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PROBLEMS IN THE PIANO PRÉLUDES OF
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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS
IN THE PIANO PRÉLUDES OF CLAUDE DEBUSSY

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
DOCTOR OF MUSIC EDUCATION

BY
THOMAS OSCAR MCCOLLOM

Norman, Oklahoma

1976

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS FOR PERFORMANCE PROBLEMS
IN THE PIANO PRÉLUDES OF CLAUDE DEBUSSY

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MUSICAL EXCERPTS from PRÉLUDES

BOOK I, Copyright 1910¹

BOOK II, Copyright 1913¹

by Claude Debussy

Danse des Delphes

Excerpt 1-measure 4
" 2-measure 1

Voiles

Excerpt 3-measures 1-2
" 4-measure 31
" 5-measures 33-36
" 6-measures 42-44
" 7-measures 50-51
" 8-measure 62

Le Vent dans la plaine

Excerpt 9-measure 1
" 10-measure 28
" 11-measure 49
" 12-measures 9-10
" 13-measures 3-4

Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir

Excerpt 14-measures 2, 5, and 51
" 15-measures 9-10
" 16-measures 34-36

Les collines d'Anacapri

Excerpt 17-measure 3
" 18-measures 14-16
" 19-measure 28
" 20-measure 30
" 21-measure 39
" 22-measure 56
" 23-measure 72
" 24-measure 81

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Les collines d'Anacapri (con't)

Excerpt 25-measures 92-93
 " 26-measure 95
 " 27-measures 45-46

Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest

Excerpt 28-measures 5-6
 " 29-measures 19-20
 " 30-measure 51
 " 31-measure 63
 " 32-measure 26
 " 33-measure 30
 " 34-measure 10
 " 35-measure 15
 " 36-measure 17
 " 37-measures 36-37

La fille aux cheveux de lin

Excerpt 38-measures 1-2
 " 39-measure 15
 " 40-measures 19-20
 " 41-measure 14
 " 42-measures 24-26
 " 43-measures 12-13

La sérénade interrompue

Excerpt 44-measures 46-47
 " 45-measures 80-83
 " 46-measures 5-8
 " 47-measures 76-77
 " 48-measure 74
 " 49-measures 136-137

La Cathédrale engloutie

Excerpt 50-measures 8-10
 " 51-measures 28-30
 " 52-measure 16
 " 53-measures 71-72

La Danse de Puck

Excerpt 54-measure 8
 " 55-measures 1-3
 " 56-measures 20-21
 " 57-measures 42-43
 " 58-measures 53-54
 " 59-measures 73-74

Minstrels

Excerpt 60-measures 13-14
 " 61-measures 28-29
 " 62-measures 41-43
 " 63-measures 45-46
 " 64-measures 76-77

Brouillards (no excerpts)Feuilles mortes

Excerpt 65-measures 1-3
 " 66-measure 38

La Puerta del Vino

Excerpt 67-measure 13
 " 68-measure 16
 " 69-measure 72
 " 70-measure 74
 " 71-measure 55
 " 72-measures 59-61
 " 73-measure 85
 " 74-measures 1-3
 " 75-measures 53-54
 " 76-measures 86-90

"Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses"

Excerpt 77-measure 1
 " 78-measures 36-39
 " 79-measures 40-44
 " 80-measures 46-47
 " 81-measures 53-55
 " 82-measure 57
 " 83-measures 64-66

Bruyères

Excerpt 84-measure 21
 " 85-measure 29
 " 86-measure 47

General Lavine-eccentric

Excerpt 87-measure 1
 " 88-measure 15
 " 89-measures 23-28
 " 90-measures 44 and 107
 " 91-measures 94-95
 " 92-measures 31-34
 " 93-measures 57-58

General Lavine-eccentric (con't)

Excerpt 94-measures 47-48
 " 95-measures 65-66
 " 96-measures 101-102
 " 97-measures 103-104

La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune

Excerpt 98-measures 10-11
 " 99-measure 44
 " 100-measures 1-2
 " 101-measures 5-6
 " 102-measure 12
 " 103-measure 32-33

Ondine

Excerpt 104-measure 11
 " 105-measure 4
 " 106-measure 14
 " 107-measures 16-17

Hommage à S. Pickwick, Esq. P.P.M.P.C.

Excerpt 108-measure 5
 " 109-measures 19-20
 " 110-measure 35
 " 111-measures 37-38
 " 112-measures 24-25

Canope

Excerpt 113-measures 24-25

Les tierces alternées

Excerpt 114-measures 11-14
 " 115-measures 93-94
 " 116-measures 107-108
 " 117-measures 112-113

Feux d'Artifice

Excerpt 118-measure 37
 " 119-measures 42-43
 " 120-measures 44-45
 " 121-measure 67
 " 122-measure 74
 " 123-measure 38
 " 124-measure 41
 " 125-measure 96
 " 126-measure 47

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The individuality of composers as well as the idiomatic differences in the music of the several style periods has traditionally been the major concern of the music scholar, who is generally interested in the larger dimensions of structure and style. The performer, on the other hand, must be responsible for the authentic and expressive realization of the musical score. In many instances, the score does not provide the performer with sufficient guidance for stylistic interpretation. The present study resulted from the writer's concern with this matter as it relates to the Préludes for piano by Claude Debussy.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to recommend solutions for performance problems that are generally encountered in the Préludes for piano of Claude Debussy. Each of the twenty-four preludes was analyzed with regard to particular problems of performance and their solutions. These problem areas include fingering, redivision of notes between hands, pedaling, touch and tone, and interpretative markings. A glossary of terms found in the preludes is provided in the Appendices. Terms and interpretative markings peculiar to

each of the preludes are translated and interpreted as a component of the analytical discussion and are also included in the Appendices. One chapter is devoted to each of the two books of Préludes. The analytical commentary for each prelude includes a discussion of the composer's expressive intent, analysis of tonal devices employed as related to stylistic performance, solutions to those technical problems peculiar to each prelude, as well as general suggestions regarding interpretation.

The Need for the Study

Grout,¹ Cooper,² and Austin,³ among others, attest to the importance of Claude Debussy and his place as the most influential composer of French music of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Debussy was a pianist. He received his early musical training at the piano, an idiom for which he had great affinity as a composer. Gillespie, among others, views Debussy as "one of the most important composers in the history of piano music.

He refused--like Chopin and Liszt before him--
to accept the keyboard restrictions set up by his

¹Donald Jay Grout, A History of Western Music (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1960), p. 601.

²Martin Cooper (ed.), The Concise Encyclopedia of Music and Musicians (New York: Hawthorn Books Inc., 1958), p. 232.

³William W. Austin, Music in the Twentieth Century (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1966), pp. 1-3.

predecessors and so proceeded to imagine different concepts of pianistic techniques and coloristic devices. He also introduced a new approach to musical composition, an approach influenced more by other arts than by any purely musical considerations. The music Debussy created through this unique approach has profoundly affected a fair share of later twentieth century music.¹

Other authorities, including Grout,² and Lockspeiser,³ agree that the piano music of Debussy and Ravel is the most significant contribution to piano literature in the early twentieth century.

Most experts feel that the Préludes most clearly reveal the distinctive qualities of Debussy's piano writing. Schmitz documents Debussy's contribution to the continuing evolution of the prelude form thus:

Chopin gave it the completeness of a single, independent movement and endowed it with a rich, poetic, and imaginative role To this evolution of the independent prelude Debussy added a complexity of materials and a completeness of form, which, without losing its essential character of brevity, brought the prelude to its highest point of development.⁴

The piano compositions of Debussy reflect his intimate knowledge of the instrument. Gillespie notes that "he provided his piano music with scrupulous directions for

¹ John Gillespie, Five Centuries of Keyboard Music (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1965), p. 330.

² Grout, A History of Western Music, p. 602.

³ Edward Lockspeiser, Debussy, His Life and Mind (London: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1962), Vol. II, p. 33.

⁴ E. Robert Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pierce, 1950), p. 129.

performance"¹ This meticulous attention to detail is seen in every prelude. Tempo and tempo fluctuation (rubato, ritard, etc.), for instance, are clearly marked. Metronome markings indicate precise tempos in many of the Préludes. Markings regarding dynamics, character, and touch are also clearly indicated by the composer.

Hutcheson observes that while the instructions given to the performer are most precise regarding such matters as dynamic shading and tempo fluctuation, there is an almost complete lack of fingering and pedaling.² Gebhart deplores the fact that there are almost no pedal markings in the greatest part of Debussy's music although proper pedaling is essential to stylistic interpretation.³ A similar opinion is held by Reifling, who states:

Only in nine of Debussy's piano pieces are a few sparing pedal indications to be found: less than twenty in all, and yet hardly any other composer requires such infinitely subtle and artistic pedaling. His particular piano texture, spirit, and fragrance, the imaginative atmosphere of his sound, the 'mist resonance,' cannot be brought to life without a wealth of support from the pedal.⁴

¹Gillespie, p. 332.

²Ernest Hutcheson, The Literature of the Piano, edited, revised and brought up to date by Rudolph Ganz (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), pp. 309-310.

³Heinrich Gebhart, The Art of Pedaling (New York: Franco Colombo, Inc., 1963), p. viii.

⁴Reimar Reifling, Piano Pedalling, trans, by Kathleen Dale (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 1.

The musical score, at best, fails to provide the performer with the information necessary for a musically, technically, and stylistically correct performance. Concerned with the inadequacy of the printed score, Dorian states:

Even the modern score, however, frequently admired as one of the highest achievements of the human spirit, is far from perfection. Of course, great composers have superbly transformed their ideas into scores, making the best possible use of musical notation. But it is this very notation that is imperfect and must remain so forever, notwithstanding remarkable contributions to its improvement. There are certain intangibles that cannot be expressed by our method of writing music--vital musical elements incapable of being fixed by the marks and symbols of notation. Consequently, score scripts are incomplete in representing the composer's intentions. No score, as written in manuscript and published in print, can offer complete information for its interpreter.¹

In addition to the need for an educated approach to the score, the performer encounters many technical demands in Debussy's music. Schmitz lists among these a facile finger dexterity,

the romantic technical dexterity which had brought the piano to its great role as solo instrument It is proverbial that Debussy's piano works do not 'fall under the fingers': each new work brings a new set of technical problems a new form of virtuosity to conquer.²

The extreme dynamic levels in the Préludes, ranging from fortississimo to pianississimo, not to mention the many

¹Frederick Dorian, The History of Music in Performance (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1942), p. 28.

²Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 36.

subtle gradations between these extremes, demand of the performer a precise control of the key. Schmitz also observes that playing louder or softer is not enough in Debussy. The way a key is depressed is also a factor in achieving the required effect.¹ Dumesnil quotes Debussy as saying "play with more sensitiveness in your finger tips. Play chords as if the keys were being attracted to your finger tips, and rose to your hand as a magnet."² Marguerite Land and Louise Liebich, two of Debussy's students, recall that Debussy was insistent that the piano sound as if it had no hammers and he wanted the fingers to penetrate into the keys.³ The many forms of touch demanded include percussive, singing, and all the various shadings of staccato, portato, and legato. Certainly not to be overlooked by the performer is the importance of skillful pedal usage including fully depressed pedaling, half-pedaling, and half-damping (otherwise known as upper half-pedaling).

Another aspect of Debussy's music which the performer must consider is that all interpretative markings are in the composer's native language. Many of these words are used in a special sense by Debussy and hence a correct translation cannot be found in a standard French-English dictionary.

¹Schmitz, p. 35.

²Maurice Dumesnil, How to Play and Teach Debussy (New York: Schroeder and Gunther, 1932), p. 9.

³Lockspeiser, Debussy, His Life and Mind, Vol. II, p. 45.

Terminology

For clarification, a definition of terms peculiar to the study follows:

1. Performance problems. Those difficulties which the performer encounters in the study of a musical composition which hinder or otherwise detract from giving a musically or technically acceptable performance.
2. Touch. Depression of the piano key in such a manner as to produce the quality and degree of tone appropriate to the musical situation.
3. Fully depressed pedal. Position of the damper pedal where the dampers are completely off the strings allowing them to vibrate freely.
4. Half-pedaling. Damper pedal depressed to full depth and raised to half depth to retain sound in the lower strings while damping the upper strings.
5. Half-damping. Damper pedal depressed to half depth from its fully released position to produce a muted "haze" of sound.
6. Impressionism. That period of French art in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the artist was interested in presenting his impression of some object, scene, or event. In general, the characteristics of the style include vagueness of expression, subtlety of color and contrast, deliberate blurring of detail, and a sensuousness of texture.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to the analysis and solution of performance problems in the Debussy Préludes for piano. The discussion of these performance problems was limited to the areas of fingering, touch and tone, redivision of notes between hands, pedaling, interpretative markings and the composer's expressive intent pertaining to stylistic performance.

Rationale For The Performance Problems Analysis

The performance problems encountered in a musical work are usually best revealed in the performance of that work. The author has performed the twenty-four Préludes under the guidance of Celia Mae Bryant, a well-known authority in the field of piano pedagogy. Bryant has done a special study of the Préludes with the eminent piano teacher, Frank Mannheimer. The solutions to performance problems discovered through the performance experience were supported by the ideas of authors in the field of piano pedagogy. Information regarding the many aspects of Debussy's piano style as well as some of the factors which may have inspired the composition of the various preludes was found in the wealth of literature concerning Debussy and his work.

Authorities recognize that good fingering selection is essential to a musically acceptable performance of any piano work. This is a particular problem in Debussy's music as he included no fingering in the original editions.

In choosing fingerings in the Préludes, the author made use of fingering principles advocated by several authorities in the field of piano pedagogy.

One principle frequently employed in making fingering selections in the Préludes is the principle of "finger grouping," recommended by Matthay,¹ Newman,² and Last.³ Matthay states that "all fingering consists of fingers lying upon groups of notes--groups forming either complete or incomplete sets of five-finger positions on the keyboard."⁴ These five-finger groups may be on five adjacent keys (all white keys or combinations of black and white keys) and they also may be contracted into five adjacent half-steps or extended beyond the five adjacent white keys. Matthay suggests that the conformation of the hand must be considered as well as the best place for crossing long fingers over the thumb or taking the thumb under the long fingers. After the player has grouped the notes to fit hand positions, the player should practice going through several

¹Tobias Matthay, The Principles of Fingering and Laws of Pedalling, extracted from Muscular Relaxation Studies (London: Bosworth and Co., Ltd., 1908), p. 4.

²William S. Newman, The Pianist's Problems (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), pp. 40-41.

³Joan Last, The Young Pianist (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), pp. 86-87.

⁴Matthay, p. 4.

successive fingering groups so that they may be more easily joined into a continuous passage.¹

Several authorities, including Newman,² and Ahrens and Atkinson,³ recommend that sequential passages should be identically fingered. The author has found this principle most useful in fingering several passages in the Préludes.

Other principles determining the author's selection of fingering in the Préludes include the suggestion of Max Pirani to use "the strong fingers in preference to weak ones, all things being equal."⁴

The redivision or redistribution of notes between hands is an outgrowth of finger grouping. There are passages in the Préludes in which the hand position indicated in the original edition is so extended that performers with smaller hands find them awkward or even impossible to play. Redivision of the notes, as suggested by the author, considerably relieves such awkward extensions. The notes have been redivided also in passages where the original score indicates an interlocking of the hands. These passages have been changed by the author to allow the right hand to

¹Matthay, p. 7.

²Newman, p. 81.

³Cora B. Ahrens and G. D. Atkinson, For All Piano Teachers (London: The Frederick B. Harris, Ltd., 1955), p. 39.

⁴Ahrens and Atkinson, p. 38.

play the highest notes and the left hand the lowest. Some passages where one hand has an extended passage while the other hand is unoccupied have been redivided so as to allow the unoccupied hand to assist the other hand. Pirani suggests that one may "use the hands alternately, if necessary, to make a passage easier."¹ In the present study, this type of problem as well as other related problems have been solved by redivision.

The composer uses several methods to indicate pedaling. Reifling observes that Debussy wrote horizontal slurs after chords and across bar lines to indicate that the pedal should continue to be depressed beyond the chords or across the bar lines.² Debussy also indicated pedaling by writing note values which were impossible to hold without the pedal. He implied omission of the damper pedal with the French term, sec (dry).³ It must be assumed, then, that when the musical situation seems to call for a richer, more resonant tone quality, the damper pedal should be employed. Gebhart notes this effect of the damper pedal when he suggests that when the damper pedal is depressed, "the overtones vibrate in sympathy with the notes struck" and "the tone is rich, sonorous, and glowing."⁴

¹Ahrens and Atkinson, p. 39.

²Reifling, Piano Pedalling, pp. 62-63.

³Reifling, p. 8.

⁴Gebhart, The Art of Pedaling, p. ix.

A variety of ways to employ the damper pedal are proposed in this study. One type of pedaling is called the syncopated or legato pedal. In this type of pedaling, the pedal is fully depressed so that the dampers are completely off the strings, allowing them to vibrate freely. When harmonies, melodies, or bass notes change so as to require a pedal change, the pedal is lifted at the moment when the new sounds occur. The pedal is depressed immediately after the new sound. The precise use of the legato pedal effectively connects one sound to the next without an unintentional rest or an undesirable blur. Rhythmic or accent pedaling, a variation of the fully depressed syncopated pedal, is occasionally necessary in the Préludes. Reifling observes that this pedaling is used "to emphasize and define rhythms, to mark accents (rhythmic as well as metric), and to support the natural articulation and declamation of the melody."¹

A pedal technique most useful in the Préludes is called by Matthay "over-short damping." He describes this technique as "employing a sufficiently short-lived 'damping'", which will "efface the upper harmonies while still allowing the more strongly-vibrating bass strings to continue sounding."² Matthay also calls this technique half-pedaling.³ Debussy often wrote a series of chords over

¹Reifling, Piano Pedalling, p. 24.

