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1 Introduction

This theatrical life repels me as much as it bewitches me.
(Debussy to Durand, 25 October 1903, during rehearsals for a revival of *Pelléas et Mélisande*; DUR, p. 16)

During the third quarter of the nineteenth century there were no fewer than seventy-eight theatres of various types operating in Paris, nearly twice as many as in the previous two decades.[1] This corpus continued to expand and change its 'makeup' during the *fin-de-siècle* years when Debussy's career began; a career which, if not dominated by the actual production of music for the theatre, was certainly preoccupied with the artistic and commercial possibilities of this stimulating genre.

The complex causes of this state of affairs form the *raison d'être* of this book as much as does a discussion of the nature and importance of the few theatre scores Debussy managed to complete. Both beginning and finishing a work were the source of much agonising on Debussy's part; 'it is not without a certain amount of terror that I see the moment approaching when I shall positively have to write something', he admitted to Gabriele d'Annunzio in January 1911 (ANN, pp. 63-4); and sixteen years earlier he had confessed to Pierre Louÿs that the prospect of finishing *Pelléas* was 'like the death of a loved one' (LOU, p. 42). He was often filled with trepidation about his music's eventual fate at the hands of the various talents who would turn his dream into reality with varying degrees of success; the traumatic dress-rehearsal of *Pelléas* on 28 April 1902 left a scar that never properly healed. Perhaps all this is best placed in perspective by comparing the rarity of the occasions when Debussy spoke happily of the impression made by one of his dramatic compositions with the frequency of his acidulous criticisms of singers in revivals of *Pelléas*, or of the state of French opera in general.

But whatever the depth of his love–hate relationship with the theatre, Debussy, as Arnold Whittall rightly says, 'at his best, was always a dramatic composer' (p. 271). To put his dramatic music in any sort of perspective,

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though, it is first necessary to look briefly at some aspects of French culture in the nineteenth century to see how their various developments relate to Debussy.

* * *

The manifesto, high-water-mark and death-knell of the Romantic movement can appropriately all be found in the theatre works of Victor Hugo. Although Debussy marginally preferred his plays to those of Alexandre Dumas *père*, he wisely never struggled to set Hugo's ill-suited verse to music as Fauré did at the outset of his career. Hugo was as prolific a writer for the theatre as Debussy was unproductive: some might say because Debussy put quality before quantity, although the truth is that there is inferior Debussy just as there is inferior Hugo. There is simply less of it, since Debussy never subjected himself to Hugo's regular creative schedules.

Hugo's Romantic manifesto can be found in the preface to *Cromwell* (1827); its plea for the 'liberty of art against the despotism of systems, codes and rules' finds direct echoes in Debussy telling Ernest Guiraud around 1890 that 'There is no theory . . . Pleasure is the law.' (LO, 1, p. 207) Hugo's views on the drama being a true representation of life are paralleled by Debussy's characters in *Pelléas et Mélisande* who 'try to sing like real people' (LCr, p. 62), and his views on beauty in art and critical objectivity would probably have found some favour with Debussy's *alter ego*, Monsieur Croche. René Peter tells us (PET, p. 131) that Debussy was not 'Romantic' in the sense of being extrovert and given to effusive speech, but he nonetheless found much of his inspiration in Nature as the Romantics did, and was a man of extreme sensitivity inclined to introspective melancholy and neurasthenia: Hamlet, a key figure for the Romantic movement, was a character with whom he often identified.

This is not to say that the Classical virtues of reason, clarity and good taste were not central to the aesthetic of 'Claude de France', as d'Annunzio christened Debussy, and in later life especially he saw himself as part of the French tradition, even to the extent of a little wartime chauvinism. To my mind the Classical and Romantic elements in Debussy's artistic makeup have almost as much bearing on his art as the Symbolist or Impressionist movements with which he is more readily associated. By his own admission he was, in the orchestral *Images*, 'attempting something different – in a sense *realities* . . . what idiots call "impressionism", a term which is as misused as it can possibly be' (DUR, p. 58). And the Symbolist case, that Debussy evoked rather than depicted, has I feel been overstressed, though there can be no doubt that he derived more inspiration from this literary movement than from anything connected with Impressionism.

