

Incidental music to Maeterlinck's "Pelleas et Melisande" by Gabriel Faure and Jean Sibelius: A Comparative Analysis from a Conductor's Perspective.

By

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ABSTRACT

This study examines some of the historical and theoretical parallels that exist between Gabriel Fauré's and Jean Sibelius's settings of Maeterlinck's *Pelleas et Melisande*. This includes a discussion of possible influences that the poet may have had on the composers and an analysis of the music. It will also discuss the source of each composer's basic harmonic vocabulary and how this relates to the stylistic developments of the time.

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Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine some of the historical and theoretical parallels that exist between Gabriel Fauré's and Jean Sibelius's settings of Maeterlinck's *Pelleas et Melisande*. This includes a discussion of possible influences that the poet may have had on the composers and an analysis of the music. It will also discuss the source of each composer's basic harmonic vocabulary and how this relates to the stylistic developments of the time.

This study is divided into four sections. The first is devoted to a synopsis of *Pelleas et Melisande*, as well as a discussion of the symbolist movement in the nineteenth century and Maeterlinck's influences. The second will examine the historical context of the work through an analysis of the artistic currents of the late nineteenth century. This paper will briefly touch on the musical mentors, influences, and early musical training of both composers, as well as their relationships to symbolism. Finally, the greater part of the discussion will focus on the theoretical aspects of the incidental music for *Pelleas et Melisande* by Fauré and Sibelius.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

The Characters: Arkel, King of Allemonde
Genevieve, his daughter
Golaud and Pelleas, Genevieve's sons by different marriages.
Yniold, Golaud's son by his first wife
Melisande

The plot begins to unfold in the second scene, as Golaud, a middle-aged prince, finds Melisande, a frightened, lost young girl leaning over a pool in the forest. In the following scene Golaud's family learns of his secret marriage to Melisande six months earlier. Golaud now wishes to bring her to his home. During this scene we also learn that Golaud's brother Pelleas would like to go to his best friend's deathbed but must remain with his sick father. When Melisande arrives, she is overawed by the dense forest surrounding the chateau. Her first meeting with Pelleas appears quite inauspicious.

When the second act begins, Pelleas is showing Melisande the coolest part of the gardens, near the "Blind Men's well." Playing with her wedding ring, Melisande lets it slip into the water, where it sinks out of reach. At the same moment, in the forest, Golaud's horse bolts and he is thrown against a tree. As Melisande nurses his injuries, Golaud notices that her ring is missing and questions her. Instead of telling the truth, she says that she lost it gathering shells in a cavern by the sea. Despite her protests, Golaud sends her off to fetch it, accompanied by Pelleas, assuring her that his brother is not as gruff as he appears. Pelleas and Melisande descend to the cave but do not enter because they see three beggars sleeping just inside its mouth.

Pelleas again requests permission to leave but his grandfather, King Arkel, forbids it, explaining that his father is very near death.

In the third act, the emotional bond between Pelleas and Melisande becomes stronger even though they do not speak of their feelings for each other. They are interrupted by Melisande's stepson, Yniold, whose words unwittingly evoke a sorrowful future. In the first scene, the ecstatic Pelleas expresses his love in words for the first time. Melisande is anxious lest Golaud should see them, which he does, and although he treats them as children playing games, his words lack conviction. Later, in the second scene, Golaud takes Pelleas into the castle's subterranean vaults to show him its precarious foundations. He almost pushes his young brother into an abyss. Instead, Golaud warns him to avoid Melisande as much as possible without seeming impolite. In the third scene, Golaud's growing jealousy prompts him to ask little Yniold about Pelleas and Melisande's behavior, but he receives inconclusive answers. Hoisting the boy onto his shoulders to look in Melisande's window, Golaud asks what they are doing. Yniold's answers are unsatisfactory, since Pelleas and Melisande are doing nothing but simply standing, staring at the lamp.

In the fourth act, his father's recovery at last frees Pelleas, and he determines to leave the castle as soon as possible. Before departing he arranges one last rendezvous with Melisande. We then see Melisande listening to Arkel, who is predicting happier times to come now that the pall of illness has been removed. Golaud's arrival interrupts him, and his growing jealousy belies Arkel's words as he derides Melisande's apparent innocence. In the following scene Yniold is at play, creating a sharp contrast with Golaud's brutal behavior towards Melisande.

However, there is a sense of futility and approaching doom as he tries to recover his golden ball and as he sees a flock of sheep being driven unwillingly. When night has fallen, Pelleas goes to the garden, where he keeps convincing himself that he must leave. When Melisande arrives, he finds himself more in love than ever and the pair is caught up in their mutual delight. Even at that moment, there is still a shadow separating their souls, and complete, perfect communication is impossible. Startled by the sound of the castle gates closing, they look around and see a figure watching from the shadows. Knowing that it must be Golaud and that all is lost, they kiss one last time. Golaud comes forward, strikes down Pelleas, and then pursues his frightened wife.

In the act 5, we see the servants gossiping and learn that both Golaud and Melisande were found wounded at the gate in the morning. Golaud is recovering well from his attempted suicide, but Melisande, though scarcely wounded, lingers near death, her strength further drained by the fact that she has given birth to a little girl. As stillness descends upon the castle, the servants rise to go to the deathbed. When Melisande awakens, Golaud speaks with her alone, asking if she was guilty of anything with Pelleas. He is unable to accept her denial but her mind is already drifting away from him. With a gesture towards her baby, she dies as the servants who have filed into the room drop to their knees.

