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A Musical Glance Upon The Melodie Apres Un Reve By Faure Faure'nin Apres un Reve Melodisi Üzerine Müzikal Bir İnceleme

ABSTRACT

Gabriel Urbain Faure, a composer of late Romanticism linked with modernism, is one of the leading French *melodie* composers of his genre. *Melodie* can be described as a French art song, similar to German lied. Harmonic progressions, chromatic shifts and sudden modulations are often seen in Faure's music, also giving high importance to nuance and interpretation. Especially his *melodie* called *Apres un Reve* Op. 7 No. 1 is very popular because of its melancholic musical structure and romantic text. In this paper, *Apres un Reve* is analyzed through its harmonic structure, tonality, and the relationship between the music and the poem. The story is about a dream, also indicated by the title of the *melodie*. The dream is so unique and heavenly that the singer does not want to wake up and wishes to continue to see the beloved in this magical and mysterious atmosphere. The piece is originally in C minor key and has a strophic structure since the melody and the rhythm are repeated throughout the piece. Chromaticism and complex chords can easily be observed throughout the piece. The time signature of the music is 3/4, and the tempo is *andantino*. Triplets are often used in the music, creating a hasty atmosphere, or embellishing the beautiful elements of the poem. This *melodie* will definitely be performed in musical environments continuously because of Faure's impressive approach to French Romanticism.

Keywords: Faure, Apres un Reve, melodie.

ÖZET

Gabriel Urbain Faure, dönemsel olarak geç Romantizm ve modernizm arasında bağ kurarken, kendi türünün önde gelen Fransız *melodi* bestecilerinden biri olmuştur. *Melodi* ise Alman *lied* şarkı formuna benzeyen bir Fransız sanat şarkısı olarak tanımlanabilir. Faure'nin müziğinde armonik ilerlemeler, kromatik geçişler ve ani modülasyonlar sıklıkla görülürken, nüans ve yorum da büyük önem taşır. Özellikle *Apres un Reve* Op.7 No.1 adlı eseri melankolik müzikal yapısı ve romantik metni nedeniyle oldukça popülerdir. Bu makalede *Apres un Reve* armonik yapısı, tonalitesi ve müzik-şiir ilişkisi üzerinden incelenmiştir. Hikaye, *melodi*'nin adından da anlaşılacağı üzere bir rüya hakkındadır. Rüya o kadar eşsiz ve ilahidir ki, şarkıcı uyanmak istemez ve sevgilisini bu büyü ve gizemli atmosferde görmeye devam etmeyi diler. Eser, orijinali Do minör tonda olup, melodi ve ritim eser boyunca tekrarlandığı için strofik bir yapıya sahiptir. Eserin tamamında kromatik diziler ve karmaşık akorlar kolaylıkla gözlemlenebilmektedir. Müziğin zaman ölçüsü 3/4 ve temposu *andantinodur*. Üçlü nota grupları eserde sıklıkla görülmektedir, bu sayede aceleci bir atmosfer yaratılır veya şiirin etkileyici unsurları süslenir. Faure'un Fransız Romantizmine olan etkileyici yaklaşımı nedeniyle bu *melodi* müzikal ortamlarda seslendirilmeye mutlaka devam edecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Faure, Apres un Reve, melodi.

1. INTRODUCTION

2. FAURE

Gabriel Urbain Faure (1845-1924) produced over one hundred melodies in his sixty-year career (Sobaskie, 2006) while linking the end of Romanticism and modernism. Being a composer, pianist, teacher and organist, Faure was one of the primary French composers of his era. His musical style impressed many 20th century composers (Oxford Lieder, 2023) such as Ravel, who was among his students (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023).

Faure was a composer in all branches of chamber music (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023) but he was affected by the art song throughout his career more than any other genre (Phillips, 1993). He began his song composition career by writing *romances* which are elegant, light strophic songs with piano. These

pieces are typical of the first half of the nineteenth century (Dibbern, 2015). Although he respected traditional forms of music, he enjoyed adding harmonic inventions. He liked sudden modulations and harmonic progressions, with a deceptive air of simplicity (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2023). He enjoyed unexpected harmonies and colorful chromatic shifts (Combrink, 2023). Nuance is of top importance to Faure, who was always moved by the sensitive expression of detail. He always encouraged the performers to bring out subtleties in the musical text. Every phrase in his music speaks with intimacy (Gordon, 1999).

Faure had an admiration for Wagner and his operas such as *Die Walküre*, *Das Rheingold*, *Parsifal* and *Die Meistersinger*. Although Faure knew Wagner's music very well, he was one of the few composers who did not come under his musical influence in his era (Combrink, 2023).

