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Gabriel Fauré's "Other" Career in the Paris and London Music Salons

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On April 10, 1903, on the occasion of his promotion to the rank of Officier of the Légion d'honneur, *Le Figaro* described Gabriel Fauré in this way:

No [such] reward could cause more rejoicing in the hearts of musicians, for no one is more purely musical than Fauré, no one is imbued with more poetry – so much so that his delightful *Lieder* have earned him the appellation of the French Schumann.

Modest, almost shy, and yet with a fine mind, Fauré is above all a tender and sweet dreamer.¹

It was these qualities of poetic sweetness and modesty – in addition to the genius of his music – that endeared the composer to almost everyone who knew him. And yet, despite the many accolades that came Fauré's way over the course of his career, the renown of the composer and his works during his lifetime was achieved slowly and with difficulty. The modesty and shyness alluded to by the *Figaro's* journalist stemmed, in part, from Fauré's insecurities about his talent and his ability to succeed as a composer, professionally and financially. He was never able to make a living from composition, and he was overburdened by his hardworking daily life as a church musician, suburban piano teacher, and freelance musician. In 1892, he also took on the position of inspector of conservatory education in the branches of the national music and choir schools, a post that involved relentless administrative work and interminable train travel. It was only in middle age (beginning in the mid-1890s) that Fauré was able to achieve an estimable degree of recognition and respect as a composer.

Fauré's hard-won success was due, in no small part, to the performances of his works in the artistic, aristocratic, and upper-bourgeois music salons in Paris and London, and to his championship by the hosts and hostesses of these salons, who offered professional opportunities and material support at crucial moments in the composer's career. This study will

¹ "Instantané: Gabriel Fauré," *Le Figaro*, April 10, 1903, 1. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the French are my own.

provide a brief overview of the social milieus and patronage that played such an important role in the ascent of Fauré's reputation in the wider musical world.

The music salon was at the height of its popularity as Fauré began to make his way in Paris musical circles. Salons dedicated to literature, philosophy, and the art of conversation had been established during the Enlightenment, but, beginning in the 1830s, musical performance became the express purpose of certain gatherings. Music salons were hosted not only by musicians such as Rossini and Offenbach, but also by members of the aristocracy such as Napoleon's niece, Princesse Mathilde, and Liszt's lover, Comtesse Marie d'Agoult. The period following the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1 saw a proliferation of music salons in artistic-musical, literary, aristocratic, and upper-bourgeois circles. While the wider public's musical consumption was mostly satisfied by opera and ballet (or, for those with more taste for the popular, at *café-concerts*), those "connoisseurs" who yearned for more intimate music-making found havens in the pleasing domestic surroundings of the salon's hosts and hostesses, many of whom performed alongside the greatest performing artists of the era. In this socially fluid post-war period, musicians were welcomed into the salons of the upper classes, who received on a chosen "day." Composers of art song and chamber music who were unsuccessful in having their works performed in the official concert societies – the Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, the Concerts populaires (later, the Concerts Padeloup), the Concerts Colonne, and, some years later, the Concerts Lamoureux – were able to hear their works performed in refined surroundings before an audience of passionate, sophisticated, and socially influential music-lovers. The Société nationale de musique (founded in 1871), whose goal was the advancement of French contemporary music, was composed primarily of composers and musicians playing for other composers and musicians.² Thus, the salon emerged as one of the only venues where new music could be promulgated among relatively diverse and fluid groups of sophisticated music-lovers.³

² A member of the Société nationale de musique since its creation in 1871, Fauré first served as secretary of the organization and subsequently, in 1886, as its treasurer. Three of his chamber works, eighteen of his songs, and four symphonic works were given their first performances under the auspices of the SNM between 1872 and 1885. See Michel Duchesneau, *L'Avant-Garde musicale à Paris de 1871 à 1939* (Sprimont: Mardaga, 1997), 19–21.

³ For a discussion of Paris salon culture, see Chapters 2 and 3 of my *Music's Modern Muse: A Life of Winnaretta Singer-Polignac* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2009).

Early Promoters: Pauline Viardot and the Clerc Family

Shortly after Fauré moved to Paris in 1871 to begin a career as a young organist, he was introduced by his teacher and mentor Camille Saint-Saëns to the salon of the internationally renowned singer and composer Pauline Viardot. Fauré quickly ingratiated himself into the brilliant Viardot circle, where he met an extraordinary group of artistic personalities that included Charles Gounod, Gustave Flaubert, Ernest Renan, Ivan Turgenev, and George Sand. Pauline Viardot took a liking to Fauré, and soon began to serve as his musical advisor and social intermediary, recommending him to her friends and associates as a potential pianist-accompanist in their salons and a teacher of piano.⁴ His modesty and shyness notwithstanding, Fauré loved to circulate in society; his dramatic good looks and natural charm were attractive to men and women alike. He formed a romantic attachment (broken off in 1877) with Pauline Viardot's younger daughter, Marianne; he also became friends with Madame Viardot's violinist son Paul Viardot, who was the dedicatee of Fauré's Violin Sonata in A Major, Op. 13 (composed 1875–6). This score, a deservedly celebrated staple of the violin repertoire, might not have been made accessible to the public so expeditiously were it not for the intercession of two new friends whom Fauré met around the same time: Camille and Marie Clerc. The Clercs – he a well-to-do engineer and she a talented amateur musician – hosted their own salon of artists and musicians in the fashionable Rue de Monceau; in the summers, the music-making and artistic camaraderie were transplanted north to the Clercs' summer home in Saint-Adresse, in Normandy, where Fauré was a constant guest and musical participant. In the Clercs, Fauré found not only a close and welcoming family circle but also encouragement for his creativity, sorely needed by a young composer who doubted the value of his works. Marie Clerc became a surrogate mother for Fauré. She encouraged him to push past his natural indolence and lack of ambition, in the words of Jean-Michel Nectoux, "leading him out of an adolescence that continued well beyond his thirtieth year."⁵ Under her supervision, Fauré applied himself to his work. His diligence bore fruit; the Violin Sonata in A Major was written almost entirely under the Clercs' roof during the summer of 1875 (he would begin work on his Piano Quartet in C Minor, Op. 15, the following summer).

⁴ Jean-Michel Nectoux, *Gabriel Fauré: Les voix du clair-obscur* (Paris: Fayard, 2008), 61.

⁵ See Jean-Michel Nectoux, (ed.), *Gabriel Fauré: His Life through His Letters*, trans. J. A. Underwood (London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1984), 31.