The Symbolist Movement

By definition, symbolism was a literary movement that opposed “the purveying of information, against declamation, against false sensibility and against

objective description. Instead, its aim [was] the attempt to give outward form to ideas.”¹ Eija Kurki states, “dream-plays and dramas dealing with death and mortality were typical of the symbolist school.”²

The leading figures of the symbolist movement were Charles Baudelaire, Paul Verlaine, and Stephane Mallarme. Baudelaire was the first to exalt the value of symbols; Verlaine used them instinctively, while Mallarme provided their explanation and justification.³ Despite their differences, these poets were separated from their predecessors by a shared view of the sentimental excesses of romanticism and the scientific rigidity of realism. They believed they should, in their poetry, create an intensity that relied on a world beyond the senses⁴ and avoided the political themes which were central to the Romantics. To this new generation of poets, who were absorbed in beauty as an ideal, the clamor of politics seemed alien and hostile.⁵

An important tenet of symbolism was the equation of poetry and music.⁶ “Music possesses just that quality of suggestiveness that the Symbolists were looking for, and lacks just that element of precision which words necessarily possess and which the Symbolists wished to suppress.”⁷

¹ Charles Chadwick, *Symbolism, The Critical Idiom*, 16 (London,: Methuen, 1971), 6.

² Eija Kurki, "Sibelius and the Theatre at the Turn of the Century," *Finnish music quarterly*, no. 4 (1995): 11.

³ C. M. Bowra, *The Heritage of Symbolism* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1943), 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁶ Chadwick, *Symbolism*, 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

By refusing to conform to the rigid conventions of versification that still dominated French poetry and by placing great emphasis on the musical quality of prose, the symbolists created a new verse language utilizing the musical sonorities of the French language and its tractable rhythms.⁸ In their attempt to achieve greater flexibility these poets discarded the restrictive patterns of rhythm, meter, fixed line, and conventional rhyme schemes.⁹

Maeterlinck and Pelleas

Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949) wrote the play *Pelleas et Melisande* in 1892, which premiered at the Theatre des Bouffes-Parisiens on May 17, 1893, in an experimental production by Aurelien Francois-Marie Lugne-Poe (1869-1940). Debussy and Mallarme, who attended this performance, were absolutely delighted by the drama. This was not, however, the general consensus of the audience and critics.

Maeterlinck was one of the most important dramatists of the late nineteenth century. Born in Gand, Belgium to a wealthy middle-class family, he studied law, which he practiced for a brief period before concentrating on writing. His early literary attempts were in poetry (*Serres chaudes*, 1889), but Maeterlinck turned his interests to drama. His first play was entitled *La princesse maleine* (1890). In 1885, Maeterlinck translated into French the works of the medieval Flemish mystic Jean de Ruysbroeck (1294-1381), who wrote of God's love for the individual in a

⁸ Kenneth D. Pennington, "Gabriel Urbain Faure (1845-1924)," *NATS Bulletin* 31, no. 3 (1975): 36.

⁹ Chadwick, *Symbolism*, 5-6.

language filled with vivid symbols and metaphors. After translating several sections of Ruysbroeck's works, Maeterlinck became a modern mystic, adopting a style similar to Ruysbroeck's in its simplicity and symbolism. Ruysbroeck and other medieval mystics, according to Maeterlinck, loved God without mediation, while modern man's love had become "diseased" and "symbolic." Maeterlinck's *La Princesse Maleine* and *Pelleas et Melisande*, although set in the Middle Ages, exude an atmosphere of sickness and morbidity. They are replete with medieval themes, circumstances, and symbols, but they represent a hybrid combination of medieval aspects and modern disillusionment.¹⁰ For a lover of medieval mysticism like Maeterlinck, symbolism countenanced the hidden force behind physical objects and, along with Villiers's focus on mystery, helped to convert the "bon Flamand (Good Flemish)" away from realism.

This fashioned his style of playwriting and his aesthetic theories about the theater. Since the age of clarity had passed, the artist must use symbols that evoke, in the reader's or spectator's imagination, pictures of that era. Poe, Baudelaire, and Villiers elucidated the mysticism that fascinated Maeterlinck, and it was always connected to death.

If Maeterlinck's eclectic medievalism and non-discursive language evoked "the favorable distance of a dream," his strange morbidity turned the dreamlike

¹⁰ Carole Jane Lambert, "Anti-Rationalism in Symbolist Drama: Medieval Themes, Circumstances, and Symbols in the Plays of Maurice Maeterlinck, Paul Claudel, August Strindberg, and Georg Kaiser (1880-1920, France, Belgium, Germany, Sweden)" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1986), 26.

atmosphere into nightmares. He was personally haunted by the subject of death, and this characterizes his art.

Richard Wagner, who felt that drama should ideally synthesize all of the other arts, also influenced Maeterlinck's writing. In practice, these theories proved difficult to apply and very little symbolist drama has survived. One of the greatest problems was finding intrinsic symbols, which suggested a deeper meaning, and all too often their works proceeded from the symbol's meaning, becoming sterile allegories.

Maeterlinck's *Pelleas et Melisande* captured the imagination of a whole generation of composers, who were no doubt inspired by his unique literary style, which exhibits a rich vocabulary of symbolism and vague use of language. *Pelleas et Melisande* prompted certain composers to achieve in music that which Maeterlinck had expressed with words, thus motivating them to reinvent harmonic language, form, and orchestral texture. Paul Dukas described the artistic culture of this time:

Impressionism, symbolism, and poetic realism merged together in an atmosphere in which enthusiasm, curiosity, and intellectual passion competed. Painters, poets, and sculptors all took their material to pieces, as it were, examined it, questioned it, changed and remade it according to their own will. Words, sounds, colors, and lines must all express new shades of meaning, new feelings.¹¹

Contemporary development in the arts

¹¹ Martin Cooper, *French Music, from the Death of Berlioz to the Death of Fauré* (New York,: Oxford University Press, 1951), 8.