²Matthay, The Principles of Fingering, pp. 15-16.

³Matthay, p. 19.

long note values which were impossible to hold to full duration without the pedal. The only way to avoid indiscriminate blurring was to use the half-pedaling technique.

Another technique similar to half-pedaling is described by Matthay as "half-damping."¹ In this case, the pedal is depressed just enough to raise the dampers lessening their contact with the strings without removing them completely. Matthay observes that with the dampers not fully pressed on the strings, "any notes sounded, and particularly the lower ones will faintly continue in spite of the keys being allowed to rise."² This effect has proven to be particularly useful in some of the Préludes, for example, when staccatos are to be played and yet the composer indicates that the sound is to continue.

Schmitz suggests the use of the sostenuto pedal for pedal-points and soft pedal for controlling the general level of dynamics.³ Both recommendations have been followed in this study. The soft pedal was found to be particularly useful when the dynamic plane was pianissimo or less, especially at those points where the harmonic texture was somewhat thick.

¹Matthay, p. 19.

²Matthay, p. 19.

³Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 38.

Schmitz feels that one prerequisite for playing Debussy is a "knowledge of touches . . . commensurate with the variety of the demands of the Debussy palette."¹ The only real test of validity in the questions of touch, tone control, and tone color is whether the resultant tone is musically appropriate. The musical result, after all, is the true criterion. Accordingly, the recommendations in this study in regard to questions of touch and tone are an outgrowth of experimentation in the performance situation. The touches suggested here tend to produce the most satisfactory results in terms of authentic stylistic performance. The control of the key is the crux of the touch problem. By varying the way the key is depressed, the player can produce harsh tones, percussive tones, piquant tones, singing tones, ethereal tones, in short, an infinite variety of sound qualities. As Matthay says, "'Sensing the key' is the main factor towards expressing" what is musically felt. "There never has been any musical playing without it."² By sensing the key, Matthay refers to sensing its resistance. He also notes that good tone, ease in production, and control of tone, can only be obtained by gradually pressing the key into motion. Only in this way can one obtain perfect control over tone, good "singing" tone, and good quality of

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 39.

²Tobias Matthay, The Visible and Invisible in Pianoforte Technique (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 13.

tone. Conversely, Matthay suggests that bad tone, and lack of control over tone, occurs when the key is depressed by a "too suddenly applied impulse,"¹

Many of the French markings were translated with the aid of Cassell's New French Dictionary,² Larousse's French-English, English-French Dictionary,³ and Webster's French-English, English-French Dictionary.⁴ Some of the terms were found in Dumesnil's book, How to Play and Teach Debussy.⁵ A number of additional sources were consulted for translating the prelude titles, including Schmitz⁶ and Thompson.⁷ General commentary on the background of the Préludes as well as general information regarding tonal materials, form, and interpretation was derived from a variety of authorities, whose names and works are appropriately acknowledged in the manuscript.

¹Matthay, p. 7.

²James Boielle and de V. Payen-Payne, Cassell's New French Dictionary (revised edition: London: Funk and Wagnell's Co., 1903).

³Marguerite Marie Dubois and others, Larousse's French-English, English-French Dictionary (New York: Washington Square Press, 1954).

⁴Webster's French-English, English-French Dictionary (Baltimore, Md.: I. & M. Ottenheimer, 1951).

⁵Maurice Dumesnil, How to Play and Teach Debussy (New York: Schroeder and Gunther, 1932).

⁶Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, pp. 129-187.

⁷Oscar Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1937).

CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

The goal of the performer is to achieve the most stylistically correct performance possible. In order to achieve this goal, the performer must have an understanding of many aspects of the musical work in question. These aspects include the particular style period in which the work was written, factors influencing the compositional style of the composer and the particular work in question, elements of that style including tonal and structural characteristics and technical demands made on the performer. The wealth of literature concerning the Impressionistic period of art in general and Debussy and his music in particular provides information relating to the study. It is the purpose of this chapter to survey this literature.

Impressionist Painting

Most authorities agree that French painting and literature had a greater influence on Debussy's compositional style than did the music of the period. Gillespie suggests that Debussy "found his creative inspiration in Impressionist paintings and Symbolist literature."¹ It

¹John Gillespie, Five Centuries of Keyboard Music (Belmont, Cal.,: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1965), p. 330.

would seem appropriate, then, to examine in a general way the styles of these Impressionist painters and Symbolist poets.

The leading Impressionist painters were Manet, Monet, Renoir, and Degas. Lockspeiser notes that Impressionism as a movement came to the forefront between 1870 and 1880. The name "impressionism" derives from a painting of Monet, Impression: Sunrise, "in which water and sky merge imperceptibly into each other creating a formless 'impression' of these elements shrouding the rising sun."¹

Lockspeiser observes that the Impressionist painters were

principally concerned with the sensations of light, and they believed . . . that the realistic rendering of an object mattered less than the opportunity provided by sun on water or sun on snow, to juxtapose the seven colours of the solar spectrum. Their preoccupation with the sensuousness of texture caused them to seek colour in shadows and it also caused them to see a picture not primarily as an image but as a composition of volumes and surfaces.²

It is Lockspeiser's opinion that although there could be no conscious imitation of the technique of the Impressionist painters by composers, new conceptions became common to the two arts. In 1887 the Journal Officiel had criticized the "vague Impressionism" of Debussy's Printemps and the term

¹Edward Lockspeiser, Debussy: His Life and Mind (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1965), Vol. II, p. 18.

²Lockspeiser, Vol. II, p. 19.

was again associated with his music on the occasion of a concert of his works.¹

Lockspeiser also sees a resemblance in the choice of subjects in Impressionist painting and music. Both Manet and Renoir painted dreaming young women gazing at reflections in water or into the water's depths. Renoir's The Boat and Monet's Argenteuil-sur-Seine are paintings in which this state of reverie is explored. Renoir's The Seine at Argenteuil and Monet's Sail-boats at Argenteuil are paintings of water which are brighter in tone and more extroverted. Water-pieces by Debussy include the preludes Voiles, La Cathédrale engloutie, and Ondine.² J. M. W. Turner, the English painter who was the forerunner of Impressionism, first painted the sea in an Impressionist manner. Other Turner paintings depict fog on the Thames. The dream-like qualities and the air of mystery discernible in these paintings is also seen in Debussy's music, i.e., Brouillards.³ Gillespie notes in Impressionist painting "the contrast between light and shade, the vague expression of impressions, and the interplay of color."⁴ Many of the characteristics of Impressionist art--vagueness of expression, deliberate blurring of detail, subtlety of color and

¹Lockspeiser, Vol. II, p. 19.

²Lockspeiser, Vol. II, pp. 19-20.

³Lockspeiser, Vol. II, pp. 21-22.

⁴Gillespie, Five Centuries of Keyboard Music, p. 331.

contrast, and the effort to express a scene from nature, a feeling or a mood--are found in the piano works of Debussy.

Symbolist Literature

The Symbolist movement in literature reached full stature about 1885.¹ Lockspeiser² and Austin³ report that Debussy often attended the Tuesday evening salons in the Paris apartment of Mallarmé who, along with Verlaine, was a leading figure in the Symbolist movement. Dorian observes that the artists who assembled at these gatherings were later to make history in the fields of music, poetry, and painting.⁴ André Gide describes the atmosphere of these evenings thus: "One entered the room. It was evening. And silently, insensibly, and of its own accord, the conversation would rise to heights of almost religious solemnity."⁵ Other poets of the period include Rimbaud, Maeterlinck, Louÿs, and Régner. These writers aimed "at an art more suggestive and more subtle" than that of preceding periods "and at poetic

¹Oscar Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1937), p. 17.

²Lockspeiser, Vol. I, p. 150.

³William V. Austin, Music in the Twentieth Century (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., 1966), p. 26.

⁴Frederick Dorian, The History of Music in Performance (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1942), p. 298.

⁵Dorian, p. 298.

images and language that projected what Régnier called the poet's 'inner dream.'¹ Underwood suggests that Verlaine's poetry could

communicate new shades of human feeling by suggestion and tremulous vagueness . . . ; words could be used merely for their sound to make a subtler music, an incantatory spell more potent than their everyday meaning.²

Austin feels that these poets as well as other writers

fortified . . . Debussy's courage to deviate from common practice. They sharpened his sensitivity to unique forms. They recommended subtle suggestion as opposed to bald statement, and vivid sensuous imagery as opposed to diffuse emotions.³

The Symbolist qualities of subtlety, vagueness, and sensual appeal are clearly reflected in the music of Debussy.

Impressionism in Music

Grout, in explaining Impressionism in music, quotes the definition of the term in Webster's dictionary: "'A style of composition designed to create descriptive impressions by evoking moods through rich and varied harmonies and timbres.'⁴ Austin suggests that the term is used more often in a vague sense to distinguish Debussy's style from earlier and later styles, rather than to distinguish any

¹"Symbolists," Encyclopedia Britannica (15th ed.) Micropedia, Vol. IX, p. 733.

²V[ernon], P[hillip], U[nderwood], "Paul Verlaine," Encyclopedia Britannica (15th ed.), Vol. II, p. 84.

³Austin, p. 26.

⁴Donald Jay Grout, A History of Western Music (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1960), p. 601.

particular pieces or particular qualities within his style.¹

Grout describes the musical language of Impressionism thus:

The chief element in that language is color: color not only in the narrow sense of timbre, but in the broader sense as rising from harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic factors as well. Melodies are likely to be short motives of narrow range, freely combined to make a musical mosaic of irregular, varicolored pieces. Pentatonic, whole-tone, or pseudo-modal scales may furnish the material of melodies and chords. Rhythm is nonpulsatile, vague, concealed by syncopations and irregular subdivisions of the beat; but in some compositions by Debussy, the rhythm is a rapid, animated pulsation (often continued in ostinato fashion), or is patterned on some exotic or imagined fancy. Outlines of phrases and the formal structure as a whole are deliberately blurred and indistinct, though in many impressionistic pieces a general three-part (ABA) form is discernible.²

The Influence of Nature in Debussy's Work

Debussy loved nature, and the sensations he experienced in nature influenced his music. Vallas documents this declaration of Debussy: "One passion only . . . can compete with and sometimes out-rival the love of music, and that is the love of nature."³ Debussy, writing in 1903 says, "Music is the expression of the movement of the waters, the play of curves described by changing breezes. There is nothing more musical than a sunset." On another occasion, Debussy writes, ". . . of all the arts, music is closest to nature"⁴

¹Austin, p. 25.

²Grout, pp. 601-602.

³Léon Vallas, The Theories of Claude Debussy, Musicien Français, trans. by Maire O'Brien (London: Oxford University Press, 1929), p. 5.

⁴Vallas, pp. 8-9.

The composer attempted to translate into sound the sensations of touch, sound, sight, and smell. A particularly striking example of this is the prelude, Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir (Sounds and perfumes blend in the evening air).¹ Thompson called Debussy "the poet of the Nuances of Nature."² Debussy is seen by Thompson as "the adoring pantheist" and Thompson states that he was

the poet of mists and fountains, clouds and rain, of dusk and of glints of sunlight through the leaves; he was moonstruck and seastruck and a lost soul under a sky besprent with stars. All his senses were tributary to his musical inspiration. He felt faint vibrations as he heard the overtones of distant bells. He was conscious of the perfumes of a summer's day and he could scent in fancy the odors of an Andalusian night. There was touch as well as sight in these sensations, and in all a wealth of fantasy, as if he not only saw but heard the dancing of shadows on velvet feet. But there is always something more than mere sensation in what he gives back for what he has absorbed. In transmuting Nature into harmony, he has made sonorous his own emotions³

Ward feels Debussy's music is devoted to "the objective sensuousness of nature, to moods rather than feelings, and to suggestive gestures rather than illustration" and he suggests that this music expresses "through subtle allusions and characteristic inflections the sights and sounds of nature"⁴

¹Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 264.

²Thompson, p. 21.

³Thompson, p. 23.

⁴William R. Ward, Examples for the Study of Musical Style (Debuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Co., 1970), p. 252.

Influence of the Romantic Period

The influence in music of the Romantic period may be observed in Debussy's music. It would be well to note those aspects of the Romantic style which Debussy reflected.

Schmitz observes that Debussy, as a "truly French" artist, turned away from the "large, colossal, pompous in favor of conciseness, compactness, and a close adherence to the precept that 'brevity is the soul of wit.'"¹ Schmitz also notes that another French trait, that of

clarity and logic, as a basic aesthetic consideration, makes him discard from the romantic tradition all disorderliness, chaos in structure, chaos in the logical sequence of cause and effect in music, and the amount of subjectivity . . . which loses sight of universally shared emotions.²

Schmitz notes that one of the main characteristics of the Romantic period was the attempt to escape reality, which is reflected in the choice of subject matter that inspired a number of Debussy's piano compositions. These forms of escape are:

Escape in space (travel, exoticism), escape in time (past, antiquity, medievalism), escape in literature and legends (the fictitious or supernatural), escape into imaginative suggestions of the new world to be created by science.³

Schmitz further observes that:

¹E. Robert Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pierce, Inc., 1950), p. 15.

²Schmitz, p. 15.

³Schmitz, p. 16.

love and sublimation of nature have been, since the German literary inception of the romantic movement, potent factors . . . but . . . unlike the romantic, Debussy does not intrude upon nature: He lets nature intrude upon him . . . His depiction of nature is the result of a fond objectivity¹

Schmitz cites other characteristics in the music of the Romantic period found in Debussy's music:

the use of folk materials or their spirit, the attention to color and therefore to orchestration and its transference to the piano resulting in orchestral as well as piano virtuosity . . . extremes of compass . . . and dynamics, pictorial effects, and the association of certain emotions, or situations.²

The Influence of Chopin and Liszt

Two composers who had a direct influence on Debussy were Chopin and Liszt. Mme. Maure de Fleurville, with whom the young Debussy studied piano, imparted to him the "fundamental touch and spirit" of Chopin's music.³ Thompson notes that when Debussy was barely twelve, he played Chopin's F minor Concerto and Second Ballade. Thompson observes that between Debussy and Chopin ". . . there was an affinity in the spirit as well as the manner of their playing."⁴

When Debussy was in Rome as the winner of the Prix de Rome, the Paris Conservatory's yearly award in composition, he had occasion to hear Liszt perform. According to Thompson, "the impression made on Debussy, the pianist, by

¹Schmitz, p. 16.

²Schmitz, p. 17.

³Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 37.

⁴Thompson, p. 39.

Liszt's command of keyboard resource was an abiding one; more than a quarter of a century later he wrote that Liszt 'seemed to make the pedal breathe.'"¹

Other Influences

Certain aspects of Debussy's compositional style may be traced to Javanese influence. As Lockspeiser notes, Debussy was impressed with the Javanese gamelan orchestra which he heard at the Paris Exposition of 1889.² Godet writes that Debussy spent hours listening to "the percussive rhythmic complexities of the gamelan with its inexhaustible combination of ethereal flashing timbres."³ Lockspeiser observes that the rebab, a one-stringed instrument in the orchestra, used the pentatonic scale.⁴ Debussy wrote in a letter to Louÿs, "Do you not remember the Javanese music . . . able to express every shade of meaning, which makes our tonic and dominant seem like ghosts."⁵ He also observed in the Revue S. I. M., ". . . Javanese music is based on a type of counterpoint by comparison with which that of Palestrina is child's play."⁶

¹Thompson, p. 76.

²Lockspeiser, Debussy: His Life and Mind, Vol. I, p. 113.

³Lockspeiser, Vol. I, p. 113.

⁴Lockspeiser, Vol. I, p. 114.

⁵Lockspeiser, Vol. I, p. 115.

⁶Lockspeiser, Vol. I, p. 115.

The Spanish composer, de Falla, observes the influence of Spain and its music in Debussy's use of "modes, cadences, chord sequences, rhythms, and even turns of phrase which clearly reveal a relationship with our spontaneous folk music."¹ He also lists as Spanish influences, the habañera, "a sort of Andalusian tango,"² and "characteristic guitar figurations."³ Austin notes that Debussy welcomed the introduction of jazz into European culture with its new rhythms and tone colors.⁴ Schmitz suggests other composers and styles whose influences may be detected in Debussy's music. These include:

Faure', and the exquisite art of modulation and poetic inspiration . . . , Satie, and experimental harmony . . . , J. S. Bach: the divine arabesque, contrapuntal dissonance, and organ style . . . , Palestrina, and modal plasticity, and Mozart, in his sensitive use of ornamentation, and the appoggiatura.⁵

Debussy's Compositional Style and Tonal Language

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Debussy's style is his harmonic and tonal language. Schmitz makes a thorough survey of the tonal materials in Debussy's music. These

¹Lockspeiser, Vol. II, p. 256.

²Lockspeiser, Vol. II, p. 257.

³Lockspeiser, Vol. II, p. 258.

⁴Austin, Music in the Twentieth Century, p. 36.

⁵Schmitz, pp. 40-41.

materials include diatonicism, modality, bitonality, polytonality, bimodality, pentatonicism, and whole-tone scales.¹

Schmitz sees in Debussy's "infinitely sensitive and widespread treatment of the diatonic system," a

classically sober adherence to the scale degrees,
through the Faurean dexterity of supple modulation to the enrichment of altered chords²

Schmitz notes that bitonality and polytonality are systematically used in Debussy and lists some specific ways in which the composer employs these tonal materials. Included in this list is "the superimposition of completely independent contrapuntal levels, each evolving quite independently in its own key." Schmitz also feels that polytonality is sometimes "the result of chordal superimposition"³ This technique, also known as bichordality or polychordality, may produce polytonality if continued for a sufficient interval to establish the two or more keys implied. Debussy, however, often uses bichordality to obscure the tonality without extending the two chords into two independent superimposed keys. Schmitz also observes that the composer often uses pedal tones "belonging to a separate tonality from that of other levels of the piece,"⁴ which also produces a polytonal effect.

