

Chapter 6

Players and Pianos: An Overview of Early Recorded Resources for the French Piano Repertoire¹

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Paris, Christmas Eve, 1907: while most Parisians spent the afternoon making last-minute preparations for the following day, dignitaries from the Opéra, the Académie des Beaux-Arts, the government, and the French Gramophone Company assembled for a curious ceremony in the bowels of the Palais Garnier. Two large metal “urns,” each containing a dozen gramophone discs, were sealed and placed in specially constructed walls, with instructions from the undersecretary of state for the Beaux-Arts that they should not be opened for one hundred years. For this project Alfred Clark, president of the French Gramophone Company, had donated recordings of those deemed to be the principal singers of the age in some of the most celebrated lyric and dramatic numbers then in the repertoire. Four and a half years later, on June 13, 1912, a further set of his discs was entombed. Needless to say, all of them betray a distinctly French bias, in terms of voices and repertoire. They include only a small sampling of purely instrumental music: Raoul Pugno playing his own *Sérénade à la lune* in 1907, Paderewski performing Chopin in 1912, a violin and piano work or two on each occasion, and an extract from Beethoven’s *Pastoral* Symphony from the band of the Garde Républicaine in 1912.²

While this venture focused on the opera and singers rather than the piano, it is revealing on several counts for the present study. First of all, being France, it is no accident that Alfred Clark turned to the Opéra when he had the idea of preserving recordings for future generations. Despite everything that had happened in terms of instrumental music since the Franco-Prussian War, starting with the formation of the Société Nationale de Musique, opera and vocal music remained predominant culturally and institutionally. Secondly, the decision to

¹ I should like to thank David Milsom for some typically insightful comments on a draft of this chapter.

² EMI issued these recordings (in France only) as a three-disc set entitled *Les Urnes de l’Opéra: 1907/1912*, 50999 206267 2 3. A dedicated area of the Bibliothèque nationale de France website gives further information on this enterprise and the recovery of the discs: <http://expositions.bnf.fr/voix/index.htm> (accessed January 31, 2010).

preserve flat discs suggests that, in France at least, recording horizontally in the manner developed by Emil Berliner was already winning the format war with Edison's method of recording vertically onto rotating cylinders.³ Clark clearly anticipated further developments in recording technology, for an entire gramophone was also incarcerated in 1912 to ensure that the records could be played when the urns were opened. Finally, there is the notion of recordings being of importance for *musical* posterity. Edison originally intended his phonograph for recording speech, simply a piece of office machinery. Even the documentation accompanying the urns interred at the Paris Opéra refers to the gramophone as a "talking machine," but Clark's far-sighted gift reflected the fact that, by 1907, recording had rapidly moved beyond being a mere curiosity.

A century later, the study of recordings has moved beyond being a curiosity into the mainstream of musicology and performance scholarship. Building on the pioneering work of Robert Philip,⁴ the study of recorded performances has provided vital evidence for our understanding of earlier performance practices. These aural sources complement scores, treatises, interviews, memoirs, and other written materials and enhance our understanding of how music was performed in the past. Recordings made before the Second World War tend to be especially revealing, primarily because they are furthest removed from the present, although strong evidence exists for a variety of changes to performance practice and philosophy that coalesce around the late 1930s and 1940s. Nonetheless, the chapter on Messiaen as pianist shows how, even with a composer-performer operating more recently, recordings may contain striking revelations. The present chapter concentrates on the period up to the outbreak of war in 1939. It gives a broad-brush overview of some of the resources available in recordings from the perspective of French piano music and considers some of the issues that arise when studying them. It does not even begin to be comprehensive in its scope, but, hopefully, whets the appetite a little for exploring this fascinating material.

³ American by birth, Alfred Clark worked for Emile Berliner in Philadelphia (alongside Fred Gaisburg), but first came to Paris in the late 1890s as Edison's representative. In these early years he sometimes recorded simultaneously on flat discs and cylinders, so he knew both formats intimately. He took control of the French branch of the Gramophone Company when it was created in May 1899. He eventually took charge of The Gramophone Company and was the first chairman of Electric and Musical Industries Ltd (EMI). For more on Clark and the early years of the French Gramophone Company, see the preface to Alan Kelly, *His Master's Voice/La Voix de son Maître: The French Catalogue* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1990).

⁴ Notably his monographs *Early Recordings and Musical Style: Changing Tastes in Instrumental Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992) and *Performing Music in the Age of Recording* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

Resources

Recent years have seen a flurry of studies and projects devoted to analyzing and understanding the performances preserved on cylinders, discs, rolls, tapes, and myriad other formats. Despite the explosion of interest in recent years, scholars have much more to explore, and, crucially, to learn. As we shall see, the resources for French piano music are not especially extensive in the early years of recordings, but become much more plentiful in the electric era; that is, after microphones began to be used in 1925. Some early recordings have now been made available on compact disc or websites, though many of these transfers have an all-too-transitory existence in the catalogue, often requiring persistence and a sharp eye to track down. Numerous recordings still await transfer, including many commercial recordings, but also private recordings and, for the latter part of the period in question, radio broadcasts. Beyond this, there are piano rolls, huge numbers of which have remained unheard for many decades beyond the ranks of a few enthusiasts with the requisite technology.

The substantial collections of three national libraries offer a natural place to start: the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), the National Sound Archive at the British Library (NSA), and the Library of Congress (LC). While the LC online catalogue indexes only fifty percent of commercial 78rpm discs, the BnF and NSA sites are much more complete. Even with more comprehensive catalogues, however, listings rarely include the date of recording or issue since it may not appear on the disc itself. Librarians and scholars like precision, but considerable detective work may be required to establish whether a particular undated recording is likely to have been from the 1920s, 1940s, or 1960s. The disc label or cover may give clues to this or other useful information. Still, for understandable reasons, many archives are extremely reluctant to allow the actual recording to be handled directly.⁵

Information accompanying the extensive sound files on the AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (CHARM) website is especially helpful, since the label for each track has also been scanned. These lossless FLAC files⁶ include numerous items that are yet to be transferred elsewhere, such as Alfred Hallis's 1938 complete recording of Debussy's *Études* and several performances by Irène Scharrer from the early 1920s.⁷ The CHARM project, which ran from 2004 to 2009, resulted in this important website and acted as a substantial catalyst for the study of recordings. Two other outputs from

⁵ Some archives are more accommodating, one of the best-resourced being the Norwegian Institute of Recorded Sound at Stavanger.

⁶ Lossless is the term used for compressed digital files that enable the original data to be reconstructed. Most download formats, such as MP3, lose information in compression. FLAC stands for Free Lossless Audio Codec and is the most prevalent format for lossless downloads of archive recordings.

⁷ Details of all recordings mentioned are in the discography at the end of this chapter, which indicates modern transfers where appropriate.

CHARM are *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music*,⁸ a wide-ranging edited collection, and Daniel Leech-Wilkinson's monograph *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performances*,⁹ published on the CHARM website, which provides a general guide to the study of recordings. To these should be added Timothy Day's masterly *A Century of Recorded Music: Listening to Musical History*.¹⁰

It is apparent from these and other overarching resources that French repertoire in general, and French piano music in particular, tend to receive fairly scant attention. This is despite the fact that the vanguard of those using recordings as a musicological resource includes figures such as Roy Howat, Arbie Orenstein, Charles Timbrell, and others working on French piano music. To be fair, though, while the gramophone and piano roll recordings by Debussy, Saint-Saëns, and (mostly) Ravel are precious to us, the earliest days of recording largely ignored this repertoire. Unless Chopin is counted as fully naturalized, Edison cylinders preserve scarcely any recordings of French piano music, and only the occasional violin arrangement from an opera or a Saint-Saëns "Swan" if other instruments are included. The general predominance of gramophone rather than cylinder recording in France itself may explain this, but it also appears to reflect the fact that the pianists of the grand tradition did not perform this sort of repertoire in other countries.

