

TOUT FINIT PAR DES CHANSONS



This album is dedicated to the great artists of the French poetic chanson.

Saint-Germain-des-Prés

Avec le temps

La femme d'Hector

Mijn vlakke land

Le facteur

Si la pluie te mouille

Mon enfance

Göttingen

J'suis snob

Chandernagor

La Javanaise

Les feuilles mortes

Colloque sentimental

INTRODUCTION

Many of the creators of French chanson on this album first started writing and performing in a period of time when the wounds of World War II were still fresh. Saint-Germain-des-Prés quickly became the place to be for young artists, poets, philosophers and the like. It also became the home of the existentialist movement of Jean Paul Sartre, with the unknown singer/actrice Juliette Gréco as his muse.

In this new artistically vibrant environment, people like Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Pablo Picasso, Camus, Jacques Prévert, Jacques Brel, Barbara, and Georges Brassens came together, helped each other move forward, and created a tightly knit community with a shared hope for a better future. Above all, they brought forth an immensely rich repertoire of true poetry on music that will never lose its value.

J'habite à Saint-Germain-des-Prés
et chaque soir j'ai rendez-vous avec Verlaine
Ce vieux Pierrot n'a pas changé
et pour courir le guilledou près de la Seine
Souvent on est flanqué d'Apollinaire,
qui s'en vient musarder,
chez nos misères; c'est bête,
On voulait s'amuser, mais c'est raté
on était trop fauchés.

SAINT-GERMAIN-DES-PRÉS *Leo Ferré*

There is no better way to start this album than with a song that celebrates the place where French poetic chanson was born.

Saint-Germain-des-Prés is one of the four administrative quarters of the 6th arrondissement of Paris. It is located around the church of the former Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés with the Seine as its official border on the North. In the years after World War II it was known for its many bars, jazz clubs and café chantants, mostly set up in cellars to reduce noise for the neighbors. It was also the home of the existentialist movement and the heart of literary life in Paris.

It must have been a great environment for Leo Ferré, a French-Monegasque poet and composer who considered himself to be an anarchist with a great love for the old masters. In his chanson 'Saint-Germain-des-Prés' he paints a romantic picture of a group of pale figures walking along the Seine, meeting up with each other and joking about not having a dime in their pockets. But Ferré warns us: be careful with your judgement, ladies and gentlemen. It might just be Apollinaire or Racine that just passed you by. Maybe even Valéry or Verlaine. If only you had known...Greet them worthily!



AVEC LE TEMPS *Leo Ferré*

Ferré is well known for his very intense performances. He seemed to be 'living' his chansons on stage. One of Ferré's most haunting pieces is his signature song 'Avec le temps' in which he states that 'with time, it goes, it all goes', underlining the conclusion that love will always cheat you in the end. It was often the last chanson he'd sing in his concerts and after an outburst of emotion, sometimes spitting out the words like fire, he himself would slowly disappear off the stage near the end, leaving his audience in utter silence, and often in tears...

Avec le temps, avec le temps va tout s'en va
Et l'on se sent blanchi comme un cheval fourbu
Et l'on se sent glacé dans un lit de hasard
Et l'on se sent tout seul peut-être, mais peinar
Et l'on se sent floué par les années perdues
Alors vraiment, avec le temps on n'aime plus



With time, it will go, it will all go
and you'll feel like a worn out horse
and you'll feel frozen in an unknown bed
and you'll feel alone maybe, but calm
and you'll feel cheated by the years gone by
But really with time, you don't love anymore

LA FEMME D'HECTOR *Georges Brassens*

In a small cabaret restaurant in Montmartre, famous singer Patachou provided a stage for young unknown talents. One of them was Georges Brassens... Although passionate about composing and writing, Brassens had no intention of singing. Fortunately, Patachou insisted.

'Your songs are too personal. Sing and your fame will rise above mine in less than a year.' - She was right.

'La femme d'Hector' is a typical Brassens song. He humorously - and in very clear terms - rebels against the moral code of the fifties, praising the many labours of love undertaken by the wife of Hector in the name of poetry.