To return to Victor Hugo: his enormous and unexpected success with *Hernani* in 1830 firmly established the Romantic movement through the

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theatre as a force to be reckoned with. And whilst René Peter considered 25 February 1830 to be as decisive a high-water-mark in dramatic history as the première of *Pelléas* in April 1902 (PET, p. 180), he elsewhere doubted (p. 131) whether Debussy would have been amongst those shouting for *Hernani* had he been alive at the time. In other words, Debussy was a far more retiring revolutionary than Berlioz, though both stormed the same artistic barricades of French operatic tradition and the pervasive academic influence of the Paris Conservatoire, whose coveted Prix de Rome ironically launched both their careers.

Debussy, René Peter tells us, respected the 'more elegant aspects' of Hugo's style, even if he found it rather showy and pompous overall. This would surely have been his opinion of Hugo's epic drama *Les burgraves*, whose failure in 1843 tolled the death-knell both of his theatrical career and of the Romantic movement as a whole. The latter was extinguished by the 1848 Revolution, actively supported by Baudelaire, and the political involvement of artists at this time can be seen both in the proclamation of the short-lived Second Republic that year by the poet Alphonse de Lamartine, and in the self-imposed exile of Hugo in the Channel Islands for the duration of the Second Empire (1852-70) after the *coup d'état* of the Prince-President Louis-Napoléon on 2 December 1851, whom Hugo had so vitriolically attacked in the national press. This political involvement by artists largely disappeared in the second half of the nineteenth century (and Debussy was typical of this trend), but the widening gap between the serious artist and the general public made life for the former increasingly difficult.

A particular thorn in the flesh, which affected Debussy with *Pelléas et Mélisande*, was official censorship of the press and theatre. An act of May 1819 prohibited the publication of books that constituted an 'outrage to public and religious morality', and under this both Flaubert and Baudelaire were brought ignominiously to trial in 1857, for *Madame Bovary* and *Les fleurs du mal* respectively. Debussy's future librettist, Catulle Mendès, was even sentenced to a month's imprisonment in July 1861 at the age of nineteen for publishing in his own *Revue fantaisiste* 'Le roman d'une nuit', a mildly bawdy verse narrative of a carnival night, which would have been better dismissed as an expression of youthful high spirits.

In the case of theatrical censorship, which had in the past plagued such classics as Molière's *Tartuffe* and Beaumarchais's *Le mariage de Figaro*, the dream of a socialist utopia in 1848 brought with it a temporary relaxation of official scrutiny. However, this new-found freedom was deemed unwise, and reactionaries such as Eugène Scribe, the veteran producer of opera librettos, whose 'well-made play' exerted a major influence in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, and the seasoned critic Jules Janin, actually wrote in favour of a return to the old censorship system, which was reinstated on 1 August 1850. One of the first to suffer was Alfred de Musset, whose play

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Le chandelier was enjoying a revival at the Théâtre Français. Less lyrical and original dramatists in the Scribe tradition, like Émile Augier, also suffered, as did the leading dramatist of the Second Empire, Alexandre Dumas *fils*. Indeed, his difficulties in getting *La dame aux camélias* (1852) past the censors have become almost legendary, and Verdi and Piave who converted the play into *La traviata* the following year were no strangers to censorship battles either.

One happy result of all this, however, was the stimulation of private theatrical performances, and a direct descendant of the tradition that prompted Dumas's *Le verrou* for Jules de Castellane in 1856 can be seen in the *fin-de-siècle* entertainments of Madeleine Lemaire and the Comtesse Greffulhe with music by Fauré and others, and in the 'aesthetic pantomime' *Le chevalier d'or*, which Debussy planned in 1897 with the wife of the artist Jean-Louis Forain.

The second half of the century saw a move in the theatre away from the grandiose passionate dramas of the Romantics towards more intimate and compact plays which attempted to assess the effects of passion on the individual or on a small group of characters. They often included praise of domestic virtues, attacks on materialism, or pleas for social reform. Again examples are plentiful in the works of Dumas *fils*: *La question d'argent* (1857), or the *pièce à thèse*, *Les idées de Mme Aubray* (1867). But the predilection of the cosmopolitan Second Empire was for the novels of Ernest Feydeau, whose son Georges's powers of comic observation Debussy admired (PET, p. 147, n. 1), and for the frothy, inconsequential and witty *opéras bouffes* of Offenbach, whom Debussy in 1916 considered 'amusing because of the way in which he played around with his text, the music remaining willingly in the background' (LCr, p. 262). Like Victor Hugo, Offenbach was a 'workoholic', who died 'with a tune on the tip of his pen' as he had predicted.