Much of the piano repertoire from the latter part of the nineteenth century on which we now concentrate, such as Fauré, Chabrier, and Debussy, had not penetrated much beyond Paris. For example, the engrossing website of the Cylinder Preservation and Digitization Project at the University of California, Santa Barbara, lists only one recording of French solo piano music: Benjamin Godard's Mazurka, op. 54, no. 2, by André Benoist in 1918.¹¹ Similarly, the privately recorded Julius Block cylinders, made primarily in Russia and Germany between 1890 and 1927, contain plenty of Chopin, and works by Mozart, Mendelssohn, Wagner, Rubinstein, and Arensky, but for French solo piano music include just two selections, again by Godard: his Gavotte in G, op. 81 no. 2 and "En courante" from *Six Morceaux*, op. 53. For acoustic era 78s (i.e., those recorded before the introduction of microphones) and piano rolls, there are almost as many recordings of Cécile Chaminade playing her own works as of Saint-Saëns playing his, and considerably more by them than either Debussy or Ravel, or for that matter, anyone playing music by Fauré. Then again, aside from the *Moonlight*, Beethoven's piano

⁸ Nicholas Cook et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Recorded Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁹ Daniel Leech-Wilkinson, *The Changing Sound of Music: Approaches to Studying Recorded Musical Performance* (London: CHARM, 2009). See www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/studies/chapters/intro.html (accessed March 15, 2010).

¹⁰ Timothy Day, *A Century of Recorded Music: Listening to Musical History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

¹¹ <http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/index.php> (accessed July 31, 2010).

Table 6.1 Piano rolls of works by Chabrier

Work	Pianist	Company	Catalogue no.	Date
<i>Bourrée fantasque</i>	José Vianna da Mota	Duca	1333	ca. 1913
<i>Bourrée fantasque</i>	Édouard Risler	Duca	1051	ca. 1912
“Danse Villageoise”	Édouard Risler	Duca	1052	ca. 1912
<i>España</i> (arr. Copeland)	George Copeland	Ampico	58526	ca. 1922
<i>Feuillet d’album</i>	Alfred Cortot	Duo-Art	6969	ca. 1926
<i>Habañera</i>	Francis Planté	Triphonola	53566	unknown
	Magdeleine Brard	Welte-Mignon	7600	ca. 1928
“Idylle”	Alfred Cortot	Duo-Art	6910	ca. 1925
“Idylle”	Alfred Cortot	Duca	965	ca. 1912
“Idylle”	Marius François Gaillard	Pleyela	10293	unknown
“Idylle”	Édouard Risler	Duca	1049	ca. 1912
“Scherzo-Valse”	Magdeleine Brard	Welte-Mignon	7097	ca. 1927
“Scherzo-Valse”	Alfred Cortot	Duca	964	ca. 1912
“Scherzo-Valse”	Robert Lortat	Duo-Art	5974	1918
“Scherzo-Valse”	Raoul Pugno	Pleyela	8702	before 1914
“Scherzo-Valse”	Raoul Pugno	Virtuola	4425	before 1914
“Scherzo-Valse”	Raoul Pugno	Welte	541	before 1914
“Scherzo-Valse”	Édouard Risler	Duca	1050	ca. 1912
“Scherzo-Valse”	Germaine Schnitzer	Welte	905	unknown
“Scherzo-Valse”	Eugenie Wehrmann-Schaffner	Ampico	6968	ca. 1929

sonatas are in short supply, too. These statistics do not denigrate Chaminade, but underline that even if record companies in the early years of the twentieth century had an awareness of posterity, they could neither predict the filter of history nor overlook the prevailing tastes of the time.

Chabrier serves as a useful case study. Raoul Pugno made a sprightly disc of the “Scherzo-Valse” (*Pièces pittoresques*) for the Gramophone and Typewriter Company in 1903 (Recorded Example 6.1),¹² but the next audio piano recording appears to be only in 1917, with Édouard Risler playing “Idylle” (also *Pièces pittoresques*), a work that was also recorded by Marcelle Meyer in 1925. At least twenty piano rolls supplement these three audio recordings, but virtually none of them is available in audio recordings (Table 6.1). The years following the introduction of electric recording saw, if not a flood, then a significant increase in audio recordings. The *World’s Encyclopedia of Recorded Music* (WERM), which covers the electric era more-or-less comprehensively (especially 1936–50), has seventeen entries for Chabrier’s piano music, the earliest being Marcelle Meyer’s

¹² Recorded examples are available at <http://frenchpianomusic.byuh.edu>.

1929 recording of the *Bourrée fantasque*.¹³ The discs by Pugno and Risler, and Meyer's 1925 "Idylle," cover about the same timespan as those listed in WERM, so the latter represents a more than five-fold increase in audio recordings, though only about half of these are readily accessible in modern transfers.

In the years after World War I, the new generation of composers began to make their mark. The success of Poulenc's *Trois Mouvements perpétuels* (1918) resulted in at least three complete recordings within a decade of its composition, from Walter Giesecking (ca. 1924–25), Marcelle Meyer (1925)¹⁴ and the composer himself (1928). All three are suitably genial, with Meyer having the most deft touch. Poulenc tends to clip beats, and, in the rollicking final "Alerte," is not too worried about whether his fingers can keep up with the speed he has set. Most striking, though, for a composer who shunned Romantic affectations and whose scores include various imprecations against rubato or the easing of tempo at the close of movements, is Poulenc's *rallentando* at the end of the first movement, a slowing far more pronounced than either Giesecking's or Meyer's.

Meyer also appears in partnership with Milhaud in a delightful 1938 recording of his *Scaramouche* for two pianos. For the most part they play, as might be expected, with scarcely a whiff of rubato. In the central movement, however, as the more flowing, echoing melody gets under way, the second piano lingers momentarily on the highest note of the tune (bar 110). This does not occur in equivalent places, and is all the more striking and effective for its absence elsewhere. Recording information does not make it clear which pianist plays second piano; Milhaud's name is listed second, but that could be alphabetical. Regardless, he clearly sanctioned the performance, and this moment could scarcely have been accidental. This does not mean, of course, that performers should imitate Milhaud's approach in this bar, but it does indicate that he was not entirely averse to the occasional echo of Romantic sensibility.

Towards the end of the period under discussion, a smattering of radio broadcasts has survived, such as Vladimir Horowitz playing Debussy's "Serenade for the Doll" (*Children's Corner*) on October 5, 1933,¹⁵ supplementing his commercial discography.¹⁶ These documents of radio broadcasts became much more plentiful

¹³ Francis F. Clough and G. J. Cuming, *The World's Encyclopedia of Recorded Music* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1952), 111–13. It does not include piano rolls.

¹⁴ The online catalogue for the NSA also lists a 1924 recording for Meyer and gives a completely different recording date for its 1925 listing from that on EMI's transfers. It is possible, though seems unlikely, that Meyer made an acoustic recording, then an electric one the following year, but seems completely untenable that she would make three recordings in two years. The entry in the discography accompanying this chapter gives the EMI dating, on the (possibly erroneous) premise that it will be based on company archives.

¹⁵ This is in the Denmark Radio Archive, and a copy is also in the British Library's National Sound Archive.

¹⁶ The APR set of Horowitz's complete solo European recordings (APR 6004) includes Debussy's "Pour les arpèges composés" (Études) and two works by Poulenc, the

after World War II, when the advent of tape made it more practical to record programs. Nonetheless, there are some earlier gems to be found, such as Bartók and his wife, Ditta Pásztory, in an incomplete performance of Debussy's *En blanc et noir* from a Hungarian radio broadcast on April 23, 1939, which reveals the composer of *Bluebeard's Castle* as a fine interpreter of the composer of *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Many broadcasts were preserved, but even those that were recorded were not necessarily kept. While a number of broadcasters have made some of the riches of their archives available, access to these resources for scholarly research remains frustratingly difficult. Even when their archives officially belong to national libraries, the catalogues tend not to be integrated. As a consequence, it is often possible only to speculate what was preserved and what survived the ravages of war or the more prosaic dumping of material to save space in the 1950s and 60s before many broadcasters realized that they could not second-guess what future generations would find of value.

