

TEXT AND TRANSLATIONS

Achille Claude Debussy (1862–1918)

Trois Chanson de Bilitis (1898)

La flûte de Pan

Pour le jour des Hyacinthies, il m'a donné une syrinx
faite de roseaux bien taillés, unis avec la blanche cire
qui est douce à mes lèvres comme le miel.

Il m'apprend à jouer, assise sur ses genoux; mais je
suis un peu tremblante. Il en joue après moi, si
doucement que je l'entends à peine.

Nous n'avons rien à nous dire, tant nous sommes
près l'un de l'autre; mais nos chansons veulent se
répondre, et tour à tour nos bouches s'unissent sur la
flûte.

Il est tard; voici le chant des grenouilles vertes qui
commence avec la nuit. Ma mère ne croira jamais que
je suis restée si longtemps à chercher ma ceinture
perdue.

Le tombeau des Naiades

Le long du bois couvert de givre, je marchais; mes
cheveux devant ma bouche se fleurissaient de petits
glaçons, et mes sandales étaient lourdes de neige
fangeuse et tassée.

Il me dit: Que cherches-tu Je suis la trace du satyre.
Ses petits pas fourchus alternent comme des trous dans
un manteau blanc.» Il me dit: «Les satyres sont morts.

Les satyres et les nymphes aussi. Depuis trente ans il
n'a pas fait un hiver aussi terrible. La trace que tu vois est
celle d'un bouc. Mais restons ici, où est leur tombeau.

Et avec le fer de sa houe il cassa la glace de la source
où jadis riaient les naïades. Il prenait de grands
morceaux froids, et les soulevant vers le ciel pâle, il
regardait au travers.

Text by Pierre Louÿs

Ottorino Respighi (1879–1936)

Deità silvane (1917)

I Fauni

S'odono al monte i saltellanti rivi
Murmureggiare per le forre astruse,
S'odono al bosco gemer cornamuse
Con garrito di pifferi giulivi.
E i fauni in corsa per dumeti e clivi,
Erti le corna sulle fronti ottuse,
Bevono per lor nari camuse
Filtri sottili e zeffiri lascivi

The Flute of Pan

For Hyacinthus day he gave me a syrinx made of
carefully cut reeds, bonded with white wax which tastes
sweet to my lips like honey.

He teaches me to play, as I sit on his lap; but I am
a little fearful. He plays it after me, so gently that I
scarcely hear him.

We have nothing to say, so close are we one to
another, but our songs try to answer each other, and
our mouths join in turn on the
flute.

It is late; here is the song of the green frogs that
begins with the night. My mother will never believe
I stayed out so long to look for my lost sash.

The Tomb of the Naiads

Along the frost-bound wood I walked; my hair across
my mouth, blossomed with tiny icicles, and my
sandals were heavy with muddy,
packed snow.

He said to me: 'What do you seek?' 'I follow the satyr's
track. His little cloven hoof-marks alternate like holes in
a white cloak. He said to me: 'The satyrs are dead.

'The satyrs and the nymphs too. For thirty years there
has not been so harsh a winter. The tracks you see are
those of a goat. But let us stay here, where their tomb is.

And with the iron head of his hoe he broke the ice of
the spring, where the naiads used to laugh. He picked up
some huge cold fragments, and, raising them to the pale
sky, gazed through them.

Translation by Richard Stokes

One hears in the hills the bubbling brooks
Murmuring through the dark ravines,
One hears in the woods the groan of the bagpipes
With the chirp of merry fifes.
And the fauns racing over hills and through thickets,
Their horns erect above their broad foreheads,
Drink through their blunt, upturned nostrils
Subtle potions and lascivious winds.
And, while beneath the great choir of trees,
They weep, for love of the beautiful life:
The bagpipes of the arcadian shepherd.
Happy and fearful of the impending ambush,
The nymphs flee, faster than wild gazelles,
Their ardent lips like blazing flowers!

Egle

Frondeggia il bosco d'uberi verzure,
 Volgendo i rii zaffiro e margherita:
 Per gli archi verdi un'anima romita
 Cinge pallidi fuochi a ridde oscure.
 E in te ristretta con le mani pure
 Come le pure fonti della vita,
 Di sole e d'ombre mobili vestita
 Tu danzi, Egle, con languide misure.
 E a te candida e bionda tra li ninfe,
 D'ilari ambagi descrivendo il verde,
 Sotto i segreti ombracoli del verde,
 Ove la più inquieta ombra s'attrista,
 Perle squillanti e liquido ametista
 Volge la gioia roca delle linfe.