In the later nineteenth century, after the modernist revolution began in 1871, artists started to give up realism and made abstraction their ideal.¹² The term impressionism came from the hostile review by Louis Leroy of an exhibition that included Claude Monet's *Impression, Sunrise*. This painting and its title became the target of all the resentment that Leroy felt toward the exhibition. His nickname, "impressionist," was meant to mock the artists, whose work, he felt, was "an attack on proper artistic custom, on the cult of form, and the respect for the masters."¹³ The group of artists included Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Alfred Sisley, and Edgar Degas. In impressionism the scene and subject matter lost their importance, and painters showed less interest in detailed description than in the way an object appears.¹⁴ Realists, impressionists and post-impressionists like Paul Cezanne, Georges Seurat, Paul Gauguin, Vincent van Gogh, and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec continued to create innovative and significant works until the late nineteenth century.¹⁵ Each of the artists went through an impressionistic phase, but soon became dissatisfied with bright, impressionist palettes. Post-impressionism encompassed a wide range of styles, from the severely analytical to the highly expressive.¹⁶ Symbolism in art was at first an outgrowth of the literary movement

¹² Roy T. Matthews and F. DeWitt Platt, *Readings in the Western Humanities*, 6th ed., 2 vols. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2007), 596.

¹³ Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Nineteenth-Century European Art, 19th Century European Art* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2006), 389.

¹⁴ Jürgen Schultze, *Art of Nineteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Abrams, 1970), 136.

¹⁵ Marilyn Stokstad and Michael Watt Cothren, *Art : A Brief History*, 5th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2012), 500.

¹⁶ H. W. Janson and Anthony F. Janson, *History of Art : The Western Tradition*, Rev. 6th ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson/Prentice-Hall, 2004), 768.

that arose in 1885-86. Unlike post-impressionism, symbolism was a general outlook, one that allowed for a wide variety of styles.

Whether painters or writers, symbolists disdained realism as trivial. The take of symbolist artists, both visual and verbal, was not to see things but to see through them to a significance and reality far deeper than what superficial appearance revealed.¹⁷

The artists were Gustave Moreau, Odilon Redon, James Ensor, Edvard Munch, Gustav Klimt, Pablo Picasso, and Henri Rousseau.

Modernist pioneers resisted established norms; processed ideas of their contemporary's figures began as Symbolists. Vasily Kandinsky, Fantisek Kupka, Piet Mondrian, Constantin Brancusi, Kazimir Malevich, Paul Klee, and Pablo Picasso all grew up and began their art studies in the nineteenth century. They were all familiar with Impressionism, Neo-impressionism, but it was symbolism that struck a responsive conflict of the time in which they lived combined to make symbolism the natural choice for probing existential questions...¹⁸

All of these artistic trends were reflected in music. The main musical trends were impressionism, nationalism and expressionism. Associated composers were Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, Jean Sibelius and Arnold Schoenberg.

Fauré and Sibelius

Fauré

Fauré was admitted to the Niedermeyer School in 1854 at the age of nine.¹⁹

The Niedermeyer School is notable for the attention that it gave to choral singing.

¹⁷ Helen Gardner, Fred S. Kleiner, and Christin J. Mamiya, *Gardner's Art through the Ages*, 12th ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2005), 819.

¹⁸ Michelle Facos, *An Introduction to Nineteenth Century Art* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 403.

¹⁹ Jean-Michel Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré : A Musical Life* (Cambridge England

Jean-Michel Nectoux explains that the students participated in some form of choral activity at least three times a week. Louis Dietsch taught the music of Josquin, Palestrina, Bach, and Victoria. Everything was usually sung a capella.²⁰ Another interesting feature of the Niedermeyer School was that students taught each other, the older students helping out with solfege and piano courses.²¹ The school was reasonably new at that time, but the Niedermeyer School offered a thorough academic curriculum in addition to music.

Fauré studied harmony, counterpoint, solfege and instrumental performance on organ and piano.²² His training was also devoted to choral singing, and he learned a vast amount of early music, from the Renaissance up to the Baroque era and he learned plainsong and the modes.²³ Duchen mentions that this early modal influence became increasingly evident as Fauré's compositional career progressed, contributing much to his individual harmonic language.²⁴ Fauré remained at the school for eleven years and made lasting friends with a number of his schoolmates. He was a pleasant, outgoing boy and was generally popular.²⁵ Most of all, Fauré found staunch allies in two of his most important teachers: Louis Niedermeyer and Camille Saint-Saens.²⁶

Niedermeyer was for Fauré both a teacher and a father figure.

New York : Cambridge University Press, 1991), 6.

²⁰ Ibid., 7.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Jessica Duchen, *Gabriel Fauré* (London: London : Phaidon, 2000), 16.

²³ Ibid., 17

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré : A Musical Life*, 8.

²⁶ Duchen, *Gabriel Fauré*, 18.

But Niedermeyer understood the boy's character – his wit, his warmth of heart, his dreaminess, his budding originality and his taste for literature, marked by two prizes in 1858 and 1862. Fauré was always to remember with gratitude the lessons he had from his first teacher. Niedermeyer's sudden death on 14 March 1861 distressed him greatly and all the more so because Louis Dietsch took his place, the most despised of all the teachers, who took over as Director until... 1865.²⁷

Additionally,

The Director would ask the boy to his parties where he met the most elevated members of the aristocracy and the official world. Gabriel used to sing them songs from his own area of France, and these dilettanti would find his mid-southern accent and his innate musicianship quite charming and delightful. That was Fauré's debut in the polite society, which he was never to abandon.²⁸

After Niedermeyer's passing, it was Saint-Saens who became Fauré's most important teacher and who then helped him to progress in his career throughout his life.²⁹

Sibelius

Jean Sibelius showed musical predilection from an early age. He was not a prodigy in the accepted sense of the term, and he was not a particularly fast developer, but he had unmistakable musical talent.³⁰ The Sibelius children grew up in a musical family. At the age of nine he began regular piano lessons, but he was more devoted to the violin.³¹ At the age of fifteen, Sibelius started to take the violin seriously. He took lessons with the best musician in his native town, Gustaf Levander, the

²⁷ Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré : A Musical Life*.