It was Camille Clerc, however, who brought about Fauré's first great professional coup. A skilled businessman, Clerc convinced the German music-publishing house of Breitkopf & Härtel to publish the Sonata in A Major. It was inconceivable that such a long and daunting work by an unknown composer could be accepted by such a renowned publisher, but Clerc negotiated the deal by convincing the publishers that Fauré was a young artist with "a great future" – and by convincing Fauré to forgo payment in exchange for the prestige of being taken on by such a prestigious house.⁶ Camille Clerc intervened again on behalf of Fauré in 1877, when Camille Saint-Saëns gave up his post as organist at the Church of the Madeleine. Théodore Dubois subsequently assumed the position, leaving open the post of *maître de chapelle* (choirmaster). Clerc promptly asked a friend to speak on Fauré's behalf to the curate of the Madeleine (with Saint-Saëns working behind the scenes as well to promote his former student, and Fauré also securing a recommendation from Gounod). In late April, Fauré was awarded the prestigious post.⁷

Fauré's Career in the Salons

In the decades that followed – from the period of his appointment as *maître de chapelle* at the Madeleine (1877) until his ascendancy to the directorship of the Paris Conservatoire (1905) – Fauré became a regular fixture in the salons of the aristocracy and the upper bourgeoisie. For all intents and purposes, music-making in the salons became an additional profession – often an unwelcome supplementary chore at the end of a long hard day. Yet, the salons could also provide a respite from the daily grind. His 1883 marriage to Marie Fremiet, a woman to whom he was temperamentally unsuited, quickly proved to be emotionally unsatisfying; on top of that, his wife was a homebody, while Fauré was a social animal. As a consequence, Fauré chose to spend more evenings out than at home. There is no question that it was exhausting to keep up the affable sociability and *politesse* required, especially in the more exclusive salons of the *gratin* (upper-crust society), but the composer was adept at assuming

⁶ Letters pertaining to the publication of the Violin Sonata, Op. 13 are published in Gabriel Fauré, *Correspondance, suivie de Lettres à Madame H.*, ed. Jean-Michel Nectoux (Paris: Fayard, 2015), 34–45.

⁷ Letters detailing Fauré's application for and subsequent attainment of the post of *maître de chapelle* at the Madeleine are published in Fauré, *Correspondance*, 47–55.

the mask of charm and deference required. Despite the complexities of the social strata that needed to be navigated, the salons always held out the possibility of new professional contacts – and money – to be made. The critic Louis Aguettant would describe the “Fauré of the salons, moving languidly through the swirl of high-society denizens, a satisfied smile on his face, like some ancient Olympian deity who has had his fill of incense.”⁸ Debussy was less tactful: “Fauré is the musical mouthpiece [*porte-musique*] of a group of snobs and imbeciles.”⁹

But the artistically knowledgeable and appreciative *mélomanes* (music-lovers) in attendance in the salons who offered encouragement of and admiration for Fauré's talents made the nonstop participation in salon life worth the effort. Jean-Michel Nectoux writes:

Certainly Fauré frequented the Paris salons, as did all his colleagues . . . It must be stressed, however, that, unlike the young Proust, Fauré did not value the social round for its own sake. There was nothing of the snob about him; everyone who knew him emphasizes the simplicity of his life and manners. He made regular appearances only in those salons where people were genuinely interested in his music.¹⁰

Indeed, a substantial number of salon hosts and hostesses were passionately interested in his music. Many first performances of Fauré's music took place in the salons, and a substantial number of Fauré's works bear dedications to the long list of enlightened *mélomanes* who welcomed his compositions and his artistry into their music rooms.¹¹ Consciously or unconsciously, Fauré may have crafted some of his music to suit the domestic spaces in which it was most likely to be performed: by virtue of their modest proportions and the small forces needed for their execution, his songs, piano music, and chamber music naturally lent themselves to performances in private homes. Graham Johnson has suggested that, in the 1880s at least, Fauré's compositional style (as least in so far as the song repertoire was concerned) was influenced, in part, by “the standards and demands of the salon”: often, the melodic lines of his songs were not too difficult to be undertaken by amateurs (a good number of whom had vocal

⁸ Louis Aguettant quoted in Nectoux, *Les voix du clair-obscur*, 297.

⁹ Claude Debussy to George Hartmann, August 9, 1898, in Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872–1918*, ed. François Lesure and Denis Herlin (Paris: Gallimard, 2005), 415.

¹⁰ Nectoux, *His Life through His Letters*, 195.

¹¹ Details of the dedications of Fauré's songs to his salon hosts and hostesses are provided in Graham Johnson, *Gabriel Fauré: The Songs and Their Poets*, with translations of the song texts by Richard Stokes (London: The Guildhall School of Music & Drama and Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009).

training), and the accompaniments were suffused with the harmonic subtleties and “understated eroticism” that permeated his music.¹² Indeed, given the erotic nature of much of the music of the Belle Époque, musical performance could often serve as a form of artistic “seduction.”¹³ And Fauré, with his dark good looks and air of charming inscrutability, was capable of arousing intense ardor in his listeners through his keyboard artistry. According to one eyewitness, “When Fauré sat down [at the piano], letting his plump hands wander along the keyboard, improvising a prelude to some song that [my godmother] was going to sing, all conversation ceased, and we listened, charmed.”¹⁴ Not surprisingly, the composer was frequently called upon to play the piano – as a soloist, a duo-piano or four-hands partner, or as an accompanist to the host or hostess who wanted nothing better than to perform Fauré’s songs with the composer at the piano. The singer Émilie Girette, an accomplished amateur, wrote in her diary that “to be accompanied by ‘him’ is to know happiness, artistic happiness, the purest of happiness – the only kind, perhaps, that comes close to being in love.”¹⁵

Often, entire *soirées* were devoted to “all-Fauré” programs.¹⁶ These programs included not only short works but also more extended compositions: a traversal of Fauré’s opera *Prométhée* (1900), accompanied by two pianos, took place in February 1902 in the salon of the Jean Girette family. One month later, in the same salon, a performance of the complete Requiem, conducted by eminent pianist Alfred Cortot, was performed before a “chic audience,” as Émilie Girette recorded in her diary, with the host and hostess serving as soloists and with the composer seated among the guests. Girette noted that Fauré was “delighted” by her performance of the “Pie Jesu” – and there is no reason to think otherwise.¹⁷ In a letter written that year to the Comtesse Greffulhe, Fauré alluded to his eternal quest to find the perfect interpreters of his vocal music. “I don’t

¹² Ibid., 164.

¹³ In my Introduction to *Music’s Modern Muse*, 20, I argue that attendance at private musical gatherings served as a sublimation of, or substitution for, sexual activity.

¹⁴ Geneviève Sienkiewicz, “Ce . . . et ceux que j’ai aimés” (unpublished manuscript), cited in Myriam Chimènes, *Mécènes et musiciens: Du salon au concert à Paris sous la III^e République* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 69.

¹⁵ Émilie Girette, diary entry of June 19, 1903, cited in *ibid.*, 44–45.

¹⁶ All-Fauré programs were performed, for example, in the salons of Madeleine Lemaire (June 17, 1902), Albert Blondel (January 1907), and the Comtesse de Maupeou (January 15, 1908).