Acqua

Acqua, e tu ancora sul tuo flauto lene
 Intonami un tuo canto variolungo,
 Di cui le note abbian l'odor del fungo,
 Del musco e dell'esiguo capelvenere,
 Sì che per tutte le sottili vene,
 Onde irrighi la fresca solitudine,
 Il tuo riscintillio rida e sublūdii
 Al gemmar delle musiche serene.
 Acqua, e, lungh'essi i calami volubili
 Movendo in gioco le cerulee dita,
 Avvicenda più lunghe ombre alle luci,
 Tu che con modi labii deduci
 Sulla mia fronte intenta e sulla vita
 Del verde fuggitive ombre di nubi.

E, mentre in fondo al gran coro alberato
 Piange d'amore per la vita bella
 La sampogna dell'arcade pastore,
 Contenta e paurosa dell'agguato,
 Fugge ogni ninfa più che fiera snella,
 Ardendo in bocca come ardente fiore

Crepuscolo

Nell'orto abbandonato ora l'edace
 Muschio contende all'ellere i recessi,
 E tra il coro snelletto dei cipressi
 S'addorme in grembo dell'antica pace
 Pan. Sul vasto marmoreo torace,
 Che i convolvoli infiorano d'amplessi,
 Un tempo forse con canti sommessi
 Piegò una ninfa il bel torso procace.
 Deità della terra, forza lieta!,
 Troppo pensiero è nella tua vecchiezza:
 Per sempre inaridita è la tua fonte.
 Muore il giorno, e nell'alta ombra inquieta
 Trema e s'attrista un canto d'allegrezza:
 Lungh'ombre azzurre scendono dal monte...

Text by Antonio Rubino

The forest is heavy with leaves and fruit,
 The brooks are shimmering in daisy and sapphire:
 Under the green arches a lonely soul
 Circles pale flames in hidden dances.
 And with quiet intensity and hands as pure
 As the pure fountains of life itself,
 Veiled in clothes of sun and shadow
 You dance, Aegle, with spiritless steps.
 And toward you, white and blonde among the nymphs,
 Merrily dancing like fluttering leaves,
 Under the secret shadows of the leaves,
 Where the most restless spirit saddens,
 In translucent pearl and liquid amethyst
 Flows the raw rapture of the amber.

Water, once again your mellow flute
 Plays to me your varying song,
 Whose notes seem like the smell of mushrooms,
 Of moss and of sleek, silken maiden-hair,
 So that along all the tiny streams
 That refresh the lonely places,
 Your sparkling presence laughs and ripples
 With the jewels of serene music.
 Water, while along your banks the whispering reeds
 Playfully wiggle their blue fingers,
 Flickering longer shadows in the light,
 You wind your fleeting way, seeing
 On my brooding forehead and on each of the leaves
 The passing shadows of clouds.

In the abandoned garden, now the greedy moss
 Fights with the ivy for every nook and cranny,
 And in the sparse cluster of cypresses,
 Sleeping in the womb of ancient peace
 Lies Pan. On the vast marble statue,
 Wrapped with morning-glory flowers,
 Perhaps someday with a gentle song
 A nymph might bend over her lovely figure.
 God of the earth, joyful force!
 You have become too serious in your old age:
 Your fountain is dry forever.
 The day dies, and through the vast restless shade
 A song of happiness trembles and saddens:
 Long blue shadows descend from the mountains.

Translation by Joshua Breitzer

Alma Mahler (1879–1964)

Fünf Lieder (1910)

Die stille Stadt

Liegt eine Stadt im Tale,
ein blasser Tag vergeht,
es wird nicht lange dauern mehr,
bis weder Mond noch Sterne
nur Nacht am Himmel steht.

Von allen Bergen drücken
nebel auf die Stadt,
es dringt kein Dach, nicht Hof noch Haus,
kein Laut aus ihrem Rauch heraus,
kaum Türme noch und Brücken.

Doch als dem Wanderer graute,
da ging ein Lichtlein auf im Grund
und durch den Rauch und Nebel
begann ein leiser Lobgesang
aus Kindermund.

Text by Richard Dehmel III

Laue Sommernacht

Laue Sommernacht: am Himmel
Stand kein Stern, im weiten Walde
Suchten wir uns tief im Dunkel,
Und wir fanden uns.

Fanden uns im weiten Walde
In der Nacht, der sternenlosen,
Hielten staunend uns im Arme
In der dunklen Nacht

War nicht unser ganzes Leben
So ein Tappen, so ein Suchen?
Da: In seine Finsternisse
Liebe, fiel Dein Licht.

Text by Gustav Falke

Ich Wandle Unter Blumen

Ich wandle unter Blumen
Und blühe selber mit;
Ich wandle wie im Traume
Und schwanke bei jedem Schritt.

O, halt mich fest, Geliebte!
Vor Liebestrunkenheit
Fall' ich dir sonst zu Füßen,
Und der Garten ist voller Leut'

Text by Heinrich Heine

Bei dir ist es traut:
Zage Uhren schlagen
wie aus weiten Tagen.
Komm mir ein Liebes sagen –
aber nur nicht laut.

