

French Lyric Diction (2026-2027) - MUSIC 9597y

University of Western Ontario

Don Wright Faculty of Music

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Course Pianist: Jane Son (she/her)

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Class Schedule: Wednesdays from 1:30 pm - 3:00 pm in Talbot College 100

Prerequisite: Enrolment in this course is restricted to graduate students in Music, as well as any student who has obtained special permission from the course instructor as well as the Graduate Chair (or equivalent) from the student's home program.

Course Description: Intensive study of French lyric diction and mélodie performance practice including:

- IPA and pronunciation assignments
- In-class transcription and pronunciation practice
- mid-term exam and two quizzes
- study of French song composers
- performances of songs

Students will have performance opportunities in both semesters to apply lyric French diction studied in class and on their own. Repertoire will be selected from the lists below, some of which may be assigned.

Course Learning Objectives: In this course students will:

- learn correct pronunciation of sung French
- use IPA correctly for French diction and demonstrate that knowledge in performance
- learn about composers of French song and the poets they set
- gain an understanding of the syntax and flow of French language and poetry in sung French
- learn how to perform mélodie with the correct interpretive style

Course TAs

Our course TA, Autumn Zhao, is available to help you and support your learning. She has a weekly office hour that you should take advantage for help with diction, transcription, and pronunciation.

Our course pianist, Jane Son, is assigned to this course to accompany you. You must provide a copy of your List A and B songs to **both TAs** by **Sept 30th**, your list C song and your poet presentation mélodie by **Dec 2nd**. Feel free to discuss your choices with your studio teacher and coach.

It is your responsibility to book a rehearsal in advance of your class performances. If fail to do so, you will lose marks, the pianist is not obliged to accompany you, and you must provide your own pianist at your own cost. Note that the pianist for the course is *not* assigned to coach your diction or help you learn your notes. It is your responsibility to know the text and the score.

Required Materials

David Adams: A Handbook of Diction for Singers, Third Edition: Oxford University Press, 2022.

Very Strongly Recommended

P. Bernac: The Interpretation of French Song. New York: Norton, 1976. (on reserve in the library)

Recommended

C. Kimball: Song: A guide to Art Song Style and Literature, Hal Leonard, 2006 (on reserve in the library)

C. Kimball: Art Song: Linking poetry and music, Hal Leonard, 2013. (available online through the library)

Recommended materials cont.

A French/English dictionary: The Larousse Pocket French/English Dictionary is good. If you choose another, make sure it includes IPA for French. Oxford is not recommended. Collins online dictionary is useful.

Songbooks of Berlioz, Gounod, Massenet, Duparc, Chabrier, Chaminade, Chausson, Fauré, Debussy, Satie, Caplet, Roussel, Ravel, Poulenc, Hahn, Boulanger, Milhaud, Messiaen, Jolivet, Dutilleux, Papineau-Couture, Garant, Hétu

Communication

Important class announcements and information may be sent to you by email and/or through OWL Brightspace. Be diligent in checking your email and responding in a timely way. Communicate with our class pianist regularly.

Course Timeline and Format

Sept 9 to Oct 14	Lyric French Diction pronunciation, interpretation, and IPA
Oct 21	Review
Oct 28	Midterm
Nov 2-6	Reading Week
Nov 11	List A Mélodie Performances (Red Group)
Nov 18	List A Mélodie Performances (Green Group)
Nov 25	List A Mélodie Performances (Blue Group)
Dec 2	List B Mélodie Performances (Red Group)
Jan 6	Lecture TBA
Jan 13	List B Mélodie Performances (Green Group)
Jan 20	List B Mélodie Performances (Blue Group)
Jan 27	List C Mélodie Performances (Red Group)
Feb 3	List C Mélodie Performances (Green Group)
Feb 10	List C Mélodie Performances (Blue Group)
Feb 15-19	Reading week
Feb 24	Lecture TBA
Mar 3	Canadian French Song (Red Group)
Mar 10	Canadian French Song (Green Group)
Mar 17	Canadian French Song (Blue Group)
Mar 24	Contemporary French (Red Group)
Mar 31	Contemporary French (Green Group)
April 7	Contemporary French (Blue Group)

Groups will be assigned in the first week of class. Classes will be in person.

Assignments and Assessment

In-class Performances (Due on the dates listed above)

You will perform five songs in class. Choose three from List A, B, and C, listed below, and two will be assigned.