¹⁷ Émilie Girette, diary entry of March 25, 1902, cited in Chimènes, *Mécènes et musiciens*, 142, 144.

know any among the professional [singers]," he wrote. "It's the amateurs who know how to translate me and who understand me best."¹⁸

Marguerite Baugnies, Madame de Saint-Marceaux

One of the salons where Fauré could relax and be himself was that of Marguerite (Meg) Baugnies née Jourdain (1850–1930), who, following the death of her first husband, painter Eugène Baugnies, married sculptor René de Saint-Marceaux in 1892. The dedicatee of Fauré's First Nocturne (1875) and the *mélodie* "Après un rêve" (1877), Marguerite Baugnies created a hybrid salon, where class lines were blurred and where composers, renowned musicians, and talented amateurs shared the pleasures of high-level performance – or sophisticated improvisation – in unpretentious surroundings and attire. A woman of keen musical instincts, wide-ranging tastes, high standards, and unabashed (sometimes severely critical) opinions that she did not hesitate to share, Meg used her wide network of acquaintances to promote the music and careers of the composers who frequented her salon, turning her private space into a veritable laboratory for the performance of new works: among the countless compositions that were heard for the first time in the Baugnies/Saint-Marceaux salon, Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* is perhaps the most famous.

Fauré would often arrive late to Meg's *vendredis* (Fridays), more formally dressed than the other attendees, having "just left the home of one of his duchesses in evening attire" – but within minutes of arrival, he would be making four-hand music with fellow composer and École Niedermeyer schoolmate André Messager: "Often side by side on one of the piano benches, Fauré and Messager improvised four-hand music, competing in sudden modulations and unexpected changes of key. They both liked that game."¹⁹ Fauré was among the privileged small circle of favored composers, and Meg's diary is filled with details about performances of his works in her music room. Two Fauré cycles – *La bonne chanson* (1894) and *La chanson d'Ève* (1910) – were performed frequently in the Saint-Marceaux salon, often with the composer at the piano;²⁰ on

¹⁸ Fauré to the Comtesse Greffulhe, "Samedi" [November 1902], published in Fauré, *Correspondance*, 292–294.

¹⁹ Marguerite de Saint-Marceaux, quoted in Colette, "Un salon de musique en 1900," in *Journal à rebours* (Paris: Fayard, 1941), 53.

²⁰ In her diary (published as *Marguerite de Saint-Marceaux, Journal 1894–1927*, ed. Myriam Chimènes [Paris: Fayard, 2007]), Madame de Saint-Marceaux notes numerous performances of

many occasions, Meg, a serious and well-trained amateur pianist and singer, was the featured soloist.²¹

Meg's desire to help Fauré extended beyond the salon. In 1881, she and Eugène Baugnies hosted Fauré in Bayreuth, where they attended performances of *Lohengrin* and *Tristan und Isolde*.²² In 1888, during a financially difficult time in Fauré's life, Meg organized a lottery (kept secret from the beneficiaries), the proceeds of which paid for another trip to Bayreuth for Fauré and Messager.²³ When Fauré became a composition professor at the Conservatoire (1896), Meg featured works of his students – including Charles Kœchlin, Florent Schmitt, and, especially, Maurice Ravel – in her salon offerings. She supported Fauré and promoted his compositions even after the deafness that first manifested itself in 1898 worsened over the next two decades, causing the musician to stumble frequently during performance.²⁴ “Poor genius friend,” she wrote in 1916. “With patience and resignation he accepts his malady; his heart is as big as his talent.”²⁵

Fauré's songs cycles in her music salon. *La bonne chanson* was performed on June 15, 1894 (p. 87), May 9, 1895 (98), February 2, 1896 (128), May 21, 1901 (244), May 16, 1906 (435), January 30, 1914 (excerpts, 790), May 25, 1923 (1197), and June 5, 1923 (1199). Excerpts from the not yet completed cycle *La chanson d'Ève* were performed on February 22, 1907 (473) and December 25, 1908 (528); the complete cycle was performed on March 27 and 29, 1911 (641), October 1, 1911 (666), March 3, 1916 (890), and February 4, 1927 (1248).

²¹ In her introduction to the *Journal*, 40–41, Chimènes describes the diligence with which Saint-Marceaux worked to perfect her piano-playing and her vocal abilities, even late into middle age. When she sang contemporary repertoire, she worked with the composers themselves. Fauré personally coached her before her salon performances of his music, especially *La bonne chanson*, which she performed often in her salon.

²² See Fauré's letter to Marie Clerc of September 23 [1881], in Fauré, *Correspondance*, 104–105.

²³ See Nectoux, *His Life through His Letters*, 71, and Fauré's undated letter to Marguerite Baugnies [July 27, 1888], in Fauré, *Correspondance*, 146–147.

²⁴ This is important new historical data, placing the composer's incipient deafness three years earlier than the date proposed by Jean-Michel Nectoux. Nectoux claimed 1902 to be the year of the onset of Fauré's deafness (see Nectoux, *Les voix du clair-obscur*, 381). He leaned on the evidence of Fauré's letter to his wife from August 6, 1903, in which the composer revealed that his loss of hearing “remains terribly frightening and saddening!” as well as another letter from two days later, in which Fauré complained that “for a year now, the plummeting [of my ability to hear], from that point of view, has been terrible”; Gabriel Fauré, *Lettres intimes*, ed. Philippe Fauré-Fremiet (Paris: La Colombe, 1951), 72–73. But in a diary entry dated December 2, 1898, Marguerite de Saint-Marceaux notes, “[Fauré] is going deaf, poor friend”: Saint-Marceaux, *Journal*, 187.

²⁵ Saint-Marceaux, diary entry of April 12, 1916, *Journal*, 893.

Comte Robert de Montesquiou and Comtesse Élisabeth Greffulhe

Fauré was introduced to the aesthete Comte Robert de Montesquiou (1855–1921) at a performance of the Société nationale de musique either in 1886 or early 1887. The highly refined, impeccably dressed count, a self-proclaimed arbiter of taste, was no doubt attracted as much by Fauré's striking good looks as by his beautiful music. On April 26, 1887 the Comte hosted a soirée of his songs; the invitations were printed on pink Japan paper.²⁶ He became Fauré's "literary advisor," introducing him to poets as yet not set by the composer – the most important of whom was Paul Verlaine, whose poetry inspired Fauré to write some of his greatest vocal music.

Montesquiou subsequently became Fauré's means of entry into the poshest salons of the Paris aristocracy, including those of Princesse de Cystria, the Comtesse d'Haussonville, the Comte and Comtesse de Saussine (in whose salon the first performance of Fauré's great song cycle, *La bonne chanson* took place),²⁷ the Comtesse de Cheigné, the Comtesse de Gauville, and the Princesse Potocka.²⁸ But the most important person to whom Montesquiou introduced Fauré was his cousin, the Comtesse Greffulhe (1860–1952). Known as the "beauty queen of Paris," Élisabeth Greffulhe was the daughter of the Belgian prince and diplomat Joseph de Caraman-Chimay and his musically gifted wife, née Marie de Montesquiou-Fezensac (Robert de Montesquiou's aunt). The Caraman-Chimays were without fortune, but raised their children in a household that valued culture and music. At age eighteen, Élisabeth married Vicomte (later Comte) Henry Greffulhe, heir to a vast banking fortune and a future politician. In the exclusive salon that she established soon after her marriage, Élisabeth Greffulhe welcomed the cream of the worlds of art, music, literature, science, and politics.