The Silent Town

A town lies in the valley,
a pale day is fading;
it will not be long
before neither moon nor stars
but night alone will deck the skies.

From every mountain
mists weigh on the town;
no roof, no courtyard, no house
no sound can penetrate the smoke,
scarcely towers and bridges even.

But as fear seized the traveller,
a gleam appeared in the valley;
and through the smoke and mist
came a faint song of praise
from a child's lips.

Mild Summers Night

Mild summer night: in the sky
Not a star, in the deep forest
We sought each other in the dark
And found one another.

Found one another in the deep wood
In the night, the starless night,
And amazed, we embraced
In the dark night.

Our entire life – was it not
Such a tentative quest?
There: into its darkness,
O Love, fell your light.

I wander among flowers

I wander among flowers
And blossom with them;
I wander as in a dream
And sway with every step.

O, hold me fast, beloved!
Or drunk with love
I'll fall at your feet –
And the garden is full of folk.

Translations by Richard Stokes

I feel warm and close with you:
clocks strike hesitantly,
like they did in distant days.
Say something loving to me –
but not aloud.

Ein Tor geht irgendwo
draussen im Blütentreiben.
Der Abend horcht an den Scheiben.
Lass uns leise bleiben:
Keiner weiss uns so.

A gate opens somewhere
out in the burgeoning.
Evening listens at the window-panes.
Let us stay quiet,
no one knows us thus.

Text by Rainer Maria Rilke

Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979)

Tiger, Tiger (1929-33)

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat.
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp.
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

Text by William Blake

The Aspidistra (1929)

I had an aspidistra
'Twas growing in a pot.
'Twas old and green and dusty,
A living, lingering blot.
I took away its curtains
Because I loved them not.

I took away its curtains
Of lace with velvet tied.
I took away its curtains
Which were the creature's pride.
I took away its curtains
And the aspidistra died.

Text by Claude Flight

Lethe (1941)

Ah, drink again
This river that is the taker-away of pain
And the giver-back of beauty!

In these cool waves
What can be lost?
Only the sorry cost
Of the lovely thing, ah, never the thing itself!

The level flood that laves The hot brow
And the stiff shoulder
Is at our temples now

Gone is the fever
But not into the river;
Melted the frozen pride
But the tranquil tide
Runs never the warmer for this
Never the colder

Immerse the dream
Drench the kiss
Dip the song in the stream

Text by Edna St. Vincent Millay

June Twilight (1925)

The twilight comes;
the sun dips down and sets,
The boys have done
play at the nets.

In a warm golden glow
The woods are steeped.
The shadows grow;
The bat has cheeped.

Sweet smells the new-mown hay;
The mowers pass
Home, each his way,
through the grass.

The night-wind stirs the fern,
A night-jar spins;
The windows burn
In the inns.

Dusky it grows. The moon! The dews descend.
Love, can this beauty in our hearts end?

Text by John Massfield

Leo Delibes (1836-1891)

Dôme épais (1881-83)

Sous le dôme épais
 Où le blanc jasmin
 À la rose s'assemble
 Sur la rive en fleurs,
 Riant au matin
 Viens, descendons ensemble.
 Doucement glissons de son flot charmant
 Suivons le courant fuyant
 Dans l'onde frémissante
 D'une main nonchalante
 Viens, gagnons le bord,
 Où la source dort et
 L'oiseau, l'oiseau chante.
 Sous le dôme épais
 Où le blanc jasmin,
 Ah! descendons
 Ensemble!
 Sous le dôme épais
 Où le blanc jasmin
 À la rose s'assemble
 Sur la rive en fleurs,
 Riant au matin
 Viens, descendons ensemble.
 Doucement glissons de son flot charmant
 Suivons le courant fuyant
 Dans l'onde frémissante
 D'une main nonchalante
 Viens, gagnons le bord,
 Où la source dort et
 L'oiseau, l'oiseau chante.
 Sous le dôme épais
 Où le blanc jasmin,
 Ah! descendons
 Ensemble!

Text by Edmund & Philippe Gondinet and Gille

On the river bank covered with flowers laughing in the
 morning
 Let us descend together!
 Gently floating on its charming risings,
 On the river's current
 On the shining waves,
 One hand reaches,
 Reaches for the bank,
 Where the spring sleeps,
 And the bird, the bird sings.
 Under the thick dome where the white jasmine
 Ah! calling us
 Together!
 Under the thick dome where white jasmine
 With the roses entwined together
 On the river bank covered with flowers laughing in the
 morning
 Let us descend together!
 Gently floating on its charming risings,
 On the river's current
 On the shining waves,
 One hand reaches,
 Reaches for the bank,
 Where the spring sleeps,
 And the bird, the bird sings.
 Under the thick dome where the white jasmine
 Ah! calling us
 Together!

Translation by Aaron Green