- one song from List A or B must be memorized (both could be)
- the list C song must be memorized
- each song must have a different composer and poet from previous choices
- I will assign you a Canadian French song and a Contemporary French song
One must be memorized.
- Remember to send PDFs of your songs to our TAs by the dates assigned above
- Be **SURE** to give our pianist the same key you are singing
- For each song you perform create a Song Profile and Translation and IPA sheet as outlined below

continued

Each time you perform you will:

- recite your song text in French, demonstrating in your recitation an understanding of your word-for-word translation, the poetic meaning, an interpretive idea, and the correct pronunciation based on your IPA transcription. The recitation may be memorized
- offer a brief, two-minute presentation outlining your Song Profile information (detailed below)
- sing your chosen/assigned piece, demonstrating musical accuracy, correct interpretive style and communication of your interpretive idea, knowledge of your word-for-word translation, the poetic meaning, and correct pronunciation
- receive feedback and a short masterclass on your performance

Assessment is based on correct diction, pitches and rhythms, and overall style, interpretation, performance, and memorization. Your preparedness for your rehearsal with the pianist is also part of your mark.

Songs composed after 1875 must be sung in their *original* keys. Original keys can be found in works lists of composers in Groves Dictionary of Music: <https://www.lib.uwo.ca/cgi-bin/ezpauthn.cgi?url=https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic>

Dover and Hal Leonard editions of songs are usually in the correct keys. International Editions are usually not. Beware of scores from IMSLP. They often have errors. Use scores from reliable publishers found in the library.

If you would like to sing a song not already on the list, please consult me in advance.

If with illness or family emergency you are unable to sing on the day you are scheduled, notify me and your pianist ASAP, always before class, and by email and text. Please do not contact the Music Office as notice will not arrive before class begins.

Song Profile (Due the days you perform)

Create a one-page Song Profile for each song you perform in class following the style outlined below. This follows the method suggested in Carol Kimball's books, which are listed in the recommended materials above.

The purpose of the profile is to help you to understand and absorb the musical, historical, and artistic context of the *mélodie*. Not just what it's about, but why is it about what it's about. Synthesizing this information should enrich your performance.

SONG PROFILE

Your Name, voice type

Date

Song Title Cycle or set name if applicable and opus

Date composed

Composer (Composer's dates)

Poet (Poet's dates)

Short Essential meaning of the text (Not a translation). Up to 25 words.

Your profile should include pertinent information on the song and the composer's work, such as:

- indicate the career period when the song was written (early, mid, late)
- the composer's connection to the poet if any
- settings of the same poetry by other composers
- if the song is from a set or cycle, provide information about the set.
- how the details of the context inform how you will perform the *mélodie*

You are not limited to the above information. For example, you are encouraged to listen to/sing through the song set/cycle, read Bernac, read Johnson (listed at the end of the syllabus), and other sources. Research and provide information on the other cycles, sets, and *mélodies* the composer wrote.

You will be graded on the thoughtfulness, accuracy, and breadth of view shown in your profile. Provide citations and be sure to keep a copy for yourself.

Please note, copying and pasting text from websites or using AI to create this profile will receive a grade of 0. The objective is for you to learn more about the composer's writing of French art song and their compositional style in this genre. Due for each song on the day you perform.

Song Translation and IPA (Due two weeks before you perform)

For each song you must provide a translation and IPA transcription of the text. Texts of song texts must be written out in with a word-for-word *English translation*, the original **French text**, with *IPA* on three consecutive lines in the following format:

a young woman cradles her child
Une jeune femme berce son enfant.
[yn dʒœn fam bɛrs sɔ̃ nẽ.fẽ]

(Example of an excerpt of *Soir d'hiver* (Song of Winter) by Nadia Boulanger)

- You will be graded on the accuracy of your translation and IPA transcription
- Word-for-word translations and IPA are due two classes before to your performance. Make a copy for yourself before handing it in. It will be corrected and returned to you the week before your performance

Poet Assignment (TBA in the Winter semester)

Create and deliver a 15-minute presentation featuring a French poet and the music of the composers who set them. You will be assigned the poet in the first semester, or, if you prefer, you may suggest one you would like to research instead. Consider it as a short lecture recital. Like the Song Profile assignment:

- give a brief biographical survey of the poet's life, indicating when they lived and what influenced them
- indicate the poet's connection to any composers or other artistic movements of their time
- provide recorded musical/visual examples/excerpts of songs/works featuring that poet's work
- select a *mélodie* featuring this poet's work (unknown to you and not on any of the lists below) and:
 - prepare and hand in an IPA transcription (due two weeks before you present) and a Song Profile (due the day you present). Include Song Profile information in your presentation
 - perform the *mélodie* for the class
 - indicate if the poem and/or *mélodie* is from a set or cycle and provide information about the set
 - give examples, if any, of other *mélodies* featuring this poem
 - explain how the above details influenced your performance
- summarize by offering observations of the influence of the poet's life and work on the development of *mélodie*, like one might explain how Goethe influenced composers of *Lieder*
- be prepared for questions and discussion following your 15-minute presentation

You will be graded on the thoughtfulness, accuracy, and breadth of view shown in your presentation. Provide citations and be sure to keep a copy for yourself.

