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ABSTRACT

In literary circles Maurice Maeterlinck is known to have relied heavily on symbolism in his writings. This same understanding is not prevalent in the history of interpreting the music of Gabriel Fauré. Yet, we find when asked to compose incidental music for Maeterlinck’s drama Pelléas et Mélisande (1898) Fauré incorporates compositional techniques that were and still are labeled as symbols of death.

By analyzing the Suite which contains the four most prominent pieces from the incidental music (Prélude, Fileuse, Sicilienne, and La Mort de Mélisande) we see the use of such death symbolism as the lament bass, Phrygian mode, flat submediant, and the funeral march. The use of these elements effectively foreshadows the death of the two young lovers just as Maeterlinck foreshadows their destiny through his choice of narrative. This level of storytelling that Fauré lends to his composition creates an intricate web of romance and grief in the beautifully simple melodies of Pelléas et Mélisande, Suite for Orchestra, Op. 80.
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INTRODUCTION

While preparing to conduct Gabriel Fauré’s *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Suite for Orchestra, Op. 80 for a performance in the spring of 2006, I became interested in compositional techniques Fauré used to portray the topic of death. The Suite is based on a play written by Maurice Maeterlinck in 1892. Maeterlinck’s text evokes emotion and imagery that foreshadow the death of the unfortunate lovers. It is my belief that Fauré was attempting to emulate Maeterlinck’s textual foreshadowing through specific compositional techniques. Jean-Michel Nectoux, a leading scholar on Fauré, also expresses this view:

> We can see that beneath its seemingly peaceful and uninvolved surface the *Fileuse* heralds the heroine’s tragic destiny. This use of a musical portent corresponds exactly to the profoundest intentions in Maeterlinck’s dramaturgy, based on his admittedly sometimes childish devotion to Symbolism.¹

Nectoux, however, does not elaborate on this idea. It is my hope that my analysis and research can build upon this insightful, but passing observation.

This thesis has historical and analytical components. Through an examination of letters, memoirs, and biographies, I attempt to explain the broader historical contexts that motivated and shaped the composition of the Suite. After establishing a historical context, I briefly look at the text and plot of Maeterlinck’s play *Pelléas et Mélisande* and his symbolism of death.

In the analytical portion of this thesis, I will account for the overall form of each movement of the Suite, after which I focus on those compositional techniques used that

are rooted in the music of death. The main techniques of Fauré’s death music are the emphasis on b₆, the lament bass, Phrygian mode, and the genre of the Funeral March. I have two goals in this section: first, to show how Fauré uses these musical techniques as appropriate corollaries to the images and foreshadowings of death found in Maeterlinck’s text; second, to show that these techniques are not of Fauré’s own invention, but are part of a long-standing tradition of death music. As William Kimmel writes:

Wherever in music these configurations occur prominently, they disclose the presence and workings of death in the musical being…if composers intentionally used them in explicitly death-oriented contexts, they could hardly have been unmindful of their implications when resorted to in purely abstract instrumental works. ²

In the end, I strive to provide a window into Fauré’s creative mind that can provide fresh insight and interpretation which future performers can use to guide their understanding of this extraordinary work.

Chapter One: Background Information
Section 1.1: Gabriel Fauré

Gabriel Fauré, born May 12th, 1845 in Pamiers (Ariège) France, was given the name of his paternal grandfather. He was born into a tradition of education and government service. His father, Toussaint-Honoré Fauré, worked as a schoolmaster until he climbed the ladder to assistant, and then head inspector of a training school for teachers. Fauré found his way toward music through improvisation on a harmonium at an old convent and chapel near where his family moved in 1849. After years of self-study with little outside instruction, his father asked him to play for a friend who recommended that Gabriel be sent to a newly formed school, École Niedermeyer, founded by Louis Niedermeyer, which focused on religious music. Although Fauré’s father was surprised by Gabriel’s leanings toward music, due to the lack of such talents in the family history, he took the advice and traveled with Gabriel to Paris, where he started his training.

The design of the Niedermeyer school was not to train performers or composers but to create a more practical career for the students, that of choirmaster. Fauré studied organ and piano, harmony, solfège, counterpoint, as well as some general education in languages, arithmetic, geography, history, literature, and religion. Although the organ proved to be a useful tool for financial security, his passion lay with the piano. A turning point in his education was the arrival of Camille Saint-Saëns in 1861 to teach the senior piano class. Prior to Saint-Saëns arrival, the curriculum of the school did not include

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much repertoire past Mendelssohn, since Niedermeyer considered it too radical. Saint-
Saëns expanded the minds of his students with works by composers such as Schumann, 
Wagner, and Liszt. Saint-Saëns would prove to be a loyal mentor and friend throughout 
Fauré’s life.

Following his graduation, Fauré supported himself mainly through church 
positions as organist and choirmaster and through private piano instruction. His 
compositions barely made a profit, and if they did, the contract with the publishers was 
always financially in favor of the publisher. Because of his jovial disposition and desire 
for company, he found his audiences mostly in the salons of friends. To contemporary 
critics, the lack of performances in public halls and the lack of large-scale works was 
enough proof to discredit the quality of his works.

Fauré won a position at the Paris Conservatoire as a composition teacher in 
October of 1896. During his tenure there he influenced budding musical minds such as 
Maurice Ravel and Nadia Boulanger. In 1905 he succeeded Théodore Dubois as director 
of the Conservatoire. He retired from the Conservatoire in 1920, partly due to the 
beginning of his deafness. By this time his works were well known and he was admired 
by such musicians as Les Six. After his retirement from the Conservatoire, Fauré’s 
health declined and deafness truly began to set in. However, it is during this time that he 
managed to create one of his greatest masterpieces, the String Quartet, the final work he 
would offer this world. Gabriel Fauré was surrounded by his two sons and wife when he 
passed away on November 4th, 1924.

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4 The term Les Six refers to a group of composers that followed the aesthetic ideas of Erik Satie. Its 
members included Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Germaine Tailleferre, Georges Auric, 
and Francis Poulenc.
Section 1.2: Faure’s Musical Style

In his book on French music published in 1951 Martin Cooper writes:

He was the last great traditionalist in French music, more human and fruitful than Ravel, more sane though less original than Debussy and more wholly, unequivocally French than either – a central figure while the centre of the path of artistic tradition was not yet reserved for the timid and the impotent.6

Reading this, one might assume that Fauré enjoyed a life of acceptance and support for his music. On the contrary, during his lifetime Fauré was not recognized as a leading composer of his generation, let alone a leading voice of “modern” French music.

In the nineteenth century many French composers sought to create an identity apart from the Austro-German tradition. By the early twentieth century the leading French composers had carved their place in the musical world with a unique style all their own. Therefore, it is significant that Fauré defended the styles of more conservative composers such as Camille Saint-Saëns whose music had obviously been born out of Germanic influence:

But must we forget what our music owes to contact with the great German classics?...Isn’t every composer free to translate his thought, his sensibility, by the means it pleases him to choose, and do not the symphonic works of Saint-Saëns, Franck, d’Indy, and Dukas, conceived in a form whose origins are German, admit of those essentially French qualities of taste, clarity, and a sense of proportion?7

With this in mind it is easy to see why he might be considered a bridge from the Romantic period into the twentieth century. Even with one foot firmly planted in the

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6 Martin Cooper, French Music: From the Death of Berlioz to the Death of Fauré (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 214.

traditional nineteenth-century German style, Fauré managed to create a contemporary and unique “French” style.

A former student of Fauré, Nadia Boulanger poetically sums up Fauré style, “The tonality, harmony, rhythm, form, are those which Gabriel Fauré found at the beginning of his musical career; in his hands, these ordinary things have become precious.” This statement suggests that essential characteristics of Fauré’s compositional style were in place starting in his earliest works. This makes it difficult to break up Fauré’s career into periods according to his development as a composer. This difficulty is reflected in the different ways Fauré’s two main biographers have broken up his life as a composer. Jean-Michel Nectoux claims four periods while Robert Orledge offers three. I follow the outline of the latter, with the first period being 1861-1884; the second period, 1884-1906; and the third period, 1906-1924.

This is not to say that Fauré’s compositional techniques remain stagnant throughout his life, but rather that his “fingerprints” as a composer appear in his early works; and instead of moving to completely different styles, such as Igor Stravinsky, he carries these ideas into his mature style, developing them and expanding the role they initially played. The compositional traits of Fauré’s music which I focus on are:

1. rapid modulations to remote keys, but always returning back to the tonic key;
2. the use of 7th and 9th chords as “stable” sonorities that need not resolve;
3. modal inflections;
4. fluid and rhythmically elusive melodies that make frequent use of sequences.

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9 The essential difference between Nectoux’s and Orledge’s outlines are in the middle periods. Nectoux claims the second period was in the 1880’s followed by a third period in the 1890’s then the last period.
Possibly the most prominent aspect of Fauré’s style that people recognize are the beautiful melodies underlined by ambiguous harmonic motion. Looking vertically, there is no doubt that his music is tertian, mostly comprised of traditional triads, although enriched with sevenths and ninths and the added sixth. What is remarkable is his unmatched ability to move quickly and effortlessly through keys remotely related.

Chromatic slippage from one key to another is explained in the text *Traité d’harmonie* by Gustave Lefèvre, which was used at the École Niedermeyer. You must explore the directions in which each note of the chord can move, either diatonically, chromatically or enharmonically, so as to form a new aggregation. You can then assign this to a certain key depending on how you designate the notes that compose it.

The augmented triad is particularly useful for quick modulation to remote keys. Robin Tait provides an excellent example of how Fauré’s uses the augmented triad to modulate to many different keys by enharmonic transformation and parsimonious voice leading. “For Fauré, a move to any one of nine keys is possible in the following ways:”

Figure 1

“(a) by treating the chord as the dominant of one of six keys, thus:”

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11 This text was not published until twenty years after Fauré graduated but it is believed that the writings were based upon Lefèvre’s teaching material that would have been used during Fauré’s training.
(b) by treating it as a substitute for tonic of one of three keys:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{fugue note} \\
\text{substitute note} \\
G_n^{	ext{fugue}}
\end{array}
\]

A characteristic technique Fauré uses to enrich his harmonic palette is modal inflections. As Robert Orledge notes:

Fauré's harmonic style thrives on ambiguity and his modal interpolations are so subtle as often to pass unnoticed. He used modal elements to soften and facilitate transitions between two tonalities.\(^{14}\)

It is believed that these modal techniques grew out of his education at the École Niedermeyer where the modal writing of the Renaissance was an essential element of the training they offered in religious music. Very often Fauré modally inflects a melody upon its subsequent appearance. Looking at the Sicilienne we see that the opening melody starts clearly in G Dorian. In the consequent phrase, however, the high note of the melody is changed from a B♭ to an Ab, thus inflecting to the Phrygian mode. In the final two bars the melody shifts to the harmonic minor mode.

Figure 2

\[\text{Figure 2}^{14}\]

During Fauré’s lifetime it was difficult for composers not to be influenced by Wagner’s compositional techniques, and we see in Fauré’s use of sequence a debt to Wagner.\(^\text{10}\) “In the second period, Fauré occasionally uses rising melodic sequences in vocal lines that climb slowly and chromatically to produce an almost Wagnerian spiral effect.”\(^\text{11}\) Some critics have even criticized Fauré for over-using sequences.\(^\text{12}\) As we will see in the _Prélude_, Fauré’s sequences serve both expository and transitional functions. And, as one would expect, Fauré’s sequences often support the creation of harmonic ambiguity. Perhaps Fauré’s most significant contribution to the practice of sequences is his ability to seemingly wander far from the home key without actually leaving it.\(^\text{13}\) He begins and ends a sequence in the same key, but through techniques of modal mixture, real sequencing, and tonicization, the internal part of the sequence will allude to a range of distantly related keys.

These characteristics of Fauré’s compositional style are essential to the Suite and are also well documented as being part of his fingerprint as a composer. It is a style that is strongly rooted in the Romantic traditions, while at the same time expanding elements of that tradition to the point of artistic individuality. Many believe his individual approach stems from his expansion of harmony and modal flexibility. Koechlin describes Fauré’s style of harmonic progressions in these terms: “the analysis of the elements has little interest; it is a question, on the contrary, of the life of chords in

\(^\text{10}\) Orledge, _Gabriel Fauré_, 252.
\(^\text{11}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{12}\) Ibid., 247.
\(^\text{13}\) Ibid.
succession." It is this sense of stability within tradition that cost him popularity at a time when his country was looking for more radical innovation. However, it is this subtle manipulation of the traditional style that now draws people to look more closely at his works.

\[14\] Koechlin, *Gabriel Fauré*, 62.
Section 1.3: The Genesis of Pelléas et Mélisande

On August 29th, 1862 an artist was born in Ghent, Flanders whose gifts would remain hidden for years to come. Maurice Maeterlinck struggled to find recognition as a poet in Belgium after a failed career in law. Even after his first self-published book of poetry lay stagnant, Maeterlinck scraped together the funds to pay for a publication of a play *Princess Maleine* in 1890. A total of thirteen copies were made, and, by a stroke of luck, one copy happened into the hands of Octave Mirbeau, a French playwright and novelist. Mirbeau sent accolades to the press that no one was willing to take seriously: “An unknown writer named Maurice Maeterlinck has created a play called *Princess Maleine*, which is a masterpiece, full of genius and as good as Shakespeare! It is by far the greatest play I have ever read by any modern author.”15 The comparison to Shakespeare especially caused a stir, and even if people were still unwilling to accept Maeterlinck’s talents he had intrigued them enough to be offered interviews that brought him into public view. This new attention was timely for the writing of his play *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

Maeterlinck was inspired by the plot of a tale by the Italian writer Matteo Bandello (1480-1565) published in 1562 called *The Palace of Pleasure*. It is a story of two young lovers who exist in a world where their complete union is only possible through death.16 Maeterlinck wrote his version in 1892 at the age of 29. *Pelléas et Mélisande* received a few small performances around Europe. In 1895 it was performed in the original French text at the Prince of Wales’ Theatre in London. A prominent

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16 The version of *The Palace of Pleasure* that Meaterlinck was familiar with was edited and published by William Painter (1540-1594).
English actress, Mrs. Patrick Campbell was in the audience and after the performance asked a friend, Jack W. Mackail, for an English translation.