The Comtesse knew of Fauré, having heard him conduct the choir at the Madeleine, her parish church. In 1887, she invited him to perform in her

²⁶ Anne de Cossé Brissac, *La Comtesse Greffulhe* (Paris: Perrin, 1991), 74; "À travers Paris," *Le Figaro*, April 28, 1887, 1.

²⁷ "Mondanités: Réceptions," *Le Gaulois*, April 27, 1894. The title of Fauré's song cycle does not appear in the notice, only the report that "M. Maurice Bagès sang the newest *mélodies* of Gabriel Fauré" before the "most purely 'upper-crust' (*gratin*) audience." Nectoux mentions in *Les voix du clair-obscur*, 56 that another one of the first performances of the cycle took place at the home of painter Madeleine Lemaire.

²⁸ See Nectoux, *Les voix du clair-obscur*, 296–297 for a full list of the hosts and hostesses from the aristocracy, the upper bourgeoisie, and the artistic milieus in which Fauré performed.

spring musical gatherings. That June 1887, Fauré conducted a performance of Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* in the Greffulhe salon, scheduling an additional, unbudgeted rehearsal the day of the concert; "In that way," he wrote, by way of an excuse, "we can *get close to* perfection."²⁹ Élisabeth Greffulhe's passion for Fauré's music was heartfelt, and for nearly two decades she served as a faithful patron, providing moral and material support, always in short supply for the composer. In August, the Comtesse invited Fauré, stressed by overwork and suffering from chronic migraines, to spend four days at her palatial vacation home in Dieppe; his companions during the brief respite included Montesquiou; painters Jacques-Émile Blanche, Walter Sickert, and Paul Helleu; and Prince Edmond de Polignac, an eccentric, talented composer from the aristocracy. Upon his return to Paris, he composed a graceful orchestral *Pavane*, expressly intended for the Greffulhe salon. He subsequently asked Montesquiou to write some accompanying text that would render the work "suitable to be danced and sung"; the Comte acceded to Fauré's request, adding, as Fauré described to his patroness, "sly coquetries by the female dancers and great sighs by the male dancers that will singularly enhance the music."³⁰ The *Pavane* – today one of Fauré's most popular works – was dedicated to Élisabeth Greffulhe, who made it the centerpiece of a *fête* that she gave in the Bois de Boulogne on July 21, 1891, on which occasion the work – in fulfillment of Fauré's original conception – was performed by a mime and a troupe of dancers, accompanied by an invisible chorus and orchestra.³¹ On April 26, 1887, the Comtesse hosted what might have been the first "all-Fauré" program in a salon setting.³²

The Comtesse also had a hand in disseminating another beloved work by Fauré. On January 16, 1888, the first performance of the composer's *Requiem* took place at the Madeleine. Originally written for the funeral of a wealthy parishioner, the work was so enthusiastically received that Fauré took it upon himself to arrange additional performances; for the second of

²⁹ "... de cette façon nous pourrons côtoyer la perfection!" Letter to the Comtesse Greffulhe of June 9, 1887, in Fauré, *Correspondance*, 125.

³⁰ Fauré to the Comtesse Greffulhe, [September 29, 1887], in Fauré, *Correspondance*, 132.

³¹ Printed program of the Greffulhe soirée of July 21, 1891, Fonds Montesquiou, BnF-Mss, N Afr 15038, folder 117. In addition to the Fauré *Pavane*, the concert included works by J. S. Bach, Wagner, Edmond de Polignac, Xavier Perreau, and a recitation of poems by Robert de Montesquiou. A note in Montesquiou's hand at the bottom of the printed program indicates that the same program was repeated at a soirée hosted by Montesquiou in his Paris apartment.

³² "Échos: À Travers Paris," *Le Figaro*, April 28, 1887.

these, on May 4, 1888, the Comtesse Greffulhe and the Prince de Polignac discreetly underwrote the expenses.³³

Not content to limit her artistic activities to the domestic sphere, the Comtesse, who had superior organizational skills and an unmatched network of connections, yearned to branch out beyond the confines of domestic music-making. In 1890, she launched the Société des grandes auditions musicales de France, whose dual goals were "1) to give major performances of complete musical works by older or contemporary [composers], and 2) to constitute a center for French composers, in order to assure in our country the primacy of French works, [an honor] too often reserved for foreigners." In the early stages of the Société's planning, the Comtesse Greffulhe proposed a merger between her new organization and the Société nationale de musique, with herself as president: she needed the support of professional musicians, and, in return, she could offer a substantially larger financial base than the SNM was able to garner through subscriptions. Fauré served as intermediary between the two organizations. Ultimately, after heated discussions among the members of the SNM's executive committee, the merger was rejected. Fauré explained in a delicate letter to the Comtesse that "the SNM was founded in 1871 with the goal of highlighting French modern music *to the exclusion* of all other music." The merger of the two societies, Fauré continued, would risk exacerbating the tensions that already existed in the organization between those who categorically wanted to exclude foreign music and those (including the SNM's president Vincent d'Indy) who were open to more inclusivity and diversity in its concert programming. "You can see the resultant battles, the coalitions . . . the successive resignations of the older members and their replacement by the younger members . . . [As] for me, who really owes a lot to our poor Société, I don't want to be its executioner!!"³⁴ The merger never took place, but the SNM's executive committee became a "consulting" body for the programming of the "Grandes auditions," which presented diverse large-scale works, from Handel oratorios to Wagner and Strauss operas. Fauré's music was included in the concert offerings.³⁵ The Comtesse Greffulhe remained Fauré's staunch supporter, writing letters on his behalf to the members of the Institut when the composer became a

³³ Edmond de Polignac to the Comtesse Greffulhe, undated "bleu" (telegram) [April 1888], Fonds Greffulhe, AP 101 (II), folder 106, Archives nationales, Paris.

³⁴ Fauré to the Comtesse Greffulhe, [February 3, 1890], in *Correspondance*, 163.

³⁵ "À travers Paris," *Le Figaro*, May 29, 1894.

candidate for election.³⁶ Mindful of Fauré's impecunious state, Élisabeth Greffulhe sent gifts through the years to Fauré's wife and children, who regarded her as a sort of "fairy godmother."³⁷

Winnaretta Singer, Princesse Edmond de Polignac

Throughout his years as a salon musician, Fauré was obliged to navigate any number of complex social relationships with individuals and within networks. But no relationship, perhaps, was so complicated as his friendship with Winnaretta Singer, the future Princesse Edmond de Polignac (1865–1943), known during her lifetime as *la grande mécène* – the Great Patron. Daughter of American sewing-machine magnate Isaac Singer and his Parisian-born wife Isabella Boyer, Winnaretta became a millionaire upon her father's death in 1875.³⁸ She demonstrated talent in both art and music, and received lessons in painting, piano, and organ.

