

# FAURÉ, THROUGH BOULANGER, TO COPLAND: THE NATURE OF INFLUENCE

EDWARD R. PHILLIPS

Nymphs of the woods,  
Goddesses of the fountains,  
Expert singers of all nations,  
Change your voices,  
So clear and high,  
To cutting cries and lamentations  
Since Atropos, the very terrible satrap,  
Has caught in her trap your Ockeghem,  
True treasure of music . . .  
Dress in your clothes of mourning,  
Josquin, Piersson, Brumel, Compère,  
And cry great tears of sorrow for having lost  
Your dear father. . . .

In the late fifteenth century, Josquin set this text—“Nymphes des bois,” *La déploration sur la mort de Johannes Ockeghem*—as a commemoration of the older composer, “le bon père” of Josquin and his contemporaries Brumel, Compère, and Pierre de la Rue. This piece has been suggested as musico-documentary evidence of a teaching relationship between Ockeghem and the younger composers, a relationship that is not—given certain peculiarities of Ockeghem’s style—easily verifiable in the music.

Composers younger than Gabriel Fauré (1845–1924) have cited his influence on their own work; some of these, like Charles Koechlin (1867–1950), were Fauré’s pupils;<sup>1</sup> others, like

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<sup>1</sup> A letter to Henri Sauguet, in which Koechlin cites Fauré’s influence, is quoted in Otfried Nies, “‘Ganz du selbst sein’: Der Komponist Charles Koechlin (1867–1950),” *Neuland* 5 (1984–85): 256–270.

Arthur Honegger (1892–1955), who wrote quite explicitly about Fauré’s influence in his *Je suis compositeur*, were not.<sup>2</sup> Francis Poulenc (1899–1963) once remarked that the harmonic progressions of Fauré’s *La bonne chanson* made him physically ill; yet, one might suspect that this extreme view masked an indebtedness to the elder composer.<sup>3</sup> One writer from the first third of the twentieth century claimed that Fauré’s influence was to be heard in the music of not only his best-known pupil, Maurice Ravel (1875–1937), but in that of “l’école fauréenne,” consisting of Florent Schmitt (1870–1958), Louis Aubert (1877–1968), and Jean Roger-Ducasse (1873–1954).<sup>4</sup>

However, it is precisely because Fauré was the sort of teacher who did *not* impose his compositional style on his students that he created no such school. Fauré, like his pupil Nadia Boulanger (1887–1979), taught composition to *individuals*—individuals who he knew would develop their art differently from each other and from their teacher. This is to not to say that Fauré had no influence on younger musicians (and it is not to say that Boulanger’s pedagogical flexibility had no clear limits) but rather to indicate just how difficult it is to read that influence using the favorite stance of musical historiography: the analysis of style. (Indeed, a frustrating paradox presents itself to the analyst of style: the more easily a composer’s style can be heard to be influenced by his or her elder, the less interesting that composer’s output may be. For example, Jean Roger-Ducasse has been described as a slavish imitator of Fauré—an *epigone*; and his music has attracted only scant attention.) Instead of relying on a comparison of surface styles,

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<sup>2</sup> See Arthur Honegger, *Je suis compositeur* (Paris: Éditions du Conquistador, 1951), trans. Wilson O. Clough, in collaboration with Allan Arthur Willman, as *I Am a Composer* (London: Faber, 1966).

<sup>3</sup> Wilfrid Mellers has suggested Fauré’s influence on Poulenc, but he gives neither documentary evidence nor musical examples to support the idea (see Mellers, *Francis Poulenc* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993]).

<sup>4</sup> Robert Bernard, “Maurice Ravel” and “L’école fauréenne: Florent Schmitt, Louis Aubert, Roger Ducasse,” in *Les tendances de la musique française moderne* (Paris: Durand, 1930): 75–88, 89–102.

this paper will present musical evidence to suggest how an alternate approach might illuminate the subject of influence.