Campbell came to know the play well and felt a strong connection to the main heroine, Mélisande: “I knew Mélisande as though she had been part of me before my eyes were open. I knew I could put the beauty of the written word into color, shape and sound.” Campbell was determined to play this role and convinced her friend and well known actor, Johnston Forbes Robertson, to put on the play. Campbell felt that incidental music was essential as there had been no music written for the play except for the brief song Mélisande sings from her window “Les Trois sœurs aveugles,” Act III, scene 2, which was written by a friend of Maeterlinck’s – the little known composer Gabriel Fabre.

At this time Claude Debussy had already gained permission from Maeterlinck (with some nudging from Maeterlinck’s wife, Georgette) to write an opera using the text of Pelléas et Mélisande. Debussy had attended the play at the only Paris performance on May 17th, 1893. Knowing Debussy’s reputation and that he was already committed to the opera, Campbell asked him to draw incidental music from his opera to accompany the spoken play. Whether Debussy’s response was guided by his desire to only write an opera or his deteriorating relationship with Maeterlinck and Maeterlinck’s wife is unclear. Nonetheless, Debussy made it clear in 1895 that he would not write the incidental music and Campbell was forced to look elsewhere. Following Debussy’s exposure to Fauré’s creation, Debussy wrote to his publisher, who was angry Debussy had turned down the offer,

17 Mrs. Patrick Campbell, My Life and Some Letters (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1922), 164.
18 This name is not to be confused with Gabriel Fauré as it has been in the past.
The impact of this [Fauré’s] music seems to me hardly likely to survive the current production and, if I may boast, I don’t see there can be any confusion between the two scores, at least not in the matter of intellectual weight. In any case Fauré is the mouthpiece of a group of snobs and imbeciles who will have nothing whatever to do with the other Pellésas.\(^{19}\)

Indeed, Gabriel Fauré was the composer that Campbell approached in place of Debussy. Fauré had become acquainted with London social circles around 1894 through the introductions of his friends Adela and Frederick Brunning Maddison and Leo Frank Schuster. Schuster set up the meeting between Fauré and Campbell sometime between late March and early April, 1898 when Fauré was on a visit to London. Campbell read parts of the play to Fauré and made suggestions as to where the incidental music should take place. Fauré returned home early in April but was unable to begin composing until after he had made mandatory inspections of the provincial conservatoires for which he was responsible. During this tour he wrote to his wife explaining “All I know is that I’ll really have to get down to Mélisande as soon as I get back. The whole score has to be written in a month and a half, though it’s true some of it is already lying around in this old head of mine!”\(^{20}\)

Fauré quickly began writing the score in May, 1898 so that it could be ready for the premiere, which was set for June 21\(^{st}\) of that year. Due to lack of time and other responsibilities, Fauré requested one of his composition students, Charles Koechlin, to do the orchestration. We can see through notes from Fauré on Koechlin’s sketches that he submitted the orchestration for approval. Koechlin was invited to the premiere performance given on June 21\(^{st}\), 1898 at the Prince of Wales’ Theatre in which Fauré conducted the orchestra. The performance was a complete success amongst the critics

\(^{19}\) Mahoney, *Mystic and Dramatist*, 150.
\(^{20}\) Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré*, 150.
and the public. In his unpublished diary Koechlin writes: “I went back on Thursday to see *Pelléas et Mélisande*. The ensemble – play, production, costume, music, acting, decoration of the theatre – was superb and quite exceptional in being so closely unified.”

The incidental music for *Pelléas et Mélisande* is comprised of nineteen numbers.

**Figure 3**

**Act I**

1. *Prélude*
2. Chorale-like passage in E (eight bars) for strings and distant muted horn which recalls the end of no. 1. Cue-*Golaud*: ‘I am lost too.’
3. Slow interlude in a (twenty-four bars, originally no. 4). No. 5 to follow immediately.
4. Missing

**Act II**

6. Four-bar unaccompanied horn-call.
6a. Repeat no. 6.
7. Repeat no. 1 from five bars after fig. 8 to the end (twenty-one bars).
8. Repeat no. 3.
9. Repeat no. 2. Expanded to fourteen bars, which are repeated: Fauré alters Koechlin’s tempo marking from ‘Andante moderato’ to ‘Adagio’.

**Act III**

10. *Fileuse*. Used as an entr’acte.
12. Repeat no. 5, bars 1 – 16.
13. Missing
[14.] *Interlude* in e (twenty-three bars). To end Act III

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21 Quoted in Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré*, 152.
22 Orledge, *Gabriel Fauré*, 126.
Act IV

15. Repeat no 14
16. Repeat no. 2. Fourteen bars again (as in no. 9). Rescored for larger orchestra. Ends Act IV.

Act V

17. Molto Adagio (La Mort de Mélisande). Used as an entr’acte.
18. Repeat no. 17, last eight bars only. For the changeover between scenes i and ii.
19. Repeat no. 18. Ends play.

The ordering is of some question because it seems that the interludes were not put into place until the first rehearsals, and then they may have been switched for subsequent performances. What is known are the main sections which Campbell had highlighted for Fauré in their first meeting. These sections are as follows: Prélude (no. 1), Sicilienne (no. 5), Fileus (no. 10), Chanson de Mélisande (no. 11), and La Mort de Mélisande (no. 17). This group, minus the Chanson de Mélisande, would become the final version of the Pelléas et Mélisande Orchestral Suite.

Fauré took the main pieces from the incidental music and formed a suite as he had done with earlier incidental music: Caligula, op. 52 (1888) and Shylock, op. 57 (1889). Although Fauré used Koechlin’s orchestration as a guideline, he does alter it in some areas. The instrumentation for the first performance included two flutes, one oboe, two clarinets, one bassoon, two horns, two trumpets, timpani, two harps, and a small string section. He expanded this for the Orchestral Suite by doubling all the woodwinds, adding two horns and expanding the string section. The exact dates of when Fauré worked on the Suite are unknown. However, due to the fact that the Suite received its first performance on February 3rd, 1901, we can assume that he worked on it between 1898 and 1900. The first version of the Suite, published by Hamelle in 1901, contains the
Prélude, Fileus, and La Mort de Mélisande. It was not until 1909 that the Sicilienne was published on its own (in the orchestral version) and, still later, published as part of the Suite, in accordance with Fauré’s wishes.
Section 1.4: Maeterlinck’s Symbolism of Death

As It Appears in Pelléas and Mélisande

Maeterlinck’s Symbolism

The story…lives for itself and produces no impression of being a masquerade of moralities; but behind every incident, almost behind every phrase, one is aware of a lurking universality, the adumbration of greater things. One is given an impression of the thing symbolized rather than a formulation.23

This is Richard Hovey’s description of the symbolist movement in which Maurice Maeterlinck offered so many gems. He is defined in his first period of writing, from which Pelléas and Mélisande comes, as a pessimistic fatalist.24 The main themes of his writing stem from his belief in fate and life overshadowed by death. However these are never offered as the clear goal. As W.D. Halls observes: “Men are puppets of Fate, manipulated in a context of unfathomable mystery; such an enigma was to be suggested rather than stated outright.”25 Maeterlinck wished his actors to take on the quality of puppets or marionettes as best they could for he believed that “In the theatre of the soul, the role of the ‘bearer’ can be reduced almost to nothing.”26

This desire to mask tendencies of human individuality so as to portray a universal truth of fate is described by Palleske: “We no longer have to do with conflicts between individuals or principles, but with Maeterlinck’s idea of a hopeless struggle of humanity against destiny.”27 The idea of ambiguity was a leading force in the work of symbolist

poetry, and we see this intertwined with Maeterlinck’s obsession with death and fate in the story of the two lovers, Pelléas and Mélisande.

In regards to many of Maeterlinck’s early plays Palleske says “With Maeterlinck the prevailing moods are the terror of foreboding and inevitable death and the fragile atmosphere of a fanciful fairytale.” In this section I wish to familiarize the reader with the plot of *Pelléas and Mélisande*, with special attention to Maeterlinck’s symbolism, particularly towards fate and death.

**Act I (Prélude)**

The play opens vaguely with a few maidservants and a porter at the front gate to a castle. There are preparations taking place for a large event but the reader/audience member is not made privy to exactly what the preparations are for. It is made clear however, that the cleaning which must take place is difficult because the area has been neglected for some time.

After this opening, which can only make the viewer wonder exactly what is unfolding, the next scene takes place in a forest. It is here the character Golaud is introduced. Golaud, the grandson of King Arkël, is hunting in the forest and has become lost while pursuing a wounded animal. In his wandering he stumbles upon Mélisande weeping by a pool. He is overcome by her beauty and although he cannot discover who she is or where she comes from he insists that they find their way out of the forest together. All that is made clear in this scene is Golaud’s obvious attraction towards Mélisande, while very little is understood about Mélisande’s character.

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28 Ibid., 501.
29 An overview of the plot can be found in Table 1, p.30.
30 This refers to the corresponding movement which was intended to precede each Act.
Golaud and Mélisande are married and return to his Grandfather’s castle where Mélisande and Pelléas, Golaud’s half-brother, are introduced. It is in Pelléas, as he prepares for the arrival of his brother and new sister-in-law, that we start to see some striking foreshadowing of the fate which awaits him. When Pelléas is first introduced he is speaking of a letter which he has received from a friend who is deathly ill. Pelléas explains the letter to his Grandfather saying:

His letter is so sad you can see death between the lines….He says he knows the very day when death must come….He tells me I can arrive before it if I will, but that there is no more time to lose. The journey is very long, and if I await Golaud’s return, it will be perhaps too late.\(^{31}\)

Although Pelléas is speaking of his friend’s situation here, it is also doubling as a foreshadowing of his own fate if he chooses to stay to see Golaud and Mélisande, which he does through Arkël’s encouragement.

In the first meeting between Pelléas and Mélisande there is a very striking use of symbolism. Geneviève and Mélisande are walking towards the sea when they meet Pelléas. As they look out towards the water they see a ship heading out of port. The following dialogue passes between them:

Geneviève (speaking to Pelléas): we were seeking the light. It is a little lighter here than elsewhere; and yet the sea is gloomy.
Pelléas: We shall have a storm to-night. There has been one every night for some time, and yet it is so calm now….One might embark unwittingly and come back no more.
Mélisande: Something is leaving the port….
Pelléas: It must be a big ship….The lights are very high, we shall see it in a moment, when it enters the band of light….
Geneviève: I do not know whether we shall be able to see it….there is still a fog on the sea….
Pelléas: The fog seems to be rising slowly….
Mélisande: Yes; I see a little light down there, which I had not seen….

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Pelléas: It is a lighthouse; there are others we cannot see yet.
Mélisande: The ship is in the light….It is already very far away….
Pelléas: It is a foreign ship. It looks larger than ours….
Mélisande: It is the ship that brought me here!...
Pelléas: It flies away under full sail….
Mélisande: It is the ship that brought me here. It has great sails….I recognized it by its sails
Pelléas: There will be a rough sea to-night.
Mélisande: Why does it go away to-night?…You can hardly see it any longer….Perhaps it will be wrecked.32

This introduction starts the momentum towards the destiny that is so strongly held between Pelléas and Mélisande.

**Act II (Sicilienne)**

The first scene opens with a portrayal of the innocent relationship between Pelléas and Mélisande. They are talking near a fountain when Mélisande, while playing with her wedding ring drops it into Blind Man’s Fountain. At the same moment that the ring drops into the fountain a church bell strikes noon. The scene shows Mélisande tending to Golaud who has been injured falling from his horse. The incident is explained by Golaud in the following manner:

> But I cannot understand how it came to pass. I was hunting quietly in the forest. All at once my horse ran away, without cause. Did he see anything unusual?…I had just heard the twelve strokes of noon. At the twelfth stroke he suddenly took fright and ran like a blind madman against a tree. I heard no more. I do not yet know what happened. I fell, and he must have fallen on me. I thought I had the whole forest on my breast; I thought my heart was crushed.33

Maeterlinck shows the importance of the separation of Mélisande from the ring through its effect on Golaud’s environment. The loss of the ring symbolizes Mélisande distancing herself from Golaud, and it is due to Mélisande’s attention to Pelléas that the incident happens.

32 Ibid., 32-33.
33 Ibid., 40-41.
In the process of caring for Golaud, Mélisande becomes very emotional and tells Golaud that she is very unhappy and wishes to leave the castle. “But I can live here no longer. I do not know why….I would go away, go away!...I shall die if I am left here.” Mélisande is very clearly foreshadowing her own fate if she stays where she is. Soon after Golaud realizes the ring is missing he becomes very agitated. He insists that she search for the ring in the grotto (Mélisande lies and says this is where she lost it) that moment even though it is now night. In this instance, one starts to see the instability of Golaud’s character. One gets the sense that there is a darkness brewing within him that has been suppressed just beneath the surface for some time. Pelléas goes with Mélisande to the grotto in the act of searching for the lost ring. Mélisande is scared away from the grotto by three old beggars sleeping outside the entrance.