Faure was best known for his *Requiem*. His exceptional talents were recognized after he turned 50. Throughout the years, he started to have aural hallucinations and deafness (ClassicFM, 2023).

3. MELODIE

Melodie is a form of French art song which started to arise in the mid-19th century. It can be compared to the German *lied* form (Kimball, 2006, pg. 158). However, *melodie* is characterized by briefness and understatement compared to *lied*, which is openly dramatic and more persuasive than *melodie* (Redfern, 2015).

A *chanson*, which can be confused with *melodie*, is a popular or folk French song. In the *melodie*, there is a close relationship between the melody and the text. One should know French poetry, language, and poetic diction well to compose or interpret melodies (Kimball, 2006, pg. 158).

The earlier genre of French songs called *romance*, which was lighter in nature, grew less directly than *melodie*. The text of a *melodie* was taken from contemporary poetry (Richter, 1999). The first composer who described his compositions as *melodie* was Hector Berlioz, however, the first distinct composer of *melodies* was accepted as Charles Gounod, whose style evolved from *romance* to *melodie*. He used the poems of Victor Hugo and Alphonse de Lamartine in his over 200 melodies (Delage, 2023).

Faure, who was called to be the French Schumann despite their different styles and temperaments, wrote over 100 *melodies*. His settings of the poetry of Paul Verlaine including the song cycles *La Bonne Chanson*, *Cinq Melodies de Venise*, and the *melodie Clair de Lune* are his unforgettables (Orledge, 1979, p. 77-78). Faure's *melodies* generate a sense of personal attachment and even ownership for many people (De Savage, 2017). *Après un Reve* is one of the most known *melodies* of Faure (Redfern, 2015).

4. APRES UN REVE

Trois Melodies (Op. 7) is a set of melodies for solo voice and piano, written by Gabriel Faure. It consists of *Après un Reve*, *Hymne* and *Barcarolle* which were written between 1870 and 1877, and published in 1878 (Feeney, 2023). *Après un Reve*, whose text was an anonymous Italian poem, was adapted to French by Romain Bussine (Redfern, 2015); a French poet, voice teacher and baritone of the 19th century (Oxford Lieder, 2023). He founded the *Societe Nationale de Musique* to promote contemporary French orchestral and chamber music with Henry Duparc and Camille Saint-Saens (Combrink, 2023).

The text of *Après un Reve* describes a dream in which the narrator and her beloved join each other in an almost otherworldly gathering. Although the piano accompaniment is light, it provides an underlying pulse. It gives the song a sense of actuation. Meanwhile, the vocal line is slow and dreamy. The vocal range is not demanding in general, but there are unusual intervals for which the accompaniment provides little pitch support (Feeney, 2023).

Its original key is C minor, but it has been transposed to suit all types of voices. The piece is characteristic of Faure's youthful style with its romantic atmosphere. It differs from his abstract harmonic ideas from his mature times. The melody includes regular quavers. Its lyricism liberates from the fixed rhythmic base by flowing triplet figures. The fluidity of the melody is the reason of the success of this piece (Bru Zane, 2023). Whenever a chord changes, it either has a unison with a note from the chord before, or it has a semi-tone chromatic shift. This situation gives the sensation of a physical floating or clinging. The song's motion is forward with a sense of unhurried nuances of emotions. The climax point sounds in proportion and appropriate, in addition to the text that might have influenced it. That is the reason why this piece has been arranged, transposed, and transcribed for many instruments (Combrink, 2023).

The poem is about two lovers' wish to meet in the other world. One of the lovers talks about his dream, while the $\frac{3}{4}$ accompaniment supports the story of the sleepy lover with regular beats. The word "Helas"

with a whole forte expression is the climax of the piece. Then the lover accepts the reality and hopes to see the same dream again. He calls the mystical night saying, “Come one more time”. The tones are full of love and melancholy, while the whole piece is in a legato. The end is with piano expression towards the eternity of the lover (Sabar, 2013, pg. 481). Waking up from a “dream of love” implies Jungian and Freudian ideas. The dreamer is full of regret and longing for what has gone. Bussine’s text is very ecstatic, full of “divine flashes” and “unknown splendours” (Combrink, 2023). Here is the lyrics and the English translation of the poem by Richard Stokes (Johnson and Stokes, 2000):

Apres un Reve

Dans un sommeil que charmaient ton image
Je rêvais le bonheur, ardent mirage,
Tes yeux étaient plus doux, ta voix pure et sonore,
Tu rayonnais comme un ciel éclairé par l’aurore;

Tu m’appelais et je quittais la terre
Pour m’enfuir avec toi vers la lumière,
Les cieux pour nous entr’ouvraient leurs nues,
Splendeurs inconnues, lueurs divines entrevues.