Using the Recordings

It does not take long for anyone working with recordings either to feel the need for, or to be encouraged to use, technological assistance in their analysis. From the desire for accuracy about the tempi to sophisticated examination of tuning, a raft of computer programs, such as Sonic Visualiser,¹⁷ can now aid those working with recordings. They enable examination of audio material in a variety of ways, either in the abstract, or alongside the score, and for visual modeling of the results. This can be tremendously useful, but it cannot replace the human ear in scrutinizing the recording in question, first, last, and many times in between. The issue is whether the computer-aided analysis tells us anything tangibly different from rigorous close listening. Often it can, but data can also be worn like protective armor in making (or even obscuring) an observation that is readily apparent to an experienced listener. Furthermore, while computer data might reveal minutiae in the playing of Rubinstein or Gieseking, and even come close to reproducing it on a piano these days,¹⁸ it cannot disclose to a performer what precisely Rubinstein or Gieseking did to produce those sounds on that piano in that room, nor, indeed, why they did so (nor for that matter, can most musicologists). In other words, data must be combined with listening and an awareness of its limitations.

A straightforward example comes from that simplest and most commonly abused piece of information, the overall duration. Walter Gieseking's 1938 recording of Debussy's *L'Isle joyeuse* lasts 4'20", while his 1953 version takes a

"Pastourelle" (*L'Éventail de Jeanne*) and "Toccata" (*Trois Pièces pour piano*).

¹⁷ Available in the Analysing Recordings section of the CHARM website, www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/analysing/p9.html.

¹⁸ As in the Zenph re-performances of recordings by Glenn Gould, Rachmaninoff, and Art Tatum. See the Zenph website for details: www.zenph.com/the-music.

more leisurely 4'57". Not surprisingly, the latter sounds rather more relaxed than the somewhat headlong earlier account, but Gieseeking still draws on the same broad approach to the playing. Contrast this with Artur Rubinstein's January 1925 Duo-Art piano roll, which, in the re-performance by Nimbus Records, takes 5'18". Superficially the timing approximates Gieseeking's post-war performance, and yet, even taking into account the myriad caveats about piano rolls (see below), Rubinstein's approach to *L'Isle joyeuse* diverges significantly from Gieseeking's. He takes the opening at much the same pace as Gieseeking's earlier recording, but employs considerably greater flexibility of tempo. The two pianists completely diverge for the central section, with Rubinstein going markedly slower, using much more extensive and pronounced rubato. The durations here, either of the entire piece or sections within it, say very little about the playing. What is certain is that neither Gieseeking nor Rubinstein thought in terms of taking, say, 1'23" for the opening.

In all this, listening to any recording of a given work must serve a clear purpose. Much performance practice scholarship focuses on an attempt to discern the composer's expectations. As a consequence, early recordings are often consulted for similar reasons, in order to obtain insight and context for the practices the composer knew or desired. A composer's own recordings, those of artists with whom he or she worked, or those of as close a generation as possible to the composer may serve this goal. This is a coherent aspiration, for the authority of interpretative practice is often judged by proximity to the composer's wishes (perceived or actual). However, discerning a composer's intentions for any given work is deeply problematic. To start with, composers are not always consistent in their views of the music. Put another way, assuming that a composer envisaged only one way to perform a piece rests on shaky ground. Composers' tastes in general, and views of specific works in particular, often change over time. Besides, a performer may find insights and solutions unimagined by the composer. Indeed, as is clear from other evidence and sources, departures from the text were integral to the aesthetic of many performers and composers in the nineteenth century and earlier. Most controversial for some is the idea that certain approaches running counter to the composer's conception may carry musical weight and be widely accepted.

A simple example of this, deliberately taken from outside the focus of this book, is the "Adagietto" from Mahler's Fifth Symphony. Since at least the mid-1960s, performers have normally treated this piece as an impassioned slow movement, generally lasting between ten and twelve-and-a-half minutes, and in some cases even longer. However, all the evidence, from the score, from Mahler's piano roll performance, and from early recordings by Bruno Walter and Mengelberg, indicates that the composer conceived of this movement as a flowing love song, an Adagietto, not a Largo, lasting about seven-and-a-half minutes.¹⁹

¹⁹ Mengelberg's 1926 performance can be heard on Naxos disc 8.110855, and Walter's 1947 performance can be heard on Naxos disc 8.110896.

The transformation occurred in less than twenty years between the late 1940s and the mid-1960s.²⁰ Whether taken in isolation or within the symphony as a whole, both broad approaches to the “Adagietto” result in extremely effective musical experiences, even though the prevalent modern approach bears little relation to Mahler’s intentions.

Despite its seeds in the nineteenth century, the idea that a composer’s word is final, and the score is the ultimate means for discerning this, really took root in the twentieth century. Recordings have exacerbated notions of a single ideal performance. These recorded performances have become artifacts, with the record labels and public alike encouraging critics to declare winners, to increase sales for the former and to ease decisions for the latter about how to spend disposable income. The composer’s perceived wishes provide the simplest yardstick for such judgments—often presented as objective fact—and, in many cases, this has been interpreted as conformity with the score. In this respect early recordings can reveal not only the extent to which scores lack performance directions that a composer took for granted, but also the importance of a performance philosophy different from that of the present day. Most valuably, perhaps, they often challenge any notions that “one true way” to perform a given work exists, confounding the fallacy that it is possible to discover how it *should* go. A performance by the composer may have a particular authority, as might one by a pianist who worked with the composer, but recordings with equal claims to authority can differ substantially. Moreover, these assertions lose sight of the fact that even performances with no such connections can give insight into the ways in which a particular work was understood (or misunderstood) at the time.

Limitations of the Evidence

Although well rehearsed, certain caveats about the evidence at our disposal should be noted. Firstly, before considering piano rolls and audio recordings, it is helpful to remember that they are usually examined alongside another crucial, but limited piece of evidence: the score. The score is not, of course, the same as the music; that much is clear from hearing a piece on a midi playback, or a Pianola roll left to its own devices. Even if just “playing the score,” a performer adds numerous finesses that notation could never adequately convey. Besides, even the most transparently edited *Urtext* score masks myriad uncertainties, confusions, and ambiguities. Indeed, the fastidious probity of the documentation reinforces the authority of the musical text to the extent that, for the unwary, an *Urtext* score appears to be set in tablets of stone that can become interpretative concrete boots. This can

²⁰ Growing awareness of this has led to the trend starting to be reversed in some recent accounts. For instance, on the recording of Simon Rattle’s inaugural concert with the Berliner Philharmoniker on September 7, 2002, the “Adagietto” lasts 9’33”; EMI Classics 0724355738523.

periodically be seen in students who are still at the stage of seeking authoritative answers rather than creative questions. In this respect, even if nothing else is taken from them, early recordings can offer a useful corrective, for they often provide a view that varies significantly from current interpretative fashion and, hence, the prevailing view on how to approach a score. Finally, on a purely practical note, whatever errors and limitations critical editions reveal in, say, the early Durand editions of Debussy and Ravel, the performers in early recordings were using these original scores, the only ones available until the works went out of copyright. In other words, these should be kept to hand while listening, alongside the *Œuvres complètes*.

The most obvious drawback of early audio recordings is the surface noise, but, in many cases, the ear soon learns to filter this out, to listen past the crackle. Beyond this readily apparent shortcoming come more fundamental ones. To start with, the acoustic range is limited at both ends.²¹ Especially pronounced in the acoustic era, before the introduction of microphones, this changes timbre and tone from hearing music in the flesh. Although a constant factor, it is especially important for piano repertoire, for the instrument was notoriously difficult to capture. Very early recordings commonly used upright pianos, often with the back casing removed, and sometimes with the felt on the hammers shaved or even removed completely. Anything played at a dynamic below about mezzo piano was liable to be inaudible on the finished product. It surely goes without saying that this would affect the pianist's touch. The resulting disc might vary in speed, and, while the discs are known as 78s, this was an approximate average, for recorded speeds fluctuated significantly, sometimes within a side of a disc. This variability is accounted for by differences in approach between record companies, and also the fact that the equipment was not driven by electric motors, but relied on items such as weights, coiled springs and bits of string that were less sophisticated than contemporary clocks or pocket watches.²² Most listeners now will hear these recordings on a digital medium, such as CD. However, such transfers can also vary appreciably in terms of methodology and philosophy. Decisions about which sources to use, the extent of physical and/or digital cleaning, and the level of intervention involved to correct or mitigate infelicities such as scratches or variable recorded speeds on the original disc all affect the resulting sound produced and, hence, any insights gleaned from the performance. Absurd as it may seem, it is vital that transfers are heard using the highest-quality format and equipment possible. Despite significant noise and limited range on the source, a high-quality format means that more of the original has been transferred. While lossless FLAC files are adequate, many other download formats essentially draw an additional veil over the original, making it harder than ever to hear anything worthwhile in the recording of Debussy accompanying Mary Garden.