The final scene of this Act shows Pelléas again wishing to go to his friend. His friend has indeed passed away and Pelléas wishes to show his respect. King Arkēl again persuades Pelléas to stay saying “life has graver duties than the visit to a tomb.” The King is foreshadowing Pelléas’ need to prepare for his own death.

**Act III (Fileuse)**

The third act opens with Mélisande spinning in the company of Yniold (Golaud’s son from a previous marriage) and Pelléas. This scene carries an enormous amount of emotional undercurrents. First, Yniold leaves Mélisande and Pelléas alone in the room together, even though they protest it. This shows that they are becoming aware of the feelings they have for one another but are still keeping them hidden. To be left alone would only offer a temptation to speak of or act on these feelings. Yniold announces his

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34 Ibid., 42-43.
35 Ibid., 51.
return to the room by knocking strongly on the door. Startled, Pelléas says “It was you
knocking so?...That is not the way to knock at doors. It is as if a misfortune had
arrived.”

Pelléas and Mélisande are aware that by being left alone they are tempting a
fate that holds sadness and so they are afraid at any moment their love for each other will
be discovered.

After Yniold comes back he bursts into tears and foreshadows Mélisande’s fate
saying “you are going to go away too….I have seen it….I have seen it.” Mélisande
tries to soothe him but he continues for some time pleading with her not to leave.
Eventually Pelléas soothes Yniold by taking him to the window, where looking out, he
sees swans attacking the hunting dogs. This imagery is similar to that of the horse losing
its senses when the bell strikes. Maeterlinck is showing the whole world in upheaval.
The love between Pelléas and Mélisande, while innocent enough, is too strong to only
affect them. It has an effect on the surrounding world as well and in not such a
harmonious way as between themselves.

Golaud returns from hunting, and Yniold runs to greet him. He brings his father
back to the room where Mélisande and Pelléas are still sitting. They are found weeping
silently. It is too much for Golaud to see, and he asks Yniold to move the light away
from their faces.

The following scene depicts one of the most classic portrayals of romance. It is
evening, and Mélisande is leaning out of her window when Pelléas sees her as he walks
outside. Mélisande’s hair cascades down from the window, and Pelléas caresses the
golden locks, kissing them and uttering words of affection. Mélisande resists and asks

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Ibid., 54.
Ibid., 55.
Pelléas to free her, but there is a sense of enjoyment and not a true desire to be rid of him. During this scene Mélisande’s white doves escape and fly out of her window. Maeterlinck is showing that Mélisande is no longer innocent of the actions between her and Pelléas. The strong desire between them is now exposed, and so the doves, as a sign of her innocence and purity, depart from her chamber. Golaud comes upon them in the height of Pelléas’ exclamations. He lightly tells them not to act like children, but also shows that he is disturbed by what he has witnessed.

Following his discovery of Pelléas and Mélisande, Golaud asks Pelléas to descend into the castle’s vaults to show him a stagnant pool in the depths of the castle. This scene is saturated with death imagery. They describe the place as having the smell of a tomb and the feeling of lingering death. At one point, Golaud tells Pelléas to lean over a ledge so that he can fully see and smell the stagnant pool. Golaud holds Pelléas’ arm so that he will not fall, but as Pelléas is leaning, the lantern which Golaud is holding begins to shake. Golaud’s voice falters as he quickly brings Pelléas back to safety and says they should ascend back to daylight. This is the first hint of Golaud’s desire to take action against Pelléas because of his love for Mélisande. Although he experiences a desire to harm Pelléas, he is not so overcome with jealousy to put the feelings into action yet.

When they have returned to daylight, Golaud warns Pelléas that he heard what had passed between him and Mélisande the night before and wishes him to stop any sort of interaction in that manner. He also informs him that Mélisande is pregnant, and so Pelléas should take even more care in his treatment of her. As they walk they see a herd of sheep being led to the butcher. “They cry like lost children; you would say they smelt the butcher already. – It will be time for dinner. – What a fine day! What a capital day
for the harvest!” Golaud offers this imagery of death to close his discussion with Pelléas. It is another look into Golaud’s emotional state. Hearing his exclamations in regards to the “fine day,” this scene of imminent death seems to hold little disturbance for him; in fact, it is almost as though he enjoys the thought of the fate the sheep are being led to.

In the final scene of this act, Golaud is sitting with Yniold, asking him questions about how Pelléas and Mélisande behave when they are together. Yniold is very vague in his answers and as a young child does not understand what exactly Golaud wants to know. Becoming frustrated Golaud takes a more direct approach and hoists Yniold up to peer through a window into a room where Pelléas and Mélisande are sitting. His son informs Golaud that they are just sitting on opposite sides of the room looking at a light. This angers Golaud that he cannot catch them in the act of adultery; he clutches Yniold so tightly in his grasp that Yniold cries. This shows that Golaud is starting to lose control, he is becoming overwhelmed by his desire to understand and unveil the love between Mélisande and Pelléas. Overcome by a sense of defeat he offers his son a few analogies to his predicament.

Do you see those poor people down there trying to kindle a little fire in the forest? – It has rained. And over there, do you see the old gardener trying to lift that tree the wind has blown down across the road? – He cannot; the tree is too big; the tree is too heavy, and it will lie where it fell. All that cannot be helped.”

These scenes give a true description of the position in which Golaud feels himself trapped, a situation that is out of his control unless he takes extreme action.

38 Ibid., 70.
39 Ibid., 77.
Act IV (Interlude in E minor)40

We learn in the first scene that Pelléas’ father has now recovered, and Pelléas has decided that it is still right for him to leave. Before leaving he goes to his Father, and we hear one last decisive foreshadowing of Pelléas’ fate: “Is it thou Pelléas? Why, why, I had not noticed it before, but thou hast the grave and friendly look of those who will not live long.”41 In leaving he feels that he must see Mélisande alone one last time. He requests that she meet him by Blind Man’s Fountain (where the ring was lost) to say good-bye, and she agrees. The significance of them meeting at the very place where the intimacy of their relationship started to bloom offers a sense of finality. We also start to sense the depth to the meaning behind the name given to the fountain. Blind Man’s Fountain offered a meeting to Pelléas and Mélisande where they became blind to how their love for each other would affect those around them and in consequence their own fates.

In the next scene we hear King Arkël explain to Mélisande his perception of her since she arrived at the castle. Throughout the play the wise King has spoken of the ties which hold us to our destiny and the spiritual world beyond. It is no different in his understanding of young Mélisande:

I observed thee, thou wert there, listless perhaps, but with the strange, astray look of one awaiting ever a great trouble, in the sunlight, in a beautiful garden….I cannot explain….But I was sad to see thee so; for thou art too young and too beautiful to live already day and night under the breath of death.42

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40 This is a twenty-three bar interlude that is a repeat of what was just heard to close the previous act.
41 Maeterlinck, Pelléas and Mélisande, 81-82.
42 Ibid., 84.
Golaud enters after the King’s comments to Mélisande. When she offers to help him clean a scratch on his forehead he reacts violently. Slipping into insanity he describes the false innocence he sees in her eyes.

A great innocence!...They are greater than innocence!...They are purer than the eyes of a lamb....They would give God lessons in innocence! A great innocence! Listen: I am so near them I feel the freshness of their lashes when they wink; and yet I am less far away from the great secrets of the other world….A great innocence!...More than innocence! You would say the angels of heaven celebrated there an eternal baptism!...I know those eyes! I have seen them at their work! Close Them! Close them! Or I shall close them for a long while!... – Do not put your right hand to your throat so; I am saying a very simple thing….I have no under-thought. …If I had an under-thought, why should I not say it? Ah! Ah! – do not attempt to flee! – Here! – Give me that hand! – Ah! Your hands are too hot….Go away! Your flesh disgusts me!...Here! – There is no more question of fleeing now! – [He seizes her by the hair.] – You shall follow me on your knees! – On your knees before me! – Ah! Ah! Your long hair serves some purpose at last!...Right,…left! – Left,…right! – Absalom! Absalom. – Forward! Back! To the ground! To the ground!...You see, you see; I laugh already like an old man. 43

At this point the King intervenes, and Golaud calmly leaves. But through this speech he has proven himself to be in the clutches of jealous rage and unable to control the turmoil he feels.

The third scene is brief and is full of imagery of struggle and inescapable death. Yniold is attempting to retrieve his golden ball from between two rocks but they are too heavy for him to lift. He then sees a herd of sheep on the road. At first they are bleating constantly, and then when they arrive at the crossroad the shepherd forces them onto the road that leads directly by Yniold. The sheep have become silent now, and Yniold asks the shepherd why they do not speak. The shepherd answers, “Because it is no longer the road to the stable.” 44 Yniold, in his innocence does not understand that the sheep are being led to the butcher. The scene acts as a subtle image of the development of

43 Ibid., 86-87.
44 Ibid., 89.
Mélisande. She arrived at the castle an innocent, beautiful, golden maiden who became entrapped between two very strong men and, without knowing the destiny of the road she has chosen, is leading herself to her own death.

The final scene of this Act is the climax of Pelléas and Mélisande’s love for each other. The scene opens with Pelléas waiting by the Blind Man’s Fountain for Mélisande, and he is struggling with whether he should wait to see her or leave, knowing that he has “played a dream about the snares of fate.” Mélisande appears before Pelléas can decide to leave, and they begin to profess their love for the first time openly. Throughout their conversation there is a constant struggle whether they should remain in the shadows or step into the moonlight. They wish to expose their love that is so pure and contains their destiny, and yet they realize that they have been brought together in a way that makes their love a sin and therefore it cannot be exposed. In the midst of their embrace Pelléas gazes upon Mélisande and exclaims “Thou art so beautiful that one would think thou wert about to die.” Mélisande responds that she senses the same in him as well. Soon after, Mélisande realizes that Golaud is watching them from behind a tree. Pelléas and Mélisande embrace passionately one last time as he rushes at them. Golaud strikes Pelléas. He falls mortally wounded at the edge of the fountain. Golaud then pursues Mélisande as she flees into the woods.

**Act V (La Mort de Mélisande)**

The final act contains two scenes. The first is a discussion between a group of female servants in a lower hall at the castle. As they speak there are children playing and screaming in front of a ventilator. The discussion starts vaguely; they are obviously

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45 Ibid., 90.
46 Ibid., 96.
waiting for a signal which will let them know it is time to go upstairs. An old servant enters and offers an account of what has taken place since the previous scene. She says she found Mélisande and Golaud stretched out in front of the gate very early in the morning, Mélisande close to death and Golaud with blood on his sword. The servants then discuss how Mélisande has bore a frail daughter into the world and although barely wounded is close to death herself. They describe Golaud as weak and speak of how awful things have taken place that no one will speak of. The children suddenly become silent. The servants say through the silence that it is time to ascend.

This first scene prepares the viewer for the final scene in Melisande’s apartment where she lays, listless, while King Arkël, the physician, and Golaud stand anxiously by. The whole being of Mélisande is stated simply by the physician at the opening of the scene: “It cannot be of that little wound she is dying; a bird would not have died of it….She could not have lived….She was born without reason…to die; and she dies without reason.” 

Although the physician comforts Golaud that her condition is not his doing, the latter is distraught with guilt and cannot be calmed.

When Mélisande awakens Golaud asks to speak to her alone. He begs her to forgive him and asks to be absolved of his guilt by her admitting to a forbidden love towards Pelléas. Mélisande maintains her innocence, not knowing what has happened or understanding the sin she has committed. Golaud becomes frantic, terrified of entering his own death without the knowledge of whether his action was justified. The physician and King come back into the room to calm Golaud, and King Arkël introduces Mélisande to her daughter. Mélisande forshadows the way life continues to circle: “She does not

\[^{47}\text{Ibid.}, 108.\]
laugh….She is little….She is going to weep too….I pity her.”  
As Mélisande leaves the world still in her innocence, she offers another innocent being to take on life.

As Mélisande holds her infant, the women servant file in and stand against the walls of the room. They have not been summoned but, understanding what is about to take place, have come to prepare the body. Golaud is distraught by their appearance and questions them feverishly, but they make no answer. Mélisande’s eyes close. As the Physician, King Arkēl, and Golaud observe her last gesture of reaching out with both arms, suddenly the servants drop to their knees. The men realize the young maiden has passed from their world. As the King moves the grief stricken Golaud out of the room he also takes the infant. “Come; the child must not stay here in this room….She must live now in her place….It is the poor little one’s turn.” Maeterlinck leaves the reader with the sense that the child, being born out of death, will take on a similar path of destiny as her frail mother.

