled and published by Yves Lado-Bordowski in the 1990 issue of the *Cahiers Debussy*—a list that ought now to be brought up to date in light of more recently discovered sources.<sup>28</sup> Using as a first point of comparison the Vasnier manuscript of *Fête galante*—which *does* carry a date, curiously indicated as “Musique Louis. IXV. [sic] avec formules. de. 1882” (Music of Louis XIV [one presumes] with expressions from 1882)—the signatures on the Kunkelmann autographs seem to be, as shown in appendix 3.2, remarkably similar to one another, with the sole exception of that of *Rondel chinois*. In fact, the two manuscripts of *Rondel chinois* carry signatures that are similar to others that date, according to Lado-Bordowski, from the first half of 1881. The rest would seem to come from the first half of 1882, the last of them no doubt being that of *Les elfes*, where the form of the

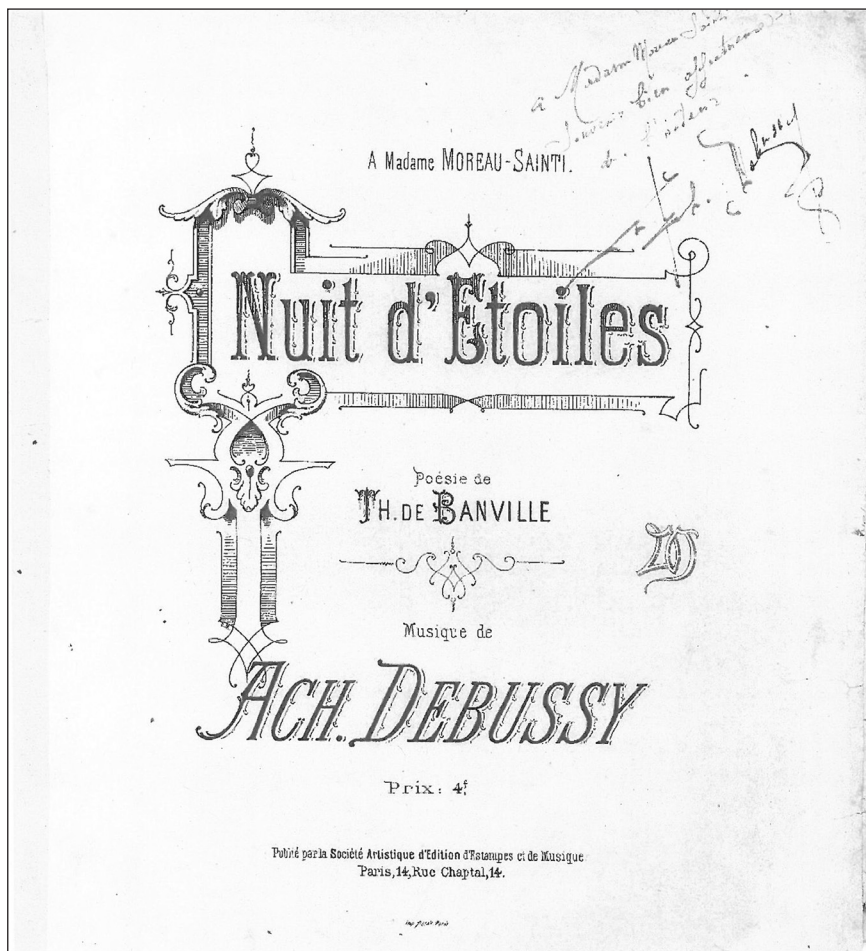


Figure 3.3. *Nuit d'étoiles*, title page of the 1882 edition with the dedication to Madame Moreau-Sainti. Paris, private collection.

letter A, more rounded than elsewhere, resembles the A in the signatures on *En sourdine* and on *Mandoline*, which date, respectively, from September 16 and November 25, 1882.<sup>29</sup> A further element would confirm this dating, because on May 12, 1882, Debussy accompanied Marie Vasnier in *Fête galante* and *Les roses* at a concert given in Paris in the *salons* of the Flaxland publishing house (see fig. 3.4).<sup>30</sup> Let me add, finally, that *Le zéphyr* raises a different question of dating because the second manuscript of the song (preserved in the collection of the music department of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ms. 23498), with the title of *Réverie*, carries no signature at all.

Salons de MM. FLAXLAND et Fils, Facteurs de Pianos  
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# SOIRÉE MUSICALE

donnée par le Violoniste

## MAURICE THIEBERG

Avec le gracieux concours de

M<sup>me</sup> VASNIER et de M<sup>r</sup> ACHILLE de BUSSY

Vendredi 12 Mai 1882, à 8 heures 1/2 très-précises

### PROGRAMME :

1. A. Allegro de la Sonate, Mi bémol majeur... BEETHOVEN  
B. Pensées fugitives, pour Piano et Violon... SI-BELLER & H. W. ERNST  
Andante con Variazioni et Intermezzo (Presto) par  
MM. de BUSSY et THIEBERG.
2. Air d'Actéon..... AUDEB  
Chanté par Mme VASNIER
3. Concerto en Mi majeur..... VIEUXTEMPS  
Adagio et Rondo, par M. THIEBERG.
4. A. Nocturno, } pour Piano et Violon..... Ach. de BUSSY  
B. Scherzo, }  
par l'auteur et M. THIEBERG.
5. A. Adagio du Concerto Militaire ..... LIPINSKI  
B. Polonaise brillante ..... WIENIAWSKI  
par M. THIEBERG.
6. A. Fête galante ..... } Ach. de BUSSY  
B. Les Roses..... }  
Chanté par Mme VASNIER
7. A. Berçeuse..... REBER  
B. Rhapsodie Hongroise..... NISKA HAUSER  
par M. THIEBERG.

Prix du Billet : 6 francs

On trouve des Billets chez MM. DURAND et SCHONWERK, place de la  
Madeleine 12, et à la Maison FLAXLAND.

Figure 3.4. Program of the concert of May 12, 1882.

Dated by François Lesure to 1880,<sup>31</sup> this *mélodie* may well have been composed somewhat later, perhaps with the others, in the first half of 1882.

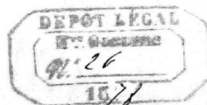
### From Vasnier to Kunkelmann: Three Case Studies

Beyond presenting us with four unpublished songs, five of the nine new Debussy autographs preserved by Kunkelmann<sup>32</sup> give us versions of *mélodies* that we knew heretofore from only the manuscripts the composer gave to Marie Vasnier.<sup>33</sup> With the exception of *Le zéphyr*, the new autographs differ from Vasnier versions in small ways that it is not practical to describe in detail in this space. (The kinds of differences to which we refer are similar to those mentioned above in the case of *Les roses*.) Nonetheless, three of them—*Rondel chinois*, *Fête galante*, and *Pierrot*—do require further comment. Indeed, thanks to the Kunkelmann autograph of *Rondel chinois*,<sup>34</sup> we learn, finally, the identity of the author of this rather dubious sonnet. The wordsmith to whom we owe these immortal verses is none other than Marius Dillard. Born in the Département du Gard in 1860, he pursued his career in Rouen, according to the best available biographical dictionary;<sup>35</sup> he authored numerous critical articles on literature, art, and music; he directed the journal *Rouen-Artiste*; and he prepared two volumes of poetry, *Rondels* and *Angoisses*, which were apparently never published. It seems that his poetry was published, however, in such magazines as the *Revue des poètes et des auteurs dramatiques*, the *Trouvère*, and the *Union littéraire*, which have, alas, not come down to us with all issues intact. Perusing them, I was nonetheless pleased to find the poem, *Rondel chinois*, for which the young Dillard was awarded a prize in April 1878—that prize being publication in the *Union littéraire des poètes et des prosateurs*, in this case in the issue of May 5, 1878 (see fig. 3.5). If this puts an end to a part of the mystery surrounding this song, it still leaves us in the dark as to why Debussy would have set to music these particular lines, which are dedicated to the celebrated poet and novelist Judith Mendès, née Gautier, who published in 1867 *Le livre de Jade*, a translation in prose poem style of Chinese poems. It is possible, though we have no certain knowledge, that Dillard, even though living in Rouen, was a member of the intellectual and artistic circle around the Vasnier family. Be this as it may, Marguerite Vasnier, Marie Vasnier's daughter, remembered in 1926 that Debussy “accompanied her [mother] when she sang in high-society concerts where, on one occasion, he had her sing a *Rondel chinois* that was as yet not published.”<sup>36</sup>

Three examples in particular will have to stand for the kinds of changes that Debussy made between the first and second settings of *Rondel chinois*.<sup>37</sup> First, from the opening measures, the introductory *vocalises* are notated more leisurely in the Vasnier manuscript than they are in the Kunkelmann

# L'UNION LITTÉRAIRE

DES POÈTES ET DES PROSETEURS



A cause de la représentation du Gymnase, le présent numéro aura quelques jours de retard. Nous prions nos lecteurs de nous excuser.

L'abondance des matières nous oblige à remettre au prochain numéro la chronique de M. Jean-Bernard, sur la Fête des fleurs.

## DIXIÈME CONCOURS LITTÉRAIRE

- 1<sup>o</sup> Un Rondel : 15 concurrents. Lauréat, M. Marius Dillard.
- 2<sup>o</sup> Sujet libre : 9 concurrents. Lauréat, Mlle Eugénie Pierre.
- 3<sup>o</sup> Développer cette idée : Vercingétorix, soldat de la liberté, et César, ennemi des libertés et de la patrie. — Prix réservé.

*Le Président,*  
Frédéric HASTON.

*Le Secrétaire,*  
FRANTZ VOGEL.

## RONDEL CHINOIS

A JUDITH MENDÈS  
[Judith Watyer]

Sur le lac bordé d'azalée,  
De néauphar et de bambou,  
Passe une fonque d'acajou  
A la pointe d'or effilée.

Une Chinoise dort, voilée  
D'un flot de crêpe jusqu'au cou,  
Sur le lac bordé d'azalée  
De nénufar et de bambou.



Figure 3.5. *L'union littéraire des poètes et des prosateurs*, 9<sup>e</sup> année, n<sup>o</sup> 27 (May 5, 1878), pp. 129–30. Paris, Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal.

Sous sa vérandah dentelée,  
Un mandarin se tient debout,  
Fixant de ses yeux de hibou

La dame qui passe isolée  
Sur le lac bordé d'azalée,  
De nénuphar et de bambou.

Marius DILLARD.

---

### LA MORT DU BABY

« La Mort est sourde. »

Ils sont là, elle et lui, près du berceau, près de ce petit nid bien chaud, bien douillet, ouaté de soie, drapé de mousseline.

Un jour, il y a deux ans, on y a déposé un tout petit enfant, et la joie est entrée au logis, et la jeune mère a contemplé à chaque instant du jour son trésor, et le père radieux a souri à la mère et à l'enfant, et son regard a dit à la jeune femme : Merci d'avoir souffert pour lui, pour moi ; et il a pris délicatement dans ses bras le baby, et il l'a contemplé avec ivresse, trouvant mignonnes ses petites mains, admirant ses ongles roses, ses petons délicats, et cherchant à découvrir dans ses yeux qui ne voyaient pas une ressemblance avec un regard aimé.