²⁸ Ibid. 8-9

²⁹ Duchon, *Gabriel Fauré*. 20

³⁰ Burnett James, *The Music of Jean Sibelius* (Rutherford, [N.J.]: Rutherford, N.J. : Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983), 23.

³¹ Karl Ekman, *Jean Sibelius, His Life and Personality* (New York,: A. A. Knopf, 1938), 15.

conductor of the military band.³² When Sibelius entered the music academy, Martin Wegelius was the primary influence on Sibelius's development. He recognized the young man's talent, and apart from giving him the requisite grounding in harmony, counterpoint and fugue, took a personal interest in his creative development.³³ During his student years, Sibelius studied abroad in Berlin and Vienna; Sibelius's real musical education was the concert life of Berlin. He heard Hans von Bulow conduct the complete Beethoven quartets arranged for string orchestra; he also heard Strauss's *Don Juan*, and was influenced by the sheer orchestral virtuosity of this master.³⁴ The most important event during his year in Berlin was meeting his fellow countryman, Robert Kajanus, who came to Berlin to conduct the first performance of his symphonic poem *Aino*. This opened Sibelius's eyes to the potential of Finnish mythology and was an immediate source of inspiration for *Kullervo*, which he completed two years later.³⁵ Sibelius wanted to study with Brahms in Vienna, but at that stage in his life Brahms was not much interested in teaching. Instead, Sibelius was fortunate enough to be accepted by Karl Goldmark. Goldmark's teaching, however, was confined to some consultations; he subjected Sibelius's first orchestral essay, an overture, to thorough scrutiny.

The Relationship of Fauré and Sibelius to the Symbolists

Fauré

³² Ibid., 27.

³³ Robert Layton, *Sibelius and His World* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1970), 15.

³⁴ Ibid., 17.

³⁵ Ibid., 20.

As Fauré was devoting his energies to expanding nineteenth-century French music beyond tonal and formal traditions that he felt to be restrictive, there was a coincidental movement in France by the symbolist poets, who were attempting to break with the classical restrictions of form and meter, and thus to release poetry from the stylized patterns of the nineteenth century. Rejecting the exact lexical meanings of words, they derived pleasure from the sound or music of the words, independent of their meaning,³⁶ choosing to express ideas and emotions “not by describing them directly, nor by defining them through overt comparisons with concrete images, but by suggesting what these ideas and emotions are, by re-creating them in the mind of the reader through the use of unexplained symbols.”³⁷

Sibelius

Rudolf Karl Alexander Schineider associates some of Sibelius’s works with Symbolism, and makes a connection between symbolism and the mythological themes in these works.

Sibelius’s comments reveal his belief in the symbolist notion of a connection between symbols and the world at large, and also the idea that, with the aid of symbols, one can achieve things that cannot be consciously understood:

“As I get older, I see all the more clearly that everything is a symbol,” he once said.

“Whoever knows how to interpret the symbols will understand all the secrets of the

³⁶ James Husst Hall, *The Art Song*, 1st ed. (Norman,: University of Oklahoma Press 1953), 147.

³⁷ Chadwick, *Symbolism*, 2.

world.” He also mentioned that a man can further music more with the aid of symbols than with reason alone and that, for this very reason, Freemasonry had been of great value to him.

Fauré's Incidental music for *Pelleas et Melisande*

Harmony

Emile Vuillermoz has observed the following:

Fauré ...speaks a musical language of prodigious richness instinctively. He discretely slips in his dissonances, taking constant care to melt them harmoniously with an eloquence stemming from that noble and purified traditional style which forbids any clashing or indiscrete interruptions in the musical discourse...³⁸

Fauré was an innovator in the use of unexpected modulations to distant keys³⁹ while maintaining a definite tonal center, and returning unconventionally to the home key without a long cadential formula.

A considerable amount of Fauré's harmony is derived from the medieval modes, which serves to release his music from the rigid bounds of tonality. Charles Koechlin provides the following insight:

His [Fauré's] tonalities, clear as they are, sometimes are established very quickly and for a passing moment only, a practice observable in the sixteenth

³⁸ Emile Vuillermoz, *Gabriel Fauré*, 1st American ed. (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Co., 1969), 35.

³⁹ Hall, *The Art Song*, 147.

century and favored by familiarity with the ancient modes, because they allow greater flexibility.⁴⁰

Thus, he played an instrumental role in helping to usher in the twentieth century with works that attest to a highly original harmonic genius. It was the combination of these influences that inspired Fauré to reunite “modality and tonality in such an intimate fusion that they form a unique and perfectly homogenous language.”

It should not come as a surprise that one of the most fascinating aspects of his incidental music to *Pelleas et Melisande* is his use of harmony, and many of the



Example 1: Fauré, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 4 ("La mort de Melisande"), mm. 61-62

unusual facets of Fauré’s harmonic ingenuity are featured in this work. Fauré often attempts to avoid the monotony of perfect cadences, preferring plagal cadences instead. A typical Fauréan cadence is the inclusion of the added sixth to the subdominant chord, creating a tritone in the inner voices that resolves by contrary motion to the tonic. This was not Faure’s invention, but was described previously by Rameau as the *sixte adjoutée*. In measures 61-62 of no. 4, “La mort de Melisande”, Faure employs a g minor chord with an added E natural resolving to a d minor chord (See Example 1).

⁴⁰ Charles Kœchlin, *Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)*, ed. Leslie Orrey (London : D. Dobson, 1946), 54.

A plagal cadence is also featured at the end of no. 3 (“Sicilienne”), in which Fauré vacillates between the raised and lowered third of the subdominant chord before making a final resolution to the tonic (See Example 2).