In 1921, Aaron Copland began studies with Nadia Boulanger. In his autobiography, Copland notes that “Gabriel Fauré was Boulanger’s favorite composer, and I soon shared her admiration for him.”<sup>5</sup> In 1923, Copland prepared an “Hommage à Fauré,” a diptych for string quartet: the first movement was an arrangement of Fauré’s ninth prelude for piano, and the second movement a *Rondino*. Copland describes this piece as follows: “The *Rondino* was based on the letters of Fauré’s name. Mixed with his influence can be heard a hint of American jazz and a bit of mild polytonality.”<sup>6</sup> In 1924, Copland published an article titled “Gabriel Fauré, a Neglected Master.”<sup>7</sup> Given all the attention he paid to Fauré’s music in the early 1920s (as well as Boulanger’s own admiration of it), it is reasonable to wonder if it had any lasting effects on Copland’s composition.<sup>8</sup>

In the following discussion, I will leave to one side the consideration of certain aspects of influence, most particularly whether it is conscious or unconscious on the part of teacher or pupil, whether any influence is intentional. Instead, I will pursue the question of whether or not some aspect of the music itself can reveal something about the relationships between composers. Accordingly, rather than choose a piece about which Copland has already acknowledged an influence, I have selected for examination other pieces of the same period: the song “Night,” composed in 1918 before the composer’s move to Paris, and “Alone,” composed in Paris in

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<sup>5</sup> Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland: 1900 through 1942* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1984), 87.

<sup>6</sup> Copland and Perlis, *Copland*, 87f. When the movements were published as *Two Pieces for String Quartet*, Copland replaced the arrangement of the Fauré prelude with *Lento molto*.

<sup>7</sup> Aaron Copland, “Gabriel Fauré, a Neglected Master,” *Musical Quarterly* 10/4 (1924): 573–586.

<sup>8</sup> The possibility of Fauré’s influence on Lennox Berkeley, through the latter’s study with Boulanger, has already been examined; see Robert H. Hansen, “The Songs of Lennox Berkeley: A Lecture Recital” (D.M.A. document, North Texas State University [now University of North Texas], 1987).

1922. Both were published, together with two other early songs, in 1989, and then in a revised and corrected edition of 1995.<sup>9</sup>

Stylistically, little of “Night” seems to compare with Fauré’s work. Its surface ninth chords recall Debussy, and the headmotive of the accompaniment becomes, later in the song under a text describing water, a very impressionistic arabesque. The surface of “Alone” is different—the style is much more contained—and yet there still seems little to recall Fauré. One might note that the melody is primarily stepwise or that the opening gesture resembles the figuration typical of piano accompaniments in the elder composer’s works. But such gestures are typical of *Lieder* and art songs and could serve as points of comparison with the works of many other composers.

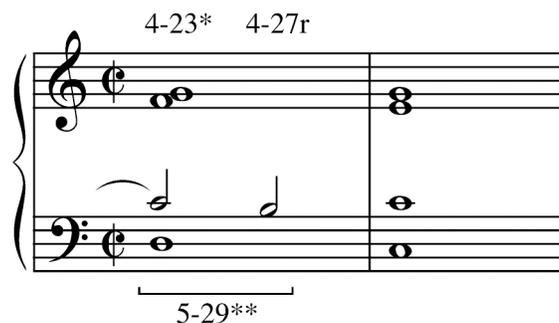
An examination of the *structure* of the two songs, however, is more fruitful. In earlier analyses I have used set theory (often employed as an analytical tool in discussions of the repertoires of the Second Viennese School and Stravinsky) to explain surface motions that Fauré constructed over completely tonal, middleground prolongations.<sup>10</sup> The analysis of Copland’s songs by this same method can produce intriguing results, as long as care is taken in applying the method—specifically, in segmenting the music. For a piece drawn from the atonal repertoire, segmentation follows musically intuitive procedures. For example, a “primary segment” of a

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<sup>9</sup> Aaron Copland, *Four Early Songs* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1989 and 1995). Discussion of some of the errors in the first edition is found in Peter Dickinson, “Copland: Early, Late and More Biography,” *Musical Times* 131/1773 (1990): 582–585. The holograph manuscript for “Night” is held by the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin; see “Notes for Notes,” *Notes* 43/2 (1986), 299. The dating of these pieces is taken from Vivian Perlis’s introduction to the editions. The date of “Alone” is also confirmed by information about the holograph sources generously supplied to me by Daniel Mathers: “There are several holographs of the piece in the Library of Congress: a draft for voice, piano, and viola dated 2 December 1921; recomposed versions for voice and piano in pencil dated 25 February 1922 and in ink dated 1922; and an orchestrated version of the last dated 1923. In addition, a sketch of the song exists in a notebook of juvenilia between pieces dated July 1921.”