¹Schmitz, pp. 25-28.

²Schmitz, p. 25.

³Schmitz, p. 25.

⁴Schmitz, p. 29.

Kohs observes that in Debussy and Ravel

the major and minor modes, although not abandoned, retire in favor of the ecclesiastical modes In this style the conventional cadence forms seldom appear; modal cadences more frequently take their place.¹

Schmitz notes that one may often find in Debussy's music a mode used pentatonically or hexatonically, i.e., with some of the notes omitted.²

Schmitz comments that chromaticism in Debussy is restricted to "transitional passages, to pictorial tensing of the texture either as a humorous twist . . . or in the mounting fury of elements, and the wind particularly."³ Schmitz describes another way in which Debussy uses chromaticism as "'slide modulation,' in which a rapid chromatic succession on a uniform pattern can effect a wide change of level nearly without a break in texture."⁴

Schmitz also discusses what he calls "Debussy's fascination" with the pentatonic scale, which the composer did not restrict to the black key pentatonic scale (F#, G#, A#, C#, D#,) or its transpositions. Nor did he restrict its use to melodic writing, but used it in "harmonic clusters" as well. In reference to the Oriental pentatonic scales, which Debussy took as his model, Schmitz notes that Chinese

¹Ellis B. Kohs, Music Theory (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), Vol. II, p. 85.

²Schmitz, p. 26.

³Schmitz, p. 26.

⁴Schmitz, pp. 26-27

musicians had available for their use some 115 individual pentatonic scales, which are not just transpositions, "but different scales resulting from the different relations of steps, half-steps, and steps-and-a-half" ¹

Austin observes that no other composer has used the whole-tone scale so often and so skillfully as Debussy, although he used it sparingly. ² Among the ways listed by Schmitz in which the composer employed the two scales are singly, in fragments or complete, and as melodic or harmonic material. ³ Schmitz observes that Debussy also alternates whole-tone texture with pentatonic texture. ⁴ Augmented triads, as Kohs remarks, are used in this style in conjunction with the whole-tone scale. ⁵

Harmony in Debussy's music. Grout notes that Debussy uses harmony in a

largely "nonfunctional" manner, that is, chords are not used to shape a phrase by tension and release through a conventional series of progressions and resolutions; instead, each chord is determined more by melodic shape or color value than by the movement of the harmony. ⁶

¹Schmitz, p. 27.

²Austin, Music in the Twentieth Century, p. 12.

³Schmitz, p. 28.

⁴Schmitz, p. 28.

⁵Kohs, Music Theory, Vol. II, p. 85.

⁶Grout, A History of Western Music, p. 602.

Thompson observes, in this regard, that Debussy treated "chords as independent units which could be arranged in succession contrary to accepted rules" ¹ Austin, however, argues that "all his chords are connected through his melody, and there are always a few of them connected in traditional fashion to reinforce the melodic cadences of the tonality and the form." ²

Gillespie notes that in Debussy's music "sevenths, ninths, and elevenths appear on the dominant or other degrees of the scale, neither prepared nor resolved." ³ Schmitz states that in Debussy one finds "seventh and ninth chords . . . treated as consonances, as resolutions, as conclusions and cadences." ⁴ Schmitz also documents Debussy's use of "tonic sevenths and tonic ninths, as consonances without need of resolution." ⁵ Kohs cites Debussy's use of the tonic seventh chord as a final chord functioning as the tonic. ⁶

A device which Debussy used frequently is called by Grout the "'chord stream," a succession of chords with organum-like parallel movement of all the voices." ⁷ Kohs

¹Grout, p. 602.

²Austin, pp. 19-20.

³Gillespie, Five Centuries of Keyboard Music, p. 331.

⁴Schmitz, p. 24.

⁵Schmitz, p. 29.

⁶Kohs, p. 87.

⁷Grout, p. 602.

observes that one often finds in Debussy's music "a string or chain of seventh or ninth chords . . . in parallel motion,"¹ a device which Thompson calls "'gliding chords.'"² In this regard, Austin suggests that "Debussy's chord streams always parallel a bit of significant melody, to enhance some quality inherent in that melody." He likens this to a "thickening" of the melodic line.³

Kohs cites as new harmonic innovations of the Impressionistic composers the use of triads with added sixth and triads with added second. In describing the structure and function of these chords, Kohs observes that:

the triad with added sixth . . . is an outgrowth of the seventh chord in first inversion (the six-five chord) which it resembles in structure, but not in function. The root of the six-five chord corresponds to the sixth in a triad, but the former (as a structural tone) functions quite differently from the latter (which is decorative). Likewise, the seventh of the chord (in a six-five) is a dissonance in need of resolution, but the corresponding tone in a triad with added sixth is the fifth of the chord, which is free to move without restraint The triad with added second . . . evolved from the ninth chord. Since the former presupposes the absence of a chord-seventh there is usually no danger of confusing the two.⁴

Another harmonic device used by Debussy is called by Schmitz the "'guttet chord.'" The third is omitted in a triad or "alternate thirds in chords of the ninth or

¹Kohs, Vol. II, p. 87.

²Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 243.

³Austin, p. 18.

⁴Kohs, Vol. II, p. 86.

thirteenth, leaving superimposed fifths."¹ The omission of the thirds causes the mode (major or minor) of the chord to be vague. Thompson feels that chords of this type are reminiscent of medieval organum.²

Melodies, ostinatos, and pedal points. Schmitz distinguishes in Debussy's music "three clearly delineated levels in the simultaneous presence and independent development of (1) melody or melodies, (2) motifs or ostinatos, and (3) pedal points." Schmitz feels that these levels "do not fuse, and their individual characters are clearly recognizable."³

Schmitz notes that pedal points in Debussy's writing are "placed in the bass, middle voices, or top voices"; they range in "harmonic implications from dominant and tonic to the distant friction of chromaticism, or of bitonality"; they are "held or rhythmically active"; and they are "pictorial and highly evolved, or simple" ⁴ Grout feels that Debussy uses pedal points as a means of preserving tonality where "tonal relationships within the phrases may be so complex or willful that it is impossible to hear a given chord or series of chords as being in the key of the phrases in which they occur."⁵

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 30.

²Thompson, p. 244.

³Schmitz, p. 32.

⁴Schmitz, p. 32.

⁵Grout, A History of Western Music, p. 602.

Schmitz suggests that motifs and ostinatos form "a midpoint between pedal-points and melody, belonging at times to one and at others to the second" Schmitz describes this type of ostinato as

a short but telling motif, stubborn or insistent in its permeation of this texture, but not necessarily incessant in its usage (though in 'Des pas sur la neige,' the presence of the ostinato is nearly unbroken).¹

Schmitz says, regarding Debussy's melodies, that:

they are non-metric, both singly and in their superimposition. The rhythmic language is indeed a very rich one. Beyond that one will find that they are highly expressive dynamically, and that Debussy, in order to insure their complete interpretation, has taken care in indicating the stresses resulting from the pitch apexes of the melodic lines, and the further rhythmic, harmonic stresses desired by dots, dashes, or accents.²

Form. Regarding form in Debussy's music, Gillespie observes that:

his ideas on form and development were considered outlandish by his contemporaries. With Debussy the piano pieces develop somewhat organically, one idea is initiated and expanded; in the process, another idea blossoms in a seemingly logical fashion; and it in turn is subjected to the same treatment. Of course, Debussy often used a type of A B A ternary form for his short piano pieces, but even then he took great liberties with structure.³

Schmitz feels that one finds a "symmetry, compactness, proportion, and balance" in Debussy's form that is "classic,"

¹Schmitz, p. 32.

²Schmitz, p. 34.

³Gillespie, Five Centuries of Keyboard Music, p. 331.

in that the form adheres to the "classic principles of dramatic unity and literary and musical construction: the statement of a situation, the unfolding of action, the climax, the denouement, the end."¹

Debussy's Piano Style

Many critics have commented on Debussy's extraordinary affinity for the piano. Lockspeiser feels that because the piano was "the most illusory and the most evocative" of instruments, it became the favorite of Debussy.² Lockspeiser, in a related comment, calls the piano "the Impressionist instrument par excellence."³ Thompson sees the piano as an ideal "medium of expression" because "the piano being an instrument of harmony and of tonal blending . . . was the natural medium for experimentation in a personal art built upon harmony and tone blending." Thompson also suggests that "the piano . . . was still capable of gradations of color and nuance of accentuation that had been ignored or . . . used only sparingly" by preceding composers for the instrument.⁴ Gillespie notes that Debussy's instrument was the piano and he had no skill on any other instrument.

¹Schmitz, p. 19.

²Lockspeiser, Debussy: His Life and Mind, Vol. II, p. 43.

³Lockspeiser, Vol. II, p. 29

⁴Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 248.

Gillespie feels that Debussy "took advantage of the one medium of expression responsive to his personal touch."¹

The performer may gain insight into Debussy's music through a knowledge of the composer's own playing and through his instructions for the performance of his music. Thompson affirms that such knowledge is of value not only for "matters of style and interpretation, but for the insight that may be gained into the personality behind, and in the compositions themselves"²

In describing the playing of Debussy, Thompson says that:

Debussy . . . was the supreme monarch of the impalpable. At the same time, there was in the sensation of his music something essentially tactile. Both considerations lead to thoughts of piano touch Let us recall the statement in which he was likened to the cat which rubs itself against the hand that strokes it, and see Debussy at the piano "caressing his own soul." Only rarely could he have thought of the piano as a percussive instrument; quite as rarely as a medium for organlike accumulations of sonorities.³

Valas states that he was

an original virtuoso, remarkable for the delicacy and mellowness of his touch. He makes one forget that the piano has hammers--an effect which he used to request his interpreters to aim at--and he achieved particularly characteristic effects of timbres by the combined use of both pedals.⁴

¹Gillespie, Five Centuries of Keyboard Music, p. 332.

²Thompson, p. 248.

³Thompson, p. 245.

⁴Léon Valas, Claude Debussy, His Life and Works, translation by Maire and Grace O'Brien of 1932 ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 108.

Thompson cites Laloy's account of Debussy's playing:

Laloy has written of tones that seemed to be produced without the impact of hammer; there appeared to be no vibrations of the strings. He described the delicate sonorities invoked by Debussy as rising up "into a transparent atmosphere, where they unite without merging and dissolve in iridescent mists."¹

Laloy offers some further suggestions recommended by the composer himself for the performance of his music.

Debussy insisted that:

the player should avoid all romantic affectation the player should aim at a blending of patterns so as to produce "a sonorous halo." Where notes are surmounted by a small stroke, these are not to be detached, since what the composer desires is a transparent tone achievable through a bold, but not harsh, attack, followed by a release of the keys and a prolongation of the sound by means of the pedal.²

Thompson concludes that in playing Debussy, "finesse invariably takes precedence over muscularity."³ The implications of these comments for touch and tone as well as pedaling are many.

Schmitz maintains that "Debussy's pianistic style is exacting; its demands on the instrument and on the performer are indeed extensive." Schmitz recalls Debussy's insistence on the precision and exactitude of the indications marked on

¹Thompson, pp. 250-251.

²Thompson, p. 251.

³Thompson, p. 253.

the scores in their minutest details."¹ Schmitz notes the wide dynamic range required by the music, as well as the wide variety of touches and the varied uses of the pedals that the music demands. He observes that "the technical virtuosity of this Debussy pianism demands:

First, accept the romantic technical dexterity which had brought the piano to its great role as solo instrument. Second, having accepted this basis, renovate it from top to bottom, by discarding its outworn patterns, and keeping a constantly renewed and genially fresh source of materials to challenge the performer Third, and paramount, while Debussy calls forth all the pianist's ingenuity as to technique, he also demands of him the thoughtfulness and education of a thorough musician.²

Schmitz also lists "some of the basics of interpretation, over and above virtuosity," required of all who would perform Debussy's piano music.³ These basics are a knowledge of counterpoint, harmony, melody, rhythm, scoring, time and tempo, pedaling, and touches in piano technique.⁴

Schmitz feels that Debussy, in writing the Préludes, has shared with the world

his intimate thoughts, his reactions and impressions to a multitude of varied and delightful subjects, sharing many moods, bringing not only the realism of his sharp etching of his subject matter, but also his personal comments--and with

¹Schmitz, p. 35.

²Schmitz, p. 36.

³Schmitz, p. 37.

⁴Schmitz, p. 37-39.

the additional complement of a compactness, of a concentration of material, an absence of repetition which reminds us . . . of the oft-quoted 'Brevity is the soul of wit. . . .'¹

Schmitz notes that Debussy, in writing the Préludes found inspiration in

legends, literature, vaudeville, painting, architectural landmarks, archeological objects, natural phenomena, a multitude of scenes and of personages, each individualized, crystallized, in the moment of creation.²

Thompson cites Ernest Newman's opinion that the Préludes "are in some ways Debussy's most original work."³ It is Gibbs' contention, however, that the source of inspiration was of less significance to the composer than the music itself.

". . . Debussy had the titles of each of his Préludes printed at the end in brackets and with hesitant dots."⁴

This survey reveals the manner in which Debussy molded the aesthetic ideals of Impressionist painting and Symbolist literature along with his own manifold musical heritage into a unique expression of his time. The astounding diversity of Debussy's musical "palette"--as Schmitz calls it⁵--is shown. The important position which the

¹Schmitz, pp. 129-130.

²Schmitz, pp. 130-131.

³Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 263.

⁴James Gibbs, "The Growth of National Schools," Keyboard Music, Denis Matthews (ed.) (New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1972), p. 277.

⁵Schmitz, p. 39.

Préludes occupy in Debussy's total output is noted. In view of these facts, one must conclude that this detailed study of the Préludes will be beneficial to teacher, student, and performer alike.

CHAPTER III

PRELUDES, BOOK I

In this chapter, each of the twelve Préludes in Book I is discussed individually. The source or probable source of inspiration is reviewed. A summary of the tonal materials and formal elements is included in the preludes where it is relevant. Finally, there is a serious study of specific performance problems in each prelude along with a discussion of possible solutions.

Prelude I: Danseuses des Delphes (Delphic Dancers)

The first prelude in Book I is one of several which reflect the composer's interest in ancient history and mythology.¹ According to Thompson, the source of inspiration in this instance was "the top of a pillar found in the Louvre, on which are sculptured three bacchantes."² The direct reference in the title of the composition to Delphi, the ancient site of the temple of Apollo, god of poetry and the arts,³ suggests that the slow, nearly hypnotic movements of this

¹Compare La Cathédrale engloutie and Canope.

²Oscar Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1937), p. 264.

³E. Robert Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pierce, 1950), p. 131.

prelude have a quasi-religious quality. The interpretative marking doux, in keeping with this spirit of solemnity, may be translated as calm or serene.

Schmitz observes that "this prelude is a lexicon of the usages to be developed in its twenty-three successive companions." The prelude is ". . . by fragments modal, then diatonic, then pentatonic, then chromatic,"¹ and yet there is an underlying dominant-tonic relationship with related keys. Thompson notes that Nadia Boulanger has suggested a similarity between this key arrangement and that of many Bach preludes in its

simple three-part key scheme, (1) tonic key with inflection at the end toward the dominant, (2) dominant, with allusions to related keys, and (3) tonic.²

Schmitz notes that the prelude

contains the basic assumption of all preludes, a distribution of its materials at several separate levels In this particular instance the three levels are: the sustained-plastic melody in dotted rhythm; the gently detached chords which serve as the light frame of the melody, sometimes below, sometimes above, sometimes in the midst of it, and which serve as the ornamental frame ending each important phrase; the percussive accents, incisive and metallic, of the major seconds representing the "crotals," small cymbals attached to the fingers and used by . . . dancers.³

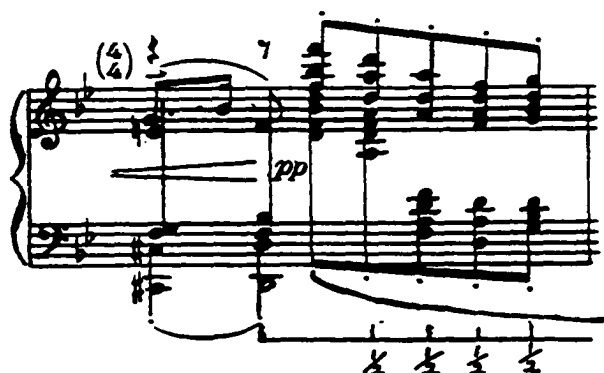
¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 131.

²Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 264.

³Schmitz, pp. 131-132.

In order to achieve this sustained effect in the melody and still avoid blurring together the chords which "frame" the melody, the performer must use the pedaling technique known as half-pedaling. This device should be used in measure 4 and all similar passages where long note values must be sustained with the damper pedal and yet pedal changes are required for changing harmonies above the sustained note. To pedal this passage correctly, the performer should depress the pedal fully on the long note. At each change of harmony in the upper register, the pedal should be raised just enough to damp the upper strings while allowing the low register tones to continue for their full duration. This technique is illustrated in the following excerpt.

Ex. 1: measure 4



Legato pedaling is necessary to maintain the sustained quality indicated by the composer (soutenu). This type of pedaling should be done in all passages where it is not necessary to use half-pedaling.

The soft pedal should be used for most passages marked *pianissimo* or softer. Exceptions to this may be seen in measures 18-20. It will be noted that measure 18 is marked *pianissimo* and the two succeeding measures are marked *piu pianissimo* and *pianississimo*. Because of the extremely soft tone required at measure 20, the performer should not use the soft pedal at measure 18, but delay until measure 19. Since measure 28 is an exact repetition of measure 27, it is effective to play measure 28 softer than measure 27 thus creating the effect of an echo. One should play as softly as possible without soft pedal at measure 27 and use the soft pedal at measure 28.