²¹ Acoustic era discs had an approximate range of 168–2,000Hz, as opposed to the human ear's range of about 20–20,000Hz.

²² The variability is analogous to that found in early films.

For piano rolls, the first thing is to distinguish between Pianola rolls and reproducing piano rolls. The former are created directly from the score, a pianist imparting expression as the roll plays. Some Pianola rolls, however, retain “style lines,” specifying expressive features for the pianist to follow. Sometimes the composer himself added these, as did Debussy for the Aeolian-Orchestrelle “Themodist” rolls—the composer states that the interpretation is his, and adds his signature and the date (June 16, 1909) for good measure. Such evidence raises the potential for further research, for, while crude, these style lines could supplement our understanding of the composer’s wishes as conveyed by the differently blunt interpretative markings in the score. In other words, the style lines do not capture a performance, but they can communicate additional information about the interpretative wishes of the composer or performer. Nonetheless, virtually all discussion of piano rolls concerns those for reproducing piano, since the Pianola rolls, while a fascinating technology, are not taken directly from performance.

Reproducing pianos, by contrast, do capture a particular performance, but come with an entire raft of “health warnings.” Rival companies promoted different systems which, in varying ways, recorded the length of each note depression, along with some element of dynamics and pedaling, directly from a performance. As a result of the intense competition, many aspects of the proprietary technology involved became closely guarded secrets, important here because the calibration of the system on any given instrument can radically affect the resulting performance. In addition, as Robert Philip has pointed out, a real-life pianist would adjust their playing to the specific instrument in question (and the location and occasion). It also needs to be understood that, for dynamics, the keyboard is divided in two. This facilitates gradation between simple melody and accompaniment, but not within, say, the notes played by a single hand. Similarly, even though some rolls are sophisticated enough to capture half pedalings, they show less refinement than the practice of a professional pianist. These caveats are especially important in French piano repertoire, which so often relies upon subtle shadings of timbre and color. Walter Gieseking’s piano roll of “Ondine” (*Gaspard de la nuit*) provides a clear example of the technology falling significantly short.²³ Whereas the opening bars of his 1937 gramophone recording shimmer, the left hand singing through, the piano roll leaves the right hand chattering brusquely, while the high register of the left-hand melody means it is merely lost in the texture for lack of dynamic differentiation (Recorded Examples 6.2 and 6.3). The dedicated trial and error work of various enthusiasts has nevertheless resulted in some remarkably convincing re-performances on reproducing pianos in recent years.

Aside from these mechanical uncertainties, piano rolls differ in a key respect from early audio recording, for it was possible to edit them. For some, this calls

²³ Welte-Mignon roll number 3831, date unknown, though Touzelet suggests 1924. The roll can be heard on Naxos disc 8.110677. See Jean Touzelet, “Historical Recordings (1912–1939),” in Arbie Orenstein, *Ravel: Man and Musician* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1975), 247–70, here 259.

into question any claims that they might have to legitimacy. In itself, however, this criticism seems harsh, for the same charge is rarely made against modern recordings, which are substantially edited, even in many cases when they are supposedly “live.” The editing of piano rolls, however, can change the nature of the articulation, even the spread of a chord. Finally, differences in copying or in the set-up of the reproducing piano can mean that, in terms of tempo, copies of the same roll may not only sound different, but have different overall durations.²⁴ It is easy to see then why some scholars are dismissive of piano rolls. They do, however, impart vital information. Even when tempered by all of the caveats, some characteristics still emerge that appear to convey a genuine sense of what the performer was trying to achieve.

All-too-often overlooked in discussion of piano rolls is that, at least until the advent of electrical recording in 1925, pianists were more likely to record solo repertoire on a reproducing piano than as an audio recording. Jean Touzelet’s Ravel discographies (Table 6.2) support this observation.²⁵ In both cases, piano rolls predominate, especially in the acoustic era. Admittedly, the pre-1925 figure in the 1975 discography refers to seventeen rolls of arrangements of orchestral works, such as *Daphnis et Chloé*. Against this, however, the figure for electric recordings includes fourteen made after 1933, the date of the latest entry for a piano roll. A quick search of the “Rollography” on the Reproducing Piano Roll Foundation website²⁶ indicates that Ravel is no exception, for it lists forty-nine entries for Fauré, eighty-one for Saint-Saëns and more than a hundred for Debussy. Frustratingly, neither this nor most of the other catalogues for piano rolls give recording dates, hence the number of approximations in Table 6.1.

Table 6.2 Piano recordings listed in Touzelet’s Ravel discographies

	Piano rolls ^a		Gramophone records	
	pre-1925	1925–1939	Acoustic	Electric (up to 1939)
1975	43	21	5	38
2003	10	10	3	10

^a The table does not include Carlos Salzedo’s roll of the “accompaniment” to the *Introduction and Allegro* or Henry Wood’s roll of Ravel’s arrangement of Debussy’s *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune*.

²⁴ For one of the best pianistic discussions of the caveats surrounding piano rolls, see Howat, *The Art of French Piano Music: Debussy, Ravel, Fauré, Chabrier* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 315–17. See also Denis Hall, “The Reproducing Piano: What Can It Really Do?” *Pianola Journal* (2001): 3–26.

²⁵ Touzelet, “Historical Recordings (1912–1939),” 247–70; “Historical Interpretations (1911–1988),” in *A Ravel Reader: Correspondence, Articles, Interviews*, compiled and edited by Arbie Orenstein, 2nd ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2003), 526–600.

²⁶ www.rprf.org/Rollography.html.

The discrepancy between figures for piano roll and audio recording, especially in the acoustic era, is not hard to fathom. Rather than bashing away on an upright piano in a small room that was kept overly hot to ensure the wax of the master disc or cylinder remained soft, recording on a piano roll could be done in comfort, surrounded by friends. The results of the latter (theoretically, at least) offered an immediacy of playback, with full piano sound, that a gramophone recording could not achieve. It is all too easy from a modern perspective to frame discussion in terms of puzzlement that a reputedly sensitive pianist, such as Debussy, should deign to record his music on a system that is clearly flawed. For Debussy and many others, though, piano rolls represented an unprecedented opportunity at a time when, by and large, familiarity with a work came only through playing it or a rare opportunity to hear it played live. Piano rolls made available an alternate method to the score for disseminating the work and/or an approximation of the performance.

Debussy's Welte-Mignon piano roll performance of "La Cathédrale engloutie" contains a well-known example that significantly enhances our understanding of the piece. In bars 7–12 and 22–83, he plays the half-notes at essentially the same speed as quarter-notes elsewhere. No "fault" of piano-roll technology would have produced such a substantial variant from a literal reading of the score. That it is reflected in the practice of pianists who knew the composer, such as George Copeland and Alfred Cortot, not to mention the recollections of various acquaintances, is important secondary evidence. Without the composer's piano roll, the easy option might be to state that the quirks of Debussy's contemporaries, about whose playing he was often dismissive, do not warrant deviation from the letter of the score. Indeed, by incorporating observations made from Debussy's audio and piano recordings, Roy Howat and the *Œuvres complètes de Claude Debussy* pioneered the use of such evidence in scholarly editions.