The novel, with some influence from Gustave Courbet, provided the main vehicle for the Realist movement which succeeded Romanticism, and the concern for absolute sincerity and meticulous social observation is everywhere apparent in the works of Flaubert, the brothers Goncourt, and Balzac. The self-educated Debussy had an insatiable literary appetite and had devoured 'almost all' of Balzac and Dickens before he met René Peter in the late 1880s. He considered the story *La grande bretèche* from Balzac's *La comédie humaine* as a possible opera in 1895, and the fact that his favourite Dickens novel was *Bleak House* (PET, p. 133) is surely not unconnected with its superficial similarity to the desolate Usher residence, whose spectacular demise formed the climax of the Poe opera which obsessed Debussy's later life.

But whilst the shrewd Offenbach's newly invented operettas invariably made a handsome profit, grand opera (which was dominated during the Second Empire by the spectacular historical collaborations of Scribe and Meyerbeer) did not. Despite the continued popularity of the Romantic, Hugoesque *Robert le diable* (1831), which received its 500th performance on 1 March 1867, the

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vast expenses involved in mounting such lavish productions meant that the Paris Opéra had had to be a state-subsidised institution since July 1854. Hardly renowned for cultivating new talent, it virtually turned its back on Berlioz, provided the scene for one of Wagner's greatest disasters (the première of *Tannhäuser* on 13 March 1861), and gave Verdi endless nightmares with *Les vêpres siciliennes* in 1854-5 and *Don Carlos* in 1867.

Charles Garnier's palatial new opera house, inaugurated on 5 January 1875, did nothing to alter the situation. Most important new works from 1870 onwards were staged at the more progressive Opéra-Comique, from the 'realistic' *Carmen* in 1875 to Charpentier's *Louise* and, of course, *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Clearly there was nothing comic about any of these, and the distinction between 'opéra' and 'opéra comique' had disappeared by the close of the nineteenth century when the latter abandoned its traditional spoken dialogue.

In the 1880s Wagner became a cult figure in Paris, passing from one extreme to the other in popularity. Only a faithful few like Judith Gautier, Mendès, Baudelaire and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam had defended Wagner in the 1860s, and the climate following France's ignominious defeat by Germany in 1870 was hardly conducive to the spread of his musical ideas. But in 1876 the Bayreuth 'pilgrimages' began, and after Wagner's death the hostility predictably abated and numbers began to grow, including not only musicians like Debussy (who went in 1888-9) but also writers and members of high society. Curiously, the influence of Wagner on the development of French music was not particularly significant or long-lasting. Not, that is, on the surface, but Robin Holloway has demonstrated in *Debussy and Wagner* (p. 21) how, whilst 'Debussy could never be called the musical heir of Wagner . . . he must be recognised to be, within the limits of a subtle and specialised relationship, the most profoundly Wagnerian of all composers.'

A development from the Realist movement in the novel and drama, known as 'Naturalism', flourished in France between about 1865 and 1895. Both Realism and Naturalism owed much to the determinist philosophy of Hippolyte Taine which stressed the interdependence of physical and psychological factors in the formation of character, and sought to apply investigative scientific principles to art. The leader of the Naturalist movement, Émile Zola, brought precise documentation and the scientific approach to the fore, as well as specialising in the lowest and most brutal aspects of human nature. In this, he was also carrying to a logical extreme the Romantic conception of Victor Hugo that to be seen in its true perspective beauty also needs the ugly and grotesque.

Naturalism spread to the theatre in the 1880s through dramatisations of Zola and the brothers Goncourt and through the Théâtre Libre of André Antoine, which flourished intermittently between 1887 and 1896. The loosely constructed lyrical comedies of Musset had begun to liberate French drama

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from its Classical and Romantic conventions during the Second Empire, but it took the combined efforts of Zola, Henry Becque and the Théâtre Libre before the break with the Scribe tradition of solid construction was finally accepted by French critics. Debussy waged a similar war against rigid scholastic forms in music and must surely have been aware of the theatrical parallel.