Singing the song from the perspective of Hector's wife instead of the original male perspective gives this chanson an extra layer of insight; serving art can be both exhilarating and exhausting at the same time:

Who is your sweet little sister in times of misery?
Who patiently awaits your release from prison?
Who organizes the best possible funeral when one of you dies?
Who provides for your needs when your bodies crave for love?
Not the wife of Bertrand, Gontrand, Pamphile, Firmin,
Germain, Benjamin, Honoré, Desiré, Théophile and Nestor.

No!

It's (me) Hector's wife!



MIJN VLAKKE LAND (LE PLAT PAYS)

Jacques Brel (Dutch translation by Ernst van Altena)

When a young Belgian from Brussels first started playing his songs in Paris, he wasn't received with much enthusiasm. Juliette Gréco, already a star in the early fifties, requested to sing and record one of his songs:

'After all, I could help him out. I was already famous!'

It marked the beginning of a tremendously successful international career for Jacques Brel. Gréco and Brel became friends for life.

Brel wrote 'Le plat pays' about West Flanders, an officially Dutch-speaking region in Belgium from which his family originated; a place he hated and loved, with its cathedrals as its only mountains, where the low mist imposes humility, where the sea can be wild and the wind blows from all corners.

Wanneer de regen daalt op straten, pleinen, perken,
Op dak en torenspits van hemelhoge kerken,
Die in dit vlakke land de enige bergen zijn,
Wanneer onder de wolken mensen dwergen zijn,
Wanneer de dagen gaan in domme regelmaat
En bolle oostenwind het land nog vlakker slaat,
Dan wacht mijn land, mijn vlakke land.

It isn't hard to imagine wind and sea when you hear Jacques Brel sing. Even when calm, his voice seems to be infused with a feverish and unpredictable quality; always ready to erupt into a storm.

Brel's family left West Flanders, but it might never have left him...

Brel considered Ernst van Altena's Dutch translation of 'Le plat pays' more beautiful than his own words, therefore Le plat pays is recorded in Dutch on this album under the title: 'Mijn vlakke land'.

LE FACTEUR *Georges Moustaki*

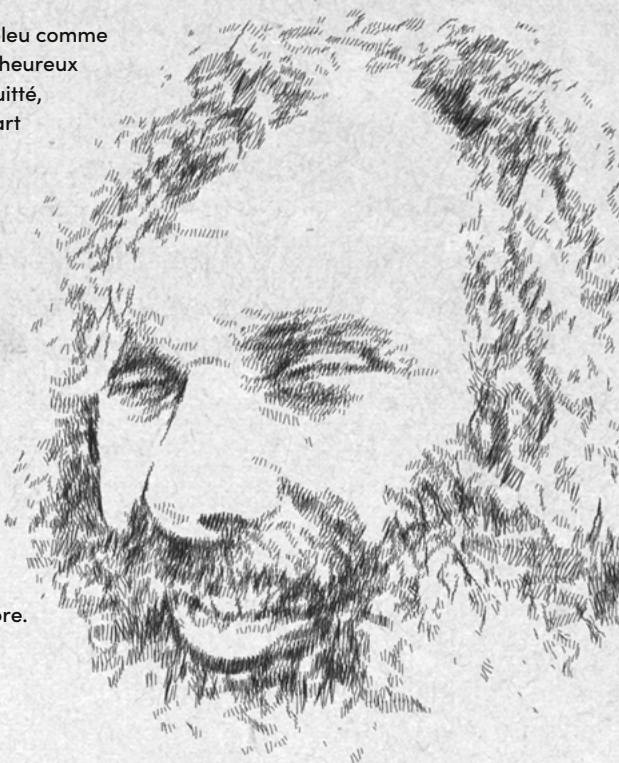
Although born in Egypt and of Greek-Jewish descent, Georges Moustaki developed an early love for French chanson, mainly because his francophile parents sent him to a French school when he was young.

He made his way to Paris in the fifties to devote himself to poetry and song but was forced to earn a living tending bars and writing for local papers. Georges Brassens spotted the young talent and helped him out. Following his advice Moustaki started writing for stars like Yves Montand, Barbara and Piaf. With his chanson 'Le Métèque', which he sung himself, he became a star in his own right.