This relatively straightforward example from Debussy not only highlights the limitations of the score and other written sources, but also gives pause for thought about being too ready to dismiss evidence that does not have the composer's name directly attached to it. That said, two recordings of "La Cathédrale engloutie" made within a year of each other, and less than a decade after Debussy's death, illustrate why going beyond a direct link with the composer can be fraught with difficulty. Even allowing for potential inaccurate measurement of duration, Myra Hess's piano roll from November 1925 is a spacious account that essentially follows the letter of the score, with bar 7 at the same quarter-note tempo as before.²⁷ She makes this convincing by adopting an expansive, monumental approach throughout. Mark Hambourg's 1926 gramophone recording appears to confound further the broad understanding of Debussy's intentions. At bar 7, he neither keeps the quarter note pulse consistent, nor plays the half notes at an equivalent tempo to the quarter

²⁷ The performance lasts 7'15" in the re-performance on Nimbus's Grand Piano series (see discography). Debussy's performance in the re-performance on the Pierian label lasts 5'01", and the transfer of Mark Hambourg's recording on the CHARM website lasts 3'43".

notes in the opening bars. Rather, he presses forward much more, the half notes dancing along about half as fast again as the quarter notes of the opening bars. Is it possible that he was naturally reading the score the way Debussy appears to have intended, and was then told by a colleague that the composer doubled speed at this point, leading to his inadvertent doubling of the tempo change? Elsewhere, his tempi seem extremely erratic to modern ears (and possibly contemporary ones, too), with sudden, often drastic gear changes at each of Debussy's instructions marginally modifying the flow of the music. Whereas Hess's performance is an early exemplar of the structural understanding of the piece to which most pianists adhered for many years, Hambourg's sounds now like someone attempting to make sense of Debussy's indications at a time before such a performance tradition had been firmly established and disseminated. Still, Hambourg was no novice with Debussy's music, for he had been playing it since at least 1912 when he recorded the "Toccatà" from *Pour le piano*. In fact, a more sympathetic assessment of his performance might stress what could happen when a major pianist with roots in the grand tradition tackled music from a different aesthetic.

Returning to reproducing pianos, a comparison of re-performances for the roll made by Saint-Saëns on December 13, 1905, of his *Rhapsodie d'Auvergne* illustrates the potential differences between different realizations of the same roll. To start with, the re-performance from the Condon collection (Dal Segno) lasts nearly a minute longer than that of Richard Simonton, Jr. (Naxos), with the Condon taking 8'03" and the Simonton 7'19". Hardly surprisingly, the Simonton sounds a little more ragged, with less refined voicing and jagged articulation that can make it hard to forget the mechanics of rolls. Whereas the Simonton works against the music, the Condon, while still clearly being a roll, sounds more natural, the articulation helping to build layers of resonance (though the boomy acoustic of the re-performance helps this effect). Condon's realization does not sound especially slow, but it conveys little of the visceral excitement of Saint-Saëns performing an extract of the work on a G & T 78rpm disc in 1904. The Simonton realization approaches the tempo in the acoustic recording of Saint-Saëns, though is still significantly short of it. It is hard to believe that the pneumatics of a piano roll could have kept up with Saint-Saëns in full flight. The gramophone disc has captured the performance of a true virtuoso pianist, displaying exceptional speed, dexterity and clarity in classic *jeu perlé* manner. The extraordinary aspect of this recording is that the tempo sounds exceptionally fast, but not rushed. At under two minutes, there was no time pressure to fit the performance onto one side of the 12" G & T disc.²⁸ Nor is Saint-Saëns pushing forward in order to skate over some of the passagework, as is the impression with some other pianists. Clearly he had the technical control to play the music

²⁸ While the earliest recordings lasted about two minutes, this soon grew, with 10" discs lasting about three minutes and 12" discs initially fitting nearly four minutes of material, later more than four-and-a-half minutes. Saint-Saëns's shortened version of the *Rhapsodie d'Auvergne* lasts 1'47".

slower should he wish—and possibly he deliberately chose a more moderate tempo when making the piano roll. On disc we are given a taste of Saint-Saëns, the sensational virtuoso performer. On the piano roll, we hear the composer presenting one of his pieces, but with less sense of the performance.

While the *Rapsodie d'Auvergne* roll falls short of conveying Saint-Saëns the performer, this reflects in part the fact that it was a relatively early use of the technology. His 1915 piano-roll recording of the *Valse mignonne* has much more spirit and grace and is far more convincing. For this work he also made gramophone recordings in 1904 and 1919, with the interpretation remaining surprisingly consistent. That Saint-Saëns was temperamentally suited to the medium of recording as it existed in the early years of the twentieth century is clear from his selection of extracts from his Second Piano Concerto. He has created a distinct work that, like a good opera overture, conveys some of the important elements of the Concerto, capturing its musical and pianistic essence yet making a coherent whole. He also manages to achieve this within the strict time frame of a single side of a gramophone disc. In both senses, he clearly knows how to make an impression on disc. The exception that proves the rule is a passage early in his extract from the *Rapsodie d'Auvergne* in which the right hand all but disappears, when Saint-Saëns temporarily forgets to reinforce delicate *jeu perlé* playing in the extreme treble register for the sake of the recording horn. This lapse aside, the playing comes across with striking clarity despite the age of the discs. The nine items recorded on June 26, 1904, display remarkable pianism, but the fact that the eighty-four-year-old Saint-Saëns shows only the slightest signs of slackening technique in the seven performances captured on November 24, 1919, is little short of astonishing.

Thus far, discussion has concentrated on pianists as soloists, but their recordings alongside other instrumentalists and/or with singers also offer riches aplenty. In terms of the earliest recordings, this will often be the only opportunity to hear a particular pianist on an audio recording, or playing the music of a particular composer. The only gramophone recordings of Debussy's piano playing are those he made with Mary Garden in 1904, so it is natural that they have been the focus of much discussion. The question arises, though, of how much attention would have been paid to the piano playing on these acoustically poor discs if Debussy had made gramophone records of any solo works. Put another way, listening to Cortot's recordings of *Fêtes galantes*, *Trois Chansons de Bilitis*, and *Le Promenoir des deux amants* with Maggie Teyte reveal much about his approach to playing Debussy beyond what can be gleaned from the limited number of solo works that he recorded. Similarly, his recording with Jacques Thibaud of the Violin Sonata in A by Fauré, a composer with whom he had a closer acquaintance than Debussy, should be as important a reference point for pianists as violinists.

Cortot's 1927 recording of Franck's Piano Quintet with the International String Quartet provides essential information once it is cross-referenced with other contemporaneous material. Heard with the score in hand, the performance deviates significantly from Franck's marked instructions at several key points. In

one sense this is no great surprise, but an unsigned article in the July 1928 edition of *Gramophone*, relating a note of “historical importance” from André Mangeot (one of the leaders of the International String Quartet), provides vital context.²⁹

The few alterations from the indications on the score of the César Franck Quintet as recorded by Alfred Cortot and the International String Quartet for H.M.V. are based on the author’s own corrections from a copy which was used at the first performance of the work at the old Société Nationale in Paris when César Franck supervised the rehearsals. This copy was given to Cortot by Madame Chausson (widow of the French composer), who was then Secretary to the Society and who collected the parts in the artists’ room of the Salle Pleyel, where they had been intentionally left after the performance by the players (Saint-Saëns and the Marsick Quartet) who did not want to see the work again!

The first correction appears in the twelfth and thirteenth bar from the beginning, where the piano plays a big crescendo (instead of diminuendo) to lead back into the fortissimo of the strings. The next alteration is on p. 18 of the Eulenberg miniature score, bars 4, 5 and 6, where a crescendo leads to an accelerando at the *ff* when it becomes a real two in a bar. The same alteration occurs in the corresponding passage at the top of p. 21. Lastly, on p. 30, the crescendo of the 11th bar is taken out, as well as the diminuendo on p. 31, bar 5.³⁰

The first of Franck’s “corrections” is especially intriguing as it smoothes the juncture from the end of the first piano solo to the re-entry of the strings. Each is audible in the recording, though they are far from unique in the chamber group’s alterations to Franck’s published markings, for Cortot approaches the work like a miniature piano concerto. That these changes were not common knowledge is clear from the recording made by Marcel Ciampi and the Capet String Quartet the following year. Although devoid of any of the amendments of Cortot’s recording, Ciampi’s approach is remarkably modern-sounding and plays down rather than emphasizes the passion (Saint-Saëns might even have approved). Far from soulless, he exhibits a rich tone, but the textures are clean and rhythmically incisive, with a sense of letting the notes speak for themselves. Here are the seeds of the more text-based, post-war manner of playing as exemplified by his student Yvonne Loriod.