Il est là encore le baby chéri ; il est là, pâle et charmant, dans son berceau : il a grandi ; ses yeux sont devenus beaux et expressifs, mais une langueur étrange en éteint la flamme, un cercle bleuâtre les entoure, ils regardent tristement, anxieusement ! La petite poitrine est oppressée ! Il souffre, le petit enfant : pour la première fois, il implore en vain un secours qu'ils sont impuissants à donner, elle et lui. Pauvre mère ! le front penché sur le visage chéri, elle cherche à ranimer de son sourire, de ses baisers la vie qui s'éteint. Inquiète, épouvantée, elle trouve des paroles pleines de joie et de promesses pour faire briller une étincelle de gaieté enfantine dans le regard du cher petit. Des larmes brûlantes tombent de ses yeux pendant que sa gorge serrée essaie une douce chanson, et le baby ne les voit pas !

Pauvre père ! Immobile, le cœur serré, il refoule l'angoisse qui l'étreint ; il épie, anxieux, les progrès du mal, il dit : « Cela va mieux, Marie ; la respiration est plus libre ; Marie, ne pleure pas. » Mais c'est une nouvelle crise qu'il voit venir, et il n'a pas la force de contempler la souffrance atroce de son enfant, il s'enfuit éperdu ; et la mère ne pleure plus : les yeux brillants, la main ferme, le cœur palpitant, elle soutient le baby frissonnant ; elle essaie de rendre l'air à sa

Figure 3.5.—(concluded)



manuscript, while the piano parts present only very slight differences (see exx. 3.4a and 3.4b). Second, in measures 11–14, in the left hand of the piano part, the half-note alternation of fifths (A to E) and octaves (A to A) in the Vasnier manuscript (ex. 3.5a) has, in the Kunkelmann manuscript, become eighth-note octaves without the fifths (ex. 3.5b). Also, the chords, notated in the bass clef, are shortened to eighth notes in measures 12 and 14. Third, although the end of the song, where the vocal part consists solely of *vocalises*, is almost identical in both manuscripts, Debussy did cross out some closing chords in the Vasnier manuscript, and—no doubt at the request of the singer—added in pencil one final *vocalise* to serve as an ornamental conclusion—evidence, perhaps, of Madame Vasnier’s tendency to improvise in performance (see ex. 3.6a). This addition does not appear in the Kunkelmann manuscript (see ex. 3.6b). These kinds of changes, taken together, confirm the impression that the Vasnier manuscript, despite its apparently last-minute addition of a cadenza, was compiled before the Kunkelmann manuscript was prepared.

In similar fashion, *Fête galante* in the Kunkelmann manuscript differs only slightly from the song as it is preserved in the Vasnier manuscript. Measures 12, 16, 38, and 47 correspond to the ends of the poetic lines: the half notes of the Vasnier manuscript (and the dotted half note at m. 47) are, in the Kunkelmann manuscript, systematically shortened to quarter notes followed by rests. Similar modifications are to be observed in the note lengths of the piano part. And at measure 27 of the Vasnier manuscript, the sixteenth-note figure in the piano, on the downbeat, creates a small rhythmic dissonance with the upbeat–downbeat sixteenth notes of the vocal part (ex. 3.7a), whereas in the Kunkelmann manuscript, the piano is aligned with the voice from the upbeat to measure 27 (ex. 3.7b). As in *Rondel chinois*, the final measures of the piano part are also different in the two versions. The motive in thirds with two sixteenth notes followed by an eighth note of the Vasnier manuscript is altered in the Kunkelmann manuscript to a motive in thirds made up of four sixteenth notes. The octave shift in the left hand at measure 44 of the Vasnier manuscript is absent at this point in the Kunkelmann manuscript. And the very last measures of the two versions are notably different (see exx. 3.8a and b). Finally, the Vasnier version carries the tempo marking of “Tempo di Minuetto,” while the Kunkelmann version is marked merely “Moderato.”

There is more to the story of *Fête galante*, for this is one of the rare early *mélodies* that Debussy copied out later, at some point between December 1889 and December 1890, as we learn from the signature found on the title page of the manuscript that is preserved in the collections of the Fondation Royaumont today (see fig. 3.6).<sup>38</sup> Indeed, this signature closely resembles those we see in letters written during precisely that year-long period.<sup>39</sup> The date “1882” on the Royaumont manuscript applies therefore to the year of the composition and not to the year of the recopying. A comparison of this autograph

Example 3.4a. *Rondel chinois*, autograph manuscript (Vasnier), mm. 1–3.

Musical score for Example 3.4a, measures 1–3. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of three systems. The first system (measures 1–3) features a vocal line with a melodic phrase starting on a quarter rest, followed by eighth and sixteenth notes, and a trill on the final note. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand.

Example 3.4b. *Rondel chinois*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), mm. 1–3.

Musical score for Example 3.4b, measures 1–3. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of three systems. The first system (measures 1–3) features a vocal line with a melodic phrase starting on a quarter rest, followed by eighth and sixteenth notes, and a trill on the final note. The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand.

Example 3.5a. *Rondel chinois*, autograph manuscript (Vasnier), mm. 11–14.

Musical score for Example 3.5a, measures 11–14. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of four systems. The first system (measures 11–14) features a vocal line with lyrics: "Sur le lac bor - dé d'a-za-lée de né - nu - phar et de bam - bou". The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a simple bass line in the left hand.

Example 3.5b. *Rondel chinois*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), mm. 11–14.

11

Sur le lac bor - dé d'a-za-lée de né - nu - phar et de bam - bou

Example 3.6a. *Rondel chinois*, autograph manuscript (Vasnier), final measures.

44

tr

Example 3.6b. *Rondel chinois*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), final measures.

45

Example 3.7a. *Fête galante*, autograph manuscript (Vasnier), mm. 26–28.

26

Phi - lis, E - glé qui sui - vent leurs a - mants,

Example 3.7b. *Fête galante*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), mm. 26–28.

26

Phi - lis, E - glé qui sui - vent leurs a - mants,

Example 3.8a. *Fête galante*, autograph manuscript (Vasnier), mm. 42–47.

42

Example 3.8b. *Fête galante*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), mm. 42–47.

42

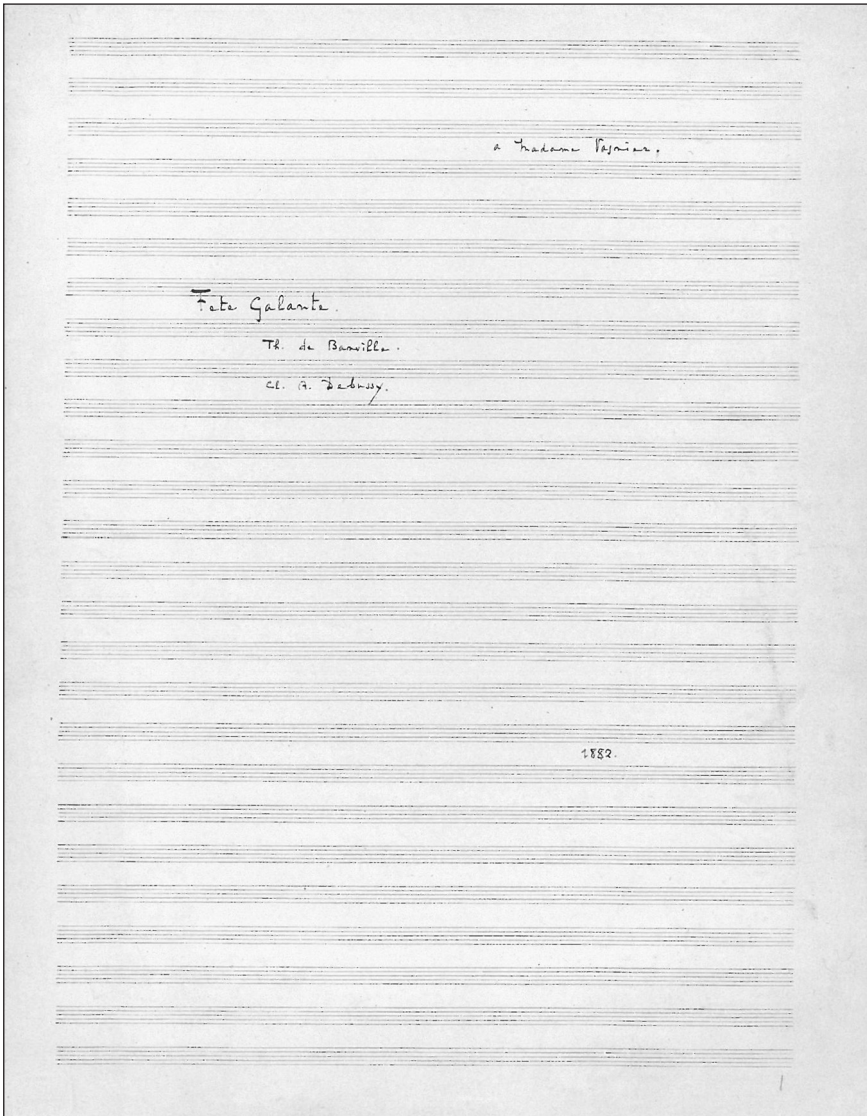


Figure 3.6. *Fête galante*, title page of the autograph manuscript (ca. 1889–90).  
Royaumont, bibliothèque musicale François-Lang.

with the two others that are known shows that the Royaumont version is closer to the Vasnier than to the Kunkelmann version—which means that Debussy must have kept for himself a copy of the song as he had offered it to Madame Vasnier: indeed, he went so far as to copy the original dedication, even though his liaison with Madame Vasnier had come to an end in January 1886. Of the “research” he carried out with Kunkelmann there is, here, absolutely no trace. He does, however, add dynamics, articulations, and the indication that the tempo marking of the Vasnier manuscript, “Tempo di Minuetto,” should be “Andantino” and not “Moderato,” as found in the Kunkelmann manuscript.

Why would Debussy copy in 1889 or 1890 a *mélodie* that he had composed eight or nine years earlier? The publication of the *Petite suite* in June 1889 surely offers a possible explanation, since Debussy reused the first twenty-two measures of *Fête galante* in the “Menuet” of this piece, adapting it now for piano four hands, as Constantin Photiadès mentioned in the article cited at the top of this study. The recopying of the song must have been undertaken in order to preserve the original version of something that Debussy had now transformed and published. This further suggests that in 1889 and 1890 Debussy still had in his library many autograph copies of the songs he had composed in the years from 1880 to 1885, many of which he would eventually destroy.<sup>40</sup> Were it not for the copies that he gave to Madame Vasnier and to Henry Kunkelmann, then, a good deal of Debussy’s early song production would simply have disappeared.