'Le facteur' is a true chanson triste about losing the ability to completely surrender to love and expressing these feelings to a beloved other without constraint. This idea is poetically personified in a young mailman, dying at the age of only seventeen and not being able to deliver love letters anymore.

Il est parti dans le ciel bleu comme
un oiseau enfin libre et heureux
Et quand son âme l'a quitté,
un rossignol quelque part
a chanté
Je t'aime autant que
je t'aimais, mais je ne
peux le dire désormais
Il a emporté avec lui,
les derniers mots que
je t'avais écrit

He's gone, into
the blue sky, like a bird
finally free and happy.
And when his heart
stopped, somewhere
a nightingale sang.
I love you still,
but I am not able
to say the words anymore.
For he has taken with
him the last words
I wrote to you




SI LA PLUIE TE MOUILLE *Anne Sylvestre*

Although Anne Sylvestre never reached the same level of fame as her contemporary Barbara, she can easily be regarded as one of the most successful female writers of French poetic song in a scene dominated by men.

She too carried the scars of war, her father being a collaborator with the nazi regime during the occupation of France. While her sister Marie Chaix wrote a book about her father's role during the war, Anne put her energy in writing chansons. She wrote about many topics; hardship and injustice, but her romantic songs might be the fairest of them all.

'Si la pluie te mouille' is a chanson of incredible beauty both in melody and in words. You can tell that it was written with much love, wit and compassion, playfully and tenderly soothing the worries of young love...



Si le vent t'évente, mon amour léger
Si le vent t'évente, ce n'est pas un danger
En feuille volante tu peux te changer
En feuille mouvante sans te déranger

When the wind wafts you coolness, my featherlight beloved,
don't be afraid of losing yourself...

You can transform into a leaf moving along the wind,
without being disrupted...

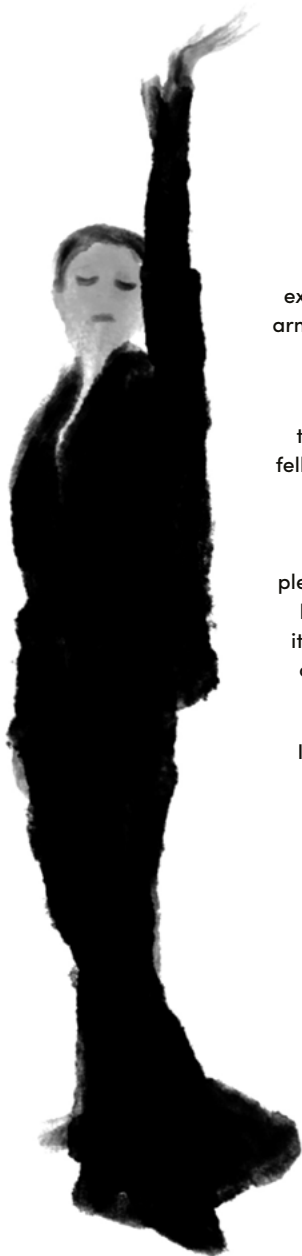
MON ENFANCE *Barbara*

Like most of the writers of chanson represented on this album, Monique Serf carried the wounds of the war. Years later, when she was famous and the world knew her as 'Barbara' - the name of her Jewish Russian grandmother - she would still hide under the staircase when someone knocked on her door unexpectedly.

In the fifties she decided to pursue a musical career in Brussels, but after living in poverty for most of her stay she returned to Paris broke and disillusioned. In a small café chantant called l'Écluse she got a job polishing glasses. After the artists left she would crawl behind the piano and sing for the remaining guests. It is here that the lifelong love affair between her and her audience began and she made her first steps into becoming one of the greatest poets of chanson to this day. But the war always stayed close...

In her chanson 'Mon enfance' she describes her feeling of emptiness and grief after returning to the village where she spent her childhood in hiding for the nazis. She recovers the house overgrown with roses where she and her brothers used to play, their youthful cries splashing out of the garden, the heavy smell of red sage and the wild dahlia's growing along the road. She concludes that it's all still there, regrettably...