Another pianist whose playing seems prophetic is Madeleine de Valmalète in an astonishing recording of *Le Tombeau de Couperin*. This first complete gramophone recording of the work resembles the playing of pianists from two

²⁹ Born in France, André (Louis) Mangeot was a naturalized British violinist and the founder of the International (originally Music Society) String Quartet. Leadership of the Quartet alternated with Boris Pecker.

³⁰ “Trade Winds and Idle Zephyrs,” unsigned article in *The Gramophone* (July 1928): 33.

generations later.³¹ Graceful and exceptionally well articulated, her playing presents the score straight, but never in a rigid way, so that she is not afraid to use a more hushed dynamic for the repeats in the “Menuet.” In short, here, and also in her recording of Debussy’s “Feux d’artifice,” de Valmalète sounds remarkably modern.

Finally, in this all-too-brief overview, two performers can throw a completely different light on the traditions for much of this repertoire: Jane Bathori and Reynaldo Hahn. Neither had the most refined voice, though Bathori’s was considerably better than Hahn’s, but the standard practice of each was to accompany themselves in *mélodies*. Fluidity of tempo between voice and piano characterize Bathori’s remarkable performances of Debussy and Ravel. Given that this is much more difficult for a single performer than simply keeping the parts together, such flexibility confirms that she had made a clear stylistic choice. Hahn’s performances are more earthy. Despite the much lower audio quality, it is worth consulting his early acoustic recordings (two of which were included in the Paris Opéra urns) for, by the time he made electric recordings, endless cigarettes had taken their toll on his voice. Nonetheless, Hahn never stopped being a compelling performer. Both Hahn and Bathori have left performances suited less to the formal stage of the concert hall than the (generally) more intimate and informal setting of the salon. This may seem obvious for songs, but the same observation applies to the piano works of many of the composers discussed here. Much of this music would have been performed not in tuxedos on the concert stage, but with a glass of wine to hand before an audience of friends. If that is a point worth remembering as performers, it is also instructive to us as listeners, for that is almost certainly how most early recordings were often enjoyed in France.

Selected Discography

The following discography gives as full details as possible of the various recordings discussed in the chapter. It does not begin to be remotely comprehensive for any of the composers, works, or performers. Where possible, the chapter refers to recordings that are available in a modern transfer.

Beethoven

“Allegro ma non troppo” (Symphony no. 6), Musique de la Garde Républicaine, rec. 1911, Gramophone GC-35508; EMI Classics 50999 206267 2 3 (*Les Urnes de l’Opéra*).

³¹ The Arbiter reissue dates the recording as 1928, but Touzelet gives it as 1933 (the National Sound Archive catalogue states ca. 1930); Touzelet, *A Ravel Reader*, 592, and *Ravel: Man and Musician*, 264. Regardless, this is still the first audio recording of *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, though there were two earlier complete piano roll recordings.

Chabrier

- Bourrée fantasque*, Marcel Meyer (piano), rec. October 12, 1929, Paris, Studio Albert; LF 24 (matrix nos. WL 1846-1 and 1847-2), EMI 0946 384699 2 6 (*Marcelle Meyer: Ses enregistrements*).
- “Dans le golfe aux jardins ombrés” (*L’Île heureuse*), Reynaldo Hahn (baritone and piano), rec. 1909, Gramophone concert GC-4-32075; Pearl GEMM 0003; EMI Classics 50999 206267 2 3 (*Les Urnes de l’Opéra*).
- Pièces pittoresques*, “Idylle,” Edouard Risler (piano), rec. 1917, Paris, Pathé; available at NSA.
- Pièces pittoresques*, “Idylle,” Marcel Meyer (piano), rec. December 1, 1925, Hayes, Studio B, (matrix no. Bb 7437—not released), EMI 0946 384699 2 6 (*Marcelle Meyer: Ses enregistrements*).
- Pièces pittoresques*, “Scherzo-Valse,” Raoul Pugno (piano), rec. November 1903, Paris, Gramophone & Typewriter 035503 (matrix no. 2564F); Appian Publications & Recordings (2001) 5532 (*The Piano G & Ts Volume 2*).

Chaminade

- Air de Ballet*, op. 30, Cécile Chaminade (piano), rec. late 1901, London, Gramophone & Typewriter 5552 (matrix no. 1136-4-IV), Appian Publications & Recordings (2001) APR 5533 (*The Piano G & Ts Volume Three*).
- “Courante,” op. 95, no. 3 (*Danse ancienne*), Cécile Chaminade (piano), rec. late 1901, London, Gramophone & Typewriter 5553 (matrix no. 1138-R-4), Appian Publications & Recordings (2001) APR 5533 (*The Piano G & Ts Volume Three*).
- Danse créole*, op. 94, Cécile Chaminade (piano), rec. late 1901, London, Gramophone & Typewriter 5555 (matrix no. 1140-R-4), APR 5533 (*The Piano G & Ts Volume Three*).
- L’Enjoleuse*, op. 50, Cécile Chaminade (piano), rec. late 1901, London, Gramophone & Typewriter 5557 (matrix no. 1141-R-4), Appian Publications & Recordings (2001) APR 5533 (*The Piano G & Ts Volume Three*).
- “Pas des écharpes” (*Callirhoe*, op. 37), Cécile Chaminade (piano), rec. late 1901, London, Gramophone & Typewriter 5553 (matrix no. 1138-R-4), Appian Publications & Recordings (2001) APR 5533 (*The Piano G & Ts Volume Three*).
- Pierrette*, op. 41, Cécile Chaminade (piano), rec. late 1901, London, Gramophone & Typewriter 5556 (matrix no. 1142-R-4), Appian Publications & Recordings (2001) APR 5533 (*The Piano G & Ts Volume Three*).
- Les Sylvains*, op. 60, Cécile Chaminade (piano), rec. late 1901, London, Gramophone & Typewriter 5554 (matrix no. 1139-NB-4), Appian Publications & Recordings (2001) APR 5533 (*The Piano G & Ts Volume Three*).

Chopin

Waltz in A, major, op. 34, no. 1, Ignacy Jan Paderewski (piano), rec. 1911, Gramophone 045531; EMI Classics 50999 206267 2 3 (*Les Urnes de l'Opéra*).

Debussy

Arabesque no. 2 in G, Irene Scharrer (piano), rec. 1921, HMV D 576 (matrix no. Cc_343-1); available on CHARM website: www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/sound/sound_search.html.

Arabesque no. 2 in G, Irene Scharrer (piano), rec. 1926, HMV E 486 (matrix no. Bb_9563-1); available on CHARM website: www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/sound/sound_search.html.

Ariettes oubliées, “Il pleure dans mon cœur,” “L’ombre des arbres,” and “Aquarelles—Green,” rec. May 1904, Paris, Mary Garden (soprano), Claude Debussy (piano), G & T 33449; 33450, 33451 (matrix nos. 3074F—11; 3077F—11; G & T 3077F—11); EMI CHS 7 61038 2 (c/w *Pelléas et Mélisande*); Pierian 0001

Trois Ballades de François Villon, “Ballade des femmes de Paris,” Maggie Teyte (soprano), Alfred Cortot (piano), rec. March 13, 1936, London, Abbey Road Studio No. 3; HMV DA 1477 (matrix nos. OEA 3159-1); Pearl GEMM CD 9134 (Maggie Teyte, *Mélodies*); EMI CHS 7 61038 2 (c/w *Pelléas et Mélisande*).