A problem relating to the use of the soft pedal is that of tone control. Here, two problems exist: (1) playing the chords and octaves in the lower register at the piano or *pianissimo* level indicated and (2) achieving a resonant, non-percussive tone where a *forte* level is indicated (measure 29). It would be appropriate to recall Thompson's statement that Debussy rarely thought "of the piano as a percussive instrument."¹

This non-percussive touch is well described by Matthay. He states that the player must learn to sense the key-resistance in order to play with a non-percussive tone. Matthay feels that:

¹Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 248.

this is not merely a touch or contact sense, but a sensation mainly derived from work being done by our muscles . . . , the kinaesthetic sense, and . . . also the sensations caused by tension of the tendons, and the pressure of tension within the joints themselves.¹

One must "feel the key" in order to control the amount of force necessary to produce the degree of tone indicated in the score.² The arm must be free of excessive tension if one is to learn how to make those subtle nuances of tone so characteristic of Debussy's style. Matthay says that "the important thing is to learn . . . to supply solely the required exertions, without interference from undesirable ones."³ To eliminate this "undesirable" tension, the performer must be sure that the upper arm is completely relaxed. The wrist should also be relaxed and it should be positioned slightly below the key surface before the chord is played. The wrist rolls up and in as the chord is played. To achieve the softest tones, the performer must play with the fingers almost flat, stroking with the sensitive cushion of the tip joint.

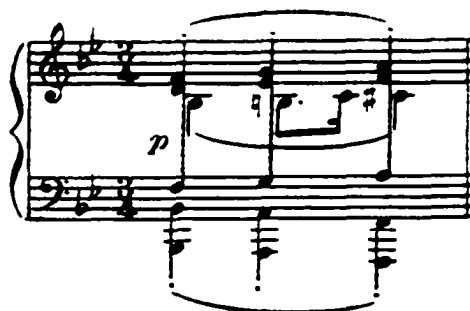
Another problem faced by the performer is that of maintaining a proper balance between melody and accompaniment. In measure one, Debussy has shown by notation that the melody is an inner part of the chord.

¹Tobias Matthay, The Visible and Invisible in Pianoforte Technique (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 12.

²Matthay, p. 13.

³Matthay, p. 16.

Ex. 2: measure 1



The B flat in the first chord must stand out from the rest of the harmony. The problem may be approached from several directions. One approach is to think of the finger playing the melody as being stronger than fingers on non-melodic tones. Another method which often yields beneficial results is to separate the melody note from the rest of the chord and practice playing it loudly and immediately after playing the rest of the chord softly. One then gradually decreases the time-lapse between melody and accompaniment until both are merged. If the melody is the top-most note of the chord (as in measure 3), one can tilt the weight of the hand and arm toward the melodic tone. Schmitz suggests that the melody should be played piano while the accompaniment should be played pianissimo.¹

While the general effect of this prelude is one of serenity and simplicity, it is certainly no simple matter to play it in a manner which is musically satisfying. This

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 132.

prelude demands a control of tone and balance through touch and pedaling which requires the utmost concentration of the performer.

Prelude II: Voiles (Sails or Veils)

Opinions differ as to the meaning of the title of the second prelude. The French word, voiles, can be translated either "sails" or "veils." Thompson suggests that French authorities agree that the translation in this case should be "sails." He submits that Debussy has

captured the sensation of sailboats at anchor in a sunlit port. There is a fluttering as of sails. Something tactile characterizes this music; the listener seems to touch rather than see the scene Major thirds play their part in producing a floating effect, as of sailing boats anchored to a fixed pedal point.¹

Schmitz, reluctant to assign a single interpretation to the title, states that "this prelude in the memory of the author was given both connotations by Debussy, i.e., veils or sails."²

There are three independent, contrapuntal levels in this prelude: an ostinato in the first four measures, the pedal point B flat which enters at measure 5, and the melody which enters at measure 7.³ Schmitz senses in the ostinato

a descriptive musical equivalent for the billows of the sails or veils, a gentle breeze setting into motion this material which at one moment is taut, then relaxed.⁴

¹Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 264.

²Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 133.

³Schmitz, p. 134.

⁴Schmitz, p. 134.

The syncopated pedal point at measure 5, reminiscent of a boat tugging at its anchor, does give credence to Thompson's theory that Debussy's inspiration might have been a sailboat floating at anchor.¹ Schmitz notes an ostinato in dotted rhythm over a stationary B flat pedal point at measure 22. The pedal point and the new ostinato should be subordinate to the more rhythmically active part. Schmitz sees a third ostinato in measure 32, an ostinato which is anticipated in measure 31. The ostinato pattern is a trill between d and e with an octave transposition on the third note.² The performer must be aware of these various levels in order to choose the dynamic plane suitable to each level.

Schmitz sees in the form of this piece a close resemblance to the sonata-rondo form (ABACA). Schmitz feels that the first B section which begins at measure 22 is a development of the opening figure. This section is followed by a return to the main theme at measure 33, a second B section at measure 38 related to the first B section, a return to the main theme at measure 48, and a coda section using the ostinato figure at measure 58.³ The sonata-rondo form, however, is too large a form to fit a piece of this length and scope. Stein states that sonata-rondo is ABACABA. He also notes that in rondo form at least one section is in

¹Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 264.

²Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, pp. 134-135.

³Schmitz, p. 135.

song form.¹ The prelude is in five-part form, but since none of the parts are in song form, it would seem more logical and appropriate to classify it as five-part song form.

One unique characteristic of this prelude is Debussy's use of the whole-tone scale for almost all of the piece with the exception of measures 42-47 where the pentatonic scale is used. The absence of sharp dissonances in the whole-tone scale, i.e., no minor seconds, major sevenths, or minor ninths, gives the performer the unique possibility of leaving the damper pedal down throughout the entire prelude. Using the damper pedal in this manner imparts to the music a vague, illusory quality which is characteristically impressionistic in style.

If more conventional pedaling is desired, the pedal technique known as half-pedaling must be used. There should be a half-pedal change at least once each measure. The sonority should not be allowed to build to a level more intense than the dynamic markings indicate. The dynamic level in this prelude ranges from piano to pianissimo with the exception of a "brilliant" crescendo in measures 42-44.

Because of the soft level of dynamics, considerations of touch and tone assume greater importance. Dumesnil suggests that these "pianissimo effects" are best obtained by an "indirect attack, which will bring the finger in contact

¹Leon Stein, Structure and Style: The Study and Analysis of Musical Forms (Evanston, Ill.: Summy-Birchard Co., 1962), pp. 88-89.

with the key progressively" making use of "the elastic little cushion of flesh which is under the finger tips." It is Dumesnil's observation that this attack "must be one of flexibility, relaxation, and sensitiveness."¹ Dumesnil lists Voiles among those pieces in which he considers the use of this touch appropriate.² The need for this type of tone control has already been noted in the first prelude.

A very delicate yet precise touch is required in the quick double thirds pattern at the beginning of the prelude. Matthay describes this touch thus:

Very light and gossamer effects are . . . produced by the arm in this fully poised condition while the fingers, as it were, play on tip-toe . . . one can play such delicately-light passages on the very top of the finger--with nails almost . . . touching the keys³

¹Maurice Dumesnil, How to Play and Teach Debussy (New York: Schroeder and Gunther, 1932), p. 13.

²Dumesnil, p. 17.

³Tobias Matthay, The Visible and Invisible in Pianoforte Technique (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), pp. 77-78.

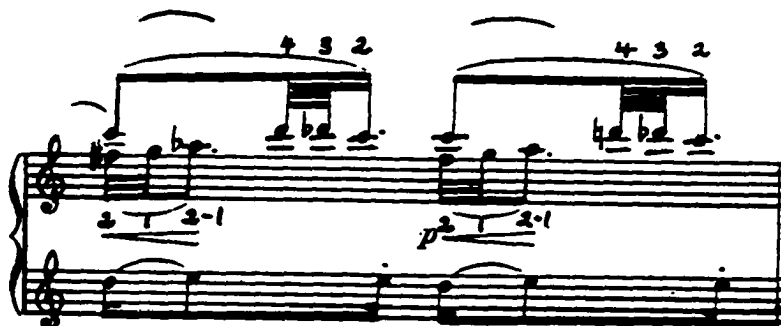
Ex. 3: measures 1-2



The fingering shown in the preceding example seems the most practical choice for the double thirds. Since crossing a long finger over the thumb is inevitable, the most logical place to do so is after the longer note value rather than in the middle of the thirty-second notes. At the end of the thirty-second notes, a small crescendo is indicated in the score. The thirty-second note in the second measure should be played with a light, staccato touch, which will shape this nuance most effectively. The performer will discover that in every case where the thirds descend in quick rhythms after a long note value, the first notes of the quicker rhythm should begin with fingers five and three. The use of identical fingering in each similar passage will insure security and control.

Another fingering problem occurs at measure 31. The use of substitutions appears to be the best means of keeping the thirty-second and sixty-fourth note patterns both articulate and light.

Ex. 4: measure 31



Some difficulty in fingering may be encountered in the passage beginning at measure 33 and continuing through measure 37. The passage restates the principal melody, inner parts most of the time, with an interweaving ostinato in the high treble. The major difficulty here is to bring out the melody in the right hand while keeping the ostinato subordinate. There are times when the upper note of the left hand and a note from the ostinato are in unison. In this case, it is better for the right hand to omit its note in order that the left hand thumb may bring out the melodic note. This has the additional benefit of simplifying fingering and allowing the right hand to bring out the melodic note on top more easily. Because there is a great deal of crossing over of fingers necessitated by the interweaving note patterns in the passage, the performer should practice the right hand melody notes alone isolating and concentrating on the appropriate fingering for the melodic

line. This will help to insure a good balance between melody and ostinato when the passage is played with both hands together.

Ex. 5: measures 33-36

The musical score for Ex. 5, measures 33-36, is presented in two systems. Each system consists of a treble and a bass staff. The treble staff features a melodic line with fingerings (1-5) and slurs. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The first system covers measures 33-34, and the second system covers measures 35-36. The dynamic marking *pp* (pianissimo) is indicated at the beginning of the first system.

A problem of a different sort appears at measure 42. This passage requires a prudent division of notes between hands plus the technical ability to execute the fast, brilliant notes with speed, clarity, and control. The most reasonable recommendation for the division of notes between hands appears to be as follows:

Ex. 6: measures 42-44

En animant

The musical score for measures 42-44 is presented in two systems. The first system (measures 42-43) shows the Right Hand (R.H.) and Left Hand (L.H.) staves. The R.H. part begins with a piano (p) dynamic and a crescendo (cresc.) leading into measure 43, which is marked 'molto' and 'mf'. The L.H. part also begins with a piano (p) dynamic. The second system (measure 44) shows the R.H. part with a rapid (rapide) section and a forte (f) dynamic. The L.H. part continues with a piano (p) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and fingerings (e.g., 5, 3, 1).

While practicing, the performer should try grouping all of the notes in the same hand in a pattern of note-clusters, playing each series (or group) of notes simultaneously as a so-called "block." As he "blocks" from one group of notes to the next, the performer's confidence in the passage is greatly enhanced. There is a merging in his mind of notes and fingering which enables him to "feel" with greater accuracy where the note patterns lie on the keyboard.

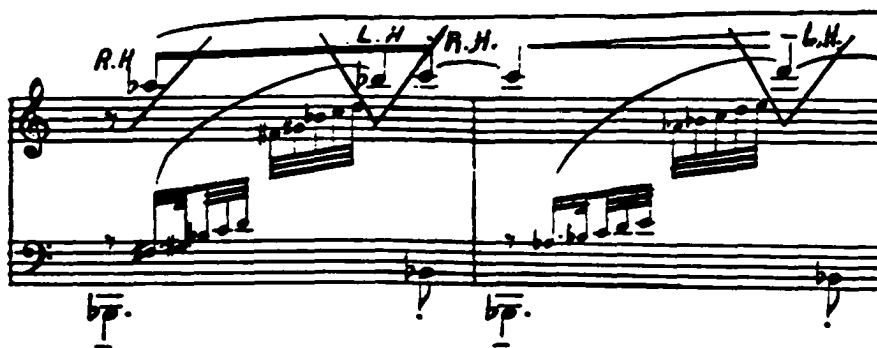
In order to achieve clarity and brilliance in this passage, the performer should play almost on the nail of the

finger.¹ The fingers should stay very close to the keys in fast passages. If the notes are to be articulated clearly, the performer will need to release each key quickly, allowing a fraction of space or rest between the notes.

In the passage beginning at measure 48, there is a whole-tone scale figure which is to be played, as the score indicates, "like a very light glissando." To execute this with sufficient control, one should use a touch similar to that described above with arm poised and nails almost touching the keys.

The composer indicates that the whole-tone melody beginning at measure 50 is to be emphasized which may be achieved by alternating the hands.

Ex. 7: measures 50-51



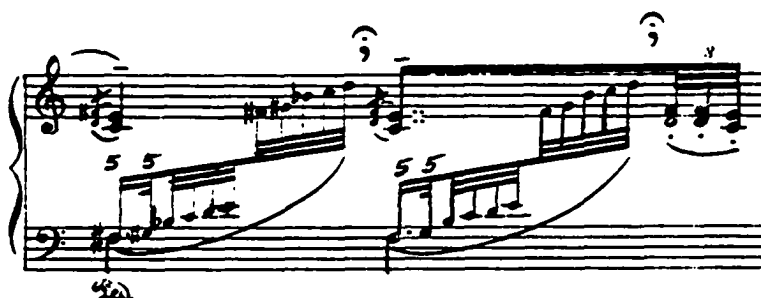
Care must be taken to play very lightly the chords in measures 54 and 56. Flatter fingers on these chords help

¹See Matthey's discussion of this on page 50.

to give a lighter, muted effect. The double third motif should be heard above the surrounding sonorities from measures 58 to the end.

The following fingering is suggested for the whole-tone scales in measures 62 and 63:

Ex. 8: measure 62



Debussy supplies a tempo indication of *moderato* and gives a metronome marking, which is unusual. He indicates that the prelude is to be played without rigorously strict rhythm (Dans un rythme sans rigueur et carressant). The use of rubato is thus appropriate. Debussy specifically marks many tempo changes within the piece: cédez, serrez, en animant, très retenu, au mouvement, etc.¹ At the end of the piece, a very peaceful mood is suggested with much fading away (Très apaisé et très atténué jusqu'à la fin). Several fermatas are seen in the final measures of the piece which results in a gradual slowing of pace to the final stop.

¹See the Appendices for translations of these terms.

As it is difficult to write a cadential progression in a whole-tone context, Debussy made use of these pauses to give the listener a feeling of finality and repose at the end.

The influence of Impressionist painting is readily seen in this prelude. Qualities found in this art form are also found in this prelude, particularly the vagueness of expression and the deliberate blurring of detail.¹ Of all the preludes in Book I, this one is the most "impressionistic."

¹See pages 16-18 of the study.

Prelude III: Le Vent dans la plaine (The Wind on the Plain)

This prelude is one of three having to do in some way with activity of wind. Schmitz notes that it is a companion piece to the preceding one, Voiles,

forming a mid-point between the gentleness of Voiles and the tempestuous nature of Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest, a triptych study in wind phenomena.¹

Schmitz discerns in this prelude a number of variants of the pentatonic scale. At the beginning, the scale is B flat, C flat, D flat, E flat, and G flat. At measures 9-12 the scale is E flat, G flat, B flat, C, and D flat. Measures 13 and 14 bring a return to the original scale. In measure 15 the B flat is changed to B double flat to form a new pentatonic scale. At measure 22 there is a change to the whole-tone scale on D flat which moves to another whole-tone scale on C. A series of major and minor triads in measures 28-34 leads to a new pentatonic scale at measure 34, which is G#, A, B, C#, and E. After this is a chromatic descent to the original pentatonic scale (B flat, C flat, D flat, E flat, and G flat). The tonal organization of this prelude (pentatonic, whole-tone, pentatonic) is the reverse of the preceding prelude, Voiles, (whole-tone, pentatonic, whole-tone). From measure 54 to the end, a series of parallel major triads progress chromatically.²

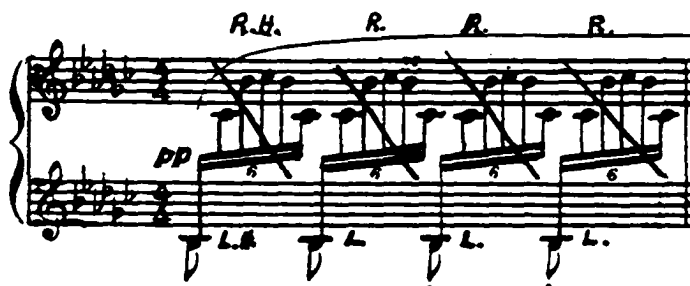
¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 136.

²Schmitz, pp. 137-138.

Debussy once again uses an ostinato trill pattern as an accompaniment figure throughout much of the prelude. Schmitz sees a similarity between this ostinato and the third ostinato in Voiles. Both ostinatos are trill patterns with the third note transposed an octave.¹

One of the major performance problems in this prelude is the rather awkward stretch between the thumb and fourth finger of the right hand. This occurs in the opening two measures and again in measures 7, 8, 13, 14, 18, 34, 51, and 53. The tension in the hand resulting from maintaining such a hand position over a measure or two measures makes it difficult to maintain the speed and lightness required by the composer. A redivision of notes between hands offers the best solution to the problem. If the performer plays the first two notes of each pattern with left hand, the tension in the hand is noticeably reduced.