Avant que le soir ne se pose,
j'ai voulu voir la maison fleurie sous les roses
J'ai voulu voir, le jardin où nos cris d'enfants
jaillissaient comme sources claires;
Jean, Claude et Régine et puis Jean,
tout redevenait comme hier,
Le parfum lourd des sauges rouges,
les dahlias fauves dans l'allée,
Le puits, tout, j'ai retrouvé, hélas...



GÖTTINGEN *Barbara*

'It's true, in Göttingen you can't walk along the Seine or visit the Bois de Vincennes, but the roses there are beautiful. And the children? They are exactly the same as in Paris. And if ever arms would be taken up again, my heart will cry for Göttingen.'

Two decades after the war Barbara travelled to the heart of Germany and fell in love with the city of Göttingen and its people. During her stay she wrote a chanson, first in French and later in German, in which she emphatically pleads for understanding. It captured the hearts of the people of Göttingen and it is said to have had a profound effect on reconciliation between France and Germany.

If there was ever a song that changed the world, this must be it.

Was ich nun sage,
das klingt freilich für manche Leute
unverzeihlich:
die Kinder sind genau
die gleichen in Paris,
wie in Göttingen.
Laßt diese Zeit nie
wiederkehren und nie mehr
Haß die Welt zerstören:
Es wohnen Menschen,
die ich liebe, in Göttingen,
in Göttingen



Boris Vian was a jazz musician, author of a pornographic roman and a fierce anti-militarist. He was also very good friends with the muse of the existentialist movement, Juliette Gréco. It didn't stop him from ridiculing the intellectual and artistic scene of Saint-Germain though.

In his hilarious and jazz oriented chanson called 'J'suis Snob' he meticulously sums up the do's and don'ts of being a true snob, and yes, of course it's a hard job, but someone's got to do it...

J'suis snob, J'suis snob...
J'm'appelle Patrick, mais on dit Bob
Je fais du cheval tous les matins
car j'adore l'odeur du crottin
Je ne fréquente que des baronnes
aux noms comme des trombones
J'suis snob... excessivement snob
Et quand j'parle d'amour
C'est tout nu dans la cour

I'm a snob... I'm a snob
My name's Patrick,
but they call me Bob
I go horse-riding
every morning
Because I adore
the smell of fresh manure
I only keep company with
baronesses with surnames
that sound like trombones
I'm a snob... an excessive snob
And when I talk of love
It's stark-naked
in the courtyard



CHANDERNAGOR *Guy Béart*

Singer, composer and lyricist Guy Béart was born in Egypt under the name Guy Béhar-Hassan. He came from a Jewish family and due to the profession of his father he spent most of his childhood abroad in countries like Libanon, Greece, Mexico and France.

He developed a passion for chanson and when he was 17 he left for Paris to study at the École Nationale de Musique. It wasn't for long before his raspy voice was also heard in Paris' cabarets. Great vedettes like Patachou and Zizi Jeanmaire noticed his talent and put his work on their repertoire.

Even the great Maurice Chevalier was interested in recording one of his songs; 'Chandernagor'. Eventually he didn't. He was worried that the lyrics were too intellectual for his audience. It was later performed and recorded by Juliette Gréco. She never had the problem of something being too intellectual...

In the late forties France still hadn't renounced some of its French-Indian colonies (France called them trading posts). In 'Chandernagor' these colonized areas become certain intimate body parts of an exotic and sensual woman. She, willingly or not, displays her 'hills', her 'valleys', her 'geographical flower' and her inextinguishable 'Bengal fire' to him. Saying goodbye can be a hard thing to do...

Elle avait, elle avait un Chandernagor de classe
Elle avait, elle avait un Chandernagor râblé
Pour lui seul, pour lui seul elle découvrirait ses cachemires
ses jardins ses beau quartiers, enfin son Chandernagor
Pas question, dans ces conditions, d'abandonner les Comptoirs de l'Inde

She had, she had a Chandernagor with class
She had, she had a Chandernagor nice and firm
For him alone, for him alone she uncovered her cashmeres
her gardens her beautiful districts, enfin, her Chandernagor
No question of abandoning the Indian trading posts under these conditions

LA JAVANAISE *Serge Gainsbourg*

It's easier to capture Serge Gainsbourg in a list of what he didn't do instead of what he did do. He was a singer and songwriter, a pianist, a composer, an actor and a director amongst other things. He was also known for his provocativeness and subversive lyric writing. His erotic duet with Jane Birkin 'Je t'aime, moi non plus' is a good example of this. It brought him worldwide fame.