As Samuel Waxman says (p. 64), Antoine 'stumbled into the creation of a theatre that was to revolutionise the dramatic art of France'. This came about through the recalcitrant attitudes of the organisers of the Cercle Gaulois in Montmartre, an amateur theatrical group with which Antoine (a self-educated clerk with the Paris gas company and an ex-member of the claque at the Comédie-Française) became involved in 1886. In his efforts to turn the group from their customary sentimental repertory, Antoine began to seek new works from young playwrights and by January 1887 had assembled four one-act plays, including a dramatisation of the Zola story *Jacques Damour* by Léon Hennique which had earlier been rejected by the Théâtre de l'Odéon. When the Cercle Gaulois refused Antoine permission to use both its name and its resources, he was forced to form his own company, raise money to pay for rehearsals, and find it somewhere to perform. After much procrastination, M. Krauss, the owner of the theatre where the Cercle Gaulois usually performed, allowed Antoine to rent it for one performance only at a cost of 100 francs. The name Théâtre Libre came from a suggestion by Arthur Byl, one of Antoine's less talented playwrights. Only the Zola adaptation was a success on the much publicised first night on 30 March 1887, and as a result was then requested by Paul Porel for the Odéon! As was often to be the case, Antoine made a financial loss though his acting was singled out for special praise.

Many of the Théâtre Libre's plays were of little more significance than the epithet 'slice of life' suggests, but it championed during its short career such authors as Becque, Porto-Riche, Ibsen and Strindberg. The height of its artistic success came in the 1892-3 season, contemporary with Lugné-Poë's first performance of *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Maeterlinck, however, was a dramatist whose plays Antoine never produced. The première of Ibsen's *Ghosts* had been given in 1890, and in May of that year, despite a deficit of 12,000 francs, Antoine produced a 200-page brochure setting out his vision of a new theatre. In his ideal dream everyone could see the stage rather than each other, and his theatre was designed in the modern funnel shape rather than the old circular model of Parisian theatres like the Comédie-Française. He appealed for a small, permanent and balanced repertory company in place of the 'star' system; for naturalness of delivery; for stage settings in conformity with contemporary life; and for an end to the exaggerated gestures of Romantic drama. Smaller, more significant and natural movements were to be encouraged; complex scenery was to be dispensed with; much more use was to be made of stage lighting; and the plays offered to subscribers were to be changed fortnightly regardless of their success or failure (though Antoine naturally was to choose, cast and direct them).

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In putting many of these theories into practice, Antoine laid the foundations of the modern theatre. But his ideas were by no means all new; Zola himself had spoken out against wings, backdrops, artificial acting and lavish costumes. Similarly, Becque, whilst antipathetic to Zola's theories and scientific approach, nonetheless produced in 1882 a series of guide-lines for municipal officials, which read rather like a blueprint for Antoine's Théâtre Libre, though each play was to run for three weeks and the number of stage settings was to be reduced to four: a temple, a forest, a street and a drawing-room!

However, the Théâtre Libre was always a fighting theatre rather than a commercial enterprise and it began to founder seriously in 1894. In fact Antoine and his company found themselves stranded bankrupt in Rome that October on one of their 'money-making' tours. The theatre, now under the directorship of Paul Larochelle, was wound down during 1895-6 and in May 1896 Antoine was appointed co-director of the Odéon, though he quickly resigned due to disagreements with his fellow director, Paul Ginisty, who also effectively put paid to Debussy's incidental music for *Le pèlerin d'amour* in 1903 (see Chapter 12).

At the beginning of October 1897 Antoine renamed the Théâtre Menus-Plaisirs in the boulevard de Strasbourg the 'Théâtre Antoine'. In his souvenirs (1928) he vividly describes the ups and downs of his new venture, which lasted till May 1906 when he was appointed sole director of the Odéon. The climax of the Théâtre Antoine's achievements came in the 1904-5 season with his production of *King Lear*, planned initially with incidental music by Debussy. Somewhat to Antoine's surprise, *Lear* was a tremendous box-office success, though receipts were as usual absorbed by the production costs. When Antoine left for the Odéon he was replaced at the boulevard de Strasbourg site by the actor–producer Firmin Gémier, who in 1917 planned to produce *As you like it* in Toulet's translation, also with incidental music by Debussy. But the true successor to the small experimental theatres Libre and Antoine was the Vieux-Colombier, founded by Jacques Copeau, which flourished between 1913 and 1940.

The other principal artistic movement at the end of the last century, and one with which Debussy was more directly involved, was Symbolism, which began as early as the mid-1870s with Mallarmé's *L'après-midi d'un faune* and Verlaine's *Romances sans paroles* and gradually grew in influence through the 1880s in its reaction against theme, technique, and the 'exteriorisation' of the Parnassian poets such as Théophile Gautier and Leconte de Lisle. Baudelaire was an important precursor of the new movement, which soon allied itself with the prevailing Wagnerian cult. As F.W.J. Hemmings says (p. 225), 'it was above all Wagner's suggestive manipulation of mythology and allegory that appealed to the symbolist generation' who strove to transfer the properties and power of music to poetry. The publication of Maeterlinck's *Serres chaudes* in 1889 proved an important event in the acceptance of Symbolism as something more than an esoteric and vague phenomenon, and by the time of

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Rimbaud's death in 1891 it had established itself as the foremost modern poetic movement.

