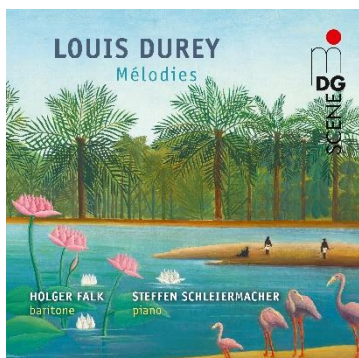




A priceless discovery: Mélodies by Louis Durey

With these recordings of Louis Durey's songs, the baritone Holger Falk and lieder pianist Steffen Schleiermacher bring the award-winning series of the legendary group "Les Six" to an impressive close. This last of nine albums reveals a rich spectrum of songs, as well as the lucid and well-developed concept behind the series, and sheds new light on an exciting era of French art song.



Louis Durey (1888–1979)

LE BESTIAIRE OU CORTÈGE
D'ORPHÉE OP. 17A (1919)

- [1] La Tortue
- [2] Le Cheval
- [3] La Chèvre du Thibet
- [4] Le Serpent
- [5] Le Chat
- [6] Le Lion
- [7] Le Lièvre
- [8] Le Lapin
- [9] Le Dromedaire
- [10] La Souris
- [11] L'Éléphant
- [12] La Chenille
- [13] La Mouche
- [14] La Puce
- [15] La Sauterelle
- [16] Le Dauphin
- [17] Le Poulpe
- [18] La Méduse
- [19] L'Ecrevisse

- [20] La Carpe
- [21] Les Sirènes
- [22] La Colombe
- [23] Le Paon
- [24] Le Hibou
- [25] Ibis
- [26] Le Boeuf from „La Fête à Henriette“ (1952)

- SIX MADRIGAUX DE MALLARMÉ
Op. 22A (1919)
- [27] Offert avec un verre d'eau
 - [28] Jour de l'an
 - [29] Départ
 - [30] Eventail I
 - [31] 1er avril 1887
 - [32] Eventail II

- VERGERS – SEPT POÈMES
DE RILKE OP. 42 (1931/32)
- [33] La biche
 - [34] Arrêtons nous...
 - [35] Eau qui se presse...
 - [36] Comme un verre de Venise
 - [37] Un cygne...
 - [38] La Passante d'Été
 - [39] La fontaine

- ÉPIGRAMMES DE THEOCRITE
Op. 13 (1918)
- [40] Veux-tu, au nom des Nymphes
 - [41] Ces roses, humides de rosée
 - [42] Daphnis à la peau blanche
 - [43] Tu dors, Daphnis

- Trois poèmes de Pétrone
Op. 15 (1918)
- [44] La Boule de Neige
 - [45] La Métempsychose
 - [46] La Grenade

- SIX MADRIGAUX DE MALLARMÉ
Op. 22A (1919)
- [47] Hommage à Erik Satie (1918)
 - Chansons Basques Op. 23 (1919)
 - [48] Prière
 - [49] Polka
 - [50] Attelage

- INSCRIPTIONS SUR UN ORANGER
Op. 16 (1918)
- [51] Oranger, dont la voûte épaisse
 - [52] Bel arbre, pourquoi conserver

- Deux Lieder Romatiques
(Heinrich Heine) Op. 20 (1919)
- [53] Mon pâle visage
 - [54] Tu es telle qu'une fleur

- DEUX POÈMES D'HO-CHI-MINH
Op. 69 (1951)
- [55] Je lis
 - [56] Nuit d'automne

Holger Falk Bariton
Steffen Schleiermacher Piano
MDG Records
RE: 6 June 2025

"It was the **shared spirit of intellectual awakening** – with an almost unanimous rejection of the sound worlds of Wagner and Debussy – and the longing for something like musical truthfulness that brought six aspiring French composers together after the end of the First World War: Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc and Germaine Tailleferre (born Taillefesse in Paris and the only woman in the artist group). The philosopher-mentor of the circle, which came to be known in music history as the "**Groupe des Six**" or "**Les Six**", was the writer Jean Cocteau, who, as a vocal critic of contemporary culture, put forward new artistic principles: simplicity, clarity and naturalness, where music in particular had to be more closely aligned with reality and "built according to a more human scale".

Fascinated by the music of this era, especially the songs of the composers of the "Les Six," Holger Falk embarked on the ambitious project of recording the song repertoire of this group of artists and their circle and bringing the music to the concert hall. *"For me, the melodies and chansons of the 'Les Six' are among the most graceful, humorous, and at the same time melancholic and beautiful works that the 20th century, so rich in tragedy, has produced. The songs allow us to experience this period of intellectual and cultural awakening in France between the wars and transport us to a Parisian world in which artists working through the medium of painting, literature, and music lived, created, and celebrated together."*

He received the ECHO Klassik award for his recording of “Mélodies et Chansons” by Eric Satie, the guiding spirit of the Six, and other awards such as the German Record Critics’ Annual Award and the Gramophone Editor’s Choice Award for his recording of Hanns Eisler’s songs.

His **affinity for French art song** goes back a long way, as he himself explains: *“The French idiom has always been fascinating. It has a very long history for me, as far back as childhood. When my mother listened to the radio—back then, many French chansons were broadcast on the radio—I would always chatter along in a kind of ‘fake French.’ When I was in the Regensburger Domspatzen, we also performed songs by Francis Poulenc, and I found Poulenc’s harmony enchanting.”*

“Holger Falk masters the delicate balance between melodic words and near-spoken singing, which is the greatest challenge of French song, with highly nuanced artistry. And he orates the text, even coloring the individual vowels with a subtlety of expression that practically demands repeated listening,” wrote Opernwelt on the Milhaud & Tailleferre recording.

Holger Falk and Steffen Schleiermacher dedicate the **ninth and final album** in the series of songs by the “Les Six” to the outsider within the group of artists: Louis Durey produced more than 120 compositions, ranging from piano pieces to operas, but is largely unknown today. He was the oldest member of the group, and *“fundamentally mistrusted Jean Cocteau’s claim to leadership and had little regard for the bogeyman pose cultivated by the members. He also fell out with the musical ‘father figure’ Erik Satie because he did not share Satie’s constant tirades against Maurice Ravel,”* explains Steffen Schleiermacher in the CD booklet. Durey was the first French composer to study the music of Arnold Schoenberg in depth. He was an avowed communist and active in the Resistance during the German occupation of France.

His piano songs are wonderfully expressive and harmonically rich, far removed from Cocteau’s ideal of a simple musical language. Among the texts Durey set to music are poems by Rilke and Heine, and even Ho Chi Minh. Many of his songs remained in manuscript and were never published. It is a great joy to be able to discover these treasures and fill a gap in the French song repertoire.

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The following have already been released in the series:

Satie „Mélodies et Chansons“ (2015) | **Poulenc** „Mélodies sur des poèmes de Guillaume Apollinaire“ (2010) | **Poulenc** „Mélodies sur des poèmes Paul Eluard et Louise de Vilmorin“ (2013) | **Poulenc** „Mélodies sur des poèmes des poètes divers“ (2013) | **Honegger** „Mélodies et Chansons“ (2021) | **Milhaud** „Mélodies et Chansons“ (2022) | **Tailleferre & Milhaud** „Mélodies et Chansons“ (2023) | **Auric** „Mélodies et Chansons“ (2024)