The text of *Pierrot* offers even more surprises. If the vocal part is essentially identical in the Vasnier and Kunkelmann manuscripts, the piano part in the latter has been considerably revised. From the beginning in the Vasnier manuscript we find off-beat sixteenth notes on C in the left hand in measures 1 and 4 (ex. 3.9a). In the manuscript dedicated to his “good friend” Kunkelmann, however, the left hand at those places is idle, rendering the music rather more tame, though a G in the bass here, not present in the Vasnier manuscript, does add harmonic complication (ex. 3.9b). The passage at measures 27–30 also differs from one version to the next: the syncopations in the piano part of the Kunkelmann manuscript, which would underline the poem’s phrase “En vain l’agace” (teases him in vain), are simply absent from the Vasnier manuscript (see exx. 3.10a–b, where the missing C♯ in the Vasnier piano part is merely carelessness on the part of the composer, who indicates the C♯ only once, in the voice line, at the beginning of m. 27). The Kunkelmann manuscript, in this case, is more cautious about sharps and flats. Indeed, here we find, in the passage from measure 35 to measure 50, a change of key signature from one sharp to four sharps that is absent from the Vasnier manuscript, where Debussy sets down the accidentals, not always carefully, as they occur. Space does not allow a detailing of the many further differences in the piano writing of the two versions.

Example 3.9a. *Pierrot*, autograph manuscript (Vasnier), mm. 1–4.

Musical score for Example 3.9a, measures 1–4. The score is in 2/4 time and G major. It features a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass staff. The melody is primarily in the treble staff, starting with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4 and B4. A slur covers measures 2 and 3, containing a sixteenth-note figure: G4-A4-B4-A4-G4. The bass staff provides a simple accompaniment with quarter notes G2 and A2. A first ending bracket is shown above the final measure.

Example 3.9b. *Pierrot*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), mm. 1–4.

Musical score for Example 3.9b, measures 1–4. The score is in 2/4 time and G major. It features a piano accompaniment with a treble and bass staff. The melody is primarily in the treble staff, starting with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4 and B4. A slur covers measures 2 and 3, containing a sixteenth-note figure: G4-A4-B4-A4-G4. The bass staff provides a simple accompaniment with quarter notes G2 and A2.

Example 3.10a. *Pierrot*, autograph manuscript (Vasnier), mm. 27–30.

Musical score for Example 3.10a, measures 27–30. The score is in 2/4 time and G major. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note G4, then quarter notes A4 and B4. The lyrics are: "En vain l'a - ga - ce de son\_œil co - quin". The piano accompaniment features a treble and bass staff. The treble staff has a melody starting with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4 and B4. The bass staff has a simple accompaniment with quarter notes G2 and A2. There are some performance markings in the bass staff, including a fermata and a [7] marking.

Example 3.10b. *Pierrot*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), mm. 27–30.

27

En vain l'a - ga - ce a - vec son œil co-quin

### Leaving the Parnassiens

The four newly discovered *mélodies* are conspicuous in suggesting their composer's defection from the aesthetics of Théodore de Banville. That Debussy should interest himself in the work of Leconte de Lisle (1818–94), however, is not surprising. Although he certainly preferred the poetry of Banville, in 1881 he had already set to music three excerpts—*Jane*, *La fille aux cheveux de lin*, and *Églogue*—from Leconte de Lisle's *Poèmes antiques*, published in Paris by Lemerre in 1874. Still, this also represents the first time that he turned to Leconte de Lisle's collection entitled *Poèmes barbares*. The poem he selected, *Les elfes*, was at the time already highly popular. As noted by Edgard Pich, this Nordic folk song well expresses the sadness of love: “the black horse of the *fiancé* [. . .], the dark night of his galloping, the evil spirits that haunt the forest, the magical and wicked divinity of the moon—all of these elements foreshadow the tragic ending of the ballad.”<sup>41</sup> As for *L'archet*, the poem by Charles Cros (1842–88) excerpted from *Le coffret de santal*—the only poem by Cros that Debussy ever set<sup>42</sup>—it bears a certain similarity to *Les elfes*, featuring as it does a woman with long, blond hair who falls tragically in love with a knight. Here, too, we find an element of the *fantastique* that is reminiscent of *The Tales of Hoffmann*, where in the tale Debussy would have known as *Conseiller Krespel* (and which in English is known as *The Cremona Violin*) we find a beloved woman's “strangely musical voice” transformed into a violin bow that is made from the tresses of her own long hair.<sup>43</sup>

It is also unexpected to find in Debussy's song composition of this period two *mélodies* based on the *Poèmes de l'amour et de la mer* of Maurice Bouchor (1855–1929). Here, again, a poet appears for the first and last time in the music of the youthful composer. We know from the colorful recollections of his friend Robert Godet that Debussy had made Bouchor's acquaintance at some point prior to 1889. The two men saw each other on only rare occasions



but “their encounters were always smiling,” as Godet confided to Georges Jean-Aubry, “and they got along well in their particular way, which meant by fencing, but by doing so very courteously, by using buttoned foils, by one not overly upsetting the sensibilities of the other.”<sup>44</sup> Whether Debussy had actually met Bouchor in 1881 or 1882, however, we simply do not know. Bouchor had been a good friend of Ernest Chausson since at least 1873.<sup>45</sup> As in the poems of Leconte de Lisle and Cros, the main theme in Bouchor’s work is love. But in this case it is not so much tragic love as it is melancholy love, love tinged with irony, as found in the poems of Jules Laforgue that Debussy would very much admire. This may be observed in a line such as “Non les baisers d’amour n’éveillent point les morts” (No, loving embraces can never awaken the dead), from *Romance* (“Non les baisers d’amour”), and also in a line such as “On ne fait point l’amour dans le lit froid des morts!” (One ought not make love in the frigid bed of the dead!). Is it conceivable that Debussy was led to this kind of poetry, so different from Banville’s, by his friend Kunkelmann? Whatever the case, these four songs mark an important turning point for Debussy, who would as of September 1882 interest himself in the poetry of Verlaine.

### From a Sketchbook

The new *mélodies* stand out by their presence in a notebook of musical sketches, or “croquis musicaux,” as Debussy called them, which is preserved in the music department of the Bibliothèque nationale de France under the call number Ms. 20 632 (1). In the notebook, the music of *L’archet* is carefully set down in black ink, but in reverse, as it were, with the poetic text carefully written out beneath the vocal line, from page 71 back to page 66. Also to be found in the notebook is a first, incomplete sketch of *L’archet* (without the poetic text), again written in reverse, from page 75 to page 72. As for *Le matelot qui tombe à l’eau*, it too, like *L’archet*, has its poetic text carefully written out, in black ink, on pages 32 and 33, but the finished song is preceded by a first musical sketch, in black pencil, without text, set down on pages 40–42. For *Le matelot*, Debussy even took the trouble (as he did not do for *L’archet*) to recopy Bouchor’s poem, which we find on page 39 of the notebook (see fig. 3.7). He followed a different compositional process for the *Romance* (“Non les baisers d’amour”). On pages 34 to 38 he very carefully set down the voice part, in black ink, along with the poetic text. But he notated only certain measures of the piano part, measures 7–8, 11–12, 15–19, 23, 29–31, and 42–43. Others, namely measures 1–6, 9–10, and 13, are set down in a kind of shorthand, while still others are left blank. On page 29 of the notebook we find six measures notated in ink, an octave higher and without the piano part, and different from the line as it is found on page 34 (see exx. 3.11a–b). There is also

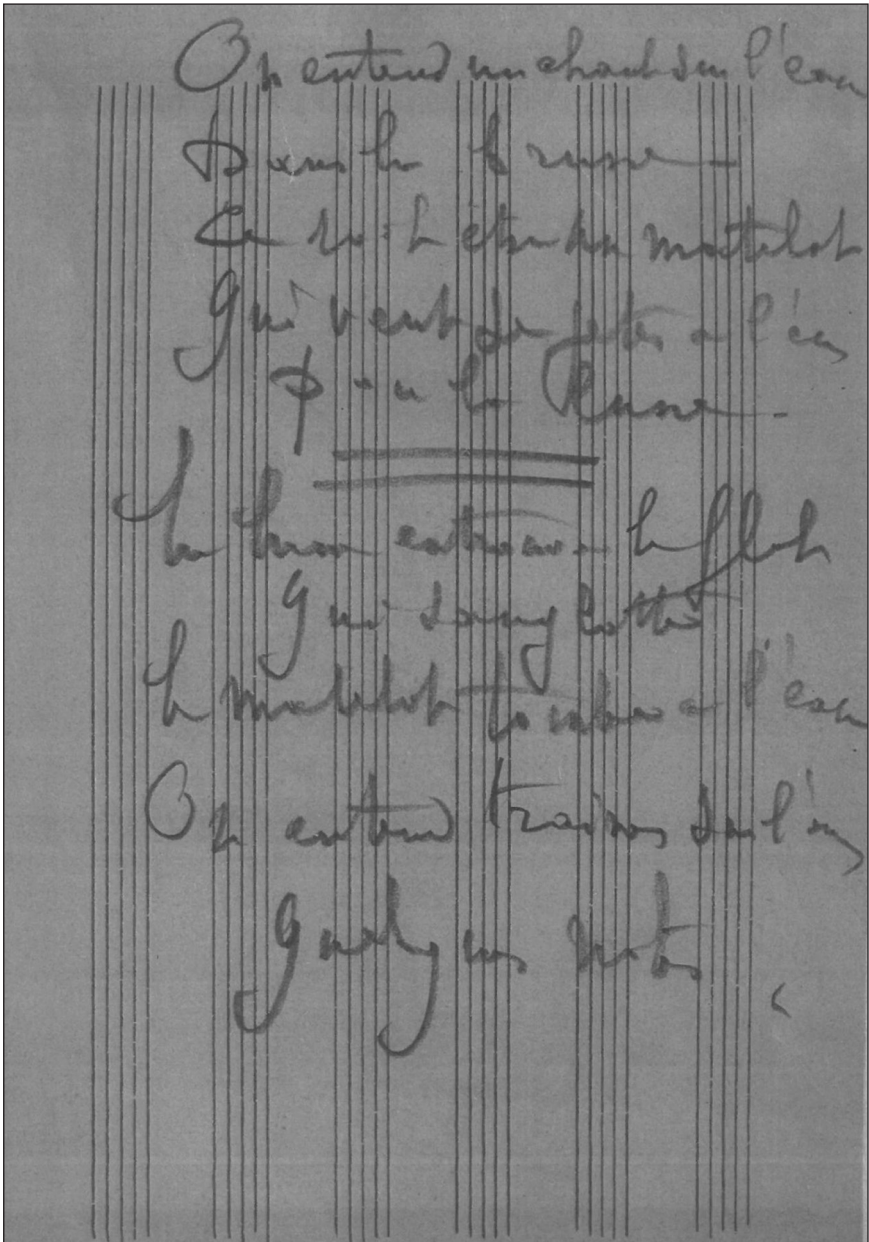


Figure 3.7. *Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau*, transcription of the poetic text by Debussy, sketchbook "croquis musicaux," Ms. 20632 (1), p. 39. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique.