In 1879, the widow Singer married again, to Dutch-born violinist and tenor Victor Reubsaet, who claimed to come from noble ancestors. Helping himself to his wife's enormous fortune, he bought himself a ducal title, becoming the so-called Duc de Camposelice. He went on to purchase an extraordinary collection of stringed instruments, including a double quartet of precious Stradivariuses. It was thus that the young Winnaretta was able to hear the great works of the chamber music repertoire performed in the family salon. Isabella and Victor often entertained their guests with performances of the operatic and song repertoire; Winnaretta was often called upon to accompany them on the piano or organ. Extremely shy, she drew inspiration and psychological comfort from the great music that took place in her home.

Winnaretta's and Fauré's paths first crossed in the early 1880s, when they became neighbors during their respective summer vacations in Normandy. As mentioned earlier, the Clercs, who hosted Fauré, organized numerous gatherings for the colony of artists and musicians in residence during the summer months. It was during one of these that Winnaretta

³⁶ Letters pertaining to Fauré's 1893–4 candidacy for the Institut are published in Fauré, *Correspondance*, 214–217; letters pertaining to his 1909 candidacy – which he won, after nine rounds of voting – appear in *ibid.*, 354–357.

³⁷ Nectoux, *Les voix du clair-obscur*, 182.

³⁸ Most of the information on Winnaretta Singer, Princesse Edmond de Polignac, in the current study can be found in my *Music's Modern Muse*; see also her own "Memoirs of the Late Princesse Edmond de Polignac," *Horizon* 12, No. 68 (August 1945), 110–140.

first heard Fauré perform his own works. "From the first," she would later write in her memoirs, "I was enthusiastic about them, for they seemed to me . . . worthy to rank with those of Chopin or Schumann."³⁹ Although they were twenty years apart in age, an easy rapport sprang up between them. Fauré recognized Winnaretta's keen sensitivity to art and beauty, and Winnaretta was enthralled by Fauré's ardor and simplicity and his impassioned compositions: he was her first musical mentor.

The growing rift between Winnaretta and her mother and stepfather led her to leave the family home as soon as she reached the age of twenty-one (1887). She promptly had her fortune transferred to her own name and soon thereafter purchased a large property with two houses in the Passy district of Paris (16th arrondissement). Recognizing that she could not circulate in polite society as a single, unchaperoned woman, she chose a husband; in doing so, she joined the ranks of industrialists' daughters who married into the aristocracy – they were called "dollar princesses." Prince Louis de Scey-Montbéliard, whom she wed in July 1887, came from a respected aristocratic family and was happy to ally his title with his intended's sewing-machine fortune. The marriage was not a happy one: Winnaretta had, by this point, acknowledged her attraction to women, and her husband, understandably, had not bargained for a sexless union. During the four years that they kept up the socially imposed pretense of marriage, Winnaretta solidified her standing in the Paris music world. She frequented the salons, including that of Meg Baugnies, who became a role model.

She engineered an introduction to Élisabeth Greffulhe – who normally did not consent to receive women that she considered below her in social standing – and subsequently contributed 10,000 francs to the Comtesse's Société des grandes auditions, which gave her "lifetime membership."⁴⁰ In 1889 (at exactly the moment when she legally separated from her husband), she sponsored a concert of new works by the SNM, further strengthening her growing reputation as an important music patron.⁴¹

She also established her own salon, and before long, the Scey-Montbéliard music room became known as a haven for the musical avant-garde. She struck up a friendship with Emmanuel Chabrier, whose music was thought to be too advanced for most tastes. In 1888, to help convince the Paris Opéra to mount his newest opera, *Gwendoline*, the

³⁹ Polignac, "Memoirs," 118.

⁴⁰ Fonds Greffulhe, Archives nationales, AP 101 (II), folders 129 and 149.

⁴¹ Fauré to the Princesse de Scey-Montbéliard, [c. April 9, 1889], Fondation Singer-Polignac, Paris, reproduced in Fauré, *Correspondance*, 149–150.

Princesse offered to host a salon performance of the work, featuring singers from the Opéra, with Chabrier accompanying on piano, Fauré on the harmonium, and d'Indy and Messenger on percussion.⁴² The opera was not the only work on the program: Fauré conducted his song "Clair de lune" (on a poem of Verlaine), orchestrated for the occasion. As Graham Johnson observes, that soirée "marked the deepening of a remarkable relationship between the Princesse and himself – something that might almost be termed an artistic partnership, a friendship that survived vicissitudes and deserves the epithet 'lifelong.'"⁴³ That summer, Winnaretta participated, with Meg Baugnies, in the "secret lottery" that brought Fauré and Messenger to Bayreuth; together, she and Fauré attended a performance of *Die Meistersinger* that left both awestruck.⁴⁴

After her separation from her husband, Winnaretta remodeled the two adjoining houses on her property. The reconstruction included construction of an *atelier* designed for painting and music-making, equipped with two Steinway grands and a custom-built Cavallé-Coll organ. Winnaretta intended the new space to become the heart of the house, a center for the most up-to-date manifestations of art and music, brilliant enough to attract the cultured elite of Paris society. As a tribute to the deepening of her friendship with Fauré, she commissioned him to write a short musical work with a mutually agreed-upon libretto or poetic text; for this, he would be paid the princely sum of 25,000 francs (as a basis of comparison, he was earning an annual salary of 3,000 francs as choirmaster at the Madeleine). Fauré enthusiastically accepted the offer. Winnaretta thought to engage Verlaine as the librettist for a treatment of a *commedia dell'arte* theme. Verlaine agreed to compose a poem for the project, but disappeared shortly thereafter: he was in the hospital, in a state of severe physical depletion. Alcoholic and syphilitic, his life had become, in Fauré's words, "an endless to-and-fro between the pub and the poorhouse."⁴⁵ It became increasingly apparent that, even with financial enticements, Verlaine would never be able to concentrate on his work. Talk of making "The Life of Buddha" the subject of the project was bantered about. Poets Maurice Bouchor and Albert Samain were considered to pick up where Verlaine had left off. Samain was ultimately engaged, but his poetic efforts had no appeal for the composer. And without an inspiring text with which to work, Fauré's

⁴² Polignac, "Memoirs," 122.

⁴³ Johnson, *The Songs and Their Poets*, 202.

⁴⁴ Polignac, "Memoirs," 121.