Example 2: Fauré, *Pelleas et Melisande*, no. 3 (“Sicilienne”), mm. 83-86

Fauré rarely wrote passages of music in which he relied solely on the church modes. Nevertheless, there are some isolated passages in the incidental music to *Pelleas et Melisande* which make use of them. The Mixolydian mode, for example, is featured in measures 88-90 of no. 1 (“Prelude”); the movement bears the key signature of G major, but this final passage is in G Mixolydian, as suggested by the consistent use of F natural in place of F sharp. Fauré’s cadence sounds completely natural, giving the effect of an antiquated style while breaking rules of traditional voice leading; for example, Faure wrote parallel fifths in the first measure, then needed in order to satisfy his overall artistic goals. Indeed, Fauré personalizes the cadence with his own sense of voice leading and modal nuance. The falling sixth in the last two notes of the bass line is a common characteristic of many of Fauré’s cadences.



Example 3: Fauré, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 1 ("Prelude"), mm. 86-88

Fauré relied on the traditional harmony system, but uses it in a way that no composer before him had imagined. Interestingly, he did not conceive the harmonic milieu of his works by confining himself to a specific key or mode.



Example 4: Fauré, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 4 ("La mort de Melisande"), mm. 13-18.

The sequence is also an important aspect of Fauré's harmonic style. Examples of tonal sequences can be found throughout Fauré's *Pelleas et Melisande*. As do many composers of the late nineteenth century, Fauré occasionally employs the circle of fifths as a means of modulation, as in measures 13-18 of no. 4 ("La mort de Melisande").

More interesting, however, is how Fauré establishes sequential patterns to connect one idea to another at unusual intervals. In measure 8-10 of no. 1

("Prelude"), for example, he uses ascending thirds with transposition (See Example 5).



Example 5: Fauré, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 1 ("Prelude"), mm. 8-10.

Likewise, in measure 20-23 of no. 4 ("La mort de Melisande") he creates incredible tension by employing a sequence that rises by minor seconds, thus allowing him to make use of intense chromatic harmonies (See Example 6).



Example 6: Fauré, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 4 ("La mort de Melisande"), mm. 20-24.

Form

Cyclical connections and thematic transformation are important compositional devices, which help to give a work formal cohesion. Cyclical form (popularized by César Franck and others) and thematic transformation (inherited from Liszt) became significant means of creating unity within multi-movement works. In *Pelleas et Melisande*, Fauré uses both of these compositional tools in a very sophisticated and individual way. He not only repeats themes, but he reiterates

entire movements and passages as separate numbers. In fact, eleven of the movements are repeated, thus constituting over half of the complete incidental music. This incidental music is unusual because the dramatic form of Maeterlinck's play, that is, the divisions of acts and scenes, guided Faure in designing the overall formal organization. Repeating an entire passage or movement could also be considered a broader application of cyclic formal process. No doubt Fauré recycled whole movements as a pragmatic way to economize when he composed the score. His reasons for doing this are irrelevant, however, since these repetitions are not monotonous. Indeed, they help impart a remarkable symmetry and unity to the overall form of the work.

Melody

There are many memorable Fauréan melodic lines, and considerable evidence that he often conceived his music in terms of themes.⁴¹

An unusual melodic feature found in the music to *Pelleas et Melisande* occurs in measures 58-61 of no. 3 ("Sicilienne"), where Fauré writes a whole tone scale (Example 7). This is quite unusual for Fauré, who usually only made use of portions of the whole tone scale, sometimes modifying it with leading tones.



Example 7: Fauré, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 3 ("Sicilienne"), mm. 58-61.

⁴¹ Robin Tait, "The Musical Language of Gabriel Fauré" (Ph.D. Diss., --University of St. Andrews, 1984.), 14.

Fauré indicates that the study of the masters of Renaissance music was the source of many of his own harmonic and melodic inventions.⁴² However, Fauré sparingly utilizes contrapuntal devices in *Pelleas et Melisande*. Most of the works he composed before 1900 emphasize harmony while ignoring counterpoint. In *Pelleas et Melisande*, however, there are a few rare moments where he writes passages that employ imitation, such as in measures 21-25 of no. 1 ("Prelude") (See Example 8).



Example 8: Fauré, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 1 ("Prelude"), mm. 21-25.

The countermelody at measure 44 of no. 3 ("Sicilienne") is especially effective, creating a conversational atmosphere between the flute, solo cello, and horn (See Example 9). These should be regarded as isolated examples, however, in a score that is admittedly sparse in contrapuntal devices.



Example 9: Fauré, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 3 ("Sicilienne"), mm. 44-47.

⁴² Ibid., 15.

Sibelius' Incidental music for *Pelleas et Melisande*, Op. 46

Sibelius is very unlike Fauré as a composer. The latter's work is rooted in a musical tradition—the modes of the middle Ages—dating back over a thousand years. Sibelius' work, in contrast, derives from his native folk music, spun out with a typical late-romantic chromaticism that pushes the tonal system to its limits. Sibelius' music is also known for its rich and innovative textures, evocative orchestration, and overall sense of breadth and grandeur. In Sibelius' incidental music to *Pelleas et Melisande*, I will survey four movements: #1, "At the Castle Gate"; #6, "Melisande at the Spinning-Wheel"; #7, "Entr'acte"; and #8, "The Death of Melisande."

At the Castle Gate

In this movement Sibelius makes regular use of perfect authentic cadences (PACs) (see Example 10 below), although usually long-delayed, as is common in music of this period. The secondary dominant is often used to prepare the PAC, for example: V/V, V6/4 – 5/3 to I. In contrast, Fauré takes great pains to avoid PACs, preferring plagal cadences instead.



Example 10: Sibelius, *Pelleas et melisande* no. 1 ("At the castle-gate"), mm. 18-21.