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48 Ibid., 117.
49 Ibid., 120.
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<td>This is a table outlining the results of an experiment. The table contains data related to various conditions and their outcomes.</td>
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### Table 1

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*Note: This table is an example and does not reflect any specific data or context.*
Section 1.5: Fauré’s Elements of Death

Introduction

Maidservants: Open the gate! Open the gate!  
Porter: Who is there? Why do you come and wake me up?50

With these lines Maurice Maeterlinck begins his play *Pelléas et Mélisande*. The opening exclamation creates anticipation for the audience. The porter’s response mirrors the curiosity of any theatre goer who has not yet seen the play unfold. There is always the question of what a story will bring; how the characters will affect us. Campbell believed that this relationship between the audience and Maeterlinck’s dramatic symbolism in *Pelléas et Mélisande* could be enhanced by the composition of incidental music. Although Fauré composed the score over a short time period, Campbell was more than satisfied: “His music came – he had grasped with most tender inspiration the poetic purity that pervades and envelops M. Maeterlinck’s lovely play.”51

We can see through the comparison of Fauré’s style of composition and Maeterlinck’s literary style that there is a similar desire for creating a sense of intention without literally portraying it. In this manner Fauré was already destined to portray Maeterlinck’s atmosphere accurately through music. However, there is still the question of actual symbolism. As I have shown in section 1.4, Maeterlinck conveys a tragic destiny for his characters through literary symbols of death. By studying the score of *Pelléas et Mélisande* it is clear that Fauré made a conscious effort to embrace this

symbolism in his own musical portrayal. As quoted in the opening of this paper, Fauré’s music “heralds the heroine’s tragic destiny.”

Before we take a more in depth look at how Fauré accomplishes this in each movement of the Suite, we must understand from what traditions of death music Fauré drew his symbols.

**Lament Bass**

The lament bass, also known as the descending tetrachord, involves a descent from the tonic to the dominant. It is most commonly found outlining a descending natural minor scale. The standard form and the most common variant is shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4**

The version using the natural minor scale and the chromatic scale were commonly used in the laments of seventeenth-century Italian opera.

Characteristics of this descent that add to the emotional angst of a lament is the association of sadness with minor mode through the lowered subtonic and submediant, and the general downward motion over and over, which offers a feeling of gravity and

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53 It is not the goal of this paper to provide an historical overview of each component in the language of death. I will be merely offering a basis from where they stem in compositional history and why their characteristics embody the character of death. For a better understanding of each element and its historical development, please refer to the references from which I draw my information.

depth. In the words of Ellen Rosand, “in its unremitting descent, its gravity, the pattern offers an analogue of obsession and depression – perceptible as the expression of unrelieved suffering.”52

**Phrygian Mode**53

Death manifests itself in musical works throughout all the parameters of musical structure and style: harmonic, rhythmic, dynamic, timbral, and formal; sometimes obviously dramatic and unmistakable and sometimes subtly, as a momentary shadow cast.54

It is primarily how music is permeated subtly by death symbolism that is the focus of William Kimmel’s focuses on in his article regarding the Phrygian mode and its relationship to death. As he points out, the Phrygian mode has a long history of implying death in music because of its being an exact inverse of the major mode.55 Although Kimmel focuses on the descending tetrachord as a leading bearer of the Phrygian mode, it is the semitone between the lower two notes which he feels labels the mode and brings the character of death. He maintains that the emphasis of the semitone in a descending context creates a feeling of gravity and relationship to death.

The crucial semitone, the crux of the Phrygian Inflection, occurs in all three modes (Phrygian, major and minor) at the following points: \(^4-3, \(^6-5, \(^b3-2,\) and with the Neapolitan alteration at lowered \(^2-1\)….wherever this semitone occurs as the terminus of a descending melodic gesture, it carries with it a quality closely akin to that of the Phrygian tetrachord.56

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52 Ibid., 370.
53 There are numerous musical examples of the use of Phrygian mode in death music (Requiems, Laments, etc.) and instances where it is implying death in other musical genres. For a reference of some of these examples see William Kimmels “The Phrygian Inflection and the Appearances of Death in Music,” *College Music Symposium* 20:2 (1988).
54 Kimmel, “The Phrygian Inflection,” 2.
55 Ibid., 2-3.
56 Ibid., 13.
Kimmel also states:

The melodic descent of death-oriented gestures is not always confined to the tetrachord. Longer and shorter melodic descents that terminate in the half-step carry with them the Phrygian quality.\(^57\)

It is this relationship of fa-mi which holds such emotional and symbolic weight:

“The dramatic tension lies in the upper tone, the finality or ultimacy of its resolution in the lower.”\(^58\) We will see the way in which Fauré uses this semitone to color a phrase in the Sicilienne and especially in La Mort de Mélisande.

**Flat Submediant**

As mentioned earlier, the semitone gesture of the lowered submediant to the dominant also has a relationship to the Phrygian mode and, therefore, death. It also holds the same darkness and gravity in its relationship to the natural minor mode. We see an extensive use of the \(\hat{5} – b\hat{6} – \hat{5}\) motive in Franz Schubert’s \textit{Winterreise}, analyzed in detail by Walter Everett. In his article he quotes Carl Schacter’s description of this motive in other Schubert songs:

Its most prominent tones – A-Bb-A (the key being D minor) – form a musical idiom that has had an age-old association with ideas of death, grief and lamentation. The musical basis of this association is surely the descending half-step (\(b\hat{6} – \hat{5}\) in minor) with its goal-directed and downward motion, its semitonal intensity, and the ‘sighing’ quality it can so easily assume.\(^59\)

\(^57\) Ibid., 11.
\(^58\) Ibid., 4.
**Augmented Triad**

Franz Liszt is among the first composers to make prominent use of the augmented triad. Liszt not only uses the augmented triad as a leading sonority but also uses it in association with death. The first piece where we witness this is *Funérailles*, composed in 1849. The augmented triad also plays a prominent role as a sonic symbol of death in later works such as *La lugubre gondola* I and II and *R. W. -Venezia*.

**Funeral March**

The funeral march has played a very functional role as death music in society. It was first used as music to process the coffin and its mourners to the streets to the gravesite. The march style comes from the need to keep those carrying the coffin (many times military personnel) in step. However, the overall style must also take into account the mourners who are not marching but following in a slow processional. Even when the genre is used outside of its place as functional music, “the funeral march is inseparable from the profound purpose which its original function served—the burial of the dead.”

Richard Burke offers this insight regarding the history of the funeral march as a concert piece.

> The actual use of the term “funeral march,” or its equivalent, *marche funèbre*, *Trauermarsch*, etc., is quite specific in the late eighteenth century. It indicates a piece of instrumental music capable of standing on its own which displays distinct characteristics of both the march and *Trauermusik*.

Burke goes on to describe the characteristics that define a funeral march as the use of minor mode (often in a flat key), slow tempo, dotted rhythms, and an emphasis on the

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Phrygian mode with a focus on $\hat{3}$ in the thematic material and the motion of the flat submediant to dominant.
Chapter Two: Analysis

Section 2.1: Prélude

We now turn to an analysis of Fauré’s incidental music whose movements were used to precede Acts I, II, III, and V. Each analysis will introduce the primary death symbolism and offer a general outline of the given movement. For the Prélude and La Mort de Mélisande I will provide a detailed melodic and harmonic analysis of each section, which will then be followed by an expressive analysis. The two inner movements are much more simple in their relationship to death and Maeterlinck’s text, therefore, I will focus primarily on the death symbolism used rather than a full analysis of every section.

As an introduction to the atmosphere of the play, the first movement, Prélude, serves a similar purpose to an opera overture. The primary symbolism of death that we will find are an emphasis on b6, elements of Phrygian mode, the augmented triad, and a hunting call.

Overall Form

A formal overview of the entire movement is provided in Table 2 on p. 52. Although there are thematic repetitions contained in the movement, it does not lend itself to a conventional form. The piece can be segmented into three sections (A, B, and C) that are connected with transitions. The movement concludes with a closing section that uses material from Themes A and B.

Fauré opens with a serene and mysterious Theme A, completely diatonic in G major, which does not complete the expected cadence on tonic. A transition follows Theme A, which uses a series of sequences to modulate to F# minor, the key of the
second theme. Fauré dovetails the cadence of the transition section with the opening of
the next section. Nectoux labels this Theme B as the “Theme of Destiny.”71 Through a
lengthening of rhythmic and melodic motion it provides contrast to Theme A. The next
transitional section, which is largely based on the first transition, builds intensity to a
dramatic climax, only to descend to a foreboding augmented triad. The augmented triad
is sustained as a pedal chord while the character of Golaud, the bearer of death, is
heralded with distant hunting calls. The closing section restates the second theme and
then ends the way the movement began with the opening melody, slightly altered with the
subtonic replacing the leading tone. We will now take a more detailed tour of the
Prélude to discover Fauré’s compositional means of introducing Maeterlinck’s characters
and the sorrowful fate that awaits them.

**Theme A (mm. 1-8): Tonal Analysis**

The opening melody, four measures in length, is grounded by a brief ascending
fifths sequence in the cellos. Marking it as important thematic material, Fauré
immediately repeats it in mm. 5-8. As the bass-line sketch in Figure 5 shows, the goal of
the ascending fifths is the submediant.

Figure 5

\[\text{Prélude: mm. 1-8}\]

\[\text{GM: I\textsuperscript{-}vi I\textsuperscript{-}vi}\]

The violins’ melody matches the simplicity of the bass line. Completely diatonic, the line
begins and ends on \(\hat{3}\). It moves mainly by step, ornamenting \(\hat{3}\) with neighboring motion.

It encompasses an intimate melodic range of a perfect fourth: G4 to C5. The four-voice texture is completed by the second violins and violas. They complement the simplicity of the outer voices with stepwise motion, and stable rhythmic patterns. This musical idea is immediately repeated. The only changes are a lowered dynamic level (from \( p \) to \( pp \)) and an added pizzicato in the basses to articulate the start of the repetition.

**Theme A: Expressive Analysis**

Immediately the listener is struck by the pure quality of the opening chord. The phrase starts on a \( mf \) but moves instantly to a \( quasi \ p \) as though the orchestra is releasing a great sigh. The orchestration of only strings provides a simplicity and delicacy in timbre, and the open spacing of the chord (from the bass through soprano: P5-M6-P8) gives a sense of pure innocence. This depiction is appropriate for the introduction of Mélisande, who appears so tender and naive.

The melody in the first violins enhances the delicate character with the focus on the mediant. As William Kimmel observes,

> The ambiguity and instability of the third scale degree is well known both from tuning theory and from musical practice. Its facility as a pivotal tone in oscillations between the major and related minor keys suggests that this point in a key possesses a “vulnerability,” that is it represents an unclear dividing line between the two reciprocal regions of the tonal system and hence…between regions of relative light and shadow, of relative dominance of the powers of life and death.\(^{63}\)

Taking this outlook, beyond the simplicity and delicacy of the line, there is also a sadness and uncertainty that shrouds it with a sense of mystery. The doubling in the opening chord of \( \hat{3} \) by the second violins emphasizes its focus and also the mere fact that the phrase begins and ends on the mediant. Fauré also cloaks the purity of this phrase with

\[63 \text{ Kimmel, “The Phrygian Inflection,” 13.}\]
the range he chose. All the strings are placed in a lower part of their register which imbues the music with a sense of depth and gravity.

Although the cellos’ four-note bass line is quite simple, it would be remiss not to acknowledge the effect it has on the character of this opening. It is this simple cello line that invokes much of the mystery. Harmonically the cellos outline the progression I-V-ii-vi. As shown in Figure 6A, if Fauré had wanted to close the phrase in a way that was expected by the listener, he could have simply stepped down to 5 on beat three of m. 2, creating a cadential 6/4-5/3 progression and then descended to the tonic in m. 3 to complete the imperfect authentic cadence. However, the character of this play holds more mystery and sorrow than such a predictable cadence could offer. Fauré ingeniously portrays this character musically through the sustained 6 in the cello, which undermines the anticipation of an authentic cadence and brings the cadential motion to rest on the submediant (see Figure 6B).

Figure 6A

![Figure 6A](image1)

Figure 6B

![Figure 6B](image2)

The harmonic progression and particularly the fermata on the submediant brings in the character of mystery and anticipation of what is to come. The Western ear is so trained in the routine and comfort of dominant to tonic progressions that the submediant offers little sense of resolution. In fact, the mere spelling and position of the chord in the Ionian mode suggest a feeling of floating. The root of the submediant is a whole step
between $\hat{5}$ and $\hat{7}$; the other chord members, the tonic and mediant, are immobile because they already belong to the tonic triad and therefore illicit no desire to resolve. This then provides the listener with a feeling of floating, unsure of how to define what led to this cadence and completely unsure of what is to come. This is a perfect portrayal of the first meeting of Golaud and Mélisande. Golaud is lost in the woods and finds Mélisande weeping by a pool of water, overtaken by her beauty he wishes to discover who she is:

Golaud: Has anyone hurt you?
Mélisande: Oh! Yes! Yes! Yes!...
Golaud: Who has hurt you?
Mélisande: Every one! Every one!
Golaud: What hurt have they done you?
Mélisande: I will not tell! I cannot tell!...
Golaud: Come; do not weep so. Whence come you?
Mélisande: I have fled! …fled…fled…
Golaud: Yes; but whence have you fled?
Mélisande: I am lost!...lost!...Oh! oh! Lost here….I am not of this place….I was not born here…
Golaud: Whence are you? Where were you born?
Mélisande: Oh! oh! far away from here!...far away…far away$^{64}$

Meaterlinck shows clearly the tenderness of Golaud for Mélisande. However, Mélisande is clearly distraught and therefore cannot produce anything that would offer the audience a sense of her origin. However, her naivety and vulnerability is clear. This leaves the audience with an ambiguous sense of their destiny. Fauré introduces and emphasizes this feeling of being suspended by holding the submediant (m. 3) with a dotted-half note tied to a half note which is then held by a fermata. The fact that he does not simply put the fermata on the first note but extends its rhythmic value and then places the fermata on the latter informs the performer that the fermata should be held for a reasonable length of time. Another example of this is found in Ludwig van Beethoven’s

$^{64}$ Maeterlinck, *Pelléas and Mélisande*, 22-3.
Symphony No. 5 in C minor, op. 67 where in the famous opening of the second statement has a half note added before the fermata. Beethoven is telling the conductor through his vocabulary of notation that the second fermata should be held longer than the first.