⁴⁵ Letter to the Princesse de Scey-Montbéliard of January 18, 1891, in Fauré, *Correspondance*, 174.

doubts about his ability to complete the project increased. And so he dithered.⁴⁶

To further complicate matters, Fauré's feelings for Winnaretta had clearly deepened beyond those of friendship and respectful deference: he was falling in love with her, and his letters to her (and to others, including Meg Baugnies)⁴⁷ reveal an unmistakable undercurrent of romantic ardor. In March 1891, Winnaretta obtained a civil divorce; in April she left Paris to spend several months in Venice, where she rented the Casa Wolkoff. She invited Fauré, as well as two painter friends Ernest Duez and Roger Jourdain (Meg Baugnies' half-brother) and their wives to stay with her. Fauré arrived on May 18, and the five weeks that he spent there were among the happiest of his life, giving him the repose that he so desperately needed. The lively days and sultry nights inspired him to compose a series of *mélodies* on poems by Verlaine. Although Winnaretta had prepared a room for him with a piano, Fauré preferred to compose at the Café Florian on the Piazza San Marco. There, amidst the hubbub of the popular café, he wrote one of his greatest songs, "Mandoline"; this was soon followed by a second, "En sourdine." The two *mélodies* received their first performance in a little fishing boat rented by Winnaretta, whose deck she had equipped with a "little portable yacht piano." And thus, one night, drifting slowly down the lagoons, Amélie Duez sang Fauré's new songs to his enraptured friends. Three more songs, "Green," "À Clymène," and "C'est l'extase," were completed after Fauré's return to Paris; collectively, the five songs came to be known as the *Cinq mélodies "de Venise,"* and, as dedicatee, Winnaretta's name became forever associated with one of Fauré's most beloved song cycles.⁴⁸ In November 1891, "Mandoline" was published in the *Figaro musical*, bearing a dedication to "Madame la Princesse de Scey-Montbéliard."⁴⁹

In February 1892, Winnaretta's marriage was officially annulled by the Vatican. Around that time, Prince Edmond de Polignac – the eccentric aristocratic composer-friend of Fauré, Robert de Montesquiou, and the Comtesse Greffulhe – was in dire straits. He had squandered his meager fortune trying, in vain, to advance his career as a composer over many

⁴⁶ Letter to the Princesse de Scey-Montbéliard, undated [August 22, 1891], *ibid.*, 200. The full story of the Fauré-Verlaine debacle was recounted for the first time in an article by Georges Jean-Aubry, "Gabriel Fauré, Paul Verlaine et Albert Samain, ou Les tribulations de 'Bouddha,'" in *Le centenaire de Gabriel Fauré*, special issue of *La revue musicale* (1945).

⁴⁷ Fauré to Marguerite Baugnies, "Vendredi" [June 5, 1891], Fauré, *Correspondance*, 183–185.

⁴⁸ Polignac, "Memoirs," 120.

⁴⁹ Gabriel Fauré, "Mandoline," *Figaro musical* 1, No. 2, November 1891, 8–11.

long, frustrating years. Of frail constitution, homosexual, and considered by his family to be a crackpot, his future looked hopeless. Montesquiou (who was likely Polignac's lover) urged his friend to make a marriage of convenience with Winnaretta, who, because of her divorce, had lost social standing. Montesquiou pointed out to Prince Edmond that Winnaretta was wealthy, that she was as passionate about music as the Prince – and that she was not sexually interested in men. Élisabeth Greffulhe was enlisted as a female intermediary who could make a parallel case to Winnaretta: Edmond de Polignac would enable the divorced Winnaretta to become a princess once more without being subjected to any sexual demands (in addition to being homosexual, Polignac was also thirty years her senior); moreover, their mutual love of art and music would give them enough common ground for a reasonably happy shared life.⁵⁰ With trepidation, both of the interested parties agreed to the plan. To the amazement of all, Winnaretta and Edmond formed an unanticipated bond of deep friendship and affection – they discovered that they were “soul-mates.” They married in December 1893, and for seven years – until the Prince de Polignac's death in 1901 – they created a loving home: their deep bond was consecrated through music (see Figure 1.1). The most powerful symbol of their union was the music salon they created together; the nonstop music-making that took place in their house was the daily expression of their vows. Within weeks of their marriage, the Polignacs began to host musical gatherings in the *atelier*. The first of these were “organ evenings,” during which Paris's great organists (Alexandre Guilmant, Charles Widor, Louis Vierne, and Eugène Gigout, among others) came to perform on Winnaretta's Cavallé-Coll organ. In the months that followed, vocalists and instrumentalists came to offer songs and chamber music. Contemporary French music was performed as frequently as the standard classical and Romantic repertoire. Early music was also given a prominent place in the Polignac salon: the *atelier* was equipped with a harpsichord that Edmond had inherited from his parents, and Paris's foremost early-music performers were engaged to perform rarely heard treasures of the Renaissance and Baroque eras.⁵¹

As both family friend and de facto “house musician,” Fauré was often on hand to play his own works; his compositions figure in dozens of concert programs given in the Polignac salon in the years 1894–1901 alone. These programs were often recorded in meticulous detail by the society press,

⁵⁰ See my *Music's Modern Muse*, 72. ⁵¹ See *ibid.*, 79–98.

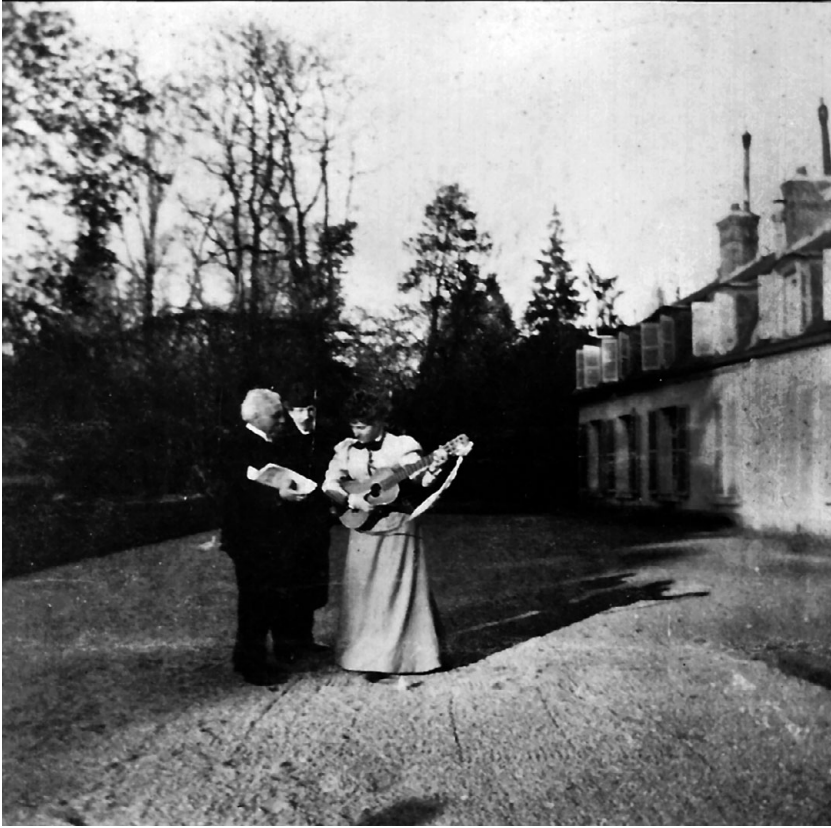


Figure 1.1 Gabriel Fauré, Prince Edmond de Polignac, and Princesse Edmond de Polignac in front of the Hôtel Polignac, Fontainebleau, c. 1895.
Private collection