Another important harmonic element is the frequent use of the augmented sixth chords, especially the French sixth. The first appearance is in m. 29, with a French sixth in D major on beat one, and a French sixth in b minor—the relative minor of D Major—leading to an unexpected arrival in F# major at m. 30. Shortly thereafter on beat two in m. 33, there is a French sixth in F# Major, with the final French sixth in measure 35 resolving to G# Major, V in the key of C# Major (See Example 11).



Example 11a: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 1, mm. 29



Example 11b: Sibelius *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 1 ("At the castle-gate"), m. 35

The movement begins in C Major, modulating to the dominant in m. 7 and returning to an imperfect authentic cadence (IAC) on C in m. 10. This is followed by a striking move to F# in m. 30 and a colorful walk through various secondary

dominants before settling in D Major in m. 21 by way of PAC. However, he moves immediately back to C Major in the next measure, conspicuously outside the norm of common practice tonality (See Example 12). Normally, when composers change keys, they usually stay there. However, Sibelius changes the rule to his advantage.



Example 12: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 1, mm. 19-21.

Indeed, a brief discussion of the overall modulatory scheme of this movement will further elucidate Sibelius's departure from the standard tonal schemas practiced by his immediate predecessors. The key areas in this movement can be mapped as follows: C Major in measures 1 and 22; modulation begins with D Major in measure 12; it ultimately ends in the key of B minor in measure 17. F# Major in measure 30 – E major in 39 – D Major in 42 and finally C Major in measure 45. As will be noted below, the other movements examined in this paper are not quite as exotic in their tonal and harmonic landscapes. Even so, inasmuch as this is a mid-career, early twentieth century work, it is notable how this movement points toward Sibelius's later compositional language.

This opening movement also demonstrates Sibelius' treatment of form, which is quite different from Fauré's.

Each movement of *Pelleas et Melisande* has a clear form, but not in the traditional sense of sonata-form, rondo or variations. However, Sibelius approached the form differently than the traditional composers. James Hepokoski calls it “rotational form.” As he describes it, “...sonata movements are engaged in a dialogue with a more basic architectural principle of large-scale recurrence...”⁴³ Hepokoski adds, “Rotational structures are those that extend through musical space by recycling one or more times - with appropriate alterations and adjustments - a referential thematic pattern established as an ordered succession at the piece’s outset.”⁴⁴

Rotational form is a concert that a composer may adapt with astonishing freedom, and, as one might expect, there are several differing treatments of it in Sibelius’s works. In one subtype, for example found in the finale of the Third Symphony, the outer movements of the Fifth Symphony, *Luonnotar*, *The Oceanides*, and several other pieces, the initial rotation is thematically differentiated and, consequently, substantial in length.⁴⁵

The first movement is monothematic, with the basic formal outline noted below:

A (mm 1-21)– A’(mm 22-38) – A(mm 39-52) – Coda(mm 53-60)

As noted above, Sibelius starts in C Major but by m. 11 is exploring other keys area without warning, and finishes the section with a PAC in D Major in measure 21. The second section begins in C Major in measure 22, this time with the pizzicato in the upper strings accompanying the main theme played by the cellos. The voice leading sets us up to expect another cadence in D Major—albeit not a PAC—in

⁴³ James A. Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory: Norms, Types, and Deformations in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Sonata* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 611.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Timothy L. Jackson and Veijo Murtomäki, *Sibelius Studies* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 326.

measure 29. Instead we arrive in F# Major, the major mediant of D Major. The section ends with V/V in F# Major. In measure 30, he employs a French sixth in b minor, which is vi in D Major. Thus, the progression should end in D Major, but instead ends in F# Major. Sibelius brings back the original rhythm and some notes in measure 39, but with some pitch variation, delaying the original key. In mm. 39-41, we see an E Major false recapitulation of the A section. Then the theme, now in D major, is handed off to the winds. Sibelius transposed and re-orchestrated this as a kind of echo prior to the return of C Major in m. 45. However, the melodic material at this harmonic homecoming is not from the beginning of the piece, but from m. 7.

The central (and only) theme of the movement is clearly stated in the first six measures of the piece. The melody is simple and has a resemblance to the hymn tune from *Finlandia*. The bass leaps up and then moves by step. One unusual feature is the 3/2 bar in the middle of the theme in m. 5, which is surrounded by a double bar. This happens again in measure 29. The first is in a minor key, and is too brief to be called a modulation. Rather, it can be seen as a secondary dominant function in A minor; however, Sibelius moves back to key of C Major rather quickly. In m. 29, the harmonic progression is different. Here, we have a French sixth in D Major, V of D Major, and then a French sixth in b minor (See examples 13a and 13b below). My impression of these measures is that they symbolize the three servants from the play:

First Servant: Ah! Ah! It is opening! It is opening slowing.

Second Servant: Oh! How light it is already out of doors!

First Servant: The sun is rising on the sea!

First Servant: I shall begin by washing the door-stone

S.S: We shall never be able to clean all this.
 Third Servant: Bring water! Bring water!



Example 13a: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande*, no. 1 m. 5.



Example 13b: Sibelius *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 1 ("At the castle-gate"), m. 29

This scene is a hint that the show is about to start. The servants are trying to clean the castle. The scene does not indicate any seriousness nor predict the future of *Pelleas et Melisande*.

Another motif appears in measure 20, and recurs in mm. 46, 47, and 51-54. These small motifs are subtle, but serve to unify the movement as a whole (See Examples 14 a, b, c, and d below).

Musical score for Flute and Oboe. The Flute part is in the upper staff and the Oboe part is in the lower staff. Both are in C major and 4/4 time. The Flute part starts with a whole rest, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a whole note C5. The Oboe part starts with a whole rest, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a whole note C5. A red sharp sign is visible below the Oboe staff in the final measure.

Example 14a: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 1 mm. 19-21.