With 'La Javanaise', Gainsbourg demonstrates his mastery of language by playing with textual rhythm and similar word sounds on one hand and preserving the romantic essence of the chanson on the other.

Juliette Gréco first adopted 'La Javanaise' after she and Gainsbourg spent an evening together drinking and dancing. Although the love affair in 'La Javanaise' only lasts for the duration of a chanson, Gréco's love affair with it was long and prosperous. She kept 'La Javanaise' in her repertoire up until her last concert to date.

J'avoue j'en ai bavé pas
vous mon amour
Avant d'avoir eu vent
de vous mon amour
Ne vous déplaie
En dansant la Javanaise,
nous nous aimions
Le temps d'une chanson

I admit that I have suffered,
haven't you my love?
Before I got wind
of you my love
Whether you
like it or not
In dancing
the Javanaise
We loved
each other
for the duration
of a chanson





LES FEUILLES MORTES

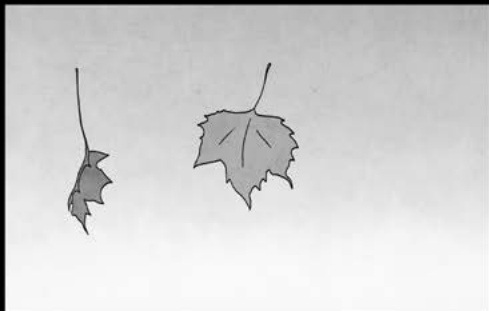
Jacques Prévert
& Joseph Kosma

In 1949 philosopher and existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre urges a young and beautiful unknown actress named Juliette Gréco to start singing. Wonder-struck Gréco asked him: 'What song?'

'Well, what do you like?' Sartre asked. She replied: 'Les feuilles mortes.'

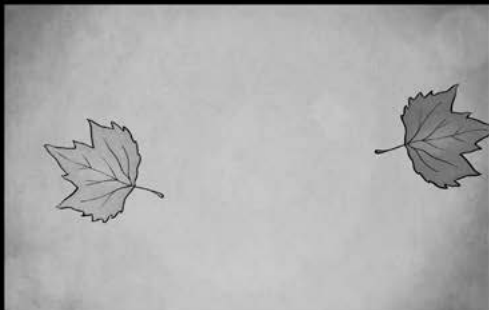
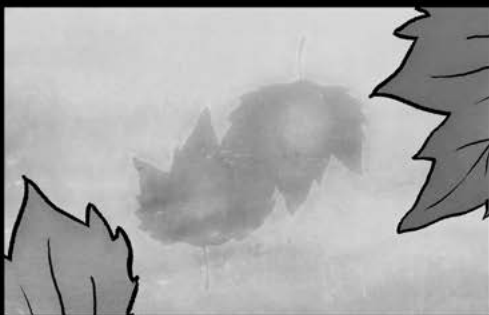
And this is how a chanson that later became world famous was first embraced by the young existentialists in Saint-Germain-des-Prés. It became the soundtrack of a period in which France slowly recovered from the events of war, marking the beginning of a new era. But all beginnings must also end. Post-war Saint-Germain no longer exists and almost all of the great writers and interpreters of French poetic chanson have passed away.

What remains is their beautiful poetry and music.



Oh! je voudrais tant
que tu te souviennes
Des jours heureux où
nous étions amis
En ce temps-là la vie
était plus belle
et le soleil plus brûlant
qu'aujourd'hui
Les feuilles mortes se
ramassent à la pelle...
Tu vois, je n'ai pas oublié
Les feuilles mortes se
ramassent à la pelle
Les souvenirs et
les regrets aussi
Et le vent du nord les
emporte dans la nuit
froide de l'oubli
Tu vois, je n'ai pas oublié
la chanson que tu me
chantais

Oh I wanted so much
for you to remember
The happy days when
we were still together
Those days,
life was better
and the sun shone
more brightly
than it does today
Dead leaves
are gathered together
You see
I haven't forgotten
Dead leaves
are gathered together
The memories
and also the regrets
And the wind of North
carries them into
the cold night of oblivion
You see,
I haven't forgotten
the song you used to
sing for me...