which added more luster to both the Polignac salon and to Fauré's reputation as a composer.⁵² An enthusiastic admirer of Edmond de Polignac's compositions, Fauré was always willing to collaborate in performances of the prince's music. A typical program, given on June 16, 1895, included several works by Polignac, the Schumann Piano Quartet, Fauré's *Élégie* for cello and piano, and a group of his songs, including "Mandoline."⁵³ Present at this particular *soirée* was a young, unknown writer who had been introduced to the Polignacs in the first months of

⁵² *Ibid.*, 372–377. The listing of concert programs performed in the Polignac salon is incomplete, but printed programs and newspaper notices of musical matinées and soirées in the Polignacs' home attest to Fauré's constant presence.

⁵³ *Le Figaro*, February 8, 1895.

their marriage by Robert de Montesquiou (who would subsequently break off relations with the couple because of their lack of “gratitude” for having engineered the marriage). The Polignac salon provided Marcel Proust with an encyclopedic musical education, introducing him to a diverse range of works spanning three centuries. The future writer of *À la recherche du temps perdu* became an ardent admirer of Fauré’s music. In September 1903, under the pen name Horatio, Proust wrote a retrospective article for *Le Figaro*, “The Salon of the Princesse Edmond de Polignac: Music of Today, Echoes of Yesteryear”; in it, Proust praised the “supreme elegance” of the Polignac salon, and listed among the musical performances that he remembered most fondly Fauré’s Violin Sonata in A Major, Op. 13.⁵⁴ Many Proust scholars believe that the Op. 13 sonata may have perhaps provided a model for the “little phrase” that infiltrates the consciousness of Swann in *Swann’s Way*.⁵⁵

As he did with Meg de Saint-Marceaux, Fauré introduced a number of his talented composition students into the Polignac salon. It was thus that Maurice Ravel was introduced to the Polignacs in 1899. Knowing what association with the name of the Princesse de Polignac could do for the reputation of an unknown composer, Ravel undertook an unheard-of feat of musical social-climbing: he dedicated his newly-written piano solo, the *Pavane pour une infante défunte*, to the Princesse – without asking her permission. This presumptive action breached every rule of etiquette. But before Winnaretta could dress down the impertinent Ravel, she was confronted with the work’s immediate popularity. Ultimately, she could only conclude, “I was much surprised and deeply touched that he should have attached my name to these lovely pages.”⁵⁶

Fauré’s perpetual presence in the Polignac salon was at once a testament to Winnaretta’s affection for her old friend and her veneration of his music – but also an indication of the proprietary hold that she exercised over “her composer.” As for Fauré, he apparently came to terms with his unrequited love – and was surely delighted by the mutual happiness of his two dear friends. At the same time, he was conscious of the fact that he had failed to produce the commissioned vocal work. Winnaretta certainly had not forgotten. In June 1894, she wrote Fauré an imperious letter,

⁵⁴ Horatio [Marcel Proust], “Le Salon de la Princesse Edmond de Polignac: Musique d’aujourd’hui; échos d’autrefois,” *Le Figaro*, September 6, 1903.

⁵⁵ See, for example, the discussion of Fauré and Swann’s “little phrase” in Jean-Jacques Nattiez’s landmark work *Proust as Musician*, trans. Derrick Puffett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁵⁶ Polignac, “Memoirs,” 127.

reminding him that it had been four years since he had agreed to write a work that would "belong entirely to [her]." She wanted to know his intentions. "It is a great source of melancholy . . . to know that what I had believed to be a source of repose, a rare occasion to work freely, has only become a source of misunderstandings and, for me, some particularly painful discussions."⁵⁷ Fauré was shocked, and responded, "I am a simple human being, and I don't pretend to be worth either more or less than any other human; however, I'm fairly certain that I am superior to what you seem to think!"⁵⁸ He promised to fulfill the commission with the next large work that he composed. And, in fact, he kept his promise, albeit many years later. In 1898, Fauré was engaged by the Belgian symbolist playwright Maurice Maeterlinck to write the incidental music for the first London production of his 1882 symbolist play *Pelléas et Mélisande*, starring the renowned actress Mrs. Patrick Campbell in the role of the doomed heroine. When the Polignacs arrived in London for the first performance, on June 21, 1898, Winnaretta was informed by the composer that he had decided to dedicate the incidental music to her.

When Prince Edmond died in 1901, Fauré conducted the choir and played the organ at the funeral of his beloved friend. He was astounded to learn that the prince had bequeathed him 10,000 francs in his will.⁵⁹ For the rest of his life, the composer maintained his affection for his friend and patron the Princesse. In early 1924 (the year of his death), he wrote her a brief note: "I see you too rarely and I think so often of the marvelous hours spent in Paris and Venice, which I owe to *you – you*, the unique Winnie in all the world!"⁶⁰ As for Winnaretta, throughout all the years that she held salon concerts, until 1939, she continually included Fauré's music in her salon programs, often devoting complete concerts to his work. At the same time, until the end of her days, she continued to bear a grudge against the composer for the failure of the Verlaine project. In her memoirs she wrote,

I'm sure that his libretto would have been wonderful, but I am sorry to say that Fauré refused to write the music . . . He had a keen sense of humour and was intensely alive to the absurdity of the pretentious; but although he was sensitive and sentimental, he was easily carried away by new affections, and was not always

⁵⁷ Princesse Edmond de Polignac to Fauré, June 1894, in Fauré, *Correspondance*, 221–222.

⁵⁸ Fauré to the Princesse Edmond de Polignac, [June 1894], *ibid.*, 222.

⁵⁹ See Fauré's two undated letters [August 12 and September 4, 1901] to the Princesse Edmond de Polignac, *ibid.*, 287–288 and 289–290, respectively.

