



Understanding French Verse: A Guide for Singers

David Hunter

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Advice to young singers often follows the standard line of the great French singer Claire Croiza: Study the poem away from the music, so that you know what the words really mean. But Croiza's advice is notoriously difficult to follow when performing French melodies. Just how do you approach a French poem? In the lyric poetry on which the melodie is based, meaning is conveyed not just through the words but also through the poem's formal structure. *Understanding French Verse: A Guide for Singers* explains this formal structure and sets out the basics of French versification, using examples drawn from a wide range of well-known song settings. Its chapters examine French meters, stanzaic forms, sonnets, rondels and other fixed forms, rhyme and sound patterning, and free verse poems. Written in a clear and concise way, it explains the Alexandrine, how to distinguish different meters by counting syllables, and how to identify stresses in French verse. The book also illustrates how rhyme works and the ways in which a French sonnet differs from its counterpart in English. And it demonstrates how the understanding of verse techniques enhances the interpretation and enjoyment of the melodie. The book also offers valuable resources, including a brief history of French versification, detailed analysis of several poems, a glossary of technical terms, and suggestions for further reading. While other books help singers with French diction, or offer translations of French texts, no other book helps a singer understand the meaning behind what they are singing. *Understanding French Verse* is an essential tool for singers, accompanists, and other musicians who want to understand more about the French texts with which they are working. It also provides a useful basic introduction to students of French poetry.

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