Musical score for Violin I and Violin II. Both are in C major and 4/4 time. The Violin I part starts with a whole rest, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a whole note C5. The Violin II part starts with a whole rest, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a whole note C5.

Example 14b: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 1 ("At the castle-gate"), mm. 47-49

Musical score for Flute and Oboe. The Flute part is in the upper staff and the Oboe part is in the lower staff. Both are in C major and 4/4 time. The Flute part starts with a whole rest, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a whole note C5. The Oboe part starts with a whole rest, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a whole note C5.

Example 14c: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 1 ("At the castle-gate"), mm. 51-53

Musical score for Violin I and Violin II. Both are in C major and 4/4 time. The Violin I part starts with a whole rest, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a whole note C5. The Violin II part starts with a whole rest, followed by a half note G4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a whole note C5.

Example 14d: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 1 ("At the castle-gate"), mm. 53-55

VI. Melisande at the Spinning-Wheel

In movement 6, Sibelius composed music for Act 3, scene 1. Melisande is at the spinning-wheel. The form of the movement is as follows:

A(mm 1-46) - B(mm 47-53) - A'(mm 54-74) - B'(mm 75-81) - CODA(mm 82-90)

This is an example of the rotational form mentioned above. Sibelius uses recycled the sections. Note the comparison between A – B and A' – B'. First, the transitions in measures 17-42 of A –B were cut down considerably in A'-B'. The actual theme does not change in orchestration or key. In A' there are four and a half measures before the cello entrance; also, the dynamic is louder than before and

there is a tutti section in the orchestra. In measure 66, the oboe has the clarinet's melody, which is shorter than in the A section. In fact, A' is shorter than A overall. The transition in measures 71 through 74 leads to B': the section is shorter than B in measure 47. However, it is marked *allargando* (See Example 15).

The image shows a musical score for measures 71-74 of Sibelius's *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 6. The score is in 6/4 time and features a continuous alternation of F# and G in the viola. The tempo markings "Allarg." and "A Tempo" are visible.

Example 15: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 6 "Melisande at the Spinning-Wheel," mm. 71-74

One notable aspect of this piece is the continuous alternation of F# and G in the viola throughout. At the surface level this represents the spinning wheel. Harmonically it gives this C-minor piece the sense of constant hovering around G. The movement centers on C and G throughout, with some brief diversions, as noted below. An entire phrase of chords is found in m. 7. Sibelius then repeats the progression below, ending with a half-cadence on V/iii in measure 16 (See example 16).

The image shows a musical score for measures 7-9 of Sibelius's *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 6. The score is in 6/4 time and features a continuous alternation of F# and G in the viola. The chords $f\#\circ 4/3$, G6, F9/6/5, and G6 are labeled below the score.

Example 16: *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 6, mm. 7-9

At mm 17-27, the pitches are related by thirds: C – E – G. A transition follows in measure 18, arriving at m. 21 in e minor. This is a mediant relationship in the key of C, although raised a semitone to E natural. Another third relationship follows in g

minor beginning at m. 25. This is the minor v of c minor, but also the third of E minor, although the B natural is lowered to Bb (See example 17).



Example 17a: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* ("Melisande at the Spinning Wheel"), m. 21 (E minor chord)



Example 17b: Sibelius *Pelleas et Melisande* ("Melisande at the Spinning-Wheel"), m. 25. (g minor chord)



Example 17c: Sibelius *Pelleas et Melisande* ("Melisande at the Spinning-Wheel"), m. 25. (g minor chord)

The chord we have here is the f#°7 and g minor: vii°7 and v in measure 25. In measure 29, b fully-diminished chord and c minor chords: viio and i. In measure 34, Sibelius uses same chord patterns previously used in measure 7 through 10. In measure 48 through 53, the chord progression is: c minor, Bb Major, Ab Major, G6, F6, G6, Ab, Bb. At m. 53 he begins in Eb Major then arrives in c minor: again, the third relationship between Eb and C is evident, although this time it takes the form of a simple relative major to minor. Measure 58 marks the beginning of A'. The chord progression and structure is relative-major to minor and is the same but

shorter than the one in measure 54. Interestingly, in measure 79-80, c minor enters first and is followed by Eb Major, the reverse of some earlier measures.. Sibelius closes the movement with a short coda in measure 82, moving once again from Eb to C minor.

VII. Entr'acte

This movement corresponds to Act 4, Scene 1 of the play. King Arkel had been gravely ill but is recovering, which frees Pelleas to leave the castle as soon as possible to travel the world, as his father as has told him. He is very sad to be leaving Melisande and arranges one last rendezvous to say farewell. Melisande reminds Pelleas that she will always look for him.

The movement begins in A major with the middle section moving to the parallel minor with a repeat (prior to the closing section – see below) back to m. 3. The form is as follows:

||: A(1-34) - B(35-65) :|| A (coda).

The theme in the A section, for flute and oboe, signifies King Arkel's recovering health. The orchestration is fairly simple, with the upper strings on an eighth note arpeggio providing the accompaniment for the theme at a dynamic of mezzo forte. By measure 17, the orchestration becomes more intricate and louder. The upper strings are arpeggiated as before. In measure 19, the horns enter (See example 18).

The image displays two systems of handwritten musical notation. The first system consists of seven staves, likely representing woodwinds and strings, with various rhythmic markings and dynamic instructions such as 'p' and 'cresc.'. The second system consists of four staves, with dynamic markings including 'pizz' and 'cresc.'. The notation is in a historical style, characteristic of late 19th or early 20th-century manuscripts.

Example 18: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 7 ("Entra'cte"), m. 17

In measure 18, the horns sound an octave E, which is articulated two more times and serves as a simple but masterful connective thread between the A and B sections. As noted above, the mode changes to minor in the B section, portending an understated sense of turbulence. The melody is once again in the woodwinds, although this time in the clarinets. The strings once again provide an arpeggiated accompaniment on E⁶ and f^{#6}, and g^{#6} (See example 19).