Example 3.11a. *Romance* (“Non les baisers d’amour”), sketchbook “croquis musicaux,” p. 29.



1

Non les bai - sers d'a - mour n'é - veil - le[nt] point les morts.

Bai - se l'a - mour vi - vant de ta lèv - re di - vi - ne.

Example 3.11b. *Romance* (“Non les baisers d’amour”), sketchbook “croquis musicaux,” p. 34.



1

Non les bai - sers d'a - mour n'é - veil - le[nt] point les morts.

Bai - se l'a - mour vi - vant de ta lèv - re di - vi - ne.

a second sketch, in black pencil and black ink, on pages 49–50 and 52–54, with a vocal part that begins like the one on page 29.<sup>46</sup> Finally, of *Les elfes*, there remain only some very fragmentary and discontinuous sketches, set down in black ink, and in reverse.

Although this sketchbook is of little assistance in refining the chronology of the composition of these four songs, it demonstrates nonetheless that they were conceived at approximately the same time. It is also worth mentioning that these are the only pages of the sketchbook that François Lesure was able at least partly to identify. In looking at them more closely, I was further able to identify the first several measures of *Pierrot*, which correspond to the version preserved in the Kunkelmann manuscript, and some more important sketches as well, for the *chanson des brises* and for the first and second movements of *Le triomphe de Bacchus*, the work inspired by a poem by Théodore de Banville that no doubt dates from early 1882, as well as for the ballet movement of the *Première suite d'orchestre*, which I mentioned at the outset.<sup>47</sup>

## Poetic Experimentation

Although he was a passionate reader of poetry, the young Debussy was not always as careful with his poetic texts as he might have been, as we see with

special clarity in the case of *L'archet*. Of the thirteen tercets in the poem by Charles Cros, separated into six sections by printers' flowers in the text, Debussy set only six: tercets numbers 1 to 3 and numbers 5 to 7.<sup>48</sup> In the first tercet, in both the sketchbook and the Kunkelmann manuscript, the composer wrote: "Elle avait de beaux cheveux, longs / Comme une moisson d'août, si longs / Qui lui tombaient jusqu'aux talons." The repetition of the word "longs" here would make sense only if the following phrase were: "qu'ils lui tombaient jusqu'aux talons" ([hair] so long that it fell all the way to her heels). But rather than following Cros's text, Debussy inadvertently substituted the relative pronoun *qui* ("Qui lui tombaient") for the conjunction *que* ("qu'ils lui tombaient"), a syntactical error that leads, in literal translation, to a rendering such as: "She had lovely hair, long / like the harvest season of August, so long / which fell all the way to her heels."

Similarly, in the second line of the third tercet, Debussy crossed out an error in the second sketch and set down in its place the version that corresponds to Cros's original text: "Quand il traversait mont ou val" (when he traversed hill or dale). But in the Kunkelmann manuscript he changed the imperfect tense, "il traversait" (he crossed), to the present participle, "en traversant" (while crossing). Finally, in two places, he added a poetic foot to Cros's octosyllabic verses, thereby unwittingly transforming a regular line of eight syllables into an irregular one of nine. Here, for example, Cros's original eight-syllable line, "L'amour la prit si fort au cœur" (Love so strongly assailed her heart), is turned into an irregular line of nine syllables by Debussy's addition of the word "mais" (but) to the beginning of the line. Again in eight syllables, Cros wrote: "Elle mourut. Suivant ses vœux," which Debussy changed to ten: "Elle mourut. Il fit selon ses vœux." He did so by replacing the present participle "suivant" (following her wishes) into a simple past construction, "Il fit selon ses vœux" (he followed her wishes).<sup>49</sup>

These apparently careless errors suggest that Debussy no longer had before him the text of Cros's *Coffret de santal*; they lead me to believe that he was working, not quite accurately, from memory. My belief is reinforced by the fact that in the three other poems he introduced almost no changes at all. In Bouchor's *Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau*, whose text Debussy scrupulously copied into his sketchbook, as I have mentioned, there is nonetheless one small but significant change, both in the revised second sketch in the "croquis musicaux" and in the Kunkelmann manuscript: Debussy transformed the word "brune," in "On entend un chant sur l'eau / Dans la brune" (We hear singing, on the water, through the twilight) into the word "brume," that is, "mist," or "fog." In other words Debussy seemed to be unaware of the archaic sense of the word "brune," which means "crépuscule," or "twilight," as in the French title of the last opera of the *Ring*: "le crépuscule des dieux"!

Example 3.12a. *Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau*, sketchbook “croquis musicaux,” p. 33, m. 7.

7

La lune en - trou - vre le flot

Example 3.12b. *Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), m. 8.

8

La lune é - clai - re le flot

By contrast, the word “entr’ouvre” (to open partway) that we find in the second revised sketch of the same song is transformed in the Kunkelmann manuscript into the word “éclairer” (to illuminate) in the line “La lune éclaire le flot qui sanglote” (the moon illuminates the waters, which are weeping; see exx. 3.12a and b). Perhaps Debussy found the sound of the letter r in “entr’ouvre” too guttural. At this word, in that second sketch, the piano part alternates between a minor seventh chord on E and a diminished seventh chord on E $\sharp$ , and is also marked to be played one octave higher. But in the Kunkelmann manuscript, despite the presence of the word “éclairer,” this octave shift is nowhere indicated.

Leconte de Lisle’s *Les elfes* is celebrated for its refrain, about “joyful elves, crowned with thyme and marjoram, dancing in the fields,” which returns after each sestet. In the original poem, this is a distinctive rhyming couplet, “Couronnés de thym et de marjolaine, / Les elfes joyeux dansent sur la plaine.” Debussy removed some thirteen lines of this poem and an iteration of the refrain, thus breaking down the regular alternation of couplets and sestets (see appendix 3.3).

## Musical Experimentation

In terms of their musical texts, *L'archet* and *Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau* offer small but significant differences between the corrected versions in the sketchbook and the versions in the Kunkelmann manuscripts. In measures 14–16 of *L'archet*, for example, Debussy sets down no flat sign before the note D in either the vocal part or the piano part (see ex. 3.13a). But not only are the chords differently voiced in the corresponding measures of the Kunkelmann manuscript (ex. 3.13b), but the note D $\flat$  is very carefully indicated. Furthermore, on the third beat of measure 15 Debussy introduces a low E $\natural$  in the Kunkelmann manuscript, which creates a dominant ninth chord in the presence of the D $\flat$  above and the C in the bass. It seems as though Debussy tried at first to write these measures with D $\natural$ , something that would underline the sense of the text at this point—“elle avait une voix étrange” (she had a strange voice)—and then decided to use a more conventional harmony. Let us remember that this manuscript is marked “recollections of our research”: the change from D $\natural$  to D $\flat$  could be a small example of something that occurred at Kunkelmann’s urging.

The ending of *L'archet* also brings a nice surprise. In the sketchbook, this *mélodie* comes to an abrupt end at “elle mourut,” with no trace of a conclusion (see ex. 3.14a). Entirely missing is the last line of Cros’s tercet, which gives force to the whole: “Elle mourut. Suivant ses vœux, / Il fit *L'archet* de ses cheveux” (She died. Following her wishes, he made a bow from her hair). Nevertheless, this line is included in the Kunkelmann manuscript, with the text slightly altered by Debussy, let us recall, to “Elle mourut. Il fit selon ses vœux. / Il fit *L'archet* de ses cheveux.” We hear a dark pedal on the note C at the bottom of the keyboard, while a series of descending triads in the first and second inversions casts new light on each measure, especially measure 49, with the chromatic motion in the bass and, above, a chord with a diminished fifth (see ex. 3.14b).

In *Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau*, the shortest song that Debussy ever wrote, there are also noteworthy differences between the corrected version preserved in the sketchbook and the version set down in the Kunkelmann manuscript. In the sketchbook the vocal part of *Le matelot* is set down in the bass clef and is obviously intended for the male voice. In the Kunkelmann manuscript the vocal part is written in the treble clef, but the tessitura ranges from A below middle C up to E at the top of the treble staff, rendering the song more suitable for the baritone voice than for the soprano—and making it the only song from Debussy’s youth composed for this low register. In addition, in both sketchbook versions, *Le matelot* has no introductory measure for the piano, and the ending is shortened by one measure. Finally, the key signature of the corrected sketchbook version has five sharps, whereas that of the

Example 3.13a. *L'archet*, sketchbook “croquis musicaux,” p. 70, mm. 14–17.

14

Elle a - vai t u - ne voi x é - tran - ge, Mu - si - cale, de fée ou d'an - ge,

Example 3.13b. *L'archet*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), mm. 14–17.

14

Elle a - vai t u - ne voi x é - tran - ge, Mu - si - cale, de fée ou d'an - ge,

Example 3.14a. *L'archet*, sketchbook, “croquis musicaux,” pp. 66–67, mm. 43–45.

43

Puis, dans un long bai-ser ner - veux, El - le mou - rut.

Example 3.14b. *L'archet*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), mm. 43–50.

43

Puis, dans un long bai-ser ner veux, El-le mou- rut. Il

47

fit se lon ses vœux. Il fit l'ar-chet de\_\_ ses che-veux.

8<sup>th</sup>.....

8.....

Kunkelmann manuscript has six. (The unusual key of F-sharp major, I might note, had already been explored by Debussy in *Les papillons* of 1881.) Thus, in the sketchbook's *Le matelot*, the note E $\flat$  on the word “chant” in both the voice and the piano parts becomes, in the Kunkelmann manuscript, E $\sharp$ . As John Clevenger has remarked, *Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau* is on the whole one of Debussy's most unusual pieces in its use of pentatonism, its surprising change of color on the descending arpeggios of measures 8 and 9, and its open fifth sonorities in the chords of measures 6–7, 10–11, and 13–14.<sup>50</sup>

### *Les elfes*

I must set aside the *Romance* (“Non les baisers d’amour”) in order to comment more fully on *Les elfes*, which at 175 measures is one of Debussy's longest songs. The wide two-octave tessitura extends from the D above middle C up to D two octaves higher. It was presumably written for Madame Vasnier, but seems curiously not to have been among the *mélodies* he actually offered to her. As in



*Rondel chinois* and *Pierrot*, *Les elfes*, too, includes passages of untexted vocalise, in measures 84–89, for example, as well as in measures 157–58. Although he cut a substantial number of lines from the poem, as we have seen, here Debussy, as in *Nuit d'étoiles*, did in fact maintain the essential form of Leconte de Lisle's poem, with the rhymed couplet serving as the refrain. That refrain—"Couronnés de thym et de marjolaine, / Les Elfes joyeux dansent sur la plaine" (lines I have translated above)—occurs some four times. On each occurrence, the music for "Couronnés de thym et de marjolaine" is varied, while the music for "Les Elfes joyeux dansent sur la plaine," a chromatic descent, is hardly varied at all. The couplet, first set down in measures 23–34, occurs again in measures 55–66. On its third occurrence, in measures 86–97, the words "Couronnés de thym et de marjolaine" are replaced by a vocalise, whereas the words "Les Elfes joyeux dansent sur la plaine" are sung. The fourth presentation of the couplet, in measures 159–70, is followed by a five-and-a-half-measure coda that brings the song to a close.