<sup>10</sup> See, e.g., Edward R. Phillips, “Smoke, Mirrors and Prisms: Tonal Contradiction in Fauré,” *Music Analysis* 12/1 (1993): 3–24.

FIGURE 1. An example of sets in a hierarchy



piece is, according to Allen Forte, “a configuration that is isolated as a unit by conventional means.”<sup>11</sup> Imbrication, or the successive extraction of the subsets of a vertical or a melody, is often employed. Further, a “composite segment” is one “formed by segments or subsegments that are contiguous or that are linked in some way.”<sup>12</sup> Central to these definitions is the notion of contiguousness; notwithstanding the possibility of interlocking set structures of great complexity, any segmentation of an atonal piece that completely ignores the proximity of pitches would be deemed illogical or even fanciful.

However, when set theory is used to understand better the vocabulary of a piece that is essentially *tonal*, segmentation must also be governed by the inevitably hierarchical structure of tonality. Consider Figure 1, which describes (in terms of sets) the progression of  $V_3^4$ , with a suspension of the leading tone, as it resolves to I. The dominant seventh chord is equivalent to set class 4-27 (0258); the false vertical created by the suspension is 4-23 (0257); the entire measure constitutes 5-29 (01368). Just as we understand the dominant with the resolved suspension to have greater structural weight than the suspension verticality, we understand 4-27 (0258) to be in a similar superordinate relation to 4-23 (0257). The former set bears the designation “r”; the

<sup>11</sup> Allen Forte, *The Structure of Atonal Music* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), 83.

<sup>12</sup> Forte, *The Structure of Atonal Music*, 84.

latter set bears an asterisk to indicate its subordinate rank in the structure.<sup>13</sup> The set 5-29 (01368) is, in this simple configuration, of no structural significance; it has only a tenuous hold on the analytical ear because of the proximity of pitches. Its status is indicated by a double asterisk.

In pieces not so revealing of their underlying tonal structure as this simple example, sets of the double asterisk demand more attention of the listener and analyst because the usual hierarchical gestures are disguised. They assume a greater role in presenting the sonic vocabulary of the piece. Such is the case in certain pieces by Fauré, notably those of his last compositional period, and such is the case also in Copland's "Alone." In the excerpt shown in Figure 2, m. 13 shows a structure that appears to be an upwardly resolving appoggiatura figure (A $\sharp$ 3 to B3, left hand of the accompaniment) with the set of resolution being a triad, 3-11 (037). The set containing the appoggiatura is 3-5 (016); in this particular situation, it merits an asterisk while the set comprising the entire measure, 4-Z29 (0137), receives a double asterisk.

Classification of sets by reference to tonal gesture is not, however, without its problems. The excerpt of Figure 3 shows mm. 9–10, in which the appoggiatura gesture just discussed is not so simply understood. The motion from A3 to B3, in the left hand of the piano part, here continues to C $\sharp$ 4 and is thus heard as the lower part of a voice exchange, the upper part being in the vocal part (with a cross relation). That C $\sharp$  is the main note in these measures seems further underscored by the upper-neighbor motion in the vocal line: C $\sharp$ 5–D $\sharp$ 5–C $\sharp$ 5. Yet, at the same time, D $\sharp$  also seems to have a claim to the status of principal pitch, by virtue of its presence in the ostinato of the right hand of the piano part (in these measures as well as in those that precede and follow them). Does the set on the downbeat of m. 9 then receive an r, one asterisk, or two asterisks?

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<sup>13</sup> The "r" indicates a vertical that has weight as the "real" harmony in a highly ornamented tonal structure.

