

## Les clochettes des muguets

**Les clochettes des muguets,**  
The bells-little of the lilies-of-the-valley

**Frissonnantes sous la brise,**  
trembling beneath the breeze

**Carillonnent de légers,**  
chime some light

**Discrets et subtils parfums.**  
discrete and subtle perfumes

**Je les écoute, un à un,**  
I to them listen one by one

**Doucement je les respire;**  
gently I them breathe

**Ils ont l'arôme si fin**  
they have the aroma so fine

**De ton éclatant sourire,**  
of your bursting smile

**Ils ont l'éclat radieux**  
they have the brightness radiant

**Et fleurant bon de tes yeux;**  
and blossoming good of your eyes

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This is an unusual little song, yet it is more accessible than might be thought on first reading - and it has sufficient character to make it quite infectious! Whilst many twentieth century French songs are very challenging, this one is manageable and still quite representative of its period. It comes from a collection of six songs called *Chansons printanières* (spring songs). A successful performance is all about filling the song with lots of delicate and tender colours.

The piano has a repetitive pattern in the right hand that is evocative of the delicate little flower spikes. This must be very light and smooth. The left hand can be warmer. As the text begins to speak of the bells chiming in bar 9, the left hand starts playing chords. A tempo of ♩=120 gives an effective lilt.

The singer starts each of the first five bars of the melody with two semiquavers. These should be very light and delicate but not too quiet, with a slight word stress on the second quaver beat. In bar 9 this word stress is indicated by a longer note, but there is an additional sudden accent on a crisp first syllable as a bit of onomatopoeia for *Carillonnent* (meaning *chime*). The general dynamic is still *p* however. Lots of words can and should be coloured – *clochettes*, *fissonnantes*, *léger*, *discrets* and *subtils* are all delightfully playful words which should be

## The little bells of the lily-of-the-valley

The little bells of the lily-of-the-valley,  
quivering in the breeze,  
chime peals of light,  
discreet and subtle scents.

One by one I listen to them,  
softly I breathe them in;  
they have the delicate fragrance  
of your beaming smile,  
they have the radiant sparkle  
and blossoming goodness of your eyes;

the little bells of the lily-of-the-valley,  
quivering in the breeze,  
chime peals of light,  
discreet and subtle scents.

### Explanation of French musical terms:

*très légèrement* – very lightly  
*suivez* – follow (i.e. the pianist follows the singer's rubato)

enjoyed. There are many double consonants which should not be enunciated even though it is tempting to use them for colour - avoid the “n”s in *frissonnantes*. Take particular care over the phonetics of *muguets* and *carillonnent*.

Whilst still delicate, from bar 17 the dynamic is fuller and richer. From bar 23 the melodic line, marked *espressivo*, needs to be more legato too, as the text is now speaking of the singer's love. The energy continues growing until bar 33 when the tone is quite exultant. Nevertheless on the way do not miss the opportunity to play lightly with the semiquavers in bar 25.

In bar 37 we repeat the opening verse, but now noticeably quieter, which explains why the start should not be too quiet.

The *rallentando* in bars 45 and 46 is marked *suivez*, so the pianist follows the singer. This is difficult as the shorter notes are in the pianist's part and the movement is naturally dictated by the pianist. The pianist should silently sing the melody whilst articulating and colouring the words. In this way the singer will find it easy to fit the vocal line onto the piano part, creating a natural *rallentando*. There should only be a gentle *ritenuto* at the end of the payout, with a little time taken to allow for placing the closing spread chord – the important effect is a vanishing *diminuendo*.