In this year Symbolism was also transferred to the stage, through the efforts of the teenage manager of the Théâtre d'Art, Paul Fort. As Maeterlinck said about this time, 'the theatre is dying in the hands of the "vaudevillistes". It is the most backward of all the arts and the hour has come for its regeneration.' (Desonay, p. 81) To some extent the Théâtre d'Art was founded in direct opposition to Antoine's Théâtre Libre (which was then rehearsing Ibsen's *The wild duck*), but its first night fell far short of success. Fort's production of Pierre Quillard's poetic drama *La fille aux mains coupées* seems to have introduced the 'Symbolist' technique of a cast declaiming the text in slow, monotonous voices behind a muslin curtain, which subsequently plagued so many of Maeterlinck's plays. What followed was intended as a parody, but the banal naturalistic melodrama of a poor mother driven to prostitution to feed her starving children was one 'slice of life' which went down like the proverbial lattice-work canoe and acutely embarrassed Zola and Mallarmé who were in the audience.

A benefit performance for Verlaine and Gauguin at the Théâtre d'Art on 21 May 1891, however, proved more significant; not only was it the occasion of the première of Maeterlinck's *L'intruse*, but included in the company was a young actor who had initially trained with Antoine in 1888-90 and who soon became the foremost name in the Symbolist theatre, Aurélien Lugné-Poë. After a production of Maeterlinck's *Les aveugles* on 7 December 1891, the Théâtre d'Art closed. As Hemmings says (p. 239), 'Fort had given proof of enthusiasm and ingenuity but lacked experience and authority.' His experiments in Symbolist drama were carried through by Lugné-Poë, first with the Cercle des Escholiers and then with the company he founded in association with Fort, the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre. Here, between 1893 and 1929, Lugné-Poë proved himself even more of a champion of the young, the foreign and the unknown than Antoine, producing plays by Wilde, Péladan, Bjørnson, Jarry,[2] Claudel, Strindberg, and especially Ibsen whom he was really responsible for popularising in France. But the two works that contributed most significantly to the founding of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre were both associated with Debussy: Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's *Axël* and Maeterlinck's *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

It was for a projected performance of *Axël* that Fort first invited Lugné-Poë to the Théâtre d'Art in early June 1891, where he was to play Commander Kaspar d'Auërsperg and assist with the *mise-en-scène*. But due to the eternal 'cash-flow problem', *Axël* (to be given in the 1890 edition by Mallarmé and Joris-Karl Huysmans) was postponed till September and finally abandoned after a legal battle with Rodolphe Darzens, the attorney of the heirs of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam who opposed the production. Nonetheless, Fort was still enthusiastic about *Axël* and, with financial backing from Mme Tola Dorian,[3]

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planned to reopen his Théâtre d'Art with it in 1893. *L'écho de Paris* of 21 January announced that the first performance would be at the end of February and the new premises, at 25 rue Turgot, soon became a Saturday meeting-place for poets like Charles Morice (later to collaborate with Debussy on *Crimen amoris*) and Camille Mauclair.

But as *Axël* went into rehearsal, some of the many current theatrical journals began to publish hostile accounts. Even Henri de Régnier, a staunch supporter of the play and its author, wrote in *Entretiens politiques et littéraires* on 10 February 1893 that 'to perform *Axël* seems to me rather like making sport with it. For does not this drama go beyond the bounds of the theatre as we know it?', and he suggested that the Théâtre d'Art abandon 'such an enterprise of untimely rashness'. As a result *L'écho de Paris* announced on 27 February that *Axël* would be replaced by the latest play of Maeterlinck, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and the première was set for 10 March.[4] Tola Dorian claimed in *Mercure de France* that the substitution was her decision and was due to staging difficulties with *Axël*, but the idea of presenting *Pelléas et Mélisande* almost certainly came from Lugné-Poë, who finally directed it. For some reason, which remains unknown, the Théâtre d'Art never reopened its doors to the public.