Hélas! hélas, triste réveil des songes,
Je t’appelle, ô nuit, rends-moi tes mensonges;
Reviens, reviens, radieuse,
Reviens, ô nuit mystérieuse!

Translation:

After a Dream

In sleep made sweet by a vision of you
I dreamed of happiness, fervent illusion,
Your eyes were softer, your voice pure and ringing,
You shone like a sky that was lit by the dawn;

You called me and I departed the earth
To flee with you toward the light,
The heavens parted their clouds for us,
We glimpsed unknown splendours, celestial fires.

Alas, alas, sad awakening from dreams!
I summon you, O night, give me back your delusions;
Return, return in radiance,
Return, O mysterious night!

5. STRUCTURE

The work is strophic, meaning that the melody and the rhythm are repeated throughout the piece. Verse 1 is between bars 1 and 16 (A); verse 2 is between bars 17 and 30 (A1); verse 3 is between bars 31 and 48 (B). Verse 2 is like a repetition of verse 1, in comparison to verse 3 which is like a new diversion from the other two verses, with its different harmonic construction functioning like an extended coda. One can consider the piece to be modified strophic, which is a more poetic form (Redfern, 2015).

6. TONALITY AND HARMONY

The period’s typical works are in a state of constant flux, however this *melodie* is in C minor. Continuous resolutions of dissonant chords onto dissonant chords give rise to a sense of tonal unease and temporary modulations. The work is full of harmonic devices that it is difficult to find a bar without some form of harmonic extension or dissonance. Chromaticism and the elaborated use of the complex chords such as the half-diminished 7th guarantees that there is no return to the home key absolutely. The only sense of tonal repose is given in the final seven bars of the piece, as shown in Figure 1 (Redfern, 2015).

42 *p* *pp*
 se, Re - viens, ô nuit mysté-ri - eu - - - se!

Figure 1. Bar 42 to 48. (Redfern, 2015).

The tranquil tone of the beginning of the piece continues with three bars of dissonance and release. The hesitating C minor triad intermingles into the F 7/9, symbolizing the exotic sound of the song and the era that the piece was written in. The descending motion from bar 3 to 4 brings to the piece a merciless sense of melancholy and loss, as shown in Figure 2. (Redfern, 2015).

Andantino *dolce*
 Dans un som - meil que char-mait ton i - ma - ge

pp

Cm Cm EbΔ7 F 7/9 F7 Bb 7/9 Bb 7
 2nd
 inv.

Figure 2. Bar 1 to 4. (Redfern, 2015).

Melodically, the listener waits the final resolution of the fifth degree or the passage from the dominant to the tonic. The descending of the fifth cadence of F# to B is expected. The first four verses of the poem end with a descending fifth (e.g. the voice in bar 15). It creates a strong cadential feeling. It is observed that there is a cadence on III. The intonation of a descending fifth is observed twice more in lines 7-8. However, other parameters suggest that the final cadence has not come in both times. The tonal movement is towards the subdominant on the words “leurs nues, splendeurs” where the melodic fifth is provided with an entirely different harmony. The real descending fifth is seen in the very end of the song. It is heard in the right harmony minor I and the right register (Tarasti, 2011, pg. 446).

All the transitions of the song take place with simple and abrupt chromaticism; without modulatory means such as diminished sevenths or enharmonic reinterpretations. The highest tension moments are placed between Lines 9 to 12 starting with “Hélas! Hélas” (Tarasti, 2011, pg. 447), giving the sensation of a sudden pause, unexpected modulation, or a transition; leading one to expect a corresponding musical drama (Tarasti, 2011, pg. 439).

7. POETIC AND MUSICAL INTERPRETATION

The *melodi* is in a $\frac{3}{4}$ time signature, starting with tempo *andantino*, which means moderately fast; slightly faster than *andante* but slower than *moderato*. Faure wants the first words of the *melodi* to be sung *dolce*, indicating the sweetness of the dream. The very first phrase “Dans un sommeil” is divided into three separate quarter-notes instead of a joint movement. The words on short notes should be sung as in a recitative, *quasi parlando* mode since the tempo is very fast (Tarasti, 2011, pg. 457). The words “charmaït” (charmed) and “mirage” (illusion) are sung in triplets, demonstrating the floating influence of the beautiful vision of the lover. Both triplets have *crescendo* and *decrescendo* towards the end of the lines. The third line has triplets while describing the eyes and the voice of the lover. The fourth line’s triplet is on the words “éclairé par” (lit by the dawn) referencing to the illusions created before.