In the Fauré, after the fermata fades away there is a quarter rest, and then the phrase is repeated at a pp dynamic. The basses accentuate the start of the phrase with a single pizzacato on the tonic, doubled at the octave. This addition to the phrase sounds as a single bell toll that heralds the fateful journey that Golaud and Mélisande have assumed by intertwining their lives. The delicacy which characterizes the echo is portrayed through the added slur in each string part and the added dolcissimo marking. Although the dynamics and articulation of the phrase seem to hold more purity and gentleness, the melody still maintains the focus on the mediant and the cello line is more aggressive in its arrival on the submediant by articulating the final chord with the arrival of the other strings. This arrival makes it clear that there is no resolution, even within the beauty and simplicity, there is a sadness and darkness which attaches itself to the entire phrase.

**Transition (mm. 8-32): Tonal Analysis**

The first transition builds in intensity through a series of sequences to the climactic release into the second theme at m. 32.
Starting on the minor dominant of G major, the first sequence provides the first cadence on the tonic in m. 14. However, this cadence overlaps into the next sequence and thus provides no sense of rest. The next sequence moves to the predominant, but is not followed by a dominant-tonic progression. Instead a new sequential idea begins in m. 18, which arrives in m. 22 on the dominant of A minor. Although the descending bass line outlines an A minor triad, the arrival on the low A in m. 24 is not supported by an A minor triad. Instead, the A is part of a fully-diminished seventh chord of E which functions as a secondary dominant to the dominant of A minor. The bass again descends by step to A and the low A once again acts as part of a fully diminished seven chord of E. Fauré then begins a harmonic motion of descending fifths whose goal is the key of Theme B, F# minor. The close of this transition brings us our first important cadence of the piece. While the motion to F# minor is strengthened by the descending fifths, Fauré
undercuts the arrival of F# minor in m. 32 by a chromatic appoggiatura chord and by the
substitution of the submediant for the expected tonic.

The melodic material of the transition is derived from the opening theme.
Starting on the first violins’ second note, the pattern can be seen as a close retrograde of
the previous line starting on the last note of m. 2 and working backwards through the
measure.

Figure 8

Prélude:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{m. 2} & \quad \text{m. 2 retrograde} & \quad \text{m. 9}
\end{align*}
\]

This melodic idea is then twice sequenced at a third (the third time altering the line
slightly) before it reaches a climax on a I\(^6\) (m. 12) and resolves to a perfect authentic
cadence (m. 14). The second sequence, melodically derived from the first sequence,
again builds intensity through ascending motion, this time by a whole step transposition.
It arrives at a high point in m. 17, which disintegrates immediately into another sequence.
The motive of the first two sequences is only one measure long. In the third sequence the
motive is extended a second measure by a varied repetition of the previous measure and
then repeated up a whole step. This time there is only one sequential repetition.

The climactic passage of the section begins in m. 22. It opens with a canon
between the first and second violins and the cellos and basses. This idea is echoed and
expanded from the interval of a P4 to a tritone. Following each of these outbursts is the
opening theme, first in the oboe and then in the flute and clarinet. The final melodic sequence begins in m. 28. This sequence combines the melodic ideas of the previous sequences, descending a third and then using neighbor motion. The sequence rises by step with the third statement echoed with a slight variation as it prepares for the cadence in F# minor and the arrival of Theme B.

**Transition: Expressive Analysis**

In the opening of this transitional section Fauré begins to expand the pure diatonicism of the opening theme. The first chromatic note (the subtonic) makes its appearance on the downbeat of m. 9. F natural will play an important role throughout this movement reappearing at important expressive junctures (climaxes in mm. 25 and 66, and as the final chromatic pitch in the movement in m. 88). Fauré also expands the orchestration. The first wind instrument to enter is the flute in m. 10. The flute plays a prominent role in the Suite, especially in relationship to Mélisande’s character, guiding her to her final resting place at the close of *La Mort de Mélisande*.

In the climax of this transition (mm. 22-28) there is a very clear battle between the passionate forces behind Pelléas and Mélisande’s love and the naivety and youth of Mélisande’s character. The passion is exemplified in the syncopated outburst in the violins which is overlapped by the same statement in the cellos and basses. As exclamation dies away, the A theme emerges in the oboe. Just as the gentle melody is about to cadence the syncopated outburst returns, this times expanding upwards from a P4 (B-E) to a tritone (B-F). As the tension dissipates, the A theme returns in the flute and clarinet.
Notice in the climax the continual emphasis on $\hat{3}$. The passionate outburst leaps away from the mediant and returns immediately to it, while the A theme enters in its wake to claim the phrase and continue the focus on $\hat{3}$. Thus through the thickening chromaticism Fauré is able to maintain the expressive presence of the mediant, that of vulnerability and the struggle between life and death.

Looking at the bass-line sketch we see an ascent from G (m. 14) up to E (m. 22) and then a neighbor motion to F (m. 25) and back to E (m. 27). By this time the music is moving towards the key of A minor, thereby allowing us to hear this neighboring motion as scale-degrees $\hat{5}$-b$\hat{6}$-$\hat{5}$. In this way Fauré prepares the listener for the prominent gesture of grief that will dominate the second theme.

While the music finally arrives on the tonic of A in m. 28, its larger function is as a mediant within a cadential progression. As mentioned earlier, the cadential progression is comprised of a descending fifths progression. Fauré glances at the Phrygian mode through a Neapolitan before moving to a $V^9$.

Returning to the bass-line sketch, in this transition we can see that almost all the sequential cells are made up of small descending linear progressions. In contrast, the sequential cells of the melody constantly reach upward. The bass-line thereby tempers the melody’s ascent with a sense of restraint and gravity. This transition holds the heart of the play at its core. The struggle of Mélisande and Pelléas to create something beautiful and ethereal, while tied to the earthly vows they have already made. Out of these opposing forces grief must be born.

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65 Octave displacement occurs in this stepwise ascent.
Theme B (mm. 32-41): Tonal Analysis

Figure 9

Prelude: mm. 32-41

While the first theme was harmonically stable, the second theme weakens the harmonic structure through suspensions, added notes, and the avoidance of a cadence in the local key of F# minor. There is a clear cadential preparation for F# at the end of the transition. However, the tonic resolution of the cadence is masked by long suspensions (mm. 28-32). In fact, there is no tonic triad to be found. The suspensions resolve into a tonic substitute – a D major triad in first inversion. The suspension above the tonic bass in m. 32 produces a half-diminished 7th chord on E. This suspension figure repeats itself in mm. 34-35. It appears that it will be repeated again in m. 36 only this time the F# is taken away and only the half-diminished chord is present with the E in the bass. One important result of this extremely dissonant and chromatic suspension figure is the presence of G, which inflects the key of F# minor with the Phrygian mode.

While there is no cadential confirmation of F# minor or pure F# minor triads, Fauré is able to dimly project a sense of F# minor through the constant reiteration of F# in the bass-line. As the voice-leading sketch shows, the bass-line is organized as a large
arch traversing two octaves from F#2 to F#3 to F#4 before descending back down to F#2.

**Theme B: Expressive Analysis**

In the first four measures (mm. 32-36) we see captured the expressive essence of what Nectoux called the “theme of destiny.” While the opening theme was very sedentary in its melodic range (always revolving around 3), the second theme reaches outwards, spanning an octave and a sixth (A-F#). Adding to the sense of emotional expansion is the flute in its upper register combined with the cello in its upper register, which create a pleading duet. This falling interval of a minor sixth (m. 33) embodies a Phrygian gesture and, in Kimmel’s words, an “encounter with death.” A more explicit reference to the Phrygian mode is found in the varied repetition of this opening motive. The change is that instead of falling a minor sixth to the tonic, the b6 falls a perfect fifth to a G. The longer durations in the melody also enhances the pleading and grieving character if the music.

In m. 36 the opening of the second theme is stated one last time. As the line descends it is suddenly replaced by a sweeping gesture outlining the tonic triad (m. 39). This melodic swell, in its rhythmic motion, dynamics, and clear harmonic focus, pulls momentum back into the phrase. And we find that once again our focus has been guided by the mediant, which begins and closes this sweeping gesture.

---

Transition 2 (mm. 42-69): Tonal Analysis

Figure 10

Prélude: mm. 42-69

The second transition begins with a restatement of the second theme. The F# in the bass is set against an E half-diminished chord. The opening two measures of the transition are then sequenced up a whole step. A climactic point is arrived at in m. 46. While there is some hint at the home key of G major, the tonality of this passage (mm. 46-47) is ambiguous. A sense of momentum and continuity is provided by the melodic line which descends through an elaborated series of fifths (E-A-D-G-C). A stronger sense of G major is established in mm. 49-50 with a IV-V-I progression. However, the cadence turns its attention back towards IV with an added seven to the tonic triad. The secondary dominant of IV continues in a series of inversion. The harmonic goal of this progression is a V/V, which prepares the dominant that begins the next sequential progression.
The sequential pattern that begins in m. 54 is based off the sequence in m. 14. Here Fauré expands the sequential unit from one to three measures in length. The reason for this extension is that the winds, instead of doubling the sequential material, have brought back the A theme. Importantly, Theme A is stated at its original pitch level thus confirming that G major is the controlling key of this passage. As the sequence continues it becomes progressively smaller from three measures in length (mm. 54-59), to two measures (mm. 60-61), and finally one measure in length (mm. 62-64). The progressive shortening of the sequential units coupled with a crescendo and rising line spirals us towards the structural climax of the movement (m. 66).

At the climax the melody surges downwards through three octaves emphasizing G Phrygian mode. In m. 68 the third beat is transformed into a V7, and it appears that the climax will be released to a tonic chord. However, the stability of the tonic is weakened by the presence of an Eb. Aurally, we hear this pitch as D# of a G augmented triad.

**Transition 2: Expressive Analysis**

Undoubtedly, the most important expressive events of this transition are the structural climax and the cadence that follows. There are three components which create expressive depth in this structural climax:

1. In preparation for the climax a vii\(^7\)/ii is outlined in the descending cellos and bass. The seventh (subtonic) of the chord is emphasized as the highest note which is tolled out in a syncopated rhythm. Every instrument which is not on this F natural resolves to the root and third of a ii chord. However, the F natural remains resolute, manipulating the expected cadence to a ii chord into a bVII.
2. As the climactic release of m. 66 descends it outlines the tonic triad moving from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{3}$ on beat 2. But instead of leaping down to the tonic, it moves to $b\hat{2}$ and then passes onto the tonic. The inflection of the Phrygian mode is prepared enharmonically by the violas on beat two (m. 66) playing a G# and B.

3. The most captivating, yet subtle, expressive element Fauré employs is the use of the augmented tonic triad to close this tumultuous section. The idea that Fauré would create harmonic motion towards a clear goal and then cloud the final cadential arrival is not new. Recall the preparation of the second theme in mm. 28-32. In that instance Fauré has modulated to a remote key, therefore the undermining of that arrival does not create such a strong feeling of deception. In the case of the resolution of the climax, the music has been searching for a way back to the tonic key, which has been hinted at since m. 54. Therefore, the structural dominant that arrives on beat 3 of m. 68 has been too long awaited to not create a strong expectation of the tonic. The presence of the tonic is so strong that the Eb in m. 69 at first seems a mere suspension just awaiting resolution. However, we find in the next few measures not a resolution, but a confirmation of the tonic as an augmented triad.

Also interesting is an associative connection between the high points preceding this climax. The second theme is centered on D, the high point of the smaller climax in m. 46 is E, and the high point of the structural climax is F. Through this association we can see that from the very earliest moments of the movement Fauré has been preparing the listener for this arrival in m. 66. Such a release of emotional tension seems appropriate for the end of the story. However, the story has only just begun, and the
cadential “resolution” allows the tension to rediscover itself in the subdued undercurrent of the G augmented triad. The tension simmers, waiting to be released into the anguished grief of *La Mort de Mélisande*.

**Closing (69-end): Tonal Analysis**

Figure 11

*Prélude*: mm. 69-end

![Musical notation]

The augmented triad is quietly sustained in the strings. Overtop the horn sounds a hunting call on Eb. After a brief statement of the second theme the hunting call is heard again over the sustained augmented triad. In m. 77 the flute arpeggiates through an Eb triad bringing back the second theme. The bass line is emphasizes the return of G major through a neighboring motion to the leading tone. The pure tonic triad is finally reached in m. 85. In the final four measures the opening theme returns. On its final appearance Fauré allows the theme to end on a tonic chord.

**Closing: Expressive Analysis**

Fauré dramatizes the effect of the hunting call by using a French horn, a descendent of the hunting horn known in France as the trumpe de chasse (horn of the chase). The horn sounds an Eb. This note on the horn falls in the middle of the overtone series. For the note to be in tune the player must allow the bell to be as open as possible, drawing his/her hand out of the bell. This gives the note a very raw, unbridled sound,
certainly appropriate for the open air. The rhythms also call forth the image of the hunt through the dotted rhythms and sextuplets, which suggest the rhythms of a galloping horse. This call heralds the character of Golaud not just as a bearer of death in the forest in which he is lost, but also to those characters whom he holds most dear, Pelléas and Mélisande. This role of Golaud is emphasized by the subsequent entrance of the “theme of destiny” played mournfully by the solo cello and the second violins in m. 74.