This *mélodie* is unusual for Debussy in that it opens with a fully developed twenty-two-measure introduction which presents a particular motive that recurs repeatedly throughout the piece, and gives rise to a number of chromatic gestures (see ex. 3.15). Debussy's writing closely follows the poetic text. It is martial when we hear of the knight with his "éperon qui brille en la nuit brune" (his spurs that sparkle in the foggy night) in measures 43–46, and it is ethereal, in measures 67–70, with arpeggiated chords characteristic of the future composer of *Pelléas*, when the Elves surround the knight with "un essaim léger," when they "swarm gently around him"). Debussy restores the drama of the dialogue by including a passage at a notably slower tempo (mm. 100–10) and a passage in *stile recitativo* (mm. 135–42). Finally, the ride of the black knight (mm. 112–17) is not without similarity to Wagner's "Ride of the Valkyries" (see ex. 3.16). Debussy may well have learned of the Wagner work from his friend Kunkelmann, who was already an unapologetic Wagnerian. Evidence of this comes in the 1882 sketchbook we have been talking about, where we find "Tristan et Iseult" set down on one of the endpapers, the title of the Wagner opera that would of course have a very long-lasting impact on the composer.<sup>51</sup> In his desire to paint the epic breathlessness of this tragic horseback ride, which is reminiscent of the young Franz Schubert's famous setting of Goethe's *The Erl-King*, Debussy deploys a highly varied compositional palette that at once closely follows the rhythms of the text and creates almost orchestral sonorities. Despite certain infelicities in the prosody, the composer demonstrates here the capacity to compose a work of substantial dimension that requires considerable virtuosity from both the singer and the pianist.

Furthermore, as Marianne Wheeldon has quite rightly remarked,<sup>52</sup> *Les elfes*—by dint of its length, the important role played by the piano (which

Example 3.15. *Les elfes*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), mm. 1–4.

1    [Allegretto]

Example 3.16. *Les elfes*, autograph manuscript (Kunkelmann), mm. 112–16.

112

Et sous l'é - pe - ron le noir che-val part. Il

115

court, il bon - dit et va sans re - tard;

provides an ample introduction and solo interventions along the way), and moments of dialogue among the protagonists—properly belongs to the genre of the *scène dramatique* that Frits Noske described with reference to certain songs from the 1860s and '70s (*Le galop*, 1868; *Au pays où se fait la guerre*, 1869; *La vague et la cloche*, 1871; and *Le manoir de Rosemonde*, 1879) by Henri Duparc.<sup>53</sup>



What is the larger impact of the discovery of these manuscripts, which demonstrate the preponderance of the role played by setting texts to music in the artistic development of the composer? First and foremost, in the case of the

*mélodies* that were already known, the Kunkelmann manuscripts of two them—*Les roses* and *Pierrot*—give us versions quite different from those preserved in the Vasnier manuscripts. As a whole, they provide evidence of Debussy's careful working and reworking of the piano parts, of his essentially experimental nature, of his desire constantly to refine the accompaniment of the vocal lines. We knew, from the several versions of a good number of the later songs on poems by Verlaine, that the more mature Debussy had a tendency to experiment, revise, and refine. We now learn that these tendencies were part and parcel of Debussy's compositional methodology from the beginning, that they were inherent in the musical personality of composer when he was still Achille and not yet Claude.

These manuscripts furthermore demonstrate that setting poetry to music was for Debussy not solely a way of manifesting his love for Madame Vasnier—though I do not wish for a moment to minimize the determinative role that that love played. Still, apart from *Les elfes*, a song well suited to the high and agile voice of Madame Vasnier, the three others, especially *Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau*, seem clearly to have been conceived for voices other than hers. In point of fact, scholars have far too often viewed the songs that Debussy wrote during this period uniquely and almost blindly through the lens of the admittedly passionate love that he felt for his older and more experienced *inamorata*, whose mother, I might add, had been a teacher of music. The manuscripts dedicated to Henry Kunkelmann reveal that for the youthful musician the creation of *mélodies* was in and of itself an essential station on the road to his becoming a composer, a magnificent road that eventually led to *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *Chansons de Bilitis*.

## Appendix 3.1: Titles of the Kunkelmann manuscripts (in alphabetical order) and concordances with other sources

- 
- Fête galante* (L. 31/[23])    ***Kunkelmann manuscripts***, Paris, private collection.  
 — Autograph Ms., 2 folios of music, with 12 staves per page: “à Henry / Fete Galante / Poesie de Th. de Banville. Musique Ach. Debussy.”  
 — Ms. by a professional copyist with no corrections in Debussy’s hand. 2 folios of music, with 12 staves per page.  
***Further manuscript sources***  
 — Autograph Ms., not found. Previously in the collections of L. Koch, G. Morssen, then Eric Van Lauwe. 2 folios of music in oblong format, with 12 staves per page: “À Madame Vasnier / Fete Galante / Poesie. de th. de Banville. Musique Louis. IXV. [sic] avec formules. de. 1882. Ach. Debussy.”  
 — Autograph Ms., Asnières-sur-Oise, Fondation Royaumont. Formerly in the collection of Henry Fatio, then François Lang. 2 folios of music, with 26 staves per page: “a Madame Vasnier. / Fete galante / Th. de Banville. / Cl. A. Debussy. / 1882.”
- L’archet* (L. 22/[46])    ***Kunkelmann manuscripts***, Paris, private collection.  
 — Autograph Ms., 2 folios of music in oblong format, with 12 staves per page: “L’archet. / Paroles de Ch. Cros. / Musique. Ach. Debussy / A mon meilleur ami. Henry Kunkelmann. / Souvenir de nos. recherches.”  
 — Ms. by a professional copyist with corrections in Debussy’s hand. 4 folios of music, 12 staves per page.  
***Further manuscript source***  
 — 2 autograph sketches at the end of a working sketchbook and written in reverse, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Ms. 20 632 (1), pp. 71–66 (first calligraphic copy); pp. 75–72 (sketch). Reproduced in facsimile in Yves Lado-Bordowski, “*L’archet*. Un ‘croquis musical’ de Debussy [1881],” *Cahiers Debussy* 16 (1992), pp. 6–11. These facsimiles are accompanied by a transcription of the *mélodie* from the sketch (pp. 18–21).
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(continued)

- 
- Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau* **Kunkelmann manuscript**, Paris, private collection.  
(L. 24/[47])  
— Autograph Ms., 2 folios of music, 12 staves per page: “A mon bon ami Kunkelmann (1) / Le matelot qui tombe à l’eau. / poesie M. Bouchor. Musique. Ach. Debussy / (1). Cette dédicace. est la bonne.”  
**Further manuscript sources**  
— 2 autograph sketches in a working sketchbook, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Ms. 20 632 (1), pp. 32–33 (first calligraphic copy); pp. 40–42 (sketch); p. 39 (poetic text only). A transcription appears in John R. Clevenger, “The Origins of Debussy’s Style” (PhD dissertation, University of Rochester, 2002), pp. 951–54.
- Le zéphyr (Rêverie)* **Kunkelmann manuscripts**, Paris, private collection.  
(L. 3/[8])  
— Autograph Ms., 2 folios of music in oblong format, with 12 staves per page: “a Henry. / Le zéphyr / poésie Th. de Banville / musique / Ach. Debussy.”  
— Ms. by a professional copyist with no corrections in the hand of Debussy. 2 folios of music, with 12 staves per page.  
**Further manuscript source**  
— Autograph Ms., Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Ms. 23498. Formerly in the collection of Walter Straram, then Denise Jobert-Georges. 2 folios of music, with 16 staves per page: “Rêverie / Musique – de – On n’a jamais su. Poésie de – Th. de Banville.”
- Les elfes* (L. 25) **Kunkelmann manuscript**, Paris, private collection.  
— Autograph Ms., 6 folios of music, 12 staves per page: “a Henry. / Les Elfes / Poesie de Leconte de Lisle. Musique Ach. Debussy.”  
**Further manuscript source**  
— Fragmentary autograph sketches in a working sketchbook, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Ms. 20 632 (1), p. 65 (mm. 39–46), pp. 51 and 53 (mm. 98–106), pp. 48–45 (mm. 113–48).
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(continued)

*Les roses* (L. 28/[13])

***Kunkelmann manuscripts***, Paris, private collection.  
 — Autograph Ms., 2 folios of music in oblong format, with 12 staves per page: “– a Henry – / Les roses. / poesie Th. de Banville / Musique / Ach. Debussy.”  
 — Ms. in Kunkelmann’s hand, 2 folios of music in oblong format, with 12 staves per page: “AD.” The vocal part is set down in ink; the piano part in black pencil.  
 — Ms. by a professional copyist with several corrections in Debussy’s hand, 4 folios of music, 12 staves per page.

***Further manuscript source***

— Autograph Ms., Stockholm, Stiftelsen Musikkulturens Främjande (Rudolf Nydahl collection). 2 folios of music in oblong format, with 12 staves per page: “a Madame Vasnier / Les roses. / poésie Th. de Banville. Musique Ach. Debussy.”

*Pierrot* (L. 30/[15])

***Kunkelmann manuscripts***, Paris, private collection .  
 — Autograph Ms., 2 folios of music with 12 staves per page: “A mon bon ami Henry Kunkelmann / la dedicace véritable / n’est pas celle-ci / Pierrot. / poésie de Th. de Banville. Musique de Ach. Debussy.”  
 — Ms. by a professional copyist with several corrections in Debussy’s hand. 2 folios of music, 12 staves per page.

***Further manuscript source***

— Autograph Ms., Washington, The Library of Congress, ML96.D346. Formerly in the collection of Henry Prunières. 2 folios of music in oblong format, with 12 staves per page: “a Madame Vasnier / Pierrot. / Poésie. Th. de Banville. / Musique sur l’air de [au clair de la lune] / Ach. Debussy.”

*Romance* (“Non les baisers d’amour”) (L. 23/[48])

***Kunkelmann manuscripts***, Paris, private collection.  
 — Autograph Ms., 2 folios of music in oblong format, with 12 staves per page: “Romance / a Henry. / toute mon amitié et la / romance par dessus le marché. / poesie Maurice Bouchor. Musique Ach. Debussy.”  
 — Ms. by a professional copyist with several corrections in Debussy’s hand. 2 folios of music, 12 staves per page.