Ex. 9: measure 1

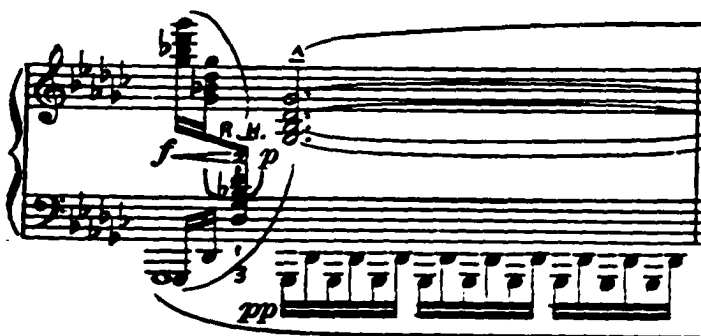


The composer, in fact, suggests this division in measures 55-57.

¹Schmitz, pp. 136-137.

Another passage where redivision of notes between hands is beneficial is at measure 28. The problem is to play the third chord forte and reach the second beat softly. If the left hand plays all four notes of the third chord, it is very difficult for both hands to arrive on beat two with accuracy and at the correct dynamic level (piano). The best solution would be division of two notes of the chord to each hand. The most successful fingering here will prove to be fingers one and two in right hand and fingers one and three in left hand.

Ex. 10: measure 28



The performer must take care at this point to play the second chord without accent so that the crescendo indicated is maintained to the third chord. The chord pattern in measures 30, 31, 33, and 34 should be redivided and fingered in the same way for best results.

At measure 49 the disjunct line at beat four makes it difficult for the right hand to negotiate the passage as originally notated. If the C flat originally written for

right hand is played with left hand, the awkwardness of the skips is largely eliminated.

Ex. 11: measure 49



In order to play "as lightly as possible," the performer must develop sensitivity to key resistance. The ability to judge exactly the amount of muscular effort needed to satisfy the dynamic requirements is important. Excessive muscular effort not only produces too loud a tone, but also impairs the ability to play as fast as is indicated. One must learn to release as much as possible any unnecessary tension in the arm. The resulting "free" arm allows the fingers to act with the delicacy, precision, and speed demanded of them. Another aspect of this "light" touch is the quick release of each key which allows, as it were, a small rest between each note. These releases are not heard as rests due to the speed and also to the pedaling, but they greatly enhance the speed and clarity of the sixteenths.

Another point in connection with playing softly enough is the fact that repeated notes build in tone when the pedal is down. Therefore, in order to counteract this unwanted crescendo, the performer must think diminuendo.

A passage involving both touch and fingering problems occurs at measure 9. Here, light delicate chords are marked *pianissimo*. In order to achieve a tone that has no sharpness to it, it is necessary that one play on the cushioned pads of the finger, keeping the fingers almost flat.¹ The wrist must be free so that there is a feeling of "lifting" the tone out of the piano.

The most secure method of playing the chords involves learning the fingering sequence of the next to the highest note in each chord. The performer would do well to practice this one inner part alone using a fingering pattern of 3, 3, 4, 4, 3, 3, 4, 4, etc.

Ex. 12: measures 9-10



The pedaling of this prelude involves clearing the sound with half-pedals at intervals so that the repeated pedal point on B flat does not become too strong. Half-pedaling should be used so there is no real cessation in the sound just as there is rarely cessation of wind on the plain. A suggested pattern is that one pedal once for every

¹See page 44 for further discussion of this touch.

measure where there is no melody, then pedal on each pedal point (B flat on the first page) where a melody does exist in the left hand.

Ex. 13: measures 3-4



Support for this recommendation can be found in Schnabel's study of pedal techniques in which he suggests that this type of pedaling be used in this passage and all similar passages.¹

At measure 9 and in other nearly identical passages where the desired effect is a light, airy sound, the damper pedal should be left down through the complete measure and

¹K. U. Schnabel, Modern Techniques of the Pedal (New York: Mills, 1959), p. 19.

the first two beats of the next measure. The eighth note chords are marked staccato and should be played detached with the touch previously mentioned. This avoids the "too dry" sound of no pedaling. A half-pedal should be used for beats three and four of measure 10 and in all similar passages.¹ Schmitz apparently agrees with this pedaling when he states that the pedal changes in this passage should be governed by the bass.²

Toward the end of the prelude, the pedaling differs somewhat. Beginning at measure 54 a full-pedal is taken on beat two of each measure to avoid unnecessary blurring of the triads. For the same reason, a pedal is taken on beat three of measure 57. At measure 58 the pedaling technique known as half-damping should be used.³ As the pedal is never depressed more than half depth in this type of pedaling, the staccatos are somewhat more detached while a background sheen of sound is maintained. The damper pedal is released completely after the octave B flats. These are then released at measure 59 and the single B flat is "allowed to vibrate" (laissez vibrer). The soft pedal should be used in the last two measures to help achieve pianissimo.

¹See Excerpt 12.

²Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 138.

³See page 13 of the study.

It is apparent, then, that while this prelude requires great finger facility, it also demands of the performer extreme lightness of touch as well as precise control of pedal depth and reiteration.

Prelude IV: Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir (Sounds and perfumes blend in the evening air)

The inspiration for this prelude comes from a poem by the French symbolist poet, Charles Baudelaire, entitled "Harmonie du Soir" (Evening Harmony):

This is the time when each vibrating flower
Like a censer, is breathing forth its scent;
Perfumes and sounds in the evening air are blent:
Melancholy waltz and dizzy languor.

Each flower, like a censer, breathes its scent;
The violin quivers, like a heart that suffers;
Melancholy waltz and dizzy languor!
The sky, like an altar, is sad and magnificent.

The violin quivers, like a heart that suffers,
Hating the Nothing's black extent!
The sky, like an altar, is sad and magnificent;
Drowning in curdled blood, the sun sinks lower.

A heart that hates the Nothing's black extent
Each vestige of past radiance must gather!
Drowning in curdled blood, the sun sinks lower,
Your memory shines in me like the Sacrament!¹

Debussy chose the third line of the first stanza of the poem as the title for the prelude. Oscar Thompson found the prelude to be

melancholy, languorous music, sensuous in every detail The air is heavy with perfume and vibrant with sounds that seem to swoon in the dying day. All the senses, with those of touch and smell added to those of sight and hearing, seem to enter into the caress and the gentle intoxication of this fantasy.²

¹C. F. MacIntyre (trans.), French Symbolist Poetry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), p. 15.

²Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 265.

The tonal materials are highly chromatic, although not atonal. There is a definite sound of A major in this prelude. Although it often goes far afield from that key, the prelude always returns to A major periodically. The key is also reinforced by the frequent use of a pedal point "A", a gong-like effect imitating, perhaps, the sound of church bells tolling away the evening hours. There is a blending of whole-tone, pentatonic, and chromatic elements from measure 9 to measure 23 which lends the music a bitter-sweet quality, a quality similar to that found in Baudelaire's poem.

Schmitz finds two basic melodic ideas in the prelude, the first at the beginning in a high register and the second beginning at measure three in the middle of the harmonic texture. These melodic materials are used both alternately and together, the high part being superimposed upon the middle.¹ The performer should be careful to insure that the middle melody is not lost when the higher is superimposed upon it. In fact, Debussy indicates stress for critical notes of the lower melody in measures 9, 11, and 13. The lower melody continues under an ostinato pattern and, while the melody should be brought out (en dehors), the fact that the dynamic plane is pianissimo and that the marking "equal and sweet" is given indicates a subdued quality.

The interpretative marking harmonieux et souple (harmonious and supple) suggests a certain quality of sound and a

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 140.

certain freedom in the meter. The dynamic level is generally pianissimo and only a few times rises to mezzo forte. The touch should be completely non-percussive. The performer should play from the key surface and with a sense of the key resistance. The finger is relatively flat and swings the key down with accelerating or "follow-through" movement. Careful listening is required to achieve this "harmonious" tone quality. The arm should remain relatively free muscularly to insure the ease and control that is needed.

Debussy clearly marks the tempo fluctuations with terms such as En animant un peu (quickening a little), en retenant (holding back), a tempo, serrez un peu (getting a little quicker), Retenu (hold back), cédez (go a little slower), and rubato. Schmitz suggests that in the rubato passages, the first two notes should be slightly broadened and in the following arpeggio one should push on in tempo.¹

The chordal passage beginning on beat three of measure 34 and continuing through measure 36 is somewhat unusual. The composer indicates that the bass is to be "slightly stressed and sustained" (la basse un peu appuyée et soutenu). The lower note of the chord should be the strongest and should be sustained from one note to the next while the upper notes of the chord should be slightly detached and lighter.

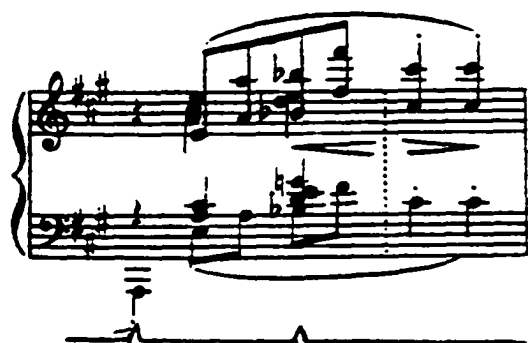
¹Schmitz, pp. 141-142.

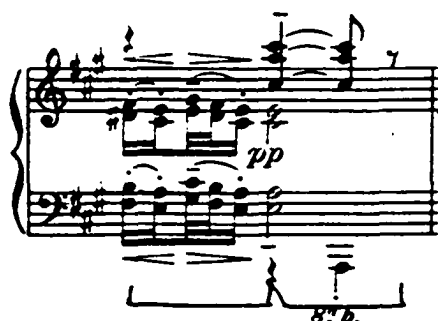
At measure 41 Debussy indicates a "tranquil and floating" character (Tranquille et flottant). These markings imply a quiet mingling of sound depicting the mingling of various sounds and perfumes of the night as suggested in the poem. The pedal serves to mingle the sounds well, although care should be taken to pedal each octave and harmonic change.

At measures 50-53 Debussy indicates that the sound should be "like the distant sound of horns" (Comme une lointaine sonnerie de Cors). An extremely light yet firm touch is required to get the effect of horns from a distance. It is suggested that the performer catch the low "A" in the bass with the right hand so that the left hand can sustain the half note chord during the third beat where rests are indicated for all other parts. Pedal should be released at beat three.

In general, legato pedaling should be used, although subtle blending of different harmonies is effective in some passages, such as measures 2, 5, and 51.

Ex. 14: measures 2, 5, and 51

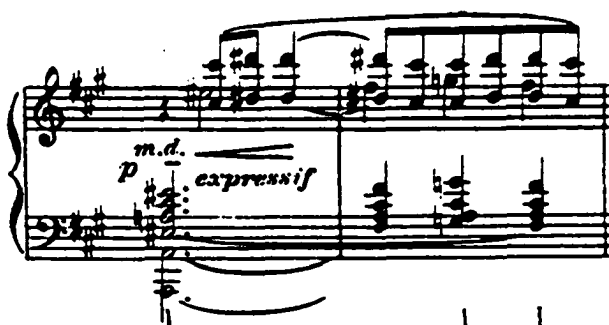




Another effective pedaling is to leave the damper pedal down from measures 15 through 17.

Half-pedaling is needed in several passages. Debussy indicates an extension of the pedal point "A" in measure 9 into the next measure which requires a half-pedal on beat one of measure 10. A similar effect is necessary in measures 11-12.

Ex. 15: measures 9-10



The parallel chords in measures 34-36 should be pedaled with upper half-pedaling (half-damping) so that the right hand can be played staccato while the bass is sustained.

Ex. 16: measures 34-36

The image shows a musical score for measures 34-36. The score is written for piano, with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The tempo/mood is marked 'Rubato' at the top right. The dynamics are marked 'p' (piano) at the beginning of measure 34. The bass line is marked with the instruction 'la basse un peu appuyée et soutenue' (the bass a little pressed and sustained) at the bottom. The music consists of chords and single notes, with a rubato tempo indicated by the slanted lines above the notes.

Half-pedals may also be used in measure 49 and the soft pedal should be used in all pianissimo passages.

The minute shadings of tempo, pedaling, and dynamics in the prelude place heavy demands on the technique and musicianship of the performer, but the quiet, haunting beauty evoked by a correct reading of the piece makes the effort well worthwhile.

Prelude V: Les collines d'Anacapri (The Hills of Anacapri)

Anacapri is a small city on the island of Capri, located in the Bay of Naples. It is situated, as the title suggests, high on one of the many hills of the island and is a scene of color--bright sky, blue seas, pastel houses, brilliant flowers--and gay, light-hearted inhabitants. Schmitz perceives in this prelude a "joy as well expressed in the Neapolitan songs and in their national dance, the tarantella, which was adopted by the . . . inhabitants of Napoli."¹

Debussy uses pentatonic and diatonic tonal materials in this prelude, separately and in combination. The pentatonic scale is used as a basis for the introductory motif in measure one, which Schmitz discerns as the ringing of bells in the distance.²

Schmitz sees the "bell" motif as a unifying factor in the prelude. It is heard many times in the course of the piece, at times alone and elsewhere in diminution and as an ostinato accompaniment to a melody. Schmitz discerns three themes in the prelude: the first theme, a lively tarantella, begins at measure 14; the second theme, beginning at measure 31, is a popular song; and the third theme, which begins at measure 49, is another popular song, a love song which "seems

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 142.

²Schmitz, p. 142.

to fit the portly tenor, hero of Italian opera." Schmitz sees the form as: "Introduction, A-B-C, Introduction, A-B-Coda."¹

The tarantella theme is essentially in B major, although from measures 14 through 20 it is completely pentatonic. The second theme is partially pentatonic with a sixth tone added in measures 32 and 38. The third theme is completely diatonic. An interesting harmonic feature is Debussy's use of tonic with added sixth at the final cadence (measures 94-95).

The tempo indicated is extremely lively (Vif with a metronome marking of ♩ = 184). This brisk tempo is characteristic of the tarantella. The composer is careful to note that there must also be a feeling of lightness (léger). The Très modéré (very moderate) sections are to be played considerably slower than those marked Vif. A certain amount of freedom is indicated at measure 32--Avec la liberté d'une chanson populaire (with the liberty of a popular song) and Cédez (go a little slower). The Cédez marking indicates a very subtle slowing usually returning quickly to tempo. Schmitz warns against overdoing the rubato effect in this passage.² Debussy left little doubt as to where tempos were to be strict and where they were to fluctuate. The tempo of the third section of the piece (measures 49-65) is slower

¹Schmitz, p. 143.

²Schmitz, p. 144.

(Modéré). The rubato indicated at measure 57 implies a bigger ritard than when cédez is indicated. Tempo should be resumed at measure 59 but slowed again at measure 63 (Retenu) and should be slower still at measure 65 (Presque lent). There is a return to the first tempo (Vif) at measure 66 and the tempo remains at this speed to the end, except for those measures where cédez is indicated.

In the introductory measures a "bell-like" tone may be achieved by lightly "plucking" the key with a slight snap from the nail joint. The notes are played staccato. Debussy indicates that the keys are to be released while the sound is allowed to vibrate (quittez, en laissant vibrer). In order to achieve this effect, it is necessary that the pedal be left down through the first two measures so that the six tones are sustained through measure 2. The pedal should be released at the comma between the second and third measures. The staccatos must not be pedaled in measure 3. The pedal should be depressed on the final eighth note of the measure and released as the rolled chord is played in measure 4. The pedal is again held in measures 5 through 6. The staccato rolled chords are not pedaled, but the tenuto chords receive a rhythmic pedal, that is, the pedal is depressed as the chord is played and released with the next staccato chord. This kind of pedaling enhances the piquancy of the staccato and, at the same time, gives added vitality to the pulse.

In measure 10 the pedal should be left down to first sixteenth note in measure 11. The pedal is up until the last

right hand note in measure 11. The pedal should then be left down to measure 14. The pedal should be released on the staccato notes and depressed on the last eighth note in the right hand, measures 14-15. In measures 16-17 legato pedaling is used with the pedal changed every two beats. Measures 18-31 have similar pedaling with the pedal down on slurs and up on staccatos. Where the left hand has portato touch, legato pedaling should be used, that is to say, the pedal should be changed on every measure and released on rests. Measures 30-31 should have one long pedal with a release before the octave D# in the bass and the pedal depressed on the octave. At measure 32 the pedal is changed every half measure through measure 34 except that the G# octave in measure 33 should have an upper half-pedal (half-damping). Every bass octave is pedaled in measure 35. Measure 36 has a legato pedal every half bar. At measure 37 the pedal is released on the first beat and depressed on the second octave in the bass. Legato pedaling is used on the third octave. This pedal is sustained to the middle of measure 38 where the pedal is changed. The pedal is changed every beat in measures 39-42 although a half-pedal change is needed on beat two of measure 40. The pedal is changed at measure 43, released on the second eighth note, and depressed on beat two. The pedal is changed every measure from measures 44 through 49. From measures 49 through 65 the pedal is changed every half bar with the exception of full measure pedals at measures 54, 56, 58, and 62-65. There is a full pedal at

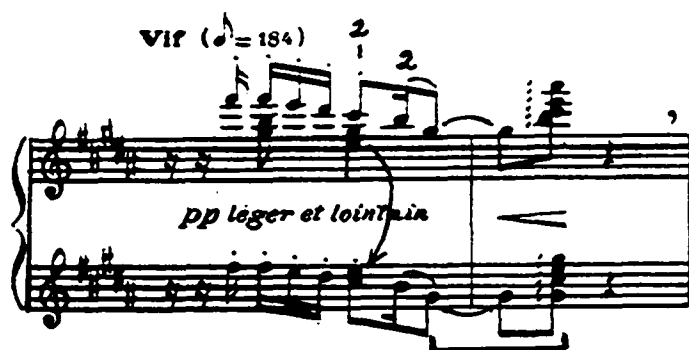
measure 66 extending through measure 67. The pedal is raised before measure 68 so that the pedal can be depressed on the beat at measure 68, a rhythmic pedal. The pedal is kept down from measure 68 to the mid-point of measure 71. Here, as in measure 6, Debussy indicates with ties across the bar lines that the chord should be "slowed to vibrate." The pedal is depressed on each left hand chord in measures 71-72. In measure 73 the pedal is changed on each beat and held to beat one of measure 74. The pedal is up on the staccatos and depressed on the tied notes and slurs in measures 75-76. The pedal is changed on every beat from beat two of measure 76 through measure 77. In measures 78-79 the pedal is depressed on the slurs and released on the staccatos. The pedal is changed every two beats in measures 80-83, although the pedal is left down through the tied G# octave in right hand (measures 82-83). The pedal is changed again on beat two of measure 83 and again on beat one of measure 84 and released on the second eighth note. Every beat is pedaled from beat two of measure 84 through measure 85. Accent pedals are used from measures 86 through 91. The pedal is left down for two measures at measures 92-93 and for three measures at measures 94-98.