Please note, copying and pasting text from websites or using AI to create this profile will receive a grade of 0. The objective is for you to learn more about the composer's writing of French art song and their compositional style in this genre. Due for each song on the day you perform.

Midterm Exam (October 28th in class)

This written exam will include IPA transcription, questions on vocabulary and diction rules, and interpretive style. The questions will be based on classwork, lectures, and the readings.

Method of Evaluation

In-class performances	40%
Song Profiles	10%
Song Translation and IPA transcriptions	10%
Poet assignment	10%
Pop Quizzes	5%
Midterm	15%
Attendance, Participation, and Preparedness	10%

MÉLODIE SONG LIST

MUS 3942y (Term 1) French Lyric Diction

INSTRUCTIONS

1. *A. mélodie performance* – Choose one selection from List A
2. *B. mélodie performance* – Choose one selection from List B
At least one of the above selections must be memorized. Both could be.
3. *C mélodie performance* – Choose one selection from List C . Must be memorized

When a song set/cycle is listed, choose one song (*unless otherwise stipulated*). Selections in *italics* are song cycles or sets. Consult with me if you wish to perform a song not found on the list. The list is based upon the songs in the BERNAC textbook, allowing the class to read the text. *Star indicates text not found in Bernac

Guide: **M:** Medium voice **H** High voice **B:** Baritone **T:** Tenors

LIST A:

HECTOR BERLIOZ 1803-1869
M/H Villanelle From Les Nuits d'Étés

CHARLES GOUNOD 1818-1893
Sérénade
Chanson de printemps
M / H Au rossignol
Mignon
Viens les gazons sont vert

CÉSAR FRANCK 1822-1890
Nocturne
La procession

CAMILLE ST-SAËNS 1835-1921
La cloche
L'attente

GEORGES BIZET 1838-1875
Chanson d'avril
Ouvre ton cœur
H Les adieux de l'hôtesse arabe (for advanced singers)

LEO DELIBES 1836-1895
H Les filles de Cadix (for advanced singers)

JULES MASSENET 1842-1912
***B** Si tu veux, Mignonne

HENRI DUPARC 1848-1933
T Chanson triste
M/H Extase
Phidylé (tenors especially)
B Testament

GABRIEL FAURÉ 1845-1924
M/H Adieu
***Aurore**

Les berceaux
Au bord de l'eau
Prison
T : Lydia
M/H Le secret
H Nell
Les roses d'Ispahan
***Mai**
***M** Rêve d'amour
***Dans les ruines d'une abbaye**

ERNEST CHAUSSON 1855-1899
H Les papillons
H Sérénade italienne
Le colibri
M Chanson d'Ophélie

REYNALDO HAHN 1874-1947
***Si mes vers avaient des ailes**
***L'heure exquise**
***L'énamourée**

DEODAT de SÉVERAC 1842-1912
Les hiboux

CLAUDE DEBUSSY 1862-1918
Beau soir
Les cloches
Romance 1891
***Nuits d'étoiles**

LIST B:

EMMANUEL CHABRIER 1841-1894
B Ballade des gros dindons
B Villanelle des petits canards
L'île heureuse
Les cigales
M Chanson pour Jeanne

GABRIEL FAURÉ 1845-1924
 Le papillon et la fleur, op. 1
 Après un rêve
B Automne
 Au cimetière
T Chanson du pêcheur
 C'est l'extase
 En sourdine
 Clair de lune
 Green
 Mandoline
 ***T** Nell
 Notre amour
T Prison
M Toujours, **or** Rencontre *from Poemes d'un jour*:
 Soir
La bonne chanson: choose one
B *L'horizon chimérique*: choose one

ERNEST CHAUSSON 1855-1899
M - Le temps de lilas
M/H Cantique à l'épouse
 La cigale
 Dans la forêt du charme et de l'enchantement

HENRI DUPARC 1848-1933
M/H Sérénade Florentine
M/H Soupir
 Le manoir de Rosemonde
 ***L** l'invitation au voyage
 ***L**a vie antérieure
 Testament
M Lamento