FIGURE 2. Copland, “Alone,” mm. 12–14

FIGURE 3. Copland, “Alone,” mm. 8–10

Figure 4 shows the concluding measures of the song, where a similar situation obtains. In the voice at m. 27, E5 moves to F#5 as would an appoggiatura. But the tonality of the piece, as indicated by the key signature and the final notes of the bass, makes E the note of greater weight. Complicating the situation is the clouding of E minor in the sustained notes of the accompaniment, which become the final vertical. The last harmony of the piece is 4-16 (0157). As a set it might merit a double asterisk for including both E and F#, notes at odds with one another in the

FIGURE 4. Copland, “Alone,” mm. 26–29

The musical score for Copland's "Alone" (mm. 26–29) is presented in a standard staff format. The vocal line (top staff) is in G major and 4/4 time, with lyrics "does not end." The piano accompaniment (bottom two staves) features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes in the right hand and quarter notes in the left hand. Dynamics include *p*, *pp*, and *ppp*. An *8va* marking is placed above the piano part in measures 26–28. A *4-16* marking is located at the bottom right of the score.

vocal gesture in m. 27. Or it might merit an *r* by virtue of its position as the final—albeit non-triadic—sonority.

Indeed, an exhaustive partitioning of this piece reveals that recurring sets often fulfill various roles, as determined by tonal gesture and vestigial tonal structure. The table of Figure 5 lists sets that appear in “Alone.” Following Allen Forte’s work on set genera,<sup>14</sup> it places these sets in a reduced genera table in which each set—which may belong to only one genus or to several genera—is assigned to a single genus according to the various characteristics of both the set and its use in this particular piece. Some of the set vocabulary of Copland’s song falls into genera 11 and 12—those described as the “tonal” genera—and genus 10, characterised as “atonal-tonal.” The majority of sets, however, fall into genus 1, an “atonal” genus; others fall into two genera linked with genus 1: genera 2 (“whole-tone”) and 3 (“diminished”).

<sup>14</sup> Allen Forte, “Pitch-Class Set Genera and the Origin of Modern Harmonic Species,” *Journal of Music Theory* 32/2 (1988): 187–270.

**FIGURE 5.** Copland, “Alone”: reduced genera table, all sets

NB: the symbol “\*/\*\*” denotes sets that appear in two ways:  
 as a set ornamenting a harmonically important set (like the 4-23 of Figure 1), and  
 as a set that occurs simply as contiguous pitches, without structural weight (like the 5-29 of Figure 1)

		G1	G2	G3	G7	G9	G10	G11	G12
<b>3-</b>	2**				○				
	5r*	○							
	6*		○						
	9r*							○	
<b>4-</b>	6	○							
	8	○							
	13	○							
	14r*						○		
	Z15*/**	○							
	16r*	○							
	17*					○			
	18*/**	○							
	19*						○		
	20*						○		
	22							○	
	23r*							○	
	26								○
	28**			○					
Z29*/**	○								
<b>5-</b>	7**	○							
	Z12*	○							
	14**	○							
	16**	○							
	Z18**	○							
	20**	○							
	21**						○		
	23**							○	
	24**	○							
	25**	○							
	27*/**							○	
	28*	○							
	29r**	○							
	Z38	○							
<b>6-</b>	Z17**	○							
	Z25**	○							
	Z28**	○							
	33**	○							
	Z38**	○							
	Z41**	○							
Z43**	○								

**FIGURE 6.** Copland, “Alone”: reduced genera table, r sets

	G1	G10	G11	G12
3-5r*	○			
3-9r*			○	
3-11r*				○
4-6r	○			
4-8r	○			
4-13r	○			
4-14r*		○		
4-16r*	○			
4-22r			○	
4-23r*			○	
4-26r				○
5-29r**			○	
5-31r				○
5-Z38r			○	

**FIGURE 7.** Copland, “Night”: reduced genera table, excerpts

	G1	G2	G3	G12
3-8		○		
3-10			○	
3-11				○
4-16		○		
4-21		○		
4-24		○		
4-25	○			
4-27		○		
4-Z29		○		
5-20		○		
5-25		○		
5-29		○		
5-33		○		
5-34		○		
6-35		○		

Invoking the hierarchy of tonal gesture (cautiously, given the ambiguities already discussed) provides a different profile of the piece’s vocabulary. As shown in Figure 6, when sets are limited to those that appear at least once as r sets, we find that genera 10, 11, and 12 (the “tonal” and “atonal-tonal” ones) become much more important. However, a significant number of sets—including that of the cadence, 4-16 (0157)—still fall into “atonal” genus 1. The set

profile of Copland's "Night," drawn from excerpts, is also different; see Figure 7. Emphasis here is on genus 2 ("whole-tone"); the only set of "tonal" genus 12 is the triad.

