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Lili Boulanger (1893-1918) *D'un soir triste* (1918)

Lili Boulanger was the younger sister of the better known composer and teacher Nadia. Theirs was a musical and late-breeding family: their grandfather Frédéric had won first prize in cello at the Paris Conservatoire in 1797 and their father Ernest had won the *Prix de Rome* in 1835 for his cantata *Achille*. Their Russian princess mother Raïssa Mychetsky was 43 years younger than Ernest, who had taught her singing in St Petersburg. Like their father, Nadia and Lili both competed in the *Prix de Rome*, Nadia taking second place in 1908, and Lili first place (the first woman to do so) in 1913 for her cantata *Faust et Hélène*.

Lili's life was plagued by illness following bronchial pneumonia as a very young child. Though prodigiously talented, her frailty limited her musical education. She was initially taught composition at home by Nadia. Her compositions were mainly vocal, including an opera and settings of a number of Psalms. Fauré admired her work and promoted it enthusiastically.

D'un soir triste was written along with its shorter companion piece *D'un matin de printemps* in the last months of her life, reflecting both her recognition that she had only a short time to live and her strong Catholic faith. It exists in three versions: tonight's version for piano trio, a transcription for cello and piano, and an orchestral arrangement.