The clarinet, after it states the second theme starting in m. 78, echoes the melodic cell swirling around $\hat{5}$ in m. 81. Underneath, the first violins rise chromatically from $\hat{1}$ to $\hat{3}$, stretching up to $\hat{4}$ as though attempting one more desperate reach beyond the shadows of the mediant before descending back diatonically to the tonic. The final four bars close the movement as it began. The phrase once more communicates the beauty and mystery that will unfold in the forthcoming story. However, in this closing phrase, Fauré does not avoid the tonic triad in the final bars, although he still keeps the $\hat{3}$ in the soprano so that the sense of vulnerability is maintained. Also darkening the phrase is the appearance of the first altered tone that entered the piece, the lowered seventh.
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I. Evaluation

Table 2
Section 2.2: *Fileuse*

Fileuse, a spinning song, precedes Act III. In the first scene of Act III Mélisande spins while talking quietly with Pelléas and Yniold. The gentle character of this scene soon fades as the extreme emotions of the rest of the act come forth. Indeed, in this act all the forces that are guiding the play are clearly defined: Golaud’s extreme jealousy and anger, and the youth and naivety of Yniold and Mélisande, and the love of Pelléas and Mélisande and their inevitable fate. The primary love scene (scene 2) between Pelléas and Mélisande is tempered by the following scene of Golaud and Pelléas surrounded by the fowl smells of the castles vaults. Towards the end of Act III Maeterlinck contrasts the innocence of Yniold with Golaud’s jealous anger as he tries to pry information from Yniold about Pelléas’s and Mélisande’s love for each other. These contrasting ideas are no longer seen through a veil of subtle imagery; Maeterlinck forcefully shows a battle between light and dark, life and death, good and evil. It is true artistry how in the music of *Fileuse* Fauré prepares the audience for Maeterlinck’s contrast and intertwining of light and dark.

As shown in Table 3, found on p. 59, this movement, recalling the key of the *Prélude*, is in G major and composed in a straightforward ternary form (ABA\(^1\)). In the B section we will find Fauré’s clear allusions to death through his use of the Phrygian mode, lament bass, and the \(5\)-b\(6\)-\(5\) grief motive. In the last section he foreshadows the interaction of good and evil so prominent in Act III by weaving the B theme through the much lighter and naïve A theme, which is slightly altered in its return.

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67 This scene is omitted in Debussy’s opera.
Section A

The stage is clearly set for the opening scene with the image and sound of a spinning wheel, which is suggested by the first violins’ whirling neighboring figures set in triple meter. The underlying pizzicatos rhythmically guide this gentle whir, just as the nimble fingers of a spinner guides the unspun wool. The constant presence of this motive in some form creates the sensation of a spinning wheel whirring as white noise in the background – soothing and steady, never ceasing. Although there is a calming nature to this gesture, it also contains a vibrancy like the constant ticking of a clock. Once this pattern is established Theme A enters, played by the oboe and bassoon. The lyrical courtship between the two wind instruments creates a lover’s duet that is calm and gentle. The persistent C#s in the melody do not serve to tonicize the dominant but rather to inflect the Lydian mode. In comparison to the Phrygian mode, which had a strong presence in the Prélude and will make an appearance in the Fileuse as well, the Lydian mode is lighter in character; it is the only mode other than Ionion to have a leading tone. This lighter quality is also caused by a leading-tone motion towards the dominant with the half step between $^4$ and $^5$.

The B section (mm. 18-33) provides sharp musical and expressive contrast to the first theme. The most obvious element of contrast is the modal switch from G major to G minor. This change in mode is immediately noticeable in the spinning motive of the accompaniment. Rather than ornamenting a descending line, as in the opening section, Fauré introduces the first symbol of death: the grief motive of $^5$-$^6$-$^5$. This gesture is traded back and forth between the violas and second violins. The impact of this ornamented dominant pedal is subtle due to its placement in an inner voice. However,
the incessant presence of this gesture suggests a demonic undercurrent. This demonic character comes to fruition in Scene 2 of Act IV when Golaud seizes Mélisande by her hair and sneers at her false innocence. In Act III, though, Golaud’s jealous rage is held just below the surface. Maeterlinck paints a clear picture of this underlying tension in Golaud’s and Pelléas’ tour of the castles vaults.

Golaud: Wells, this is the stagnant water that I spoke of to you....Do you perceive the smell of death that rises?
Pelléas: I smell it already;...you would say a smell of the tomb.68

This inner voice of death is reinforced by the cellos and basses, which, as shown in Figure 12, provide an elaborated lament bass.

Figure 12

Fileuse: mm. 19-22

Contrast is also found in the melodic material. While Theme A is characterized as naive, simple, and slightly playful, Theme B is sobering in its secretive darkness. The extreme change in character is achieved, as already mentioned, through mode, but also through changes in orchestration (oboe and bassoon are replaced by clarinet and horn), a lower register, and the use of longer durations. Most importantly, with regards to this

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68 Maeterlinck, Pelléas and Mélisande, 66.
paper, is the introduction of $b^2$, which inflects the Phrygian mode (mm. 24 and 31). In this middle section, death steps out from the shadows.

**Section A**

The opening A theme returns in m. 34, introduced by the gentle spinning motive in the first violins. If the simple genius of this movement has not yet been noticed, it is certainly foregrounded in the intertwining of Theme A and Theme B. The oboe begins with a restatement of Theme A seemingly unaware of the darkness that preceded it. However, before the bassoon can respond to the oboe’s line, the somber horn melody of Theme B enters in m. 39. The return of Theme B is only four-measures long at which point the oboe again offers its soothing melodic line. However, in this statement the oboe has been affected by the somberness of the horns. The previously raised subdominant is lowered to its natural position, and the leading tone of the tonic is also lowered (mm. 42-43).

In m. 58 it appears that the oboe has begun the final melodic statement of the piece. The line leaps down a minor sixth ($4^\flat$-$6^\flat$) and then returns stepwise to $1^\flat$ reestablishing the leading tone. The melodic line is harmonically supported by the cadential progression $ii^6-V^7-I$. This seems a natural place to close as it matches the material which concluded Theme A in mm. 17-18. With the arrival of I in m. 59, however, the line immediately arpeggiates upwards two octaves outlining the tonic traid. In the next measure the ascent soars to $3^\flat$ at which point a one-measure sequence begins. Building intensity, the sequence climbs to the highpoint, being $1^\flat$. After reaching the tonic the melody falls down the familiar interval of a minor sixth to $3^\flat$ from whence it
came. Once again we see a leaning towards Phrygian mode with the emphasis on $\dfrac{4}{3}$ and the sighing descent of the minor sixth. This descending sixth is echoed by most of the orchestra before the spinning motive returns in the first violins (m. 64). The return of the opening texture of the movement begins the true closing section of the movement.

Before looking at the last section of the movement, we find two points of interest in this climactic passage (mm. 59-65) which warrant further discussion. Within the context of the entire movement there is something unique about this passage: this is the only place in the movement where the constant sixteenth-note motion of the spinning motive is not heard. However, looking closely at the counter-line beginning with the pickup to m. 60, we find the spinning motive in its simplest form, without the neighbor-note ornamentation. This motive is sequenced up by step to match the sequential motion of the melody. In a manner similar to mm. 14-21 of the Prélude, we see how a feeling of gravity can be created when an ascending line is counterpointed with a shorter descending cell that is repeated over and over.

The other point of interest in this climactic passage is the role of the oboe. As mentioned the oboe plays a prominent role in Theme A. In the climactic passage, however, which is based on Theme A, the oboe disappears, only to return at the exact moment of the descending minor sixth (mm. 63-64). The oboe again does not play as the orchestra echoes the descending minor sixth, but returns with the beginning of the closing section (pick up to m. 66). It is difficult to determine with any certainty the possible expressive motivations behind the orchestration because of Koechlin’s involvement. Although Fauré approved the score, it is difficult to know if there was more intended than merely giving the oboist a rest. However, I feel there is a strong connection between the
opening melody and the character of Mélisande. It is as if Fauré is showing us that although Mélisande may be the root of the conflict in the play, her naivety does not allow her to be an active contributor to the dramatic events that unfold. Therefore, her innocence creates a great sadness, shown in the sighing descent of the minor sixth.

The closing section is very much tied to the opening. The first violins take up the spinning motive as the oboe tenderly offers one last melodic motive, again using the descending and ascending minor sixth (mm. 65-67). As in the false closing section (mm. 51-55), the flute and clarinet answer the oboe with an ascending perfect fifth. This time the oboe does not respond, rather the second violins provide a celestial ascending fifth using natural harmonics. The flute and clarinet repeat the ascending fifth, beckoning to the oboe. The oboe answers this time, not with a perfect fifth but with an ascending perfect octave. This celestial sound mingles with that of the harmonics and hovers over the continuing whir of the violins, which are marked by pizzicatos only on the downbeat. The oboe releases its held note with the last pizzicato. The closing tonic chord is held only by the flutes and clarinets, sounding an echo of everything that has come before.

The vulnerability of 3 that concluded the Prélude is also found in the final chord of the Fileuse.
Section 2.3: Sicilienne

The Sicilienne was originally composed by Fauré for violincello and piano in 1893. Its inclusion in the incidental music was probably due to the short timeframe Fauré had to complete the score (May to early June, 1898). We may assume that the decision took into consideration its compatibility with Maeterlinck’s drama and with the music of the other movements. Obviously, because the Sicilienne came to fruition prior to the actual commission, we cannot tie any compositional elements as being conceived specifically for the purpose of foreshadowing the death of Pelléas and Mélisande. However, we can look at the character and style of the composition and compare it with what was composed solely as incidental music. Through its melancholy character and the use of Phrygian mode, the lament bass, and the augmented triad, we can understand why it found a place within this suite.

Although it serves as the third movement of the Suite, this movement in the complete incidental music precedes Act II, in which the opening scene portrays innocent play and youthful attraction. Pelléas and Mélisande are found sitting by “Blindman’s Fountain” where Mélisande, as she playfully tosses her wedding ring, accidentally drops it into the fountain. As Pelléas tries to soothe her fears over the loss of the ring, we witness the first portrayal by Maeterlinck of the tenderness and mutual attraction between the young people. There is a very clear sense of naivety and innocence that draws compassion from the audience rather than judgment for the infidelity of the attraction. Fauré probably chose to include this piece not only for its light quality and natural innocence, but also for an underlying sense of darkness which is provided by the minor key and above mentioned musical symbols of death.
Section I

The *Sicilienne* can be divided into three sections with the following thematic design: ABA/CB/A. The opening section starts gently in G minor with the flute accompanied by the harp. Theme A is eight-measures long, split into two four-measure phrases. The second phrase is a varied repetition of the first phrase. Although the quick ascent and lilting rhythm create a light character, the repetition is darkened by the inflection of the Phrygian mode with $b^2$ and by the accompanying lament bass (mm. 6 and 7). To close the first phrase, a solo first violin enters with a chromatically descending line, sighing through a minor third then rising back to the tonic through the leading tone with an imperfect authentic cadence.

Theme A is then repeated with variation. The accompaniment is slightly altered through orchestration while the harp stays constant. In the closing measure (m. 17) the harp, which had previously outlined a minor tonic triad (m. 9), now outlines a major tonic triad.

Theme B is a four-measure phrase that is repeated, as was Theme A. The orchestration is expanded in the repetition, layering entrances of woodwinds. This builds to a melodic release starting in m. 26. As seen in the two previous movements, Fauré counteracts the light, ascending melodic gesture of Theme B with a descending line in the violas. The point of interest in this countermelody is how the repetition of the second phrase is treated (mm. 22-25). In the first statement, the second measure (m. 19) contains a chromatic descent on beat two from $\hat{3}$ to $\hat{1}$, using a passing $b^2$. In the second measure of the restatement (m. 23), the violas, instead of ascending to $\hat{3}$, as they had previously,

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68 An outline of the *Sicilienne* can be found on p. 65.
descend a semitone to \( b^\hat{2} \), giving it more emphasis as the line moves to a neighboring
tonic and then back to \( b^\hat{2} \). This use of \( b^\hat{2} \) creates an instability that darkens the otherwise
playful rhythms which characterize the thematic material.

Similarly to the main climax in the *Prélude*, the climax at m. 26 gives purpose to
the direction of all the previous phrases. The forward momentum that was created by the
uneven rhythms suddenly drops out as the line moves from a dotted quarter note to a
quarter note. The dynamics give great emphasis to this gesture with a *sf* followed by a
decrescendo, where before the melodic line stayed within the realm of *mp*. The rhythm
and dynamics combined with the descending fourth offer a release from the clipped
rhythms of the preceding melodic material and from the constant motion of the harp’s
accompaniment.

The harmonies here are quite interesting: an F dominant 7\(^{th}\) chord with an added
ninth moving to an E half-diminished 7\(^{th}\) chord in first inversion. Although it would
seem that the second chord would hold the most tension, we find instead that it serves to
release the tension. The dynamics and the descending melodic fourth certainly contribute
to this interpretation. Another factor is the counterpoint between the outer voices, which
move from a major ninth to a perfect fifth. One can actually think of the second chord as
a minor tonic triad with an added major 6\(^{th}\).