Trois Chansons de Bilitis, “La Flûte de Pan” and “La Chevelure,” Jane Bathori (soprano and piano), rec. November 1929,³² Paris; Columbia D 13086 (matrix nos. WL1416, WL 1417); Marston 51009; “La Chevelure”—Testament SBT 0132 (*EMI Record of Singing*, vol. 3).

Trois Chansons de Bilitis, “Le Tombeau de naïades,” Jane Bathori (mezzo-soprano and piano), rec. ca. January 1930, Paris; Columbia LF 50 (matrix nos. [W] L1415-2); Marston 51009.

Trois Chansons de Bilitis, Maggie Teyte (soprano), Alfred Cortot (piano), rec. March 12, 1936, London, Abbey Road Studio No. 3; HMV DA 1474/5 (matrix nos. OEA 3152-1/53-1/54-1); Pearl GEMM CD 9134 (Maggie Teyte, *Mélodies*); EMI CHS 7 61038 2 (c/w *Pelléas et Mélisande*).

Children’s Corner, “Serenade for the Doll,” Vladimir Horowitz (piano), rec. October 5, 1933, Copenhagen (Danish radio broadcast); available at Denmark Radio Archive and NSA.

En blanc et noir (fragments), “Avec emportement” (bars 1–203); “Lent. Sombre” (bars 1–92, 144–79); “Scherzando” (bars 1–63, 114–end), Bela Bartók and Ditta Pásztor (pianos), April 23, 1939, Budapest (Hungarian radio broadcast); Hungaroton HCD 12334-37 (*Bartók: Recordings from Private Collections*).

³² The Marston transfer gives the recording date as “ca. February 1929,” but the EMI record of singing gives November 1929, presumably based on EMI archives.

- Études, Alfred Hallis (piano), rec. February 3–5, 1938, Decca Series K 891 (matrix nos. DTA_3542-1; DTA_3540-1; DTA_3544-1; DTA_3539-2; DTA_3551-2; DTA_3545-1; DTA_3541-1; DTA_3543-1; DTA_3538-2; DTA_3537-2; DTA_3546-3; DTA_3552-3); available on CHARM website: www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/sound/sound_search.html.
- Fêtes galantes* 1^{ère} série, Maggie Teyte (soprano), Alfred Cortot (piano), rec. March 12, 1936, London, Abbey Road Studio No. 3; HMV DA 1471/2 (matrix nos. OEA 3146-1/47-1/48-1); Pearl GEMM CD 9134 (*Maggie Teyte: Mélodies*); EMI CHS 7 61038 2 (c/w *Pelléas et Mélisande*).
- Fêtes galantes* 2^e série, Jane Bathori (mezzo-soprano and piano), rec. ca. February 1929, Paris; Columbia D 15196 (matrix nos. [W]LX814, ([W]LX815); Marston 51009).
- Fêtes galantes* 2^e série, Maggie Teyte (soprano), Alfred Cortot (piano), rec. March 12, 1936, London, Abbey Road Studio No. 3; HMV DA 1472/3 (matrix nos. OEA 3149-1/50-1/51-1); Pearl GEMM CD 9134 (*Maggie Teyte: Mélodies*); EMI CHS 7 61038 2 (c/w *Pelléas et Mélisande*).
- Images* 1^{ère} série, “Reflète dans l’eau,” Irene Scharrer (piano), rec. 1924, HMV D 914 (matrix no. Cc_4305-2); available on CHARM website: www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/sound/sound_search.html.
- Images* 2^e série, “Poissons d’or,” Irene Scharrer (piano), rec. 1924, HMV D 914 (matrix no. Cc_4306-2); available on CHARM website: www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/sound/sound_search.html.
- L’Isle joyeuse*, Artur Rubinstejn (piano), rec. January 1925; Duo-Art piano roll no. 6834; Reproduced on Nimbus Records NI 8807 (*Grand Piano: Debussy*).
- L’Isle joyeuse*, Walter Giesekeing (piano), rec. August 11, 1938, Berlin, HMV LX 830 (matrix no. CRX 90); Pearl GEMM CD 9449 (Walter Giesekeing, *Debussy/Ravel*).
- L’Isle joyeuse*, Walter Giesekeing (piano), rec. August 16/20, 1953, Studio 3, Abbey Road Studios, London; Columbia 33CX1149 (LP); EMI 7243 5 65855 2 2 (*Debussy: Complete Works for Piano*).
- Pelléas et Mélisande*, “Mes longs cheveux descendent,” rec. May 1904, Paris, Mary Garden (soprano), Claude Debussy (piano), G & T 33447 (matrix no. 3078F—11); EMI CHS 7 61038 2 (c/w *Pelléas et Mélisande*); Pierian 0001.
- Pour le piano*, “Toccata,” Mark Hambourg (piano), rec. January 16, 1912, HMV 14814e.
- Préludes—Book 1, “La Cathédrale engloutie,” Claude Debussy (piano), rec. 1912,³³ Paris; Welte-Mignon piano roll no. 2738; Reproduced Pierian 0001 (*Claude Debussy: The Composer as Pianist*).

³³ Debussy’s rolls are often listed as being recorded in 1913. This is when they were published, with a signed expression of delight from the composer dated November 1, 1913. However, Roy Howat has provided convincing evidence that they were actually recorded in 1912 (Howat, *Art of French Piano Music*, 376, appendix 3, n.2).

- Préludes—Book 1, “La Cathédrale engloutie,” Myra Hess (piano), rec. November 1925; Duo-Art piano roll no. 6927; Reproduced on Nimbus Records NI 8807 (*Grand Piano: Debussy*).
- Préludes—Book 1, “La Cathédrale engloutie,” Mark Hambourg (piano), rec. July 2, 1926; HMV C 1303 (matrix no. CR_530-4A); available on CHARM website: www.charm.kcl.ac.uk/sound/sound_search.html.
- Préludes—Book 2, “Feux d’artifice,” Madeline de Valmalète (piano), rec. 1928, Berlin; Polydor 90033 (matrix nos. 1542(1/2)bk); Arbiter 144.
- Le Promenoir des deux amants*, Maggie Teyte (soprano), Alfred Cortot (piano), rec. March 13, 1936, London, Abbey Road Studio No. 3; HMV DA 1475-6 (matrix nos. OEA 3155-1/56-1/57-1); Pearl GEMM CD 9134; EMI CHS 7 61038 2 (c/w *Pelléas et Mélisande*).
- Proses lyriques*, “De grève,” Maggie Teyte (soprano), Alfred Cortot (piano), rec. March 13, 1936, London, Abbey Road Studio No. 3; matrix nos. OEA 3158-1; HMV DA 1477, Pearl GEMM CD 9134; EMI CHS 7 61038 2 (c/w *Pelléas et Mélisande*)

Fauré

- Berceuse*, Jacques Thibaud (violin), Alfred Cortot (piano), rec. July 2, 1931; HMV DB 1653 (matrix no. 2G 982); Biddulph LAB 116.
- Violin Sonata no. 1 in A, Jacques Thibaud (violin), Alfred Cortot (piano), rec. June 23, 1927; HMV DB 1080/2 (matrix nos. CR 1420/5); Biddulph LAB 116.

Franck

- Piano Quintet, Alfred Cortot (piano), International String Quartet, rec. 1927; HMV DB 1099–1102; Biddulph 109.
- Piano Quintet, Marcel Ciampi (piano), Capet String Quartet, rec. 1928; Pathé 15102/6 (matrix nos. LX559–562/591–596); Opus Kura OPK2056.

Godard

- “En courante” in G flat (*Six Morceaux*, op. 53, no. 1), Vladimir Wilschaw (piano), rec. ca. 1890s, Russia, Julius Block cylinder C144, Marston 53011-2.
- Gavotte in G, op. 81, no. 2, Anna Essipova (piano), rec. November 15, 1898, Russia, Julius Block cylinder C136, Marston 53011-2.
- Mazurka no. 2, op. 54, André Benoist (piano), released 1918?, Edison Amberol cylinder 3578 (matrix no. 4092); available from Cylinder Preservation and Digitization Project, <http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/index.php> (accessed July 31, 2010).