Consider now two set tables of works by Fauré. The first, shown in Figure 8, is of mm. 25–34 of "Cygne sur l'eau," from the cycle *Mirages* (1919). These measures employ linear chords to elaborate a secure, if obscured, tonal middleground structure: an extended neighbor-note formation. In subsequent measures, the same sets provide the surface prolongation of a  $V^7$  chord. A tonal analysis of these passages is not without difficulty, but it is the *surface* that produces the non-tonal character of the music. This "non-tonality" is the result of the relation of surface sonorities to one another and their refusal to confirm the tonal middleground structure. Yet Fauré accomplishes this with sets that find their home in genera 10, 11, and 12—the "tonal" and hybrid "atonal-tonal" genera. The second table, in Figure 9, relates to Fauré's "Diane, Séléné," the third song of the cycle *L'Horizon chimérique* (1921); it is, at deep middleground and background levels, solidly tonal. The non-tonal stasis of the surface is effected in various ways but again uses the familiar set vocabulary anchored in genera 10, 11, and 12.

The musical evidence thus far might suggest that Copland's tonal vocabulary—still his own but closer to that of Fauré in "Alone" than in "Night"—changed during this time; and it is tempting to assert that it did so because of Copland's acquaintance with Fauré's music in Paris. This conclusion would be too easy. For while these four works by Fauré and Copland could not seem more different on their stylistic surface, all four are tonal, and their set materials—their vocabulary of sonorities—are, despite different distributions across the genera, all drawn from the diatonic collection. That is, the important sets are all subsets of 7-35 (013568T), the set class of the major heptachord. The difference is in how these materials are used and which are emphasized. For example, Fauré would not have concluded a piece with 4-16 (0157), as Copland did in

**Figure 8.** Fauré, “Cygne sur l’eau,” mm. 25–34: reduced genera table, all sets<sup>†</sup>

	G4	G10	G11	G12
3-11		○		
3-12*	●			
4-14		○		
4-20		○		
4-22			○	
4-23			○	
4-26				○
4-27				○

**FIGURE 9.** Fauré, “Diane, Séléné”: reduced genera table, all sets<sup>†</sup>

	G1	G2	G3	G4	G10	G11	G12
3-5r	○						
3-7r						○	
3-9r						○	
3-10*			●				
3-11r							○
3-12*				●			
4-13r			○				
4-14r					○		
4-20r					○		
4-21*		●					
4-22r						○	
4-23r*						○	
4-26r							○
4-27r							○
4-Z29*			●				

<sup>†</sup> The symbol ○ indicates a set that appears at least once as an r set; the symbol ● indicates a set that exists *only* as a set with an asterisk.

“Alone.” And “Night,” for all its impressionistic flights, ends on a triad. The structural differences in terms of set vocabulary are slight; the principal differences appear still to be stylistic.

But consider now a tonal analysis of the two Copland songs, as shown in Figure 10. The middleground/background structure of “Night” is relatively straightforward: a fifth descent with the head note ornamented by the lowered sixth degree of the scale (B $\flat$ , given enharmonically as A $\sharp$ ). If the surface recalls Debussy, then the arpeggiated support for the extended neighbor, and the enharmonic transportation to and fro, recall—if anyone—Brahms. The tonal structure of

FIGURE 10. Copland, “Night”

Figure 10 shows a musical score for Copland's "Night". The score is written for piano and consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). The time signature is not explicitly shown but appears to be 4/4. The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 5, 17, 18, 24, 27, and 35 marked above the staff. A fermata is placed over measure 18, which contains a note marked with an 'N'. A bracket labeled '6' spans measures 27 and 28. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some chords and a melodic line in the upper voice.