This gesture of release is repeated three more times, the last time at the dynamic
level of *p*. Each time it is answered with a motive derived from Theme A. In the last
statement (m. 32) the register drops along with the dynamics; and the second chord of the
progression removes the E so that it is now a G-minor triad. Again \( b^\hat{2} \) of the Phrygian
mode makes an appearance in m. 33. The b\(^2\) is supported by a descending lament bass that leads to a perfect authentic cadence.

This cadence dovetails with the return of Theme A. The entire first theme is presented with the echo, again emphasizing b\(^2\). The perfect authentic cadence in mm. 40-41 provides closure for the entire first section. The tonic of this cadence is transformed into an Eb major triad, preparing us for the key of the second section starting in m. 44.

**Section II**

Section II begins with a duet between a solo flute and cello. Harmonically, the bass line grounds us in the key of Eb major with a constant pedal of either ¹ or ⁵. However, the melody inflects the minor mode with a consistent use of b⁶ and b⁷. Fauré not only melds the worlds of light and dark through modal mixture but also within the character of the two melodic ideas. The flute contrasts its descending line with the lilting rhythms of Theme A. Fauré counters the flute’s gesture by giving the solo cello an ascent of a minor ⁹th with more gentle rhythms.

The return of Theme B functions as a preparation to G minor and the return of Theme A. This is almost an exact repetition. There are slight alterations in orchestration, and the dynamics in the last statement of the release gesture are lowered to pp so that the softening in character is even more defined. Aside from these differences it still contains the same sense of release, like a great breath exhaled, with forward motion expressed between each release.
Section III

The beginning of the third section is defined by the return of Theme A. The first eight measures are almost an exact replica of the opening theme. The most important difference is the cadence. Instead of a perfect authentic cadence, Fauré uses a deceptive cadence (m. 77). The Eb tonality is sustained four measures before returning to G minor in m. 81 through a perfect authentic cadence. Here the Phrygian mode is emphasized once again. After all the playfulness that this movement holds, Fauré is determined to cast a shadow through the presence of the Phrygian mode.

Fauré allows light and dark to battle through the closing section. The violas and second violins use b2 while the clarinet maintains the A natural. The more mournful gesture which emphasizes the Phrygian mode is found in m. 81 with the cellos and basses sighing from 1 to b2 and then back to 1. This gesture only gains strength as it descends through a lament bass. Above however, the second violins attempt to bring a gentle close with the raised 7 and natural 2 that resolves to 1 (mm. 82-83). As we may have guessed, in the end darkness prevails – the flute offers the last statement of this melodic idea with the lowered 6 and 7.

Although this movement was not composed with the story of Pelléas and Mélisande in mind, I believe we can now better understand why this movement feels at home when matched with this play and the other movements. Through the lightness in character and orchestration we see a similarity to the Fileuse. In regards to death imagery, although we do not know whether it was composed with that intention, we see Fauré employs the use of the lament bass and Phrygian mode to juxtapose the more lilting character of the thematic material with an underlying darkness.
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Table 4
Section 2.4: La Mort de Mélisande

Act IV closes with Pelléas taking his last breath at the foot of the fountain after being stabbed by Golaud. Meanwhile the latter pursues the fleeing Mélisande into the forest. Fauré sets the stage for Act V with a funeral march for Mélisande which prepares the audience for the death of the innocent and naive heroine.

Overall Form

This movement acts as a bookend to the Prélude. In Nectoux’s words: “In its gravity and poignancy it recaptures the high level of inspiration we find in the Prélude.”

The movement is arranged in three large sections using the thematic design $A^1BA^2/C/A^1A^2B$ as seen in Table 5, on p. 81. The opening section, which returns at the end, draws from the genre of the funeral march. It is comprised of two primary themes whose relationship calls to mind the Romantic tradition of interspersing a contrasting trio section in the middle of a funeral march. Moreover, the character of the two themes mirrors Chopin’s approach to the funeral march. Themes $A^1$ and $A^2$ are heavy in character with agitated rhythms and dissonant harmonies in D minor. Theme B, with its soothing ascending line, simple rhythms, and modal harmonies in D Dorian, moves the audience to a distant and nostalgic view of death. Following the first section there is a transition which uses sequences to arrive at the structural climax. The transition and the climactic sections use material derived from Theme A. With the return of the first section Fauré withholds Theme B until the end of the movement. Theme B is extended four measures with the flute ascending through a D Phrygian scale.

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69 My primary source for this movement is Richard Burke, The Marche Fune‘bre from Beethoven to Mahler (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1991).
70 Nectoux, Gabriel Fauré, p. 157.
71 An example of this is Chopin’s Sonata No. 2 in Bb minor, Op. 35, 3rd mvt.
Section I: Tonal Analysis

Theme $A^1$(mm. 1-8)

Theme $A^1$ is an eight-measure period divided into two equal phrases. The first four-measure phrase begins with a Plagal motion from i to iv. The second phrase closes with a Plagal cadence iv$^7$-ii$^7$-i. We can see in the bass line sketch and also in the melodic line, the emphasis on the subdominant is a characteristic feature of this movement. Looking at the entire harmonic outline given in the bass sketch it is apparent that this cadence is important due to its being the only true cadence on the tonic of D minor until m. 54. The orchestration of Theme $A^1$ is simple with flutes and clarinets supplying the melody and countermelody, and the cellos and basses accompanying with pizzicatos. In m. 1 the melody begins on the tonic (low in their range) and ascends through an octave (mm. 1-6). The last two measures of the melody descend, inflecting Phrygian mode, back to the starting tonic. The primary countermelody played by the first clarinet introduces the grief motive of $\hat{5}-b\hat{6}-\hat{5}$.

The characteristics of this movement which reference the genre of the funeral march are:

1. Dotted rhythms
2. Slow tempo
3. Minor mode
4. Plagal motion/cadences
5. Regular melodic structure (four-bar phrases)
Figure 13

*La Mort de Mélisande* Bass line sketch
Theme B (mm. 9-12)

There are obvious differences between Theme A and B such as orchestration, rhythm, and modality. The four-measure theme maintains the D as tonic but now is clearly in Dorian mode. The first violins’ ascending line, which outlines the tonic, is contrasted after one measure by a descending line which begins in the bassoon and then is joined by the violas in m. 10. While the bassoon breaks off its descent (m. 12) the violas continue the descent to the end of the phrase, which is articulated with a modal half-cadence. Comparing the bass line sketch of Theme A\textsuperscript{1} with Theme B we see a clear diversion in the bass line sketch from the more chromatic line of Theme A\textsuperscript{1} and the simple descending scale of Theme B. While the harmonies in Theme A\textsuperscript{1} are dominated by dissonant 7\textsuperscript{th} chords, Theme B is comprised of pure triads, the majority of which are major. The rhythmic motion is now smooth, and, importantly, without the agitation of the dotted rhythms.

Theme A\textsuperscript{2} (mm. 13-20)

Section I closes with a varied return of Theme A\textsuperscript{1}. Looking at the bass line sketch we can see the return is established through the prolongation of D as tonic but that the overall motion of the bass line is quite varied. Similarities between Theme A\textsuperscript{1} and A\textsuperscript{2} are apparent in a very similar accompaniment of pizzicatos, and a nearly exact repetition of the penultimate measure. Although this theme is also divided evenly into two four-measure phrases, the division is not as clear due to a two-measure sequence which extends into the second phrase. Looking at the bass line sketch we see the harmony of Theme A\textsuperscript{2} does not take the phrase to the same brief cadence as in m. 5 of Theme A\textsuperscript{1}, rather it sustains the predominant harmony to the end of the phrase.
The sequence found in the flutes mimics the first measure of Theme A\(^1\) with the double-dotted march rhythm. As in the Prélude, the sequence is repeated twice, each time transposed up a perfect fourth. The melody is emphasized by a countersubject in the violas that is also sequenced up a transposition of a fourth. When the melodic line has ascended an octave and a fourth, it plunges down the octave to begin the cadential progression, the same Plagal cadence as previously heard in mm. 7-8. However, Fauré evades the tonic resolution by substituting it with a V\(^7\)/iv. Referring to the bass line sketch we see that once again Fauré grounds his ascending melodic line with the gradually descending pizzicatos in the cellos and basses.

**Section I: Expressive Analysis**

*Theme A\(^1\)*

Although Theme A\(^1\) is steeped in death elements traditionally associated with the funeral march, such as Plagal motion, dotted rhythms, slow tempo, and a minor mode, Fauré suspends the instant acknowledgement of the genre in his approach to the first measure. The double-dotted rhythm, so necessary to mark the footsteps of the casketbearers, is not employed until the final beat (beat 3). The movement instead opens with a gentle tonic triad in first inversion played by the flutes and clarinets. This clouding of the genre in the first two beats corresponds to Maeterlinck’s opening of Act V. Rather than taking the audience directly to Mélisande’s room where she lays dying, the first scene portrays a group of female servants who speak vaguely of what has happened and what is about to take place.

An Old Servant: You will see, you will see, my daughters; it will be to-night. – Some one will come to tell us by and by… Another Servant: They will not come to tell us…They don’t know what they are doing any longer…. 
As the servants give an account of what has passed since the scene by the fountain, pages pass before Golaud and Pelléas’ names are mentioned. This avoidance of direct association is increased as the name of our heroine is never uttered throughout the scene. While Maeterlinck draws a curtain over the main object of concern in this first scene, Fauré introduces the Mélisande as the primary focus immediately by the gentle instrumentation. The use of the flute and clarinet on the opening melody and countermelody contrasts from the traditional use of oboe. The use of the oboe stems from its capability to project. After this introduction of Mélisande’s character in the first chord Fauré makes a clear portrayal of a funeral march.

Fauré introduces the character of the funeral march by starting the opening chord with the distant but heavy first step of the mourners, depicted in the low pizzicato bass line. Why Fauré chose to use string instruments rather than the timpini is explained by Burke: “The use of the imitation of the figure establishes this as a character piece.” In this instance Burke is referring to the slide in the basses found in the *Marcia funebre* from *Symphony No. 3* of Ludwig van Beethoven. This slide imitates the four-note ruff commonly played. Although Fauré’s funeral march is set for a specific person in the drama, the piece is intended only for the setting of the mood. Therefore, the use of the strings to represent the keeping of time by muffled drums is appropriate. Earlier in Burke’s writing he describes the function this drumbeat plays.

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73 Burke, *The Marche Funèbre*, p. 35.
74 Ibid., pp. 88-89.
The beat of the drum should, while keeping a military group in step, also give the illusion that the mourners, whether in a carriage or simply walking along with the cortège, are also moving in time. This twofold function is fulfilled by the vague, unfocused sound of the muffled drum which, when played in the open air, gives a uniform slow beat with an initial punctuating attack for those marching in time followed by a long decay which covers the lack of uniformity in those not actually marching…it was the sound of the drum and its solemn, subdued beat which would survive for centuries as a characteristic of the genre.75

With this understanding we clearly hear the trudging of the mourners laden with their sorrow as the cellos and basses create a foundation for the melody with their heavy pizzicatos. The depth of sorrow is drawn from within the texture as the first clarinet sighs through the \( \hat{5}-b\hat{6}-\hat{5} \) grief motive.

The horn enters to close each four-measure phrase with a sustained concert A. While the timbre, up to this point, has been pure, this addition of the muffled, suffocated cry of the stopped horn creates a foreboding character. This mournful cry also brings to mind the significant role the horn has already played in the Prélude when it introduced the character Golaud with a hunting call. Looking at the entire score we find that this hunting call has haunted the incidental music throughout the play.76

The overall arch of the phrase presents an ascent towards light as it inflects the major mode in the bass line with the raised \( \hat{6} \) and \( \hat{7} \). However, as the melody descends through the octave from whence it came, \( \hat{6} \) is once again flattened and \( b\hat{2} \) also makes its first appearance. Slightly different from Fauré’s approach to phrase rhythm thus far, there is no elision between Theme A\textsuperscript{1} and B. Theme A\textsuperscript{1} ends clearly with the Plagal cadence and Theme B begins a completely new character is almost every sense.

75 Ibid., pp. 19 and 28-29. 
76 Referencing back to the outline of the original incidental score on pp. 14-15 we see that the horn call was brought back immediately following the Prélude, three times in Act II, and once in Act IV.
Theme B

While the register of Theme B matches Theme A\textsuperscript{1} almost exactly, the change in timbre (low woodwinds giving way to violins) provides a much lighter and translucent sound. The simplicity of timbre, rhythm, melodic motion, and harmony, coupled with the rising melodic line provide for a pure, ethereal atmosphere. This musical portrayal of Mélisande’s character embodies her journey, tragedy, and hope for a love that breaks all earthly boundaries. The connection between this melodic gesture and Mélisande’s character is unmistakable when compared to the theme of Chanson de Mélisande.