The image displays a page of musical notation for Example 19. It features several staves. The top two staves show vocal lines with notes and rests. Below them are piano accompaniment staves. A prominent feature is a large, sweeping dynamic marking that reads "dim. poco a poco" across several measures, indicating a gradual decrease in volume. Other markings include "pp" (pianissimo) and "arco" (arco). The notation includes various note values, rests, and articulation marks.

Example 19: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 7 ("Entrac'te"), mm. 35-40

Measures 35-51 of "Entr'acte" are in key of A minor; the underlying progression begins with V6, vii^{o6}/vii, and vii^{o6}. Sibelius repeats this progression three times, then finally in the second beat of measure 41 there is a resolution to an a minor chord in first inversion. The coda, beginning in measure 66, is back in key of A Major. In measure 69, there is a fermata on a C major chord, II in the temporary key of D minor, before the piece concludes.

Thematic transformation is also part this movement. In measures 3 and 4 the flute and oboe have a theme that represents bird song. A similar theme appears in measure 49 (See Example 20).

Musical score for Flute and Oboe. The Flute part is in the upper staff, and the Oboe part is in the lower staff. Both are in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature (C). The Flute part features a melodic line with eighth notes and a quarter note. The Oboe part features a similar melodic line with eighth notes and a quarter note.

Example 20a: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 7 ("Entr'acte"), mm. 3-4.

Musical score for Oboe. The part is in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature (C). It features a melodic line with eighth notes and a quarter note.

Example 20b: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande*, no. 7 ("Entr'acte"), mm 49-54

Another example occurs in the B section, where the first clarinet has the melody, which then passes to the bassoons and oboes before cycling back to the clarinet. In measure 55, we see the whole wind section picking up the rhythmic gestures of this theme, leading to the repeat and finishing with the coda (See Examples 21a and 21b).

Musical score in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature (C). It features a melodic line with eighth notes and a quarter note.

Example 21a: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 7 ("Entr'acte"), mm. 35-37.

Musical score for piano. The right hand is in treble clef and the left hand is in bass clef. Both are in common time (C). The right hand features a melodic line with eighth notes and a quarter note. The left hand features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Example 21b: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 7 ("Entr'acte"), mm.54-57

VIII. The Death of Melisande

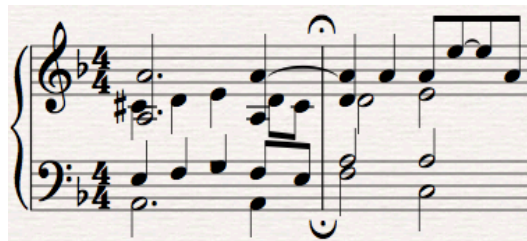
This final movement of *Pelleas et Melisande* begins in D minor, with a move to the parallel major in the middle section at m. 35. The main theme returns at m. 47 and the movement concludes with an expanded version of mm. 10-12. Given the subject matter, it is not surprising that the general mood and character of the piece is dark, with the head motive of the theme appearing frequently in the outer sections, although it is conspicuously absent in the B section (See Example 22).



Example 22a: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 8 ("The death of Melisande"), mm. 1-3.



Example 22b: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 8 ("The death of Melisande"), mm. 38-39



Example 22c: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 8 ("The death of Melisande") mm. 50-51

The orchestration is sparse in section A, with a contrasting tutti in the B section. The movement also has a second theme, or more properly speaking, a motif, as noted in Example 23 below. It appears in mm. 20, 25-26, 27-28, and finally, at the measure 47.



Example 23: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 8 ("The death of Melisande"), mm. 21-23



Example 24: Sibelius, *Pelleas et Melisande* no. 8 ("The death of Melisande"), m. 7.

Another significant feature of this movement is the use of the Phrygian mode, both melodically and harmonically. For example, in measure 7, D Phrygian occurs in the penultimate measure of the main theme (See example 24). Sibelius depicts Golaud's quiet frustration about Pelleas and Melisande with the violin and cello. At the end, Melisande is drifting away from Golaud without acknowledging or accepting her guilt.

Conclusion

Fauré's and Sibelius's music for *Pelleas et Melisande* survives only in rarely performed suites arranged to ensure a life for *Pelleas et Melisande* beyond the theater. It was only recently that interest in the complete versions has resurfaced.⁴⁶

The destiny of these composers' efforts is not uncommon. A survey of the standard orchestral repertory reveals that a number of our most celebrated works originated as music for the theatre. We know these works only in part; that is to say, the pieces that endure on the concert stage are excised from the context of a set of pieces.

The concert hall is a musical venue in which we preserve the accepted masterworks, stripped of the theatrical effects with which they may be associated.

The most stubborn obstacle remains the cost of playing these scores. One option, not entirely without peril, is to rescore the works for chamber orchestra. Fauré's original incidental music for *Pelleas et Melisande* was written for chamber ensemble and orchestrated by Faure's student Charles Koechlin. Fauré later rearranged the piece as a four-movement suite. The Sibelius score is more easily retooled to fit the chamber orchestra format, as the set is modular and comprised of isolated, character-driven music. Moreover, Sibelius's music speaks a distinctly twenty-first century dialect, and as such is more adaptable to more compact ensembles

⁴⁶ Timothy S. McDonnell, "Incidental Music to Shakespeare's "the Tempest" by Engelbert Humperdinck and Jean Sibelius: A Comparative Analysis" (D.M.A., University of South Carolina, 2002), 62.

Naturally, the incidental music to Faure's and Sibelius's *Pelleas et Melisande* exists as magnificent masterpieces, comparable to background music from a movie soundtrack. It vividly arouses images of the medieval castle, and recalls the yearning emotions of the two young lovers who find unity through death.

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