FIGURE 11. Copland, “Alone”

Figure 11 shows a musical score for Copland's "Alone". The score is written for piano and consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is not explicitly shown but appears to be 4/4. The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 8, 17, 19, and 29 marked above the staff. A bracket labeled '6' spans measures 17 and 18. The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some chords and a melodic line in the upper voice. Below the bass staff, there are harmonic labels: #III (16) under measure 8, V under measure 19, (IV?) under measure 20, and I under measure 29.

“Alone” is not so simple; Figure 11 provides a reduced middleground/background sketch of the piece. The non-tonic beginning unfolds the dominant triad in the upper voice, first as motive B4–D $\sharp$ 5, and subsequently as B4–D $\sharp$ 5; it then moves to an apparent  $\sharp$ III harmony in m. 8. This raised mediant harmony is the result of the refusal of the leading tone (D $\sharp$ ) to be resolved to E. Over the long span of the music, the dominant returns (in an admittedly obscure fashion) in mm. 18–23 and then resolves to the tonic (obscured itself, as already observed) at the close of the piece. Between dominant and tonic there appears a key area based on a false IV, produced by the coincidence of the dominant’s passing seventh (A) and another passing tone (C) connecting the lowered leading tone with the fifth of the tonic triad (B).

A background that is essentially tonal but which, through the application of prolongational counterpoint, produces a middleground or foreground structure at odds with either the prevailing tonality or the rules of harmonic progression itself (here, a progression that seems to

be V–IV–I) is, as I have demonstrated elsewhere, a very *fauréen* trick, indeed.<sup>15</sup> Equally *fauréen* is the warping of counterpoint that produces the false  $\sharp$ III at the opening. Remember, too, the detail of mm. 9–10 of Copland’s “Alone,” described in Figure 3. This situation, in which two pitches are presented as principal and ornamental notes by voice and piano in contradictory fashion, is exactly paralleled in m. 13 of Fauré’s “En sourdine,” in which the voice asserts C as principal note with upper neighbor D, while the piano presents D as the principal note supported by the harmony.<sup>16</sup>

Now it is perhaps more justified to revisit the question: did contact with Fauré’s music produce the difference in structure between Copland’s two songs? That is, did Copland learn from Fauré how much more could still be wrung from conventional tonal structures if the foreground was elaborated with familiar tonal sets, relating to each other in unfamiliar ways (as in the elder composer’s “En sourdine” and “Cygne sur l’eau”)? Did he learn, further, what possibilities existed if conventional tonal structures of the deep middleground were themselves stretched and bent? In short, did contact with Fauré’s music allow Copland, somewhat paradoxically, to begin to find his own tonal vocabulary and tonal syntax?

The admittedly small sampling of Copland’s music offered here does not permit a definite conclusion that contact with Fauré’s music had an effect on the structure of the younger composer’s compositions. But these comparisons do affirm the validity of further investigation into the possibility of influence. They affirm, too, the validity of probing music history from the point of view of musical structure. Music history has been written, for the most part, as a history of musical style; and this stance, as noted at the beginning of this essay, has its limitations. It is

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<sup>15</sup> See Phillips, “Smoke, Mirrors and Prisms.”

<sup>16</sup> Phillips, “Smoke, Mirrors and Prisms,” 8.

perhaps time for a new approach to be taken to musical historiography. The history of Western art music needs to be written as a history of that music's evolving structure—in particular, its contrapuntal structure. Such a history—one that examines more of the workings of our art than can be found in surface style—is inherently musical.

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## ABSTRACT

Using tonal and post-tonal analytical methods, this article examines two early songs of Aaron Copland and compares them with the music of Gabriel Fauré, in order to determine if the notion

that the compositional techniques of the older composer had an influence on those of Copland is valid and worthy of further research.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Edward Phillips is a graduate of Amherst College and of Yale University, where he completed his Ph.D. in music theory under Allen Forte. He also studied in Paris and Fontainebleau with Nadia Boulanger. Prof. Phillips has published a number of articles on the analysis of Fauré’s music, as well as *Gabriel Fauré: A Guide to Research* (Taylor and Francis), the second edition of which was published in 2011.

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