Figure 14\textsuperscript{77}

Fileuse: second theme

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\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\begin{musicnote}\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\note{e}\end{musicnote}
\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\begin{musicnote}\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\note{g}\end{musicnote}
\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\begin{musicnote}\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\note{b}\end{musicnote}
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\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\begin{musicnote}\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\note{a}\end{musicnote}
\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\begin{musicnote}\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\note{c'}\end{musicnote}
\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\begin{musicnote}\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\note{f'}\end{musicnote}
\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\begin{musicnote}\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\note{g'}\end{musicnote}
\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\begin{musicnote}\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\note{a'}\end{musicnote}
\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\begin{musicnote}\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\note{b'}\end{musicnote}
\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\begin{musicnote}\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\note{c''}\end{musicnote}
\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\begin{musicnote}\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\note{f''}\end{musicnote}
\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\begin{musicnote}\setlocalgroundx=0\setlocalgroundy=0\note{g''}\end{musicnote}
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Chanson de Mélisande

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La Mort de Mélisande: end

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\end{musicnotation}
\end{music}

Theme A\textsuperscript{2}

It is in this section that the drama of the movement starts to unfold. In the sequence of the melody we experience the steadily ascending line, which gradually builds

\textsuperscript{77} Nectoux, Gabriel Fauré, p. 155.
in dynamics, finally receiving full orchestral support in mm. 17-18. At the height of this climactic passage, the flutes plunges down an octave and the first violins, previously in unison with the flute, create a dissonance leaping down a minor seventh (m. 19). In the last four measures of Theme A the Phrygian mode is inflected with a frequent use of b2. Finally, the descending bass line provides agitation with its emphasis of beat two. We can also see in the bass line sketch agitation provided by the stepwise descent, which is constantly interrupted by octave displacement.

Section II: Tonal Analysis

Theme C (mm. 20-35)

Theme C functions as a transition which leads to the structural climax (pick up to m. 29). Elements of the march remain, as seen in the use of two double dotted rhythms in each measure as opposed to one. As is typical of Fauré’s approach to transitions he makes prominent use of sequences. The opening sequence begins in the first violins, which is passed to the violas, and then passed to the second violins. This sequence occurs at a transposition of an ascending minor second. Not only is the descending line of the sequence contrasted by the ascending transposition, but there is an ascending chromatic line of quarter notes set a major second above the march motive. The final measure of this sequence (m. 22) dovetails with the next sequence, acting as the first measure of a new sequence, which is built on the previous sequence and expanded to two measures.

This new sequence builds in intensity as two opposing motives struggle against each other for prominence. In the march motive the added measure reinforces the march feel, filling the entire measure with the double-dotted rhythm, emphasizing the dominant. An ascending motive first heard in the first clarinet part in m. 20, gains prominence by
the addition of the first violins. In addition to the expansion of the sequence, the other more subtle change is that the transposition has been expanded from a minor second to a major second. We will continue to see how Fauré uses this idea of increasing the level of transposition as a tool for building intensity towards the structural climax.

A new two-measure sequence begins in m. 26. The march motive now completely overtakes the score, and the transposition is now a minor third. The dynamics continue to increase reaching aff for the structural climax on the pick-up to m. 30. After landing on A4 the melody falls through a series of three minor sixths, arriving again on A an octave lower (m. 32). Harmonically, the return of Theme A\(^1\) in m. 35 is prepared by a clear dominant in m. 33. However, once again, Fauré has overshadowed the return of the home key by transforming the tonic into a V\(^7\)/iv thus emphasizing the Plagal motion to iv.

Section II: Expressive Analysis

Theme C

One of the most striking aspects of the first two sequences is the juxtaposition of the two melodic ideas. The contrast of the gently ascending line against the agitated descending dotted rhythm can be heard as depicting the gentle release of Mélisande’s soul against the anguish Golaud has created by his actions. This anguish is clearly depicted in Golaud’s character throughout the final scene.

Golaud: I have killed her without cause! I have killed her without cause!...Is it not enough to make the stones weep?...They had kissed like little children....They had simply kissed….They were brother and sister….And I, and I at once!...I did it in spite of myself, look you….I did it in spite of myself....\(^77\)

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77 Maeterlinck, Pelléas and Mélisande, 109.
The march motive gains its strength in the second sequence (mm. 22-25) as the violas and horns pound out A4 with the double dotted rhythm. The intensity is also strengthened by the appearance of first and third horns which start a minor second above and then ascend chromatically two half steps. But with the march motive which supersedes the gentle ascending line, we see a glimmer of hope through the constant overall ascent of the sequences.

Although mm. 26-29 are thoroughly set in the funeral march character with the persistent double-dotted rhythms, there is a fanfare quality to the phrase. The first and third measures bring a regal character as they move away from the grounded stepwise motion and outline a triad, quickly ascending through an octave and a fifth in four beats.

Even with this heroic, explosive ascent, the line quickly returns through the familiar sighing minor sixth. Beneath these sighs the second violins and violas steadily descend chromatically with the double-dotted rhythm. The preparation for the return of tonic is emphasized in this chromatic descent by the C# reversing the descent by ascending to the tonic. The descent then continues back to the leading and then to the subtonic, preparing for the V\(^7\) of iv which will begin the return to Theme A\(^1\).

**Section III**

*Theme A\(^1\)*

In this return of Theme A\(^1\) we find many changes in orchestration. Although the flute still plays the march theme it has become more pronounced by the addition of the first horn and trumpet. Harmonically the phrase is almost an exact repetition, with the exception of the closing cadence (m. 42). Rather than using a Plagal cadence, Fauré ends the section with a half cadence. This allows for a seamless transition to A\(^2\). An aspect
from the opening theme that has been removed is the $\hat{5}$-$b\hat{6}$-$\hat{5}$ grief motive originally found in the first clarinet. In its place a new addition to Theme A$^1$ is found in the string section, reminiscent of material from mm. 26 and 28. This addition of a full measure of double-dotted rhythms in mm. 36 and 38 increases the agitation of the melody.

*Theme A$^2$*

Again the orchestration is slightly more developed than the original Theme A$^2$. Instead of being played by the flutes, the melody is doubled by the first violins and trumpet. Although the cellos and basses follow the same harmonic line as before, the drama is increased by an added thirty-second note pick-up to beat two. Also worth noting is the entrance of the timpani. Although there has been a representation of the drum in the string pizzicatos this is the timpani’s first appearance of the movement entering on beat one of the start of Theme A$^2$ (m. 43).

The second phrase of Theme A$^2$, starting in m. 47, continues to build in intensity, similarly to mm. 17-18. Orchestration is thickened and dynamics continue to increase. In m. 48 the line arrives on $\hat{4}$, which is sustained by the flutes and first horn in m. 49 before descending to the tonic (unlike m. 18 the register of the previous measure is maintained). The first violins at the same moment plunge as before (m. 19) almost two octaves to $\hat{5}$.

As before, the final measure of this phrase mimics the penultimate measure from Theme A$^1$, harmonically preparing for a cadence on the tonic. Similarly to m. 20, the cadence is evaded through an added seventh on the tonic chord. However, rather than moving to the transition and the structural climax, Fauré has created a five-measure closing section (mm. 50-54).
Although these closing five measures of Theme $A^2$ are based on the transition section of mm. 20-23 rather than treated as a sequence the descending dotting figure is repeated at the same pitch level. The nonfunctional seven chords of sequential material have now become functional seven chords constantly moving us towards the Plagal cadence. However, we can see in the bass line sketch the repetition of the bass pattern as Fauré suspends the actual cadence (in mm. 50 and 52) by the familiar use of the tonic chord as a $V^7/iv$. This sustains the Plagal motion that finally in m. 54 resolves to the tonic triad whose arrival has been withheld since m. 8.

**Theme B**

Unlike the clear break between Theme $A^1$ and B in mm. 8-9, the tonic chord of m. 54 is held through the barline just long enough to elide with the entrance of the first violins and bassoon. This literal connection of the two themes shows the connections of the emotions in regards to death. Although the emotional response can be as different as anger and heartbreak to contemplative and peaceful, they are given in reaction to the same event and therefore are intimately connected.

The first two measures are identical to mm. 9-10, with the exception of the voicing in the strings and the anticipated entrance in the bassoon. In the third and fourth measures (mm. 57-58) the harmony maintains the natural minor mode as the first violins continue the ascent to the high D. As the first violins descend through two and a half octaves to $\hat{5}$, a solo flute enters on D, contrasting the violins’ descending line with an ascending Phrygian scale. This clear arrival of Phrygian mode is prepared by a $V^7$ of Eb (b2) in m. 58. The Phrygian scale in its ascent offers a sense of hope and peace as though acting as Mélisande’s soul rising to eternal rest. However, Fauré combines it with the
strings in their low register. The final gesture of the first violins as they move to the
cadence is to utter one last statement of the $\hat{5}-b\hat{6}-\hat{5}$ grief motive. This sighing motion still
contains the mournful spirit of the entire movement. Although our heroine has finally
found rest, it is a rest which follows a life of sorrow and struggle. As the Physician
describes Mélisande’s life just before she takes her last breath: “She was born without
reason…to die; and she dies without reason.”\textsuperscript{78}

In this movement we see the hints of death come to fruition which the other
movements offered at times subtly and at other times boldly. Although the agitation and
darkness of this movement speak of the depth of sadness which permeates the story of
Pelléas and Mélisande, Theme B and especially the last five measures offer bittersweet
feeling just as the wise old king’s closing words:

Arkël: Come, come….My God! My God!...I shall never understand it at all….Let
us not stay here. – Come; the child must not stay here in this room….She must
live now in her place….It is the poor little one’s turn….\textsuperscript{79}

\textsuperscript{78} Maeterlinck, \textit{Pelléas and Mélisande}, p. 108.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p. 120.
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Conclusion

When studying a work such as Gabriel Fauré’s *Pelléas et Mélisande*, Suite for Orchestra, Op. 80 one must take into account the text for which it was originally intended. In going through this process I have discovered that there is great depth in the connection between Fauré’s compositional choices when placed in relationship with Maurice Maeterlinck’s text. Through this thesis I have attempted to show that Fauré’s music, while not programmatic in any literal sense, does represented the specific moods of the characters as well as the general contour of the story. More importantly though, I believe he fully understood Maeterlinck’s interest in representing the tragic destiny of the two main characters with symbolism. Therefore, Fauré explicitly uses techniques that allude to this destiny, a destiny that underlies every scene of *Pelléas and Mélisande*.

Maeterlinck’s symbolism of death can be found in explicit imagery such as the ships sailing into the storm in Act I, scene 4; or the wise words of King Arkël: “I observed thee (Mélisande), thou wert there, listless perhaps, but with the strange, astray look of one awaiting ever a great trouble.”80 We have seen how in the *Prélude, Fileuse,* and *Sicilienne* Fauré matches this subtle symbolism with his inflections of Phrygian mode and use of the flat submediant. We also see it in the way he grounds the light melodies of *Fileuse* and *Sicilienne* with a lament bass.

Examples that clearly bring across Fauré’s intention in his compositional choices are the way he treats structurally important moments, particularly in the first movement. To close the climax of the *Prélude*, rather than releasing the intensity to the anticipated tonic chord, he alters the tonic chord to an augmented triad. Indeed, throughout all the

80 Maeterlinck, *Pelléas and Mélisande*, p. 84.
movements Fauré manipulates cadences to leave little feeling of resolution and rest. Moreover, when the final cadence of each movement arrives, only the fourth movement ends with the tonic in the soprano voice. This lack of a complete resolution builds the feeling of tension and unrest, supporting Maeterlink’s constant reference to fate and death.

It is only when death is staring us in the face that Fauré presents the listener with an undeniable mark of death, the funeral march. In this bare portrayal of mourning and death the consistent inflection of Phrygian mode and the pure Phrygian scale which closes the movement allow us to see in retrospect the significant role the Phrygian mode plays in the earlier movements. This discovery of the final destination gives the listener the ability to approach the piece or text again with foresight. What was once a simple melody supported with interesting chromatic harmonies now morphs into an intricate web of symbols. And when these symbols are put into the context of musical traditions, they align themselves with the language that was used in genres associated with death.
Appendix

To Mme. la Princesse Edmond de Polignac:

Pelléas et Mélisande
Suite for orchestra / Op. 80 (1898)

I. Prélude

Quasi Adagio, (d : 18.)
II.

Andantino quasi Allegretto. \( \text{\textit{\( \frac{d}{84} \)}} \)

2 Flûtes.
2 Hautbois.
1\textsuperscript{er} Clarinette en si bémol.
2\textsuperscript{er} Clarinette en si bémol.
1\textsuperscript{er} Basson.
2\textsuperscript{er} Basson.
1\textsuperscript{er} et 2\textsuperscript{er} Cor en fa.
2\textsuperscript{er} et 3\textsuperscript{er} Cor en fa.
2\textsuperscript{er} et 3\textsuperscript{er} Trompettes en fa.

Harpes.

1\textsuperscript{er} Violons.
2\textsuperscript{er} Violons.
Altos.
Violoncelles.
Contrebassens.

\( \text{\textit{\( \frac{d}{84} \)}} \)
III. Sicilienne
de Pelléas et Mélisande

Allegretto molto moderato.

2 Flûtes.
Hautbois.
Clarinettes en si.
Basson.
Cor en Fa.
Timbales. (2)

Solo.
Harpes.

1\textsuperscript{er} Violons.
2\textsuperscript{er} Violons.
Altos.
Violoncelles.
Contrebasses.

Allegretto molto moderato.
IV. La mort de Mélisande

2 Flûtes. Molto Adagio. (d : 46)

2 Hautbois.

1ère Clarinette en si.

2ème Clarinette en si.

1er Basson.

2ème Basson.

1er et 2ème Cors chrom. en fa.

3ème et 4ème Cors chrom. en fa.

1ère 2ème Trompettes chrom. en fa.

Timbales.

Harpes.

1ère Violons.

2ème Violons.

Altos.

Violoncelles.

Contrebasses. Molto Adagio. (d : 46)
Bibliography