As has been previously noted, the "bell motif" is a unifying factor in the composition. The desired effect, achieved by the damper pedal, is suggestive of the overlapping ringing of bells and is appropriate in each passage where the motif occurs, i.e., measures 1-2, 5-6, 42, 43, 63,

65-67, 73-76 (except with staccatos). 84, 86, 88, and 90-93. The final restatement of the motif mounts to a brilliant intermingling of sounds.

Judicious choice of fingering as well as some redivision of notes between hands is essential to the most fluent performance. At measure 3 a redivision of the eighth note chord greatly enhances the facility with which this light, quick passage is executed.

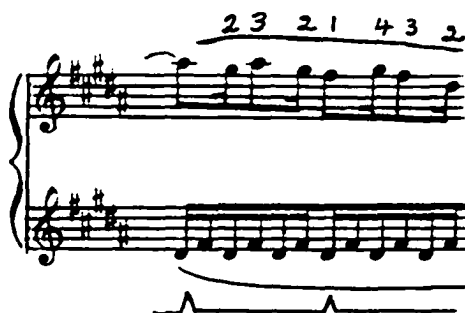
Ex. 17: measure 3



At measures 14-16 careful fingering in both hands is essential for clarity. The following fingering is suggested:

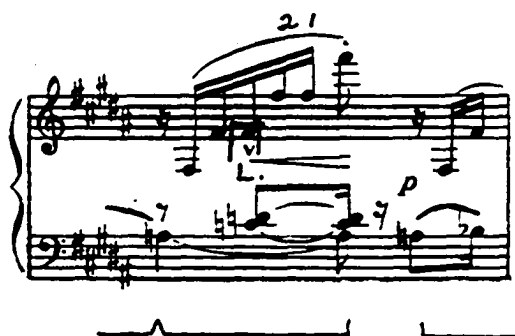
Ex. 18: measures 14-16





There are several passages which are greatly facilitated by redivision of notes between hands. One such passage is measure 28.

Ex. 19: measure 28



At measure 30 a similar problem exists. Again redivision offers the best solution.

Ex. 20: measure 30



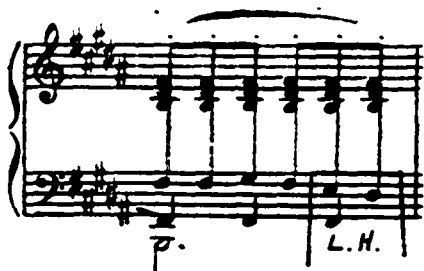
Another such passage is measure 39.

Ex. 21: measure 39



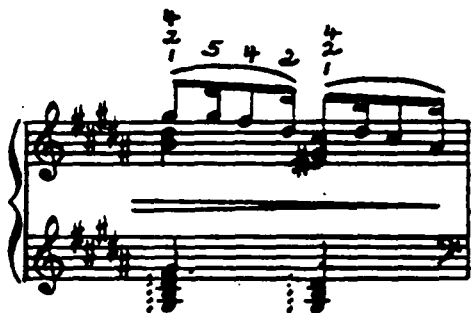
Chords with intervals of a ninth, a tenth, and an eleventh are found in measures 56-57 and 60-61. Redivision of the chords between hands results in a simple execution of these passages. In measure 57 the left hand plays the melody in octaves while the right hand repeats the same chord.

Ex. 22: measure 56



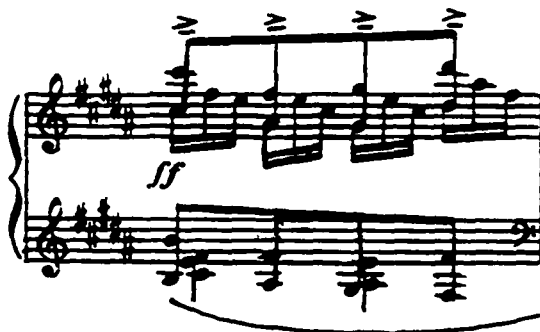
The problem of excessively large chords and interlocking hands is solved by redividing at measure 72.

Ex. 23: measure 72



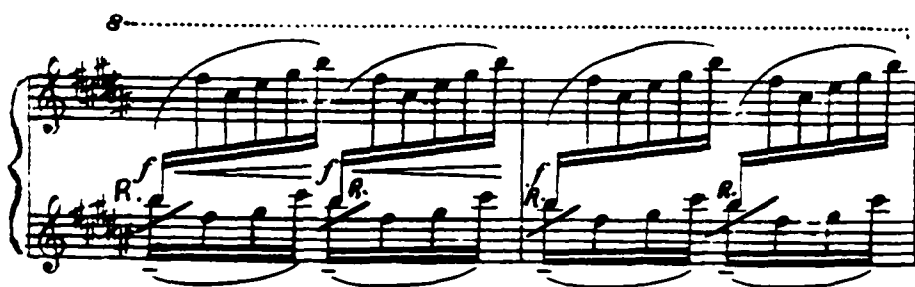
A similar problem exists at measure 81 and is solved thus:

Ex. 24: measure 81



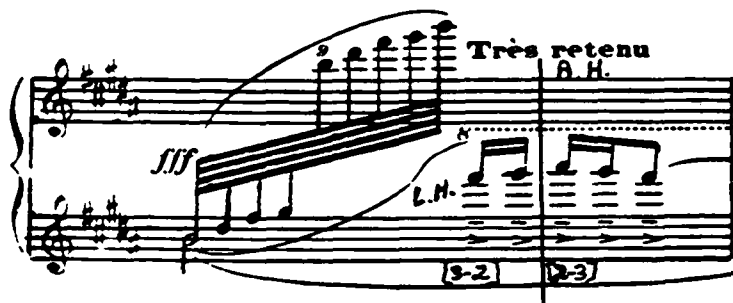
A slightly different difficulty is seen in measures 92 and 93. Here, the composer has placed one note from the bell ostinato, normally written for right hand, in the left hand part. This pattern has been done all in one hand in similar passages, i.e., measures 66-67. It is suggested that the B be played with right hand thumb, thus permitting a strong accent and still maintaining a pattern already learned and executed. The passage should be performed thus:

Ex. 25: measures 92-93



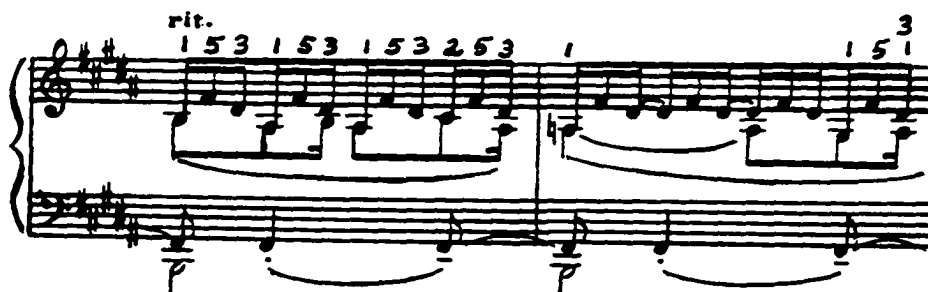
At measure 95 the last three notes will be stronger if played with right hand. For additional reinforcement on these fortississimo accents, two fingers should be used on a key for the last five notes.

Ex. 26: measure 95



There is one other passage where correct fingering strengthens the melodic line.

Ex. 27: measures 45-46



The prelude reflects the gay, the colorful, the optimistic in Debussy's character, and with its brilliance and dash makes an interesting contrast to those preludes which are quieter and more introspective in character.

Prelude VI: Des pas sur la neige (Footsteps in the Snow)

In view of the close correspondence between the title of the prelude and the rhythmic ostinato, this prelude may be classified as almost programmatic. Debussy indicates that "the sound of the rhythmic figure should convey a melancholy, icebound landscape" (Ce rythme doit avoir la valeur sonore d'un fond du paysage triste et glacé). The rhythmic figure referred to is heard in measure 1 and continues as a rhythmic ostinato throughout the prelude. Schmitz observes that this rhythm is "the counterpart of . . . faltering steps." Schmitz also notes that the ostinato remains almost constantly at the same pitch level throughout the prelude.¹ The monotonous quality of the ostinato is suggestive of a feeling of hopelessness and despair. The composer has used the term douloureux, which means "sorrowful" or "painful." Either connotation is appropriate. Schmitz also observes that "an increase in dynamics paralleling the pitch and durational value of the second note" suggests a sob or a sigh.² From the second measure on, the figure functions mostly as a retardation with stress on the first note and resolution on the second.

The dynamics are very subdued, ranging from piano to pianississimo. The soft pedal should be used on the first measure and from the middle of measure 34 to the end. It

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 145.

²Schmitz, p. 145.

should not be used where there is a melodic line. Decreased resonance when the soft pedal is down hampers the balance between melody and underlying accompaniment and limits the possibilities of shaping phrases. The performer must, therefore, have complete control of the key in these melodic passages so that he does not inadvertently play too loudly or, conversely, fail to produce a sound. Sensitivity to the key's resistance is imperative for the tonal subtlety that is required.

Debussy has very clearly indicated the rise and fall of the melody by appropriate tenuto, crescendo, and diminuendo markings along with repeated use of the term expressif (expressive).

Pedaling is rather conventional, legato pedaling being used most of the time. The pedal is changed on each bass half note in the first six measures with no pedal on measure 7 after the chord is released. In measures 8 and 9 where there is a bass melody, pedal should be changed every quarter note. In measures 10 and 11, where the melody is in a less resonant register, the pedal should be changed every two beats again. Full measure pedals are used from measures 12 through 14. In measure 15 the right hand chord is caught silently so that the pedal may be changed while the tie is observed. No pedal should be used on the bass quarter notes in measure 15. The pedal should be changed every beat in measure 16, changed every two beats in measures 17 through 21. The pedal must be

left down through the length of each of the tied note patterns in the bass in measures 21 through 23. Otherwise, pedals are changed every two beats in these measures. No pedal should be used in measure 25 after the chord is released. The pedal is changed on every melodic or harmonic change in the bass except in measure 27 where the half note cannot be sustained without pedal. In measures 32 and 33 the pedal is changed every two beats while care should be taken to play the left hand eighth notes staccato. The pedal is left down from beat three of measure 33 to the end. The bass quarter notes should be extremely light. The best way to play the final chord *pianississimo* is to drop the wrists slightly below the keys and let them roll up and in stroking the key with fingers almost flat. Some experimentation is usually required with this touch before its usefulness becomes evident.

Although this prelude is not as large in scope as some of the other preludes, the skill with which the composer has evoked a melancholy, hopeless quality makes the piece a beautiful tone painting.

Prelude VII: Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest (What the West Wind has seen)

Schmitz observes that a west wind would mean something quite different to someone living in France than it would to someone living on the east coast of the United States. He states that:

. . . the west wind is to Debussy that fear-some, tragically destructive, magnificently powerful element gathering force over the expanse of the Atlantic, lashing the coasts, battering cliffs, destroying houses, schooners, and liners, sweeping icebergs and mountainous waves before it, playing havoc with human lives, subjecting each to a state of exalted terror.¹

Lockspeiser suggests that Debussy was familiar with Felix Rabbe's translation of Shelley's lines from the "Ode to the West Wind":

Thou

For whose path the Atlantic's level powers
Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
the sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know
Thy voice, and suddenly grey with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh hear!

Lockspeiser maintains that this poem was one source of inspiration for this prelude.²

The tonal materials used in the prelude are most interesting. One finds polytonality as well as considerable use of the whole-tone scale. The composer has also used in this prelude a device often associated with him

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 147.

²Edward Lockspeiser, Debussy, His Life and Mind (London: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1962), Vol. I, p. 141.

known as "gliding chords," a chord progression with parallel motion in all voices.

In the opening measures the tritone relationship between the dominant seventh on D in six-five inversion against an incomplete A flat dominant seventh chord (A flat, E flat, and G flat) creates a tonally ambiguous sonority. The pedal remains depressed through measures 5 and 6 resulting in a polychordal juxtaposition of the two dominant seventh harmonies. In measures 7 through 9 the parallel succession of major triads continues the tonally ambiguous feeling.

Gliding chords in ascending chromatic movement are heard in measures 15 through 19. Schmitz observes that Debussy used chromaticism to depict "the mounting fury of . . . the wind."¹ A similar passage (gliding chords ascending chromatically) is heard in measure 46. One finds more ascending parallel chromaticism in measure 30, and also in measures 33 and 34. Seventh chords used as gliding chords are seen in measures 21, 49, and 50.

The whole-tone scale is first seen in measure 19 and is the basis for the augmented dominant sevenths found in measures 22 through 30 and the augmented sixth chords in measures 35 through 37 and measures 39 through 41. A whole-tone scale is heard in the bass ostinato in measures 63-66.

¹Schmitz, p. 26.

Several passages as notated in the original score are somewhat awkward to play. An example of this is measures 5 and 6, where the stretch of a ninth in the arpeggios produces tension in the hand and forearm which inhibits ease of execution. Redivision solves the problem.

Ex. 28: measures 5-6

The image displays two systems of handwritten musical notation for measures 5 and 6. The notation is written on grand staves (treble and bass clefs). The first system (measures 5-6) shows a complex arpeggiated figure in the right hand (R.) and a supporting bass line in the left hand (L.). A large bracket above the right hand indicates a redivision of a ninth interval. The second system (measures 7-8) continues the musical material. The notation includes various accidentals (sharps, flats, naturals) and dynamic markings such as 'molto' at the end of the first system. The handwriting is in ink on a white background.

Frequently, as noted in reference to other preludes, Debussy will have the hands interlocking as they play chords. Usually, it is better to redive the chord so that hands do not interlock. Measures 19-20 contain this problem. The

playing of this scale is greatly facilitated by playing the first five notes with right hand and the last four with left hand.

Ex. 29: measures 19-20

At measure 51 the octaves can be played with greater freedom if the hands are alternated more frequently than the score indicates.

Ex. 30: measure 51

Another passage which benefits from redivision of the notes between hands is found at measure 63. Since the right hand is free through most of the measure, it can play more of the triplets than the composer indicates in the score. It is suggested that right hand play four of the last six triplets in this measure and in all succeeding measures.

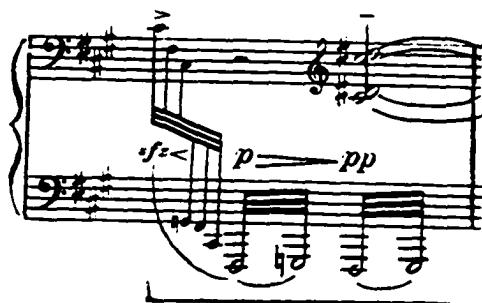
Ex. 31: measure 63



Good fingering selection is always important in a piece where finger agility is an essential factor in performance. A passage where the hands alternate, such as that in measures 26-34, is awkward with the best of fingerings. On the repeated notes it is far less confusing to choose one finger for each note and stay with it than to change fingers. If the thumb is kept on the left hand C and second finger on the right hand D, the complexities of alternating hands and interlocking notes are greatly reduced.

the bass implies that the pedal is depressed for two beats. At measures 5-6 the composer writes a whole note in the bass indicating a pedal length of four beats. However, in view of the crescendo molto in measure 5 plus the fact that the climax of the crescendo is in the highest and least resonant register of the piano, it is advisable to leave the pedal down through both measures. The pedal is changed at every change of harmony or melody in measures 7-14. An accent pedal is used to enhance the sforzando in measures 10 and 13.

Ex. 34: measure 10



The composer indicates "a little marcato" (un peu marqué) in measures 15 and 16 for the staccato bass notes. The staccato and marcato effects are enhanced by the use of short accent pedals on each eighth note.

Ex. 35: measure 15

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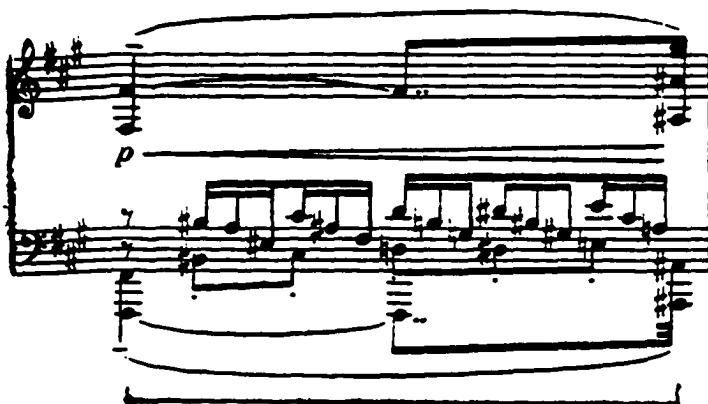
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un peu marqué

In measures 17-18 note values are indicated which are impossible to sustain without pedal. The pedal is released only on each thirty-second note in the melody.

