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- Abstract:** Gabriel Fauré play's a leading role in Vladimir Jankelevitch's influential critique of musical hermeneutics, *La musique et l'ineffable* (1961). For the French philosopher, Fauré's works epitomized music that resists verbal interpretation and demands absorption in temporal experience. Yet, like many French composers, Fauré drew upon theatrical song in his mélodies introducing a performative element that encourages distance as well as absorption. These hybrid mélodies invite both singer and audience to listen critically, savoring the performance within the performance; indeed, these songs offer up music itself as an object of reflection. This article reassesses Jankelevitch's idea of ineffability in light of Fauré's use of diegetic song, questioning the apparent claim that musical experience is incompatible with critical reflection. An introductory analysis of *La musique et l'ineffable* explores the crucial role of Henri Bergson's philosophy of mind, especially his theory of perception, and demonstrates the inseparable role of both metaphysical cognition and representation in Bergsonian phenomenology. The following song analyses illustrate the need for both reflective and immersive listening. An examination of two settings from Théophile Gautier's *La comédie de la mort* reveals how Fauré responded to the poet's writerly play between lyric and performative modes, while a longer analysis of the song cycle *La chanson d'Ève*, based upon a stage ballad, demonstrates how Fauré exploited theatrical song to portray Eve's fall into self-consciousness. Finally, the conclusion proposes a musical hermeneutics compatible with Jankélévitch's idea of ineffability, one informed by the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce.
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