Maeterlinck seems to have been suspicious of Paul Fort's plans for *Pelléas*; like Debussy he loathed rehearsals and was sceptical about any performance of his plays in the early days. But having worked with Lugné-Poë in *L'intruse* and *Les aveugles* he knew he had found an actor–director whom he could trust: whilst he never gave advice on staging or technical matters, he was extremely concerned about casting and costumes. Lugné-Poë also received much support from Camille Mauclair, a close friend of the author, who managed to extricate director and play from the Théâtre d'Art, and who also presented *Pelléas* to the public through an article (signed by Octave Mirbeau) in *L'écho de Paris* on 9 May 1893.

To find a venue for *Pelléas* Lugné-Poë first tried the Théâtre Montparnasse. Then, ironically, he approached the eventual producer of Debussy's opera, Albert Carré (then director of the Théâtre Vaudeville) who turned the play down! Finally, he managed to rent the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens for a single afternoon on 17 May, and although the performance was not a great success, it proved extremely stimulating and influential for its distinguished audience.

The subscribers to the production present included Henri de Régnier, Tristan Bernard, Léon Blum, Robert de Rothschild, Jacques-Émile Blanche, Mallarmé, Whistler, the Comtesse Greffulhe and Claude Debussy, who apparently wrote to Lugné-Poë that 'he did not know the play or its author' and that 'the possibility of a musical composition had been suggested to him by [Camille] Mauclair' (Lugné-Poë, p. 229). In this connection it is interesting to consider that Maeterlinck told Jules Huret in an interview in *Le figaro* on the

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day of the première of *Pelléas* that 'a theatre piece should be above all a poem', and that amongst the reviews was one by Henry Céard (*L'événement*, 19 May 1893) which claimed prophetically that *Pelléas* 'resembles a fine opera scenario, but one that still awaits music; literary music and the instrumentation of words sought by the author not having the power to satisfy completely the listener's aspirations'. Otherwise the reviews were divided, as they were for Debussy's opera in 1902. Henri de Régnier (*L'art moderne*, 21 May) praised the scenery and Lugné-Poë's acting, whereas Alfred Vallette (*Mercure de France*, July 1893) thought that there were too many gestures. Others protested about the deliberate obscurity and over-frequent scene changes (eighteen in all), generally agreeing that Maeterlinck was better read than performed.

No one seemed to notice the setting of Mélisande's song in the third act (scene 2) by Gabriel Fabre. Quite rightly so, for his setting,[5] dated March 1893 in the vocal score, is repetitive and undistinguished. As Ex. 1 shows, Fabre curiously set 'Les trois soeurs aveugles', as published in the revised sixth edition (1898) onwards, and not 'Mes longs cheveux', found only in the original 1892 editions and in Debussy's score. This suggests that it was the impending stage performance that caused Maeterlinck to substitute the one for the other early in 1893, perhaps because Mélisande had already sung two lines from 'Mes longs cheveux' in Act 3 scene 1 ('Saint-Daniel et Saint-Michel/ Saint-Michel et Saint-Raphaël'). But as Debussy had already decided to cut this scene when he came to set Act 3 in 1894, the repetition was of no consequence to him and he retained Maeterlinck's original song in his opera. Fabre's three-bar phrasing in 'Les trois soeurs aveugles', which seems promisingly flexible at the outset (Ex. 1), unhappily persists unchanged until the rather murky coda (Ex. 2, bars 7-10). The material of Ex. 1 is varied only at intermediate cadences and at the end when earlier faint hints of modality are replaced with cloying sevenths (Ex. 2, bars 2-4). The awkwardness of Fabre's setting is best seen in his transition to F major (Ex. 1, bars 4-6), and in his prosody (Ex. 1, bar 10; Ex. 2, bar 4) which suggests that Maeterlinck's poem was forced to fit a preconceived melodic scheme of no great distinction. There was nothing here to influence Debussy or even give him cause for comment.

We know that Debussy owned a vellum-bound copy of the first edition of *Pelléas* because it survives in the collection of Mme Gaston de Tinan. Further evidence that he set directly from this edition is provided by its almost complete identity with the text of the opera and by Debussy's frequent reference to 'Pélléas' with the extra acute accent, which appears in the first edition only. The later, 1898, printing contains many textual emendations not found in the opera, chiefly concerning repeated words like 'oui' and 'non'. These may seem insignificant to us, but they were of primary importance to Maeterlinck in his creation of the symbolic dream-world of Allemonde. It is thus possible, de-

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