Ex. 36: measure 17

p



In measures 19 and 20 the pedal is sustained through the long note values of the chords, then released on the sixteenth notes, and depressed precisely on the chords immediately following. It is changed every two chords in measures 21-22. The pedal is changed on beat one in measures 23-24. In measure 25 a new pedal is taken to effect a quick diminuendo. The pedal is held from measure 26 through measure 27 with a half-pedal on the last beat of measure 27. The pedal is changed on the high B flat in the melody in measures 28 and 29. It remains down through measure 30 with a half-pedal on the third beat of measure 30. The pedal is changed on the melodic D#s in measure 31, then on the half note C# in measure 32. The pedal should be changed every beat for the first three beats in measure 33 and then sustained through measure 34.

The composer gives some clues to the pedaling in measures 35-41 with the use of ties from the low bass notes. The pedal should be changed on the octave B in measure 35

and released on the eighth rest. It is then depressed on the octave B in each measure and released on the eighth rest in measures 36-41.

Ex. 37: measures 36-37



In measures 38 and 42 half-pedals are needed to avoid excessively blurred and heavy textures. Since the dotted half note chord needs to be sustained with pedal, half-pedaling is the only solution.

In measure 43 a short accent pedal should be used on the bass D# and the pedal should be up for measures 43 and 44. The register is so low that the sounds will be muddled and indistinct otherwise. The composer also indicates non-legato which implies little or no pedal. At measure 44 the pedal is used for two beat periods and is left down through measure 45. Before the crescendo molto at measure 46, a slight diminuendo is effective. If the pedal is taken up very shortly before measure 46, the diminuendo is enhanced. The pedal should be left down

through measure 46, allowing the sound to accumulate and strengthening the crescendo. The pedal is changed every two chords in measures 47-48, except that a new pedal is taken with the half note. The pedal is changed according to the duration of the note values to be held in measures 49, 50, 51, and 52. Half-pedals are necessary in measure 53 to effect a *diminuendo molto*. The pedal should be used in measure 54, but the technique of flutter pedaling (rapid half-pedaling) should be used to keep the dynamics at the level indicated. Keeping the pedal depressed in this case would cause the dynamics to rise above *pianissimo*, as the register is very resonant. Accent pedal is used briefly on the stressed eighth notes in measures 55-56. Measures 57 through 60 are pedaled like measures 5-8. The pedal changes with the lower bass notes in measure 61. In order for the staccatos to be clearly articulated, the pedal should not be used in measures 63-66. As the sound builds to a climax, the pedal should be left down through measures 67-68. A rhythmic pedal is used in measure 69 to reinforce the accent. The pedal is changed at measure 70 and released immediately on the final chord where the composer has indicated a dry effect (sec).

The prelude is the most brilliant and powerful of the first set. It requires finger facility and strength as well as subtlety of touch and tone and a thorough knowledge of pedaling techniques.

Prelude VIII: La fille aux cheveux de lin (The girl with the flaxen hair)

The inspiration for this prelude comes from a poem of the same name by Leconte de Lisle in his collection, Poèmes Antiques: Chansons Écossaises.¹ Schmitz sees in the opening bars ". . . a faint echo of the spinning wheel and of the famed Gretchen tradition of the romantic period."

Schmitz goes on to say that:

. . . the psychological association would be an easy one to make, for since Schubert's genial characterization of the innocent blond girl whose fate is one of the pervading motifs of romantic literature and music, her musical counterpart reappears constantly.²

Schmitz observes that the harmony is "melodically pentatonic and vertically diatonic . . . with a strong leaning toward modal cadences" Schmitz brings forward the widely held theory that:

. . . pentatonicism is not merely an oriental trait . . . , but rather a stage in the evolution of all folk materials, the presence of which insures the authenticity and age of a folk song.

Schmitz suggests that the remote quality given to the music by the use of pentatonicism is "one of time, not . . . geography."³

The fingering in this prelude presents few problems for the performer. Many of the finger patterns fall into broken chord groups, as in the first two measures.

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 149.

²Schmitz, p. 151.

³Schmitz, p. 151.

Ex. 38: measures 1-2



Blocking, a practice technique previously discussed, is helpful, in perceiving chordal patterns.

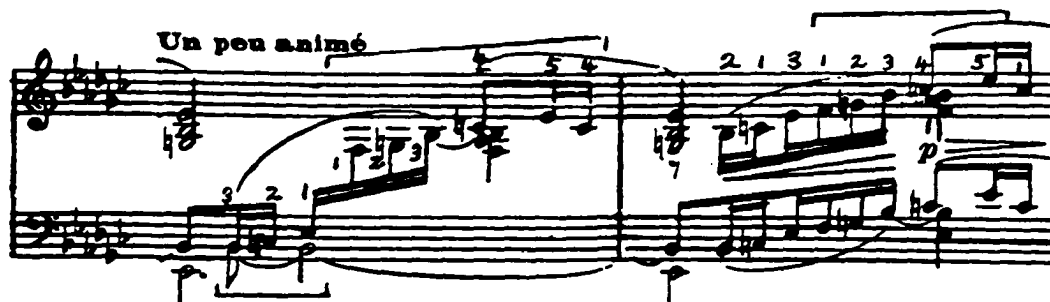
Another broken chord grouping is seen in measure 15.

Ex. 39: measure 15



A pentatonic pattern is seen in measures 19-20 (B flat, C, E flat, F, and G), along with one non-harmonic tone (A flat). Again, grouping notes into patterns that can be played together increases the performer's comprehension, control, and fingering security.

Ex. 40: measures 19-20



A combination of note grouping (blocking) and finger substitution is needed in solving fingering problems in measure 14 and in its parallel passage, measures 33-34.

Ex. 41: measure 14



A different type of fingering problem is seen in measures 24-27. These chords, built on the pentatonic scale, are to be played legato and "without heaviness" (sans lourdeur). The performer should pedal every beat and use the following fingering to achieve the best result.

X

Ex. 42: measures 24-26

The musical score for measures 24-26 is written for piano. The right hand (treble clef) and left hand (bass clef) both play chords. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major). The tempo and dynamics are indicated by 'p' (piano). Fingerings are shown with numbers 1-5 above or below the notes. Pedaling is indicated by a line with a wedge at the end, showing when the pedal is changed.

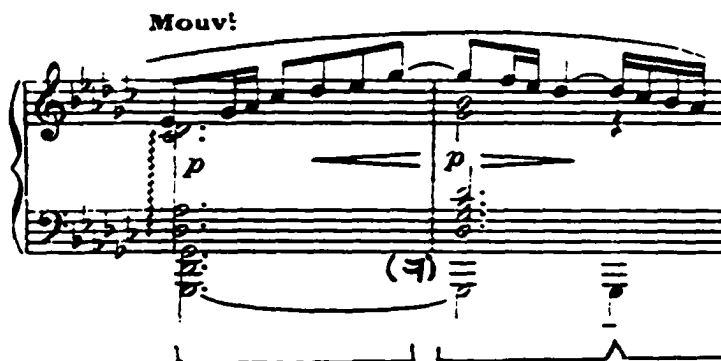
The lush, warm pentatonic and diatonic harmonies demand a straight-forward, conventional use of legato pedaling. The pedal, for the most part, is changed when the harmony changes, although in the first two measures, the pedaling is somewhat different. When the left hand enters, the pedal usually changes with every chord change in the left hand.

Exceptions to changing pedal on every harmonic change include measures 10-11, 14, and 33-34 where the pedal is changed every beat to avoid blurring the scale line. At measures 19-21 harmonic change again dictates the pedaling. Long note values also govern the length of the pedal as in measures 12, 15, 16, 28-30, and 36-39. In measures 24-27 the pedal is changed on every chord with the exception of the sixteenth notes.

An unusual pedal effect involving careful coordination of hands and feet is indicated at measures 12-13. At this point, the G flat tied into measure 13 in the bass

must be caught by a new pedal immediately after the last right hand eighth note in measure 12. The upper two notes in left hand are released just before the pedal is changed equivalent to a sixteenth rest.

Ex. 43: measures 12-13



Dumesnil translates the French term sans rigueur at the beginning of the prelude as "without stiffness in rhythm not metronomically."¹ In other words, some rubato is appropriate. The rubato is best controlled by thinking the smallest note value, in this case the sixteenth note, and allowing it to press on or pull back in tempo as the musical situation dictates.

This prelude is one of the simplest technically of either set and yet this very simplicity gives it a charm that makes it one of the most popular.

¹Maurice Dumesnil, How to Play and Teach Debussy (New York: Schroeder and Gunther, 1932), p. 17.

Prelude IX: La sérénade interrompue (The Interrupted Serenade)

A Spanish influence is readily apparent in this prelude. Thompson feels the "guitar effects identify the Spanish scene of this nocturnal fantasy."¹ Lockspeiser quotes from an article by Manuel de Falla, the eminent Spanish composer, who states that these guitar effects "are known to us from the strummings of guitars by the people of Andalusia."² Schmitz notes that the guitar

. . . brought to Europe by the Moors of Spain
 . . . has two techniques of playing, one for
 melodic or contrapuntal passages (punteado)
 and the other for strumming chords (rasgueado)
 Further, guitars, like early keyboard
 instruments, have little sustaining power and
 resort frequently, therefore, to repeated
 notes to lengthen the resonance of the sounds.³

All of these guitar effects are heard in this prelude.

It takes but a little imagination to find a story in this prelude. In the first few measures, the guitarist is preparing to play--warming up with a few scales and wondering what to play. Rasgueado chords in measure 25 precede the entry of the serenade in measure 32. At measure 46 there is a violent interruption. Schmitz imagines a window slammed shut or water thrown on the serenader. The serenade continues, but another interruption occurs at measure 80 and again at measure 87. The stress on beat two suggests to Schmitz a

¹Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 266.

²Edward Lockspeiser, Debussy, His Life and Mind (London: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1962), Vol. II, p. 260.

³Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 153.

limping night watchman or a group of drunken revelers.

"Our hero is persistent and is loath to forego his serenade despite the multiple interruptions that beset him and test his temper." His temper flares to a rage (measures 85 and 90) at the new interruption. The serenade continues, but the serenader seems to have lost his heart for it. The serenader gradually recedes into the distance (en s'éloignant), but does not fade out before one final interruption (measure 133).¹

A variety of tonal materials may be observed in this prelude. Schmitz notes that while F seems to be the tonal center at the beginning,

. . . the complete absence of the note A in the opening scale passages and its dual use later as both A and A flat brings not only interesting cross-relations, but a play on the major-minor tonic triad.²

This produces a bimodal effect. Schmitz also observes a melodic duality.

. . . with the A flat and C natural our melodic scheme could be Phrygian, but with the appearance of A natural it brings the succession F-G flat-A-B flat-C flat or C natural-D flat-E flat, a close parallel to the Moorish or Arabic scale . . . in Soirée dans Grenade³

In measures 22 and 23 a polychordal effect is heard (B flat minor against C major) along with another major-minor cross-relationship (E natural-E flat). The key of a minor in

¹Schmitz, pp. 152-153.

²Schmitz, p. 154.

³Schmitz, p. 154.

measures 46-49 is interrupted by a B flat augmented triad, which is completely foreign to the key. The Arabic scale is heard from measures 54 through 60 and again from measures 77 through 79. The keys of D flat major (measures 63-76), D major (measures 80-84 and 87-89), and B flat minor (measures 90 to the end) are heard, but with much chromatic deviation from these keys. Schmitz sees the structure as having a "first subject group containing . . . the . . . repeated note passages . . . , and the thematic ostinato theme of measures 19-24 . . . , a second subject (measures 25-40 and 54-72), and a "central episode" (measures 80-89). The thematic ostinato becomes an accompaniment figure for the second subject (measures 94-112). The scale patterns first heard in measure 5 return in measure 50 and again in measure 129.¹

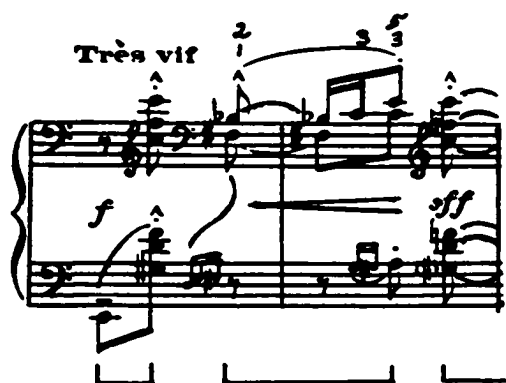
In order to achieve a guitar-like effect (quasi guitarra) in the opening measures, the damper pedal should not be used and the staccatos should imitate the sound of plucked guitar strings. From measures 19 through 24 a touch of pedal is effective on the slurs if one is careful to release the pedal on the last note of the slur.

Both soft pedal and damper pedal are to be used beginning at measure 25 (les deux pedales). The composer is imitating the strumming (*rasgueado*) style of guitar playing in this passage. Half-pedaling should be done with a change of pedal on the first beat of each measure

¹Schmitz, pp. 153-154.

except when there is a melodic change within a measure, i.e., measure 34. In this case, the pedal is changed on the new melody note. From measures 41 through 45 the slurs are pedaled as in the similar passage beginning at measure 19. Accent pedaling is used in measures 46-47 as indicated.

Ex. 44: measures 46-47



As in the opening measures, no pedal is needed from measures 50 through 53. In measure 54 with the reentry of the second subject in rasgueado style, half-pedaling is needed. It is effective to change pedal every two eighth notes from measures 55 through 60. From measures 60 through 72 legato pedaling replaces the half-pedaling. In measures 61-62 the pedal is changed with note changes in the bass. The pedal is down for a full measure at measure 63 and the pedal is changed at measure 65 and remains depressed for measures 65-66. It is changed again at measure 67 and remains down through measure 68.

The pedal is changed at measures 69, 70, and 72. There is another full measure pedal at measure 72. The pedal is left up on the first eighth note and is depressed on the second and third eighth notes from measures 73 through 75. From measures 76 through 78 the pedal is depressed on the notes of long duration and released on the notes of short duration. No pedal is needed for measure 79. In the passage from measures 80 through 84 short accent pedaling should be used only where the composer has placed tenuto marks. The performer should be careful not to pedal on the first eighth note in measures 81-84. A short accent pedal is needed on the first beat of measure 80.

Ex. 45: measures 80-83



Accent pedaling should be used on the slurs in measures 85, 86, and 90. The pedaling in measures 87-89 is a repetition of measures 80-82. In measures 91-93 the pedal is up on the first eighth note and down on the second and third eighth notes. The pedal should remain down from the second eighth note of measure 93 until the first eighth note of measure 98. Legato pedaling is used from measures 98 through 124 with pedal changes on measures 98, 101, 105, 109, 112, 113,

114, 116, 117, 118, 120, 121, 122, and 124. No pedal should be used from measures 125 to the end.

The soft pedal is needed in the following passages: measures 25-40, 50-59, 80-84, 87-89, 95-105, and 125-137.

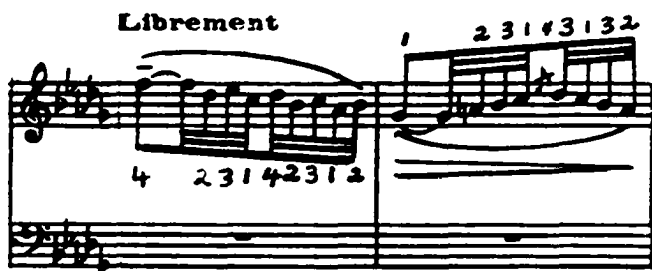
The performer should note that the opening measures have the hands divided. Right hand plays the notes with stems up and left hand the notes with stems down. The left hand should be placed below the right hand in measures 5-7 and above the right hand in measures 7-10. For clarity and control, it is important to choose a good fingering. See the musical excerpt below.

Ex. 46: measures 5-8



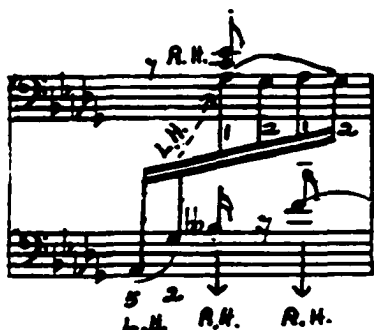
Fingering is also critical to clarity and control in measures 76-77. "Blocking" (grouping of note and finger patterns) is most helpful here. The principle of fingering sequential passages with sequential fingering helps to determine finger selection.

Ex. 47: measures 76-77



It is helpful to redivide notes between hands in two passages. The awkward overlapping of hands in measure 74 is removed by redivision.

Ex. 48: measure 74



In the last two measures of the prelude, the playing of light scales in left hand is greatly facilitated by a redivision of notes between hands on the final chord.

Ex. 49: measures 136-137



The opening passages should be played rubato. The effect is that of a guitarist warming up and trying to decide what to play. The scale passage at measure 5 should begin slightly under tempo, gradually increasing in speed and broadening at the end of the sixteenth notes in measure 10. The same effect should be repeated with each recurrence of this passage. The composer indicates many changes in tempo in the course of the prelude. Librement (measures 76-77) means freely, which implies a rather wide-ranging rubato. The tempo should be slower in the Modéré sections (measures 80-84 and 87-89) and faster in the Rageur (raging) passages (measures 85-86 and 90-93). A return to tempo (Revenir au Mouvt.) is indicated at measure 95, implying a gradual slowing of pace from the Rageur.

This prelude reveals Debussy's subtle, mocking humor at its best. According to Thompson, de Falla refers to this prelude as a "'master work.'"¹

¹Oscar Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1937), p. 266.