***Further manuscript source***

— 2 autograph sketches in a working sketchbook, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Ms. 20 632 (1), pp. 34–38 (second sketch), pp. 29, 49–50, 52–54 (first sketch).

(continued)

*Rondel chinois* (L. 11/  
[17])

**Kunkelmann manuscript**, Paris, private collection.  
— Autograph Ms., 2 folios of music in oblong format, with 9 staves per page: “Rondel chinois – / Paroles de Marius Dillard. / Musique de / Ach Debussy / Au plus sympathique / de ceux que / j’appelle mes amis / Ach. Debussy.”

**Further manuscript source**

— Autograph Ms., Washington, The Library of Congress, ML96.D346. Formerly in the collection of Henry Prunières. 2 folios of music in oblong format, with 16 staves per page: “a Madame Vanier / la seule qui peut chanter et / faire oublier tout ce que cette musique à d’inchantable et de / chinois / Rondel chinois. / Musique Chinoise (d’après des manuscrits du temps) / par Ach. Debussy.”

*Chanson des brises*  
Solo et chœur pour voix  
de femmes. (L. 32/[35])

**Kunkelmann manuscript**, Paris, private collection.  
— Ms. by a professional copyist with Debussy’s signature and numerous corrections and annotations in Debussy’s hand, with a part for piano four hands. 21 folios of music, 12 staves per page.

**Further manuscript source**

— Fragmentary sketches in a working sketchbook, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Ms. 20 632 (1), pp. 26–27.

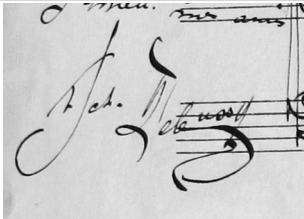
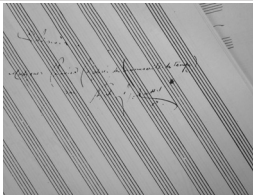
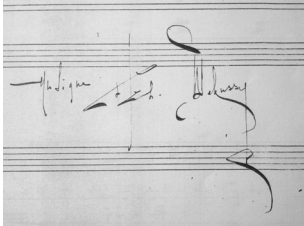
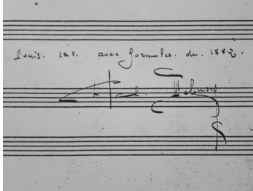
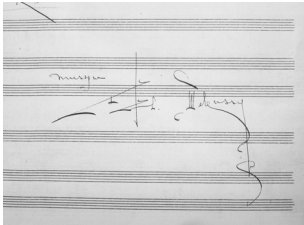
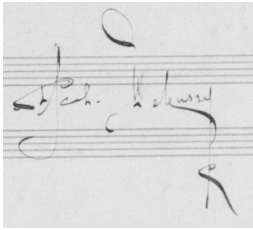
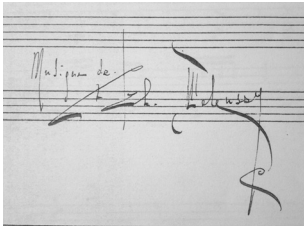

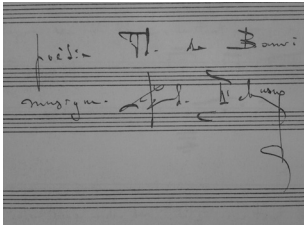
— Autograph sketches, Stanford University, Memorial Library of Music, 4 pages

— Autograph Ms. of a separate voice part, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département de la Musique, Ms. 24360. 4 folios of music, 16 staves per page: “— à Madame Vasnier— / Chanson des Brises. / Chœur pour voix de femmes avec solo. / — Solo—.”

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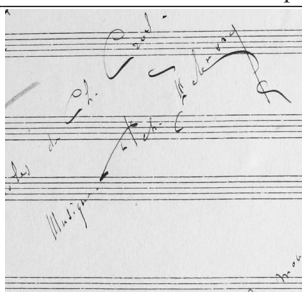
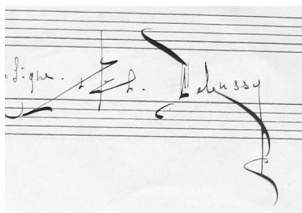
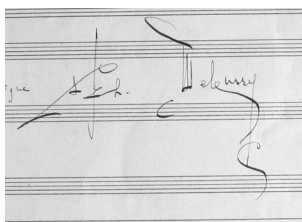
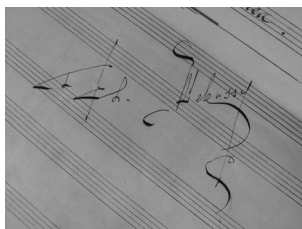
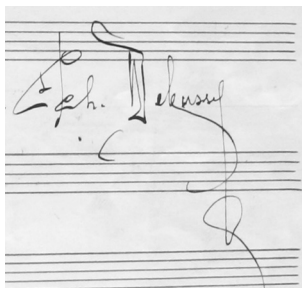
*Note.* The *Chanson des brises*, because of its form, is not considered a *mélodie*: it is mentioned here at the end.

Appendix 3.2: Comparative table of the signature of Claude Debussy

	Kunkelmann manuscripts	Vasnier manuscripts
1. <i>Rondel chinois</i>		
2. <i>Fête galante</i>		
3. <i>Les roses</i>		
4. <i>Pierrot</i>		
5. <i>Le zéphyr (Rêverie)</i>		(no signature; no dedication to Madame Vasnier)



## Kunkelmann manuscripts

6. *L'archet*7. *Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau*8. *Romance* ("Non les baisers d'amour")9. *Chanson des brises*10. *Les elfes*

Appendix 3.3: *Les elfes* (by Charles-Marie-René Leconte de Lisle)

Couronnés de thym et de marjolaïne,  
 Les Elfes joyeux dansent sur la  
 plaine.  
 Du sentier des bois aux daims  
 familier,  
 Sur un noir cheval, sort un chevalier.  
 Son éperon d'or brille en la nuit  
 brune;  
 Et, quand il traverse un rayon de  
 lune,  
 On voit resplendir, d'un reflet  
 changeant,  
 Sur sa chevelure un casque  
 d'argent.

Couronnés de thym et de marjolaïne,  
 Les Elfes joyeux dansent sur la  
 plaine.

Ils l'entourent d'un essaim léger  
 Qui dans l'air muet semble voltiger.  
 — Hardi chevalier, par la nuit  
 sereine,  
 Où vas-tu si tard? dit la jeune  
 Reine.  
 De mauvais esprits hantent les  
 forêts;  
 Viens danser plutôt sur les gazons  
 frais. —

Couronnés de thym et de marjolaïne,  
 Les Elfes joyeux dansent sur la  
 plaine.

— Non! ma fiancée aux yeux clairs  
 et doux  
 M'attend, et demain nous serons  
 époux.  
 Laissez-moi passer, Elfes des prairies,  
*Qui foulez en rond les mousses fleuries;*  
*Né m'attardez pas loin de mon amour,*  
*Car voici déjà les lueurs du jour. —*

*Couronnés de thym et de marjolaïne,  
 Les Elfes joyeux dansent sur la plaine.*

— *Reste, chevalier. Je te donnerai  
 L'opale magique et l'anneau doré,  
 Et ce qui vaut mieux que gloire et for-  
 tune,  
 Ma robe filée au clair de la lune.*  
 — *Non! dit-il. — Va donc! — Et de  
 son doigt blanc  
 Elle touche au cœur le guerrier trem-  
 blant.*

*Couronnés de thym et de marjolaïne,  
 Les Elfes joyeux dansent sur la plaine.*

Et sous l'éperon le noir cheval part.  
 Il court, il bondit et va sans retard;  
 Mais le chevalier frissonne et se  
 penche;  
 Il voit sur la route une forme  
 blanche  
 Qui marche sans bruit et lui tend  
 les bras:  
 — Elfe, esprit, démon, ne m'arrête  
 pas! —

*Couronnés de thym et de marjolaïne,  
 Les Elfes joyeux dansent sur la plaine.*

Ne m'arrête pas, fantôme odieux!  
 Je vais épouser ma belle aux doux  
 yeux.  
 — Ô mon cher époux, la tombe  
 éternelle  
 Sera notre lit de noce, dit-elle.  
 Je suis morte! — Et lui, la voyant  
 ainsi,  
 D'angoisse et d'amour tombe mort  
 aussi.

*Couronnés de thym et de marjolaïne,  
 Les Elfes joyeux dansent sur la plaine.*

*Note:* The lines in italics were removed by Debussy

## Notes

This chapter is dedicated to Philippe Cassard.

1. See Charles Koechlin, “Quelques anciennes mélodies inédites de Claude Debussy,” *La revue musicale* 7, no. 7 (special issue, “La jeunesse de Claude Debussy,” May 1, 1926): 116–17. “Cet esprit de recherche historique, j’imagine, incita M. Prunières à publier en ce jour les meilleures pages inédites de Claude Debussy; et je suis heureux qu’il m’ait confié d’écrire toute ce que me suggère la lecture de ces ‘ariettes oubliées.’” (I believe that it is his interest in historical research that leads M. Prunières to publish today the most valuable pages from Claude Debussy’s unpublished works, and I am grateful to him for asking me to set down my own thoughts on these particular “ariettes oubliées.”)
2. “J’aime beaucoup les œuvres de jeunesse des maîtres . . . [. . .] Elles témoignent d’une fraîcheur d’idées, d’une tendresse, naïves et charmantes, que plus tard le maître n’a pas toujours retrouvées.” See Koechlin, “Quelques anciennes melodies,” 115.
3. “Des inexpériences analogues déparent, çà et là, quatre mélodies charmantes qu’on a lues en mai dernier dans le numéro consacré par *La revue musicale* à ‘la jeunesse de Debussy.’ Ces petits airs d’après Banville et Verlaine décèlent assurément la main de l’écolier, mais aussi quels raffinements, quelle prodigieuse adresse à saisir l’essence poétique d’un vers jusqu’en ces prolongements les plus subtils! [. . .] Ces feuillets d’album annoncent bien des pages définitives. Tel est l’intérêt de ces révélations et de toutes celles qui le suivront. Car nous ne sommes pas encore au bout de nos surprises. Un jour ou l’autre, on découvrira la musique aérienne que Debussy écrivit pour *Les elfes* de Leconte de Lisle, ou bien cette mélodie élégante et ornée [*Fête galante*] qui devint plus tard le menuet de la *Petite Suite* à quatre mains.” See Constantin Photiadès, “Gloires de jadis et de naguère,” *La revue de Paris* 30, no. 6 (December 1926): 685–86. The “Menuet” of the *Petite Suite* does indeed lead us to *Fête galante*, one of the songs that appears among the Kunkelmann manuscripts.
4. In an undated letter to Edith de Gasparin, apparently written in 1942, Photiadès asks to see these manuscripts again: “Quand il m’avait si aimablement reçu, à St Rémy, votre regretté ami St René Taillandier m’avait montré quelques manuscrits de Debussy, essais de jeunesse qu’il tenait du musicien lui-même. Ces manuscrits sont-ils toujours en possession de sa famille? Si *oui*, je serais très heureux de pouvoir en donner les titres exacts et la date (presque toujours inscrites par Debussy à la fin de ses ouvrages), en nommant, s’ils le désirent, les possesseurs actuels. Je me rappelle très nettement qu’il y avait là une mélodie sur *Les elfes* de Leconte de Lisle et une autre mélodie qui est devenue plus tard le menuet de la *Petite Suite* à quatre mains. Le reste, à seize ans de distance, s’est un peu estompé dans mon souvenir. Bien entendu, si ces manuscrits se trouvaient à Paris, chez Mme. St René Taillandier et qu’elle voulût bien m’autoriser à les relire, à l’occasion de mon étude pour la *Revue de Paris*, je lui en aurais beaucoup de reconnaissance. Mais, à défaut de cette nouvelle lecture, il me suffirait d’obtenir la désignation exacte de ces pièces, avec leur date, si elle était mentionnée par Debussy.” (When he very kindly invited me