'Tout finit par des chansons' is the title of this album. It is a saying, stemming from the very last line of Pierre Beaumarchais' play *Le mariage de Figaro*, meaning: 'everything ends with a song', and this is what we will do.

We hope listening to this album gives you as much joy as we have experienced in making it. Moreover we hope to have inspired you to listen more to the great treasures of French poetic chanson!

Diana van der Bent & Paul den Bakker





COLLOQUE SENTIMENTAL

*A poem by Paul Verlaine
set to music by Leo Ferré*

Dans le vieux parc solitaire et glacé
Deux formes ont tout à l'heure passé
Leurs yeux sont morts et leurs lèvres sont molles
Et l'on entend à peine leurs paroles

Dans le vieux parc solitaire et glacé
Deux spectres ont évoqué le passé
Te souvient-il de notre extase ancienne?
Pourquoi voulez-vous donc qu'il m'en souviennne?

Ton coeur bat-il toujours à mon seul nom?
Toujours vois-tu mon âme en rêve? - Non
Ah! les beaux jours de bonheur indicible
Où nous joignons nos bouches ! - C'est possible.

Qu'il était bleu, le ciel, et grand, l'espoir!
L'espoir a fui, vaincu, vers le ciel noir
Tels ils marchaient dans les avoines folles
Et la nuit seule entendit leurs paroles

PRODUCER'S NOTES

It was way back in 2011 when I met Paul and Diana, recording their demo EP in a small basement studio in Hilversum. Already stunned by not just the beautiful voice, but also the sheer magic between them, we decided to stay in touch and think about future recordings.

Fast forward to this year, when we were asked to record this very album. The recording dates were set; it was going to be the incredibly hot summer of 2018 that this album were to be recorded.

Out of the whole microphone arsenal of our studio, we armed ourselves with nothing but two Brauner tube microphones for the guitars and vocals, to get this smooth, velvety sound of yesteryear, but with the quality of modern equipment. But enough about the gear, it's all about music!

I hope you will enjoy the album as much as I did recording it. For a brief moment in time during the recording, I was transported to Post-War Paris, enjoying a nice espresso, hearing Diana sing these beautiful songs about love, life, and loss. And isn't that just all any producer wants in life?

Brendon Heinst

TRPTK proudly uses **Sonodore** microphones, **KEF** loudspeakers, **Hegel** amplification, **Merging Technologies** AD/DA conversion, and **Furutech** cabling and power conditioning at their recording and mastering facilities, carefully optimized by **Acoustic Matters**.

All recordings are done in **DXD** (352.8 kHz 32 bits) in immersive 5.1-channel surround sound, and all masters are generated from the original DXD Studio Master, without dynamic compression or limiting of the signal. In both stereo and surround sound, our aim is to truly recreate the original venue and atmosphere.

CREDITS

vocals	Diana van der Bent
guitar	Paul den Bakker
cello	Maya Fridman
arrangements	Diana van der Bent
(for Saint-Germain-des-Prés)	Paul den Bakker
	Harry Hendriks
recording, mixing & mastering	Brendon Heinst
cover design	Thierry Emmerly
	Dylan de Heer
artwork	Ruben Maalman
film still	Daniël de Ruiter

EQUIPMENT

microphones	Sonodore RCM-402 Brauner VM-1
preamplifiers	Sonodore MPA-502
ad/da converters	Merging Technologies HAPI
cabling	Furutech custom microphone cables Furutech NanoFlux NCF power cables Furutech NanoFlux speaker cables Furutech LineFlux XLR interconnects
loudspeakers	KEF Blade Two
amplifiers	Hegel H30

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greatly indebted to our wonderful crowdfunders for their support. Last but not least we would like to thank the TRPTK label for engaging in our project and making the best possible recording of our performance we can think of.

**Diana van der Bent
& Paul den Bakker**

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