

Title

Crystal Mandal

Last Edited October 22, 2025

Question 1

- (a) (a) Who is Chloris?
 - (b) To whom is Hahn writing all these love songs?
 - (c) I'd like some biographical information. Hahn isn't as well known as a composer as say, Franck, Fauré, or Ravel - other composers of French song. Where/when was he born? With whom did he study? What are some hallmarks of his style? What should I be listening for?
- (b) The three are quite lovely self-contained love songs all by the same Composer. Putting them together as a Recital Set is, to me, a natural way to sample Hahn's musical styles. I don't have a particular inclination to which of *Si mes vers* and *Le printemps* should be first, but I do think that the end of *À Chloris* is too intimate and lovely to not put at the end of the set.

Question 2

Topic Chosen: Why is “Soupir” Challenging for a singer? Or is it?

Response

First, I’m not sure I’ve heard this piece before, which is such a shame. This should be regarded among Ravel’s most beautiful melodies alongside the G Major Piano Concerto and his String Quartet and Le Tombeau de Couperin. So many pieces of his don’t even come close to the brilliance of instrumentation and melody and the balance of fantastic and grotesque he is so well known for that just *shine* in this piece. And, just because of all of this minute detail, though I’m not convinced the physicality of this piece is too demanding - I’m not a well trained vocalist, so I might miss some things regarding technique - I’m quite convinced this must be *impossible* to put together. I’m not sure, but does the tuning of the strings as harmonics require the vocalist to sing closer to a just intonation? If so, the piece would require a very well trained ear to even discern *why* singing the “right” notes still sounds “off”. The tempo “Lent” at around 40bpm is just slow enough that an unaccustomed singer might find it difficult not to speed up. Of note, also, is the very strict rhythm over a very arhythmic accompaniment. The pitch and rhythm of the vocalist are almost entirely unsupported by the instrumentation. Overall, having to juggle the tuning, strict rhythms, and many little duet moments (with the flutes and violas), as well as the long phrasing (and, thus, I’d assume difficult breath control) make this, in my entirely uninformed opinion, quite challenging for a vocalist.

Question 3

Recital Group

Total Length: 9:41

1. Écoutez la chanson bien douce - Nadia Boulanger (6:03)
2. Ach, die Augen sind es wieder - Nadia Boulanger (2:09)
3. Chanson - Nadia Boulanger (1:29)

The obvious thread is that of the composer. Quite predictably, the Recital Group I've selected is comprised entirely of Boulanger songs. What strikes me about these pieces is the incredibly earnest and transparent nature of her music, as well as the absolute mastery of lyric and pianistic writing. The first song implores the audience "listen to the sweet song" that is to come. It's a love song, not for a particular person or character, but for the art of song itself. What follows is a short detour into a surprising second language for a French Composer. Another love song, though a little more explicit, *Ach, die Augen sind es wieder* is musically and narratively compelling, with a touch of regret or other bittersweet sentimentality. I also firmly believe that it could be sung an octave higher to great success. The declaration of love by a higher, more conventional (or, as I like to think about it, more cisnormative or "cis-approachable") "woman's voice" to, in text, another woman queers the music and the space in which it is sung, inviting conversations about voice, position, and intentionality - and identity! - in musical performance. The last piece serves as a lighter "encore" gesture after two much more dramatic songs. *Chanson* has some beautiful melodic writing and playfully quick rhythms with lots of interjections and "acting" involved.