CLAUDE DEBUSSY 1862-1918
 Mandoline
M La flûte de Pan: *Chansons de Bilitis*
 C'est l'extase, Il pleure dans mon cœur, Green -*Ariettes oubliées*
 En sourdine: *Fêtes galantes (I)*
 Les ingénus: *Fêtes galantes (II)*
M Au près de cette grotte sombre
B Colloque sentimentale (*Fêtes galantes I*)
B Le faune (*Fêtes galantes II*)

LIST C: LATE SONGS

CLAUDE DEBUSSY 1862-1918
Le promenoir des deux amants:
 Crois mon conseil,
 Je tremble en voyant ton visage

GABRIEL FAURÉ 1845-1924
La Chanson d'Eve, op. 95 (choose one)

ALBERT ROUSSEL 1860-1937
M Le jardin mouillé
 Sarabande
 Le bachelier de Salamanque
M Réponse d'une épouse sage

A un jeune gentilhomme
 Amoureux séparés

ERIK SATIE 1866-1925
 La statue de bronze
 Daphnéo
 Le chapelier

ANDRÉ CAPLET 1879-1925
M- Songe
M- Forêt

PAULINE VIARDOT 1821-1910
M Chanson de mer
 Chanson de la pluie
 Au jardin de mon père
 Aime-moi
T Bonjour, mon cœur
 Rossignol, rossignolet
 Seize ans!

MAURICE RAVEL 1875-1937
M or H from *Cinq mélodies populaires grecques*
 Le réveil de la mariée + Quel galant! =1
 Là-bas vers l'église Chanson des cueilleuses...
B Chanson Romanesque, Chanson épique

FRANCIS POULENC 1899-1963
 'C' *from Deux poemes de Louis Aragon*
 La dame d'André, Dans l'herbe, Il vole, Mon cadavre
 est doux comme un gant, Violon + Fleurs = One
 selection *from Fiançailles pour rire*
M/B Priez pour paix
B Hymne
M- Songs from *Le bestiaire* (Two songs = one selection)
 La grenouillère
 Le pont
H Montparnasse
 Chanson d'Orkenise or Sanglots from *Banalités*
 Hôtel + Voyage à Paris = 1 selection
 Fagnes de Wallonie
M/S from *La courte paille* (choose one song)
B La maîtresse volage, Chanson à boire
 Madrigal, Invocation aux parques from *Chansons gaillardes*: (choose one)
Airs chantés: choose one : Air romantique, Air
 champêtre, Air grave, Air vif

JACQUES IBERT 1890-1962
B *Chansons de Don Quichotte* (choose one)

Please note that this repertoire list was originally created by Professor Patricia Green who taught this course for many years before I did. It's a well-considered list and an excellent resource.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following website:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf Note especially that plagiarism is a major scholastic offence. Students are expected to write all assignments in their own words. If you take an idea from another author, you must acknowledge this by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing.

Statement on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Health and Wellness Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health Support at

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/psych/index.html> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Accessible Education Western (AEW)

Western is committed to achieving barrier-free accessibility for all its members, including graduate students. As part of this commitment, Western provides a variety of services devoted to promoting, advocating, and accommodating persons with disabilities in their respective graduate program.

Graduate students with disabilities (for example, chronic illnesses, mental health conditions, mobility impairments) are strongly encouraged to register with Accessible Education Western (AEW), a confidential service designed to support graduate and undergraduate students through their academic program. With the appropriate documentation, the student will work with both AEW and their graduate programs (normally their Graduate Chair and/or Course instructor) to ensure that appropriate academic accommodations to program requirements are arranged. These accommodations include individual counselling, alternative formatted literature, accessible campus transportation, learning strategy instruction, writing exams and assistive technology instruction.

Statement on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The use of generative AI to complete coursework is *prohibited*. The only exception is that you may use AI as part of your suite of solutions when finding translations of your song texts. You may not use it to create your IPA transcriptions. Remember, AI is sometimes wrong. If you are unsure about the meaning of a word, using more than one source is often useful. Lieder.net, Oxfordsong.org, the Collins Dictionary, and the Bernac text (on reserve in the library) are other reliable tools.

Statement on the Use of Plagiarism-Checking Software

All required papers and assignments may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Some Useful Resources:

Our library's guide for this class: <https://guides.lib.uwo.ca/music3942y>

Collins French-English Dictionary Online: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/french-english>

Kimball, Carol. *Song: A guide to Art Song Style and Literature*. (on reserve in the library)

Kimball, Carol. *Art Song: Linking Poetry and Music*. (available online through the library)

Johnson, Graham. *A French Song Companion*. Available in the reference section ML54.6.J76F74 2000