The second verse starting with the words “Tu m’appelais et je quittais la terre” is very similar to the first verse melodically. Faure wants these words to be sung *forte*, which is expected because there is a calling

and a departure from the earth. “et je quittais” (and I departed) has a triplet, indicating the haste and the movement. The other triplet is used for the words “la lumière” (light) just like in the first verse’s light and illusion motifs. Faure wants the words “Les cieux pour nous,” (the heavens) to be sung *piano* with a crescendo and a triplet on the words “entr’ouvraient leurs nues” (opened their clouds). The words “splendeurs inconnues” (mystic magnificence) have the lowest notes until this part of the *melodie*, maybe to reference the mysterious beauties of the universe and to show respect for the darker side (lower register) of the singer’s voice. The words “lueurs divines entrevues” (celestial fires) have a *crescendo* and three triplets until the word “Helas” (Alas), sounding a bit in a haste and agitated.

The third verse starts with the second *forte* dynamic of the *melodie* while shouting “Helas” with the highest pitch of the music. The second “helas” is sung with a very sudden low pitch and sounds *subito pianissimo* (Tarasti, 2011, pg. 458), although not indicated on the score. It can create a big contrast in between the two words, sounding like a bitter call because the singer does not want to wake up from the beautiful dream. The music becomes very touching and mournful with the word “triste” (sad). Another calling is heard with the word “je t’appelle” (I summon you) sung with a *crescendo* and *mezzoforte*, asking the night to give the singer its delusions. The word “reviens” is repeated three times afterwards, starting with a *crescendo*. There is a *forte*, very long-held “radieuse” (radiance) with a high pitch in between the “reviens”. This “radieuse” has the highest pitch of the last eight bars of the *melodie*. The music gets lower in pitch with a *decrescendo* towards the end, closing with a *pianissimo* on the word “mysterieuse” (mysterious).

The most essential item of the poem is formed as the title indicates “after the dream”; the awakening from the dream (*Après un reve*). The mystical night has its day-like properties such as being “radiant” (“nuit radieuse”). The singer asks the night to return to him its lies, pointing to the fact that it is a real unification of opposite poles on the imaginary level. The semantic universe of the poem can be explained in the figure below (Tarasti, 2011, pg. 444).

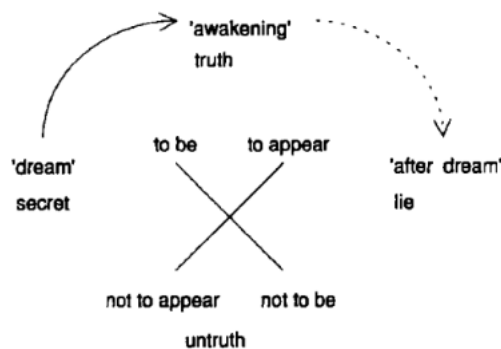


Figure 3. The Semantic Universe of *Après un Reve* (Tarasti, 2011, pg. 444).

The “dream” state of the beginning is a secret, hidden state. The awakening uncovers the truth; the “night” which is called to return seems to be a lie though a good one. The lover of the poem addresses to the “night” and not directly to “tu” because he knows that the “you” of the poem can only come with the arrival of the night, which serves as the helper of the subject. The “you” of the poem is the subject of the lover at the beginning; it turns to “the night” (“Je t’appelle, o nuit!”) towards the end. Moreover, the nameless subject of the beginning is provided with attributes such as “light” (“lumière”) or “heaven” (“ciel”) (Tarasti, 2011, pg. 444).

As a performance recommendation, the consonants are better to be sung softly throughout the *melodie*, even on fast notes. The use of *vibrato* combined with *crescendos* would produce the impression of the brilliance of the voice (Tarasti, 2011, pg.461).

8. CONCLUSION

Gabriel Urbain Faure is one of the most well-known composers of French romantic *melodies*, which have been performed throughout generations. Being described as a prominent French art song, *Après un Reve* Op.7 No.1 composed by Faure is one of the most known and favorite melodies of his, transposed and arranged for many instruments. In this piece, one can easily detect chromatic shifts, harmonic changes, and sudden modulations, as well as a romantic text matching the musical elements of the *melodie*. This paper has pointed out the tonality, harmonic structure and musical/poetical unity of *Après un Reve*, telling the listener about a beautiful and fascinating dream and its afterward. The story begins with a beautiful depiction of a celestial atmosphere with the beloved shining in it. However, the awakening from the dream

brings an end to this mysterious night, to which the singer begs to return. All these movements in the poem are supported by very well-suited musical elements, ensuring that the listeners of the classical music will fully enjoy it.

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