⁶⁰ Fauré to the Princesse Edmond de Polignac, January 12, 1924, *ibid.*, 562–563.

a faithful and perfect friend, being too much interested in new ties to trouble much about his old ones.⁶¹

Fauré's London Patrons

Fauré's music was introduced to British audiences by Camille Saint-Saëns, who performed frequently in Great Britain and routinely programmed Fauré's piano music on his recitals. In 1894, Fauré himself was in London, where he made the acquaintance of Frederick Maddison, a lawyer associated with the British music-publishing house of Metzler and Co., and his composer wife, Adela Maddison.⁶² Mr. Maddison secured a contract for Fauré with Metzler. Between 1896 and 1899, the firm published almost two dozen of Fauré's songs and instrumental works, sometimes before they had even appeared in print in Paris. By the time Fauré was engaged by Maeterlinck to write the incidental music for *Pelléas et Mélisande*, his name was well known to British audiences. Graham Johnson calls 1898 Fauré's "British year," for the composer made three trips to Great Britain for concerts within an eight-month period.⁶³

Often, Fauré would be hosted in London by Leo Frank Schuster (1852–1927). The son of German bankers, Schuster used his wealth to become an influential patron of art and music. He maintained music salons in his London townhouse at 22 Old Queen Street (Westminster) and in his opulent country mansion at Bray-on-Thames, jokingly nicknamed "The Hut." In these two abodes, he welcomed figures such as John Singer Sargent (who in 1889 had painted a now-famous portrait of the composer), Walter Sickert, and Edward Elgar. Schuster introduced Fauré to London society with an "all-Fauré" program.⁶⁴ In 1896 Fauré again traveled to London (in the company of the Princesse de Polignac) to give a concert of his vocal and orchestral works in Schuster's new music room. Among the works performed on that occasion were the four-part song "Madrigal" and the *Pavane*, enthusiastically received by a group of music connoisseurs that included Sargent, Henry James, Lady Randolph Churchill, and her sister

⁶¹ Polignac, "Memoirs," 121.

⁶² Adela Maddison, a gifted composer, would go on to become one of Fauré's mistresses. The liaison lasted for several years, and Fauré dedicated his Seventh Nocturne to the beautiful Adela. Not surprisingly, Frederick Maddison's relations with the composer soured, and, after 1901, Metzler declined to renew his contract.

⁶³ Johnson, *The Songs and Their Poets*, 269–270.

⁶⁴ "Le Monde et la ville," *Le Figaro*, November 29, 1895.

Lady Leslie.⁶⁵ Fauré spent part of the summers of 1906 and 1907 at "The Hut," where the guests also included Sir Adrian Boult. It is likely that it was Schuster who helped Fauré make his way into court circles as well. In March 1908, Fauré spent ten days in London, where he played for the Prince and Princess of Wales and subsequently performed at Buckingham Palace for Queen Alexandra and the Mother Empress of Russia.⁶⁶ Fauré thoroughly enjoyed the luxurious treatment that he received as Schuster's guest; according to Nectoux, Schuster was so devoted to Fauré that, in letters to his wife, the composer referred to his host as "my nanny."⁶⁷ He wistfully wrote to his mistress Marguerite Hasselmans that the gestures of the valet were "like velvet," adding that "Life like that would be, materially, really very sweet; 'comfort' is truly an English invention."⁶⁸

A Life in Society

In 1896, when Fauré was engaged as professor of composition at the Conservatoire, few knew who he was. *Le Figaro* wrote: "Monsieur Fauré . . . is not a music-drama composer; he is an organist by profession . . . Almost entirely unknown by the general public, Monsieur Fauré has the esteem – the very high artistic esteem – of all his confreres and an elite group of dilettantes, who have made of him a cult."⁶⁹ On the few occasions when the newspapers mentioned his name, it was in connection with his work as choirmaster or organist at the Madeleine. But, beginning in the late 1880s, Fauré's activities in the salons began to be chronicled in the society columns of the daily newspapers *Le Figaro* and *Le Gaulois*, which reported on the activities in the fashionable music salons. It was, in fact, the aforementioned "dilettantes," the musical hosts and hostesses who appreciated Fauré's music, who kept his name before the public. The composer's participation in a performance of contemporary music at the home of the Princesse de Sceaux-Montbéliard (the future Princesse de Polignac) was noted by *Le Figaro* in May 1888.⁷⁰ *Le Gaulois'* first mention of Fauré's salon activity occurred on February 9, 1891 in connection with a performance of his *mélodies* by renowned operatic

⁶⁵ See Polignac, "Memoirs," 119. ⁶⁶ See Nectoux, *Les voix du clair-obscur*, 288–289.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 288.

⁶⁸ Fauré to Marguerite Hasselmans, [March 15, 1908], in *Correspondance*, 642–643.

⁶⁹ Jules Huret, "Les nouveaux professeurs du Conservatoire," *Le Figaro*, October 16, 1896.

⁷⁰ "À travers Paris: Dans le monde," *Le Figaro*, May 16, 1888.

soprano Gabrielle Krauss.⁷¹ Progressively, reports of performances of Fauré's music in the salons began to appear more frequently than reports of his musical activities at the Madeleine. From 1893 onward, notices of "all-Fauré" programs in private venues appeared with increasing regularity; in addition to the aforementioned occasions hosted by the Comtesse Greffulhe and Leo Schuster, the papers took note of salon recitals comprised exclusively of Fauré's work in the salons of the Princesse Alexandre Bibesco, Marguerite de Saint-Marceaux, and the Princesse de Polignac.⁷² While a definitive link between these articles and the ascent in Fauré's reputation cannot be established, there is no question that the constant stream of positive publicity emanating from the society press surely helped.

Gabriel Fauré frequented the salons well into his later years, until deafness and the frailties of old age made it impossible for him to circulate in society. Throughout his life he remained ambivalent about salon culture. He complained to Madame Marcel Girette in February 1897 that he was being "flattened" by the "shallow vanity" of the *salonnières* vying for his presence in their music rooms. "My music has been performed TOO MUCH this winter, and my presence is required too often, no doubt to insure that I can't ignore such flattering efforts."⁷³ But Fauré knew well that the salon was necessary for his career – and there is no denying that the contacts that he made in the private music rooms of the *gratin* helped disseminate his music and promote his advancement in public concert life.

Interviewed by the newspaper *Excelsior* two years before his death, Fauré was asked about his success in the salons. He answered simply: "I was preoccupied with making a living. I had good friends, and when you are unknown by the wider music public, you are happy to be understood by some of those friends."⁷⁴

⁷¹ "Ce qui se passe: Échos de Paris," *Le Gaulois*, February 9, 1891.

⁷² See, for example, mentions of "tout-Fauré" programs in the salons of Gaston Berardi in "Mondanités," *Le Gaulois*, February 20, 1894; the Princesse Alexandre Bibesco in *Le Figaro*, April 13, 1896, and *Le Gaulois*, March 9, 1899; the Princesse Edmond de Polignac in "Le Monde et la ville," *Le Figaro*, March 10, 1900 and April 6, 1908; Angèle Duglé in "Le Monde et la ville," *Le Figaro*, May 8, 1896; Marguerite de Saint-Marceaux in *Le Gaulois*, May 9, 1899.

⁷³ Fauré to Mme. Marcel Girette, February 1897, quoted in Nectoux, *Les voix du clair-obscur*, 230.

⁷⁴ Fauré, quoted in Roger Valbelle, "Une gloire de la France: Entretien avec M. Gabriel Fauré," *Excelsior*, June 12, 1922.