to his home, in Saint-Rémy, your dearly departed friend Saint-René Taillandier showed me several Debussy manuscripts, sketches from his youth, which he had received from the composer himself. Are these manuscripts still in the possession of the family? If so, I should particularly like to be able to give their precise titles and the dates, which Debussy almost always set down at the ends of his works, and to give the names of their current owners. I recall very clearly that among them was a setting of *Les elfes* de Leconte de Lisle and another that later became the “Menuet” of the *Petite Suite* for piano four hands. As for the others, at sixteen years’ distance, they are a little vague in my memory. However, even if I cannot see them again, I would be pleased simply to have the exact titles of the pieces, with their dates, if Debussy gives them.) This letter is preserved in a private collection, in Paris. I have been unable to find Photiadès’s article for the *Revue de Paris*.

5. See Jean-Christophe Branger, “Une œuvre de jeunesse inédite de Debussy: la *Première Suite d’orchestre*,” *Cahiers Debussy* 32 (2008): 5–26. This work, edited by Noël Lee and Edmond Lemaître, appeared from Durand, in Paris, in 2008. The first performance of the orchestral version was given in Paris, at the Cité de la Musique, on February 2, 2012, with the Orchestre “Les Siècles” under the direction of François-Xavier Roth.
6. *Séguidille*, a setting of a poem by Théophile Gautier (L. 44/[14]), comprises 218 measures. In this article I give L. numbers in accordance with the catalogue found in François Lesure, *Claude Debussy: Biographie critique suivie du catalogue de l’œuvre* (Paris: Fayard, 2003).
7. The carefully corrected copies of *L’archet* and *Le matelot qui tombe à l’eau* and the fragmentary sketches for *Romance* (“Non les baisers d’amour”) and *Les elfes* are preserved in a notebook with the call number Ms. 20 632 (1) in the F-Pn. They were partially identified by François Lesure in the second edition of his works catalogue, *Claude Debussy: L’archet* (L. 22/[46]), 479; [*Les baisers d’amour*] = *Romance* (L. 23/[48]), 479; [*Chanson triste*] = *Le matelot qui tombe à l’eau* (L. 24/[47]), 480; *Les elfes* (L. 25), 480. For a detailed description of *L’archet* and *Le matelot qui tombe à l’eau*, see Debussy, *Quatre nouvelles mélodies (1882)*, ed. Denis Herlin (Paris: Durand, 2012), 24–25, and appendix 3.1.
8. Debussy used the edition of *Les cariatides* published by Charpentier in 1879. In fact a certain number of variants in Banville’s text are to be found solely in this edition. See Théodore de Banville, *Œuvres poétiques complètes*, ed. Peter S. Hambly, vol. 1: *Les cariatides* (Paris: Champion, 2000).
9. See Lesure, *Claude Debussy: Biographie critique*, 483: the *Chanson des brises* = L. 32/(35). This copy now becomes the authoritative source for the work, for which we possess only a separate voice part that was, according to Lesure, sold by N. Rauch, in Geneva, in 1957, and that is today preserved in the collections of the F-Pn, Ms. 24360. Four pages of sketches are preserved in the Memorial Library of Music, Stanford University.
10. To date, we know of twenty-nine *mélodies* written for Madame Vasnier: 1: *Caprice* (L. 6/[5], late 1880); 2: *Les baisers* (L. 9, early 1881); 3: *Rondel chinois* (L. 11/[17], early 1881); 4: *Tragédie* (L. 12/[18]; early 1881); 5: *Jane* (L. 13/[19], early 1881); 6: *La fille aux cheveux de lin* (L. 15/[33], early 1881); 7: *Les*

- papillons* (L. 21, late 1881); 8: *Fantoches* (L. 26/[21], January 1882); 9: *Les roses* (L. 28/[13], early 1882); 10: *Sérénade* (L. 29/[34], early 1882); 11: *Pierrot* (L. 30/[15], early 1882); 12: *Fête galante* (L. 31/[23], early 1882); 13: *Chanson des brises* (L. 32/[35], early 1882); 14: *Flots, palmes et sables* (L. 38/[25], June 1882); 15: *Ode bachique* (L. 41/[37], summer 1882); 16: “En sourdine” (L. 42/[28], September 1882); 17: “Mandoline” (L. 43/[29], November 1882); 18: *Séguidille* (L. 44/[14], late 1882); 19: “Clair de lune” (L. 45/[32], late 1882); 20: “Pantomime” (L. 47/[31], early 1883); 21: “Chanson espagnole” (L. 49/[42], early 1883); 22: “Coquetterie posthume” (L. 50/[39], March 1883); 23: “Romance” (L. 53/[43], September 1883); 24: “Musique” (L. 54/[44], September 1883); 25: “Paysage sentimental” (L. 55/[45], November 1883); 26: “Romance” (L. 56/[52], January 1884); 27: *Apparition* (L. 57/[53], February 1884); 28: “Romance d’Ariel” (L. 58/[54], February 1884); 29: “Regret” (L. 59/[55], February 1884).
11. See Constant Pierre, *Le Conservatoire national de musique et de déclamation* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1900).
  12. Kunkelmann was in Dubois’s class at the same time as Fernand de La Tombelle, as he reported to his friend the composer and organist Gabriel Saint-René Taillandier in a letter dated Tuesday, [June] 14, [1921]: “Le même jour, il [Fernand de La Tombelle] m’a dit que, de nous tous (sans doute la classe Th. Dubois de notre temps), c’était toi le plus foncièrement musicien. Et je crois qu’il a raison.” (On the same day, he [Fernand de La Tombelle] told me that, of all of us (in Théodore Dubois’s class at the time, it was you who were the most natural musician. And I think he was right.) In the same letter Kunkelmann evokes the memory of a former classmate, Henri Kaiser (1861–1921): “Kaiser notre ancien camarade du Conservatoire (classe Durand, je crois) est mort au printemps dernier—il était professeur de solfège au Conserv[atoire] depuis très longtemps. Je le rencontrais parfois; il demeurait dans le quartier.” (Kaiser, our old friend from the Conservatoire [in Durand’s class, I think], died last spring. For a long time he had been professor of solfège at the Conservatoire. I used to run into him; he lived in the neighborhood.) This letter is preserved in Paris in a private collection. Fernand de La Tombelle was indeed among Théodore Dubois’s students from 1877 to 1880. See Jean-Christophe Branger, “Fernand de La Tombelle (1854–1928): un savant et un gentilhomme de la musique,” *Revue de musicologie* 97, no. 2 (2011): 361–407.
  13. See Joël-Marie Fauquet, *César Franck* (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 962. Another proof of the link between Kunkelmann and Franck comes from a dedication inscribed on the latter’s *Les cloches du soir* (Paris: Bruneau, 1889)—“Souvenir sympathique / à mon ami Kunkelmann / César Franck”—found on a copy preserved in Paris in a private collection. When Vincent d’Indy published his monograph *César Franck* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1906), he sent a copy to Kunkelmann (preserved in the same private collection) with the inscription “à Henri Kunkelmann / en souvenir d’un vieux camarade ‘en Franck’” (a souvenir from a former colleague in the circle around Franck). In the monograph d’Indy mentions Kunkelmann in his chapter on “La famille artistique,” 235.

14. I should like to thank Jean-Yves Sureau for generously providing me with this information concerning the Kunkelmann family.
15. See Albert Lavignac, *Le voyage artistique à Bayreuth*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Delagrave, 1898), 549, 553, 555, 564, 574. Kunkelmann's Wagnerianism was not unknown to Willy, who noted, on November 24, 1889: "M. Henry Kunkelmann m'a fait observer, avec des yeux flambant de malice derrière son lorgnon, que le (et non la) *Trauermarsch* n'était plus intitulé: *La mort de Siegfried*, depuis ma dernière lettre. J'ai rougi modestement." (M. Henry Kunkelmann mentioned to me, with those mischievous eyes of his flickering behind his pince-nez, that *Le* [and not *La*] *trauermarsch*—the Funeral March—was no longer titled "The Death of Siegfried," as I indicated in my last letter. I reddened with embarrassment!) See Willy [Henry Gauthier-Villars], *Lettre de l'Ouvreuse, voyage autour de la musique* (Paris: Léon Vanier, 1890), 26–27. This further comment of Charles Gounod's probably dates from the summer of 1886: "Cette hostilité [à Wagner] ne l'empêchait pas, évidemment de comprendre l'enchantement du Vendredi Saint; à un élève de Franck, Henry Kunkelmann, qui lui annonçait son départ pour Bayreuth, il répondait à mi-voix, avec un mélancolique sourire: 'Faites tous mes compliments à Parsifal.'" (This hostility [towards Wagner] did not in the least prevent [Gounod] from understanding the enchantments of the Good Friday music. To a student of Franck's, Henry Kunkelmann, who told him that he was leaving for Bayreuth, Gounod replied quietly, with a mournful smile, "Please present my compliments to Parsifal.") See *L'art moderne* 31, no. 37 (September 10, 1911): 294.
16. Willy, in his chronicle of February 12, 1893, writes: "je constate, à la sortie, la présence du ténébreux Henry Kerval (Kunkelmann pour ces dames) [. . .]." (I noticed, at the exit, the shadowy presence of Henry Kerval [known to the ladies as Kunkelmann] [. . .].) See "L'Ouvreuse du Cirque d'Été" [Henry Gauthier-Villars, called Willy], in *Rythmes et rire* (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Plume, 1894), 78.
17. Willy was familiar with this work by Kunkelmann, as we know from an aside of his in a review of a performance on November 22, 1889, of Vincent d'Indy's *Wallenstein*: "le caustique Henry Kerval (Kunkelmann), compositeur de valse pour la maison (d'édition) Tellier" (the cynical Henry Kerval [Kunkelmann], the composer of waltzes for the publishing house of Tellier). See Willy, *Lettre de l'Ouvreuse, voyage autour de la musique*, 59.
18. *Ave Maria* for mezzo-soprano or baritone with accompaniment for organ or piano (Paris: Henri Tellier, [1885]), plate no. H.T. 740; *Valse* in D flat for piano (Paris: Henri Tellier, [1886]), plate no. H.T. 777; *Andante* for violin and piano (Paris: Henri Tellier, [1889]), plate no. H.T. 977.
19. See "L'Ouvreuse du Cirque d'Été," in *Rythmes et rires* (Paris: Bibliothèque de La Plume, 1894), 99.
20. *Les plus belles fleurs*, mélodie for baritone or mezzo-soprano with accompaniment for piano, poem by Jules Lemaitre (Paris: Richault & Cie, [1893]), plate no. 19499 R.; *En Avril*, mélodie for baritone or mezzo-soprano with accompaniment for piano, poem by Armand Silvestre (mélodie dedicated to his sister)