Hahn

Le Cimetière de campagne, “J’ai revu le cimetière du beau pays d’Ambérieux,” Reynaldo Hahn (baritone and piano), rec. 1909, Gramophone concert GC-4-32074; Pearl GEMM 0003; EMI Classics 50999 206267 2 3 (*Les Urnes de l’Opéra*).

Milhaud

Scaramouche, Darius Milhaud and Marcel Meyer (pianos), rec. December 6, 1938, Paris, Studio Albert; DB 5086 (matrix no. 2LA 2855-1), EMI 0946 384699 2 6 (*Marcelle Meyer: Ses enregistrements*).

Offenbach

La Boulangère a des écus, “Les Charbonniers et fariniers” and “Que voulez-vous faire?” Reynaldo Hahn (baritone and piano), rec. 1929, Paris; Columbia D 2022 (matrix no. WL 579); Pearl GEM 0003; Testament SBT 0132 (*EMI Record of Singing*, vol. 3).

Poulenc

Trois Mouvements perpétuels, Walter Giesecking (piano), rec. ca. 1924–25; Homochord 1-8679 (matrix no. M 51789); Pearl GEMM CD 9930 (*Giesecking: A Retrospective*).

Trois Mouvements perpétuels, Marcel Meyer (piano), rec. December 1, 1925, Hayes, Studio A; (matrix no. Bb 7430—not released); EMI 0946 384699 2 6 (*Marcelle Meyer: Ses enregistrements*).

Trois Mouvements perpétuels, Francis Poulenc (piano), rec. March 7, 1928, Paris; Columbia D 13053 (matrix nos. WL 943/1209); Pearl GEMM CD 9311 (*Poulenc d’après Poulenc*); EMI 50999 2 17575 2 5 (*Composers in Person*).

Pugno

Sérénade à la lune, Raoul Pugno (piano), rec. April 1903, Gramophone concert GC-35508; EMI Classics 50999 206267 2 3 (*Les Urnes de l’Opéra*).

Ravel

Gaspard de la nuit, “Ondine,” rec. 1924?, Freiburg, Walter Giesecking (piano), Welte-Mignon Piano Roll no. 3831. Reproduced, Naxos 8.110677 (*Welte-Mignon Piano Rolls I*).

Gaspard de la nuit, Walter Giesecking (piano), rec. January 1937, London, Abbey Road Studios (movt. 1), Berlin, August 1938 (movts. 2 and 3), HMV

LX632/772/813 (matrix nos. CAZ 7290; CRX 91-2); Pearl GEMM CD 9449 (*Walter Gieseking, Debussy/Ravel*).

Histoires naturelles, “Le Paon,” “Le Grillon,” and “Le Martin-Pêcheur,” Jane Bathori (mezzo-soprano and piano), rec. ca. March 1929, Paris; Columbia D 15179 (matrix nos. [W]LX961, ([W]LX962); Marston 51009.

Sonatine, movements 1 and 2, Maurice Ravel (piano), rec. 1912 or 1913, Paris; Welte-Mignon piano roll no. 2887; Reproduced (Condon collection) on Dal Segno DSPRCD 004 (*Masters of the Piano Roll—Ravel*).

Le Tombeau de Couperin, Madeline de Valmalète (piano), rec. 1928, Berlin; Polydor (Decca issue) PO 5088-5089 / LY 6079 (matrix nos. 5608(1/2)bkp, 5609(1/2)bkp, 2166(1/2)bmp, 5610(1/2)bkp, 5611(1/2)bkp, 2167(1/2)bmp); Arbiter 144.

Valses nobles et sentimentales, Maurice Ravel (piano), rec. 1912 or 1913, Paris; Welte-Mignon piano roll no. 2888; Reproduced (Condon collection) on Dal Segno DSPRCD 004 (*Masters of the Piano Roll—Ravel*).

Saint-Saëns

Piano Concerto no. 2 (extracts), Camille Saint-Saëns (piano), rec. June 26, 1904, Paris; Gramophone & Typewriter 035509 (matrix no. 3467p); Appian Publications & Recordings (2001) APR 5533 (*The Piano G & Ts Volume Three*).

Rapsodie d’Auvergne, op. 73, Camille Saint-Saëns (piano), rec. June 26, 1904, Paris; Gramophone & Typewriter 035510 (matrix no. 3474p); Appian Publications & Recordings (2001) APR 5533 (*The Piano G & Ts Volume Three*).

Rapsodie d’Auvergne, op. 73, Camille Saint-Saëns (piano), rec. December 13, 1905, Leipzig; Welte-Mignon piano roll no. 800; Reproduced (Richard Simonton Jr.) on Naxos 8.110677 (*Welte-Mignon Piano Rolls 1*); Reproduced (Condon Collection) on Dal Segno DSPRCD 009 (*Masters of the Piano Roll—Saint-Saëns*).

Valse mignonne, Camille Saint-Saëns (piano); rec. June 26, 1904, Paris; Gramophone & Typewriter 035507 (matrix no. 3454p); Appian Publications & Recordings (2001) APR 5533 (*The Piano G & Ts Volume Three*).

Valse mignonne, Camille Saint-Saëns (piano), rec. November 24, 1919, Paris; Gramophone 2-035503 (matrix no. 03287v); Appian Publications & Recordings (2001) APR 5533 (*The Piano G & Ts Volume Three*).

Valse nonchalante, Camille Saint-Saëns (piano), rec. June 26, 1904, Paris; Gramophone & Typewriter 035508 (matrix no. 3466p); Appian Publications & Recordings (2001) APR 5533 (*The Piano G & Ts Volume Three*).

Sarasate

Zapateado, op. 23, no. 2, Jan Kubelik (violin), unnamed pianist, rec. July 3, 1911, Gramophone 07953; EMI Classics 50999 206267 2 3 (*Les Urnes de l'Opéra*).

Collections

Composers in Person, 22 compact discs, EMI (2008), 50999 2 17575 2 5.

The Dawn of Recording: The Julius Block Cylinders, 3 compact discs, Marston (2008) Marston 53011-2.

The EMI Record of Singing, volume 3: 1926–1939, 10 compact discs, Testament 1999 SBT 0132.

Gieseking: A Retrospective, volume 1, Pearl (1992) GEMM CD 9930.

The Great Female Pianists, volume 2: *Cécile Chaminade & Genevieve Pitot*, *Masters of the Piano Roll Series*, Dal Segno (1992) DSPRCD 012.

Jane Bathori: The Complete Solo Recordings, Marston (1999), Marston 51009.

Marcelle Meyer: Ses enregistrements 1925–1957, 17 compact discs, EMI (2007) 0946 384699 2 6.

The Piano G & Ts Volume Two, Appian Publications & Recordings (1997) APR 5533.

The Piano G & Ts Volume Three, Appian Publications & Recordings (2001) APR 5533.

Les Urnes de l'Opéra, 3 compact discs, EMI Classics (2009) 50999 206267 2 3.

Vladimir Horowitz: The Complete Solo European Recordings 1930–1936, 2 compact discs, APR (2007) APR 6004.

Welte-Mignon Piano Rolls 1, Naxos (2000), 8.110677.

Useful websites

NB this is not intended as an exhaustive list, but merely provides a few of the most useful websites as a starting place for finding information.

AHRC Research Centre for the History and Analysis of Recorded Music (CHARM): www.charm.rhul.ac.uk/index.html.

Bibliothèque nationale de France catalogue: www.bnf.fr/fr/collections_et_services/catalogues.html.

British Library National Sound Archive (NSA) catalogue: <http://cadensa.bl.uk>.

CHARM—see AHRC

Cylinder Preservation and Digitization Project: <http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/index.php>.

The Pianola Institute: www.pianola.org.

The Reproducing Piano Roll Foundation (includes an extensive rollography): www.rprf.org/Briefings.htm.

The Truesound Online Discography Project: Documenting the Acoustical Era (1888–1930): www.truesoundtransfers.de/disco.htm.