- (Paris: Richault & Cie, [1893]), plate no. 19500 R.); *Marche nuptiale* for organ (Paris: Richault, [1891]), plate no. 19369 R.
21. “À l’Odéon qui, décidément, fait à l’Opéra une concurrence des plus sérieuses on a beaucoup goûté l’élégante musique de scène dont M. Henry Kerval vient d’enjoliver le *San Gil de Portugal* (ingéneusement adapté par M. Gassier) [. . .] le jeune Coste barytonne fort agréablement une Sérénade, et Mlle. Lapacerie fait applaudir des strophes sataniques composées par Kerval de qui certaine ‘Marche au Calvaire’ se déroule, non sans grandeur, sur des harmonies qui se souviennent de *Parsifal*.” See Willy, “L’Ouvreuse du Cirque d’Été,” in idem., *Accords perdus* (Paris: H. Simonis Empis, 1898), 175. One of the pieces composed by Kunkelmann was published by Fromont: the “Sérénade,” sung in the mystery play *San Gil de Portugal* by Augustín Moretto, performed at the Théâtre de l’Odéon, with French words by Alfred Gassier and music by “Henry Kerval” (Paris: Eugène Fromont, 1897), no plate no.
  22. See Willy, *La mouche des croches* (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1896), 55 (“sourcil-leuse”) and 183 (“aux yeux étincelants sous de méphistophéliques sourcils”).
  23. *Le ménestrel* (September 30, 1888): 317.
  24. *Annuaire de la curiosité et des beaux-arts* (Paris, 1911): 305. Kunkelmann’s brother Ferdinand is likewise listed here in the category of “objets d’art, tableaux, livres.”
  25. An obituary for Henry Kunkelmann appeared in *Le Figaro* of July 7, 1922: “The death of M. Henry Kunkelmann, of Reims, brother of M. F.-T. Kunkelmann and of the Countess Cafarelli, has been announced in Paris.” In a letter of July 18, 1922, addressed to Gabriel Saint-René Taillandier, Catherine Bidoire-Kunkelmann, Henry’s older brother’s wife, set down her brother-in-law’s last wishes: “My husband has made a number of visits to the apartment now in mourning in the boulevard de Courcelles, and has put aside, in accordance with the wishes of his dearly departed brother, all the music that is to be given to you. They have begun to pack it up and should soon be sending it to you bit by bit.” (This letter is preserved in a private collection.) After 1900, Henry Kunkelmann did indeed live in an apartment at 60, boulevard de Courcelles.
  26. Unfortunately, I discovered the existence of these copies only after publishing my edition of the *Quatre nouvelles mélodies*. It is important to note, for example, that in measure 24 of the vocal part of *L’archet* Debussy added a sharp before the C on the fourth beat—an accidental that is not found in the autograph manuscript.
  27. The contract with the date of June 6, 1882, ceding the song to the publishers, is reproduced in Maurice Boucher, *Claude Debussy (Essai pour la connaissance du devenir)* (Paris: Les Éditions Rieder, 1930), plate v. The signature that figures on the two copies of *Nuit d’étoiles*, like that on the contract, is quite similar to those found on the *mélodies* numbered 2 to 9 in appendix 3.2. The publication of *Nuit d’étoiles* was clearly contemporary with the signing of the contract and may thus be dated to June 1882.
  28. See Yves Lado-Bordowski, “La chronologie des œuvres de jeunesse de Claude Debussy (1879–1884),” *Cahiers Debussy* 14 (1990): 3–22.
  29. See *ibid.*, 15.

30. This program is reproduced in *La revue musicale* 7, no. 7 (special issue): 18, and in Maurice Boucher, *Claude Debussy*, plate 7.
31. See Lesure, *Claude Debussy*, 472. Lesure's notice does not explain his dating of the song.
32. We do not consider here the *Chanson des brises*, which would require a separate study of its own.
33. With the single exception of *Fête galante*, for which there does exist a second source.
34. This *mélodie*, edited by Mark DeVoto on the basis of the Vasnier manuscript, appears in appendix 2 of DeVoto's *Debussy and the Veil of Tonality: Essays on His Music* (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2004), 205–8.
35. Dictionnaire biographique comprenant la liste et les biographies des notabilités du département de la Seine-Inférieure (Paris: Henri Jouve, 1892).
36. Marguerite Vasnier, "Debussy à dix-huit ans," *La revue musicale* 7 no. 7: 17.
37. The Kunkelmann manuscript of this song includes one supplementary measure after m. 32, with a prolongation of the vocalise on G♯. In contrast, the Vasnier manuscript includes one supplementary measure at the end. The two autographs thus comprise the same number of measures: 46.
38. The case of *Flots, palmes et sables*, dated June 2, 1882 (L. 38/[34]), is not the same, because in 1887–88 Debussy, in this instance only, added a part for harp. The other important exceptions are the *mélodies* he composed on poems by Verlaine.
39. See C, 2214.
40. The question of the manuscripts preserved by Debussy is still difficult to resolve. For example, the manuscript of *Papillons*, which carries a long dedication to Madame Vasnier, was apparently given to Arturo Toscanini by Debussy's second wife, Emma. This means that Debussy had kept a copy of that song in his personal archives. See Marie Rolf, "Claude Debussy's 'Les papillons,'" in *Claude Debussy, Les papillons for voice and piano*, 1st ed., text by Théophile Gautier (New York: The New York Public Library, 2004), 11.
41. Edgard Pich, *Leconte de Lisle et sa création poétique, Poèmes antiques et Poèmes barbares, 1852–1874* (Lyon: Imprimerie Chirat, 1975), 208.
42. The poem was published in September 1869 in the journal *La parodie*, with music by Ernest Cabaner. It was dedicated to "Richard Wagner, musicien allemand." Cros's text was also set by Gabriel Fabre and Henri Busser.
43. Debussy did not set the second half of the poem, in which the knight is transformed into a poor man playing a Cremonese violin which, by dint of its sonorities, resuscitated "the departed one and her songs."
44. Claude Debussy, introduction to *Lettres à deux amis. Soixante-dix-huit lettres inédites à Robert Godet et G. Jean-Aubry* (Paris: Librairie José Corti, 1942), 9–10.
45. Chausson set some eighteen poems by Bouchor, of which nine were selected from the *Poèmes de l'amour et de la mer*. We also note that in July 1882 Pierre de Bréville made a setting of *Le matelot qui tombe à l'eau* under the title of "Chanson triste," practically at the same time as Debussy.
46. One wonders if there might be a connection here to the *Romance* that Debussy submitted for an examination on January 31, 1881, even if Bouchor's rather



- unconventional poem would not seem to support such a hypothesis. See John R. Clevenger, "Debussy's Paris Conservatoire Training," in *Debussy and His World*, ed. Jane Fulcher (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 339.
47. The works are found in the sketchbook as follows: *Pierrot*, 11; *Première suite*, "Ballet," 16–23; *Chanson des brises*, 26–27; *Le triomphe de Bacchus*, first movement, 56–57; *Le triomphe de Bacchus*, second movement, 58–62. The orchestration of the "Ballet" was submitted for the examination held in February 1884. Ambroise Thomas considered it "toujours étrange," which could mean that he always found Debussy's work to be "strange"; Léo Delibes found it "étrange" as well as "original"; Théodore Dubois found it to be of a "strange color" but "well orchestrated." See Clevenger, "Debussy's Paris Conservatoire Training," 341.
  48. The complete poem by Charles Cros may be found in Yves Lado-Bordowski, "L'archet, un 'croquis musical' de Debussy," *Cahiers Debussy* 16 (1992): 3–4.
  49. In my critical edition of the *Quatre nouvelles mélodies*, I followed Cros's text, in particular for the first tercet—except in the two last instances, where the addition of a poetic foot made it impossible to follow the original text. The textual variants are minutely described on pages 25–26.
  50. See John R. Clevenger, "The Origins of Debussy's Style" (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 2002), 950–57.
  51. On the endpaper we see: "Volume—Pessard / Partition—Flaxland / Zephyr—Bussy / Tristan et Iseut [*sic*]." That Debussy set down here the title of *Le zéphyr* would suggest that this song dates from 1881–82. The mention of Flaxland is equally interesting, because it was in the salons of this very publisher that, on May 12, 1882, Debussy accompanied Marie Vasnier. On that occasion his name was printed as "de Bussy," as found here on the endpaper. Finally, Debussy led Paul Vidal to believe that the *Les joyeusetés de bonne compagnie*, a small collection of songs by Émile Pessard, was actually one of his, Debussy's, compositions: "[Debussy] me fit cette farce d'apprendre par cœur un recueil de Pessard et il me chantait comme étant de lui *Les joyeusetés de bonne compagnie*. Je ne découvris que plus tard ce subterfuge. [. . .] le père de Debussy, qui aimait beaucoup la musique et qui avait un goût naturel, me pria de déchiffrer après dîner et c'est là que je découvris un beau soir que les *Les joyeusetés de bonne compagnie* n'étaient pas de Debussy mais bien de Pessard." (Debussy mischievously led me to learn by heart some songs by Pessard, *Les joyeusetés de bonne compagnie*, while pretending that they were compositions of his own. Only later did I discover this mystification! [. . .] Debussy's father, who liked music very much and who had for it a natural appreciation, asked me, one fine evening after dinner, to read some music; it was then that I discovered that *Les joyeusetés de bonne compagnie* were not by Debussy but rather by Pessard!) See Paul Vidal, *La revue musicale* 7, no. 7: 13. The *Chanson d'un fou*, one of the songs in Pessard's *Les joyeusetés de bonne compagnie* (Paris: Leduc, 1873), 10–15), was attributed to Debussy in a publication of 1932.
  52. In her thoughtful response to my paper "Four Newly Discovered *Mélodies* (1882) by Claude Debussy" given at the Debussy session of the meetings of the American Musicological Society in New Orleans on November 2, 2012.

53. See Frits Noske, *La mélodie française de Berlioz à Duparc, essai de critique historique* (Paris/Amsterdam: Presses universitaires de France/North-Holland Publishing Company, 1956), 256.