Prelude X: La Cathédrale engloutie (The Engulfed Cathedral)

Thompson calls this piece "the most mystic of the Préludes."¹ According to Schmitz the prelude is based on a legend known in Brittany, concerning the Cathedral of Ys which was "engulfed in the fourth or fifth century 'because of the impiety of the inhabitants,' but allowed to rise again and to be seen (as an example to others) at sunrise." Schmitz sees in the legend "the tenuous mysticism of the Celtic heritage in France."²

The influence of Impressionist painters may be detected in the piece. Lockspeiser observes that these painters often chose subjects dealing with water.³ It is Lockspeiser's opinion that in Monet's pictures of the cathedral at Rouen, "the blurred outline of many of them, particularly the one entitled Symphonie en gris, convey both a watery and a musical effect strikingly evocative of La Cathédrale engloutie."⁴

Debussy's strong love of nature and of the sea in particular are certainly to be seen in this work. As Thompson says, "For him Nature was like a religion; even more was it like music."⁵ Thompson quotes Debussy as he

¹Thompson, p. 266.

²Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 155.

³Lockspeiser, Debussy, His Life and Mind, Vol. II, p. 19.

⁴Lockspeiser, Vol. II, p. 20.

⁵Thompson, p. 22.

writes, "Here I am again with my old friend, the sea: it is always endless and beautiful." At another time, he wrote concerning the sea ". . . it is beautiful enough to defy all comparisons."¹ Schmitz sees in the prelude a conflict between Debussy's "pagan rite of the sea" and the more conventional religious exercises of the Cathedral.

. . . one wonders if this is the association of two religious concepts or a struggle between them?
 . . . the main materials characterize both forces, juxtaposed in contrapuntal independence; plainsong treated in medieval organum, motifs of the calm sea, and later of a stronger tide.²

Some of the materials used by Debussy show his attempt, as Schmitz says, "to evoke . . . structures of the past." These include the conjunct melodic line,

. . . broken by skips of fourths and fifths, . . . avoidance of certain degrees of the scale, which partakes of both modal and pentatonic usage, jointly characteristic of archaic plainsong.³

Thompson feels that "the melodic content is Gregorian; the harmony recollective of medieval organum."⁴ Schmitz calls these "organum-like" chords in parallel fourths and fifths in the opening measures of the piece "'guttled chords.'"⁵

Echoes of ancient music are immediately apparent as the composer chooses to use the pentatonic scale in the first

¹Thompson, p. 160.

²Schmitz, p. 155.

³Schmitz, p. 156.

⁴Thompson, p. 266.

⁵Schmitz, p. 156.

two measures. This expands to Lydian mode in measures 3 and 4, alluding again to ancient musical devices. The Phrygian mode is heard in measures 5 and 6. Measures 7-12 are in the Dorian mode (transposed to C#). There is a return to Phrygian mode at measure 13. The use of modes was common in the services of the early church and evoke the religious atmosphere of the Cathedral. The keys of B major, C major, and E flat major are heard in measures 14-21 with the key of C major returning in measures 22-41. Schmitz feels that:

. . . at measure 28 the sonorous color of C major heralds the apparition into full view of the Cathedral and warm parallel chords are substituted for the gutted chords of the opening. (The parallel use of these chords would be remindful of fauxbourdon or gymel rather than organum).¹

A hint of c minor is heard in measures 42-46 with the enharmonic change from A flat to G sharp at measure 46 effecting a modulation to c# minor which continues to measure 70. The remainder of the piece is in the key of C major with hints of Mixolydian mode produced by B flats in measures 77, 79, and 80. Schmitz feels that Debussy has greatly enriched the C major sonorities in the final measures (measures 84-89) with added notes. Schmitz sees the final cadence chords as "the superimposition of dominant and tonic elements."² These final chords have elements of quartal harmony and the use of nearly every scale degree produces a pandiatonic sonority.

¹Schmitz, p. 157.

²Schmitz, p. 157.

Schmitz discerns in Debussy's use of superimposed major seconds "the depiction of resonant metallic sounds, bells in this case."¹ These "bell" sounds are heard in measures 42-46 and measures 86-87. Thompson observes that:

. . . in its chord successions, the composition represents what was then a new concept of dissonance, a conception in which dissonance was to be regarded as an end in itself and not a mere episode on the road to a redemptive consonance.²

Schmitz also notes Debussy's extensive use of pedal point,

. . . which form a lexicon of usage in their abundant variety, used in the bass, middle voices, top voices; held, ornamented, or moving (waves), forming dissonance-resolution sequences or giving depth to existing harmonies, or aiding in modulations.³

The pictorial quality of some of the interpretative markings lends substance to Lockspeiser's theory, noted previously, that this prelude may have been inspired by a painting of Monet.⁴ The first such marking, seen at the beginning of the prelude, is Profondément calme (Dans une brume douce-ment sonore), the translation of which is "Profoundly calm (As in a mist softly sonorous)." In measure 6 Doux et fluide (Peaceful and fluid) suggest the watery as well as the religious character of the piece. A similarly descriptive marking, seen at measure 16, is peu à peu sortant de la brume (little by little going up out of the mist). Flottant et

¹Schmitz, p. 157.

²Thompson, p. 267.

³Schmitz, p. 157.

⁴Lockspeiser, Debussy, His Life and Mind, Vol. II, p. 20.

sourd (floating and muffled) at measure 72 is most descriptive of the engulfing water as the cathedral submerges below the surface of the sea again.

Formally, there are two basic themes. Schmitz divides the first of these into two variants, the first of which he calls "A-1, the first subject in motif form"¹ (measures 1-7). The second subject, "B," is first heard from measures 7-13. "A-1" returns in measures 13-27 while measures 28-41 is labeled "A-2, the fully stated first subject."² There is a transition (measures 42-46) and a return to "B" (measures 46-71), "A-2" (measures 72-82). "A-1" (measures 83-84), and the cadence measures (85-89).³

The imitation of the religious chant and the ringing of the bells (heard from below the surface of the water) requires effective use of the damper pedal. The rumbling quality as the Cathedral rises up out of the sea (measures 16-21), as well as the organ-like chords of measures 28-40, are dependent on the use of the pedal. All these elements, which occur singly and together require the continued use of the pedal.

In the opening measures the length of the tied notes in the bass as well as ties into empty measures determines how long the damper pedal must remain depressed. Therefore,

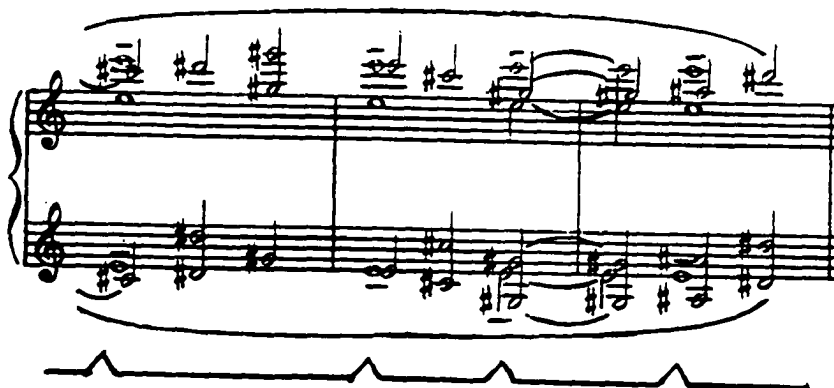
¹Schmitz, p. 157.

²Schmitz, p. 157.

³Schmitz, pp. 157-158.

the pedal should be depressed through measures 1 and 2. It should then be changed and left down through measures 3 and 4. It is changed again at measure 5 and remains depressed throughout that measure. At measure 6 the pedal is changed on beat one and each time the bell-like "E's" are struck through measure 12.

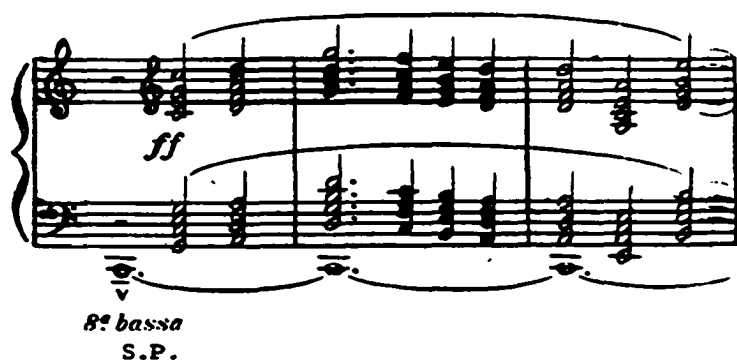
Ex. 50: measures 8-10



At measure 13 the duration of the notes again determines the length of the pedal sound. In measures 14-15 the pedal must remain down through both measures as it would be impossible to sustain the tied notes between the two measures otherwise. In measures 16-27 the duration of the long note values again determines the amount of time the pedal remains depressed. The passage from measures 28 through 41 requires the use of both the sostenuto pedal and the damper pedal. The low C pedal point in the bass cannot be sustained without using the sostenuto pedal. Schmitz approves of this usage for pedal points and adds that the damper pedal should be used

in such a way as to avoid "blurring or melting together of unrelated elements."¹ The damper pedal, therefore, should be used to connect the fortissimo chords above the pedal points without blurring them. The syncopated or legato pedaling technique previously described must be used here. The sostenuto pedal, after catching the first C (measure 28), must be left down until measure 42.

Ex. 51: measures 28-30



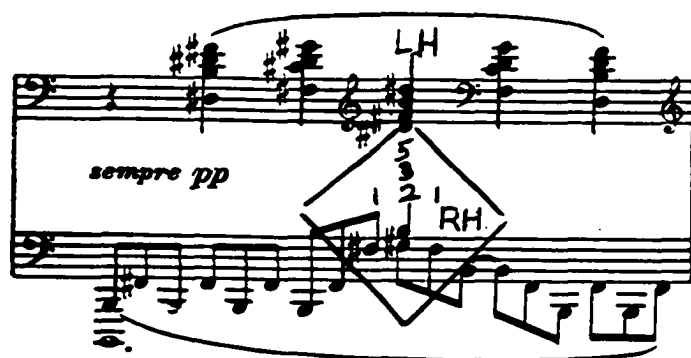
The sostenuto pedal should be used in a similar manner from measures 46 through 57. It is released at measure 58. From that point to the end, the rule of leaving the damper pedal depressed through the longest note value would apply.

There are few passages in the prelude where fingering is a problem or where redivision of notes is required. There is, however, one passage which is greatly facilitated by redividing notes between hands. In measures 16-19 there

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 38.

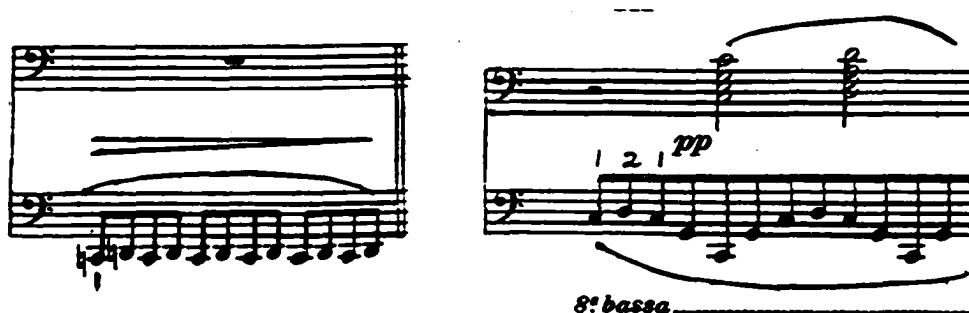
is a most awkward leap in both hands in the middle of each measure. It is much simpler to redivide the hands thus:

Ex. 52: measure 16



Measures 71-83 is a passage where fingering choice is critical. The performer should leave the thumb on the C in the left hand in the moving pedal point figure for greatest ease and control.

Ex. 53: measures 71-72



Tone control is a definite problem in this prelude. The dynamic level remains generally at pianissimo for the first eighteen measures. While there are a few subtle inflections in these opening measures, there is no large

increase in dynamics until measures 20-27. Due to the fact that the sound builds when the damper pedal is depressed for long periods, it is necessary to use the soft pedal and to use the touch, described previously, for soft chords; that is, begin with the wrist below the key surface and as the wrist lifts in, depress the key with the flat cushion of the finger. This touch is particularly important in measures 14-15 which are to be played sans nuances (without inflection). Frank Mannheimer, the eminent piano teacher, is known to have suggested that the performer think of this sound quality as being "clear white" or "transparent."

After a gradual increase in sound from measures 20-27 (Augmentez progressivement) to fortissimo (measure 28), the sonority must not be hard or harsh (Sonore sans dureté) in the fortissimo section which follows (measures 28-40). There is a rather sudden decrease in sound from measures 40 through 45. Measures 44-45 require the soft pedal as do all other passages marked pianissimo or softer.

The prelude is a demanding, but rewarding study in the coordination of pedaling and touch to achieve the many varying requirements of dynamic levels and tone qualities.

Prelude XI: La Danse de Puck (The Dance of Puck)

According to Thompson, Debussy had a "deep-seated desire . . . to make musical the delights of Shakespeare." This desire is realized only in this prelude and in two fragments of incidental music for King Lear.¹ Schmitz sees the prelude as

. . . a charming caricature of a famous mischiefmaker, impish but not really bad, . . . whose lightness of touch and fleetness . . . is one moment a little serious, and then again capriciously teasing.²

The musical counterpart of this interest in Shakespeare is Mendelssohn's "Midsummer Night's Dream." Aside from the fact that both are scherzando in feeling, there is little resemblance in the two works, according to both Schmitz³ and Thompson.⁴ Schmitz feels that the Debussy composition "is both deeper in meaning and lighter in touch than its romantic counterpart."⁵

There is a Puckish quality to the opening rhythmic figure. Normally in dotted rhythms, the shorter note is connected to the succeeding dotted note. Debussy is careful, however, to indicate a slur connecting the dotted sixteenth note and the succeeding thirty-second note. In addition,

¹Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 267.

²Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 158.

³Schmitz, p. 158.

⁴Thompson, p. 267.

⁵Schmitz, p. 159.

the thirty-second note is marked staccato. The effect is that of a staccato grace note moving to a longer note. This hopping, skipping effect produces the scherzando feeling previously noted and is a delightful characterization of the mischievous elf. Schmitz admonishes the performer to execute the figure exactly as it is marked.¹

The composer has used a wide variety of tonal material including hints of modality, bitonality, pentatonicism, and the whole-tone scale. There are also moments of solid diatonic feeling with the keys of A flat major, F flat major, C flat major, and E flat major being represented. The opening measures are in F Dorian mode which ends abruptly with the entry of a motif in measure 6 outlining a C flat major triad. The key feeling is vague from the entry of the motif through measure 17 although F seems to be the tonal center. It is interesting to note in this passage Debussy's relatively uncommon use of non-dominant ninth chords (F, A flat, C flat, E flat, G in measure 8 and G, B flat, D flat, F, A in measure 9). In general, the passage from measures 18 through 31 is in A flat major although polychordal effects occur in measures 22 and 28 with a dominant seventh and a French sixth against an E flat-B flat pedal point and the whole-tone scale is heard in measures 25 and 27 (the grace notes D and F sharp being lower auxiliaries). In the passage from measures 32 through 37, there is an alternation

¹Schmitz, p. 159.

between the keys of F flat major and A flat major under a rhythmic pedal point in the treble (D flat and E flat). A definite key is not apparent in measures 38-40. There are several restatements of the motif first seen in measure 6 which returns in measures 41-43. The key of C flat major is predominant through measure 48. Measures 49-52 are in the key of A flat major. There is a bitonal quality in measures 53-56 and again in measures 59-60. There is a whole-tone sound to the first half of measures 55, 56, 59, and 60, although the D natural in the trill prevents it from being a pure whole-tone scale. Abrupt changes into D major in measures 57 and 58 and again in measures 61 and 62 provide a foil for the more nebulous key feelings in the rest of this passage (measures 53-62). The key of E flat major appears in measure 63 and continues through measure 66. The key feeling is uncertain from measures 67 through 87. The motif reappears at measure 69. The pentatonic scale is heard in measures 73 and 75. A definite key of E flat major is established in measures 87-90, although this is obscured by the D flats in measures 91-94 and by the scale segments in the final two measures of A flat major, E major, A flat major, E major, and C minor. Because implied keys are distant in their relationship, the general effect is bitonal. It may be seen, then, that there is often an ambiguity of key feeling and, when a key is established, that it is short-lived. This nebulous, elusive quality in key feeling may be interpreted as another

device which Debussy uses to capture the nebulous, elusive character of Puck.

The tempo, as might be expected, fluctuates somewhat throughout the course of the piece. The composer calls attention to this at the beginning with the term Capricieux (capricious). Debussy is careful, as always, to mark every tempo change. One unusual marking denoting both tempo and character is Rapide et fuyant, seen in the final two measures. The translation of this term is "rapid and flying away." Thompson calls this "a concluding puff,"¹ or, to paraphrase, "disappearing in a puff of smoke."

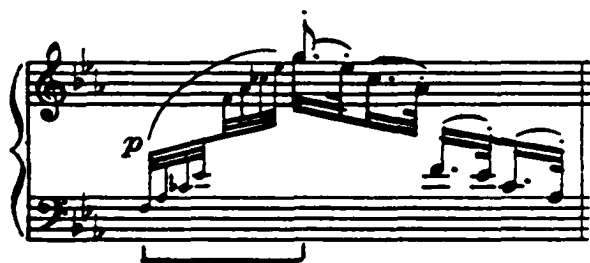
It is most important to use a touch compatible with the character of the prelude. For the most part, a light, delicate touch is required. There are outbursts of sound throughout the piece, but the dynamic level, in general, is piano to pianissimo. The composer indicates the need for a light touch when he uses the term, léger. The term, aerien (used in measure 30 with a pianissimo marking), which means airy or ethereal, would also indicate a light, delicate touch. The performer must be careful not to make the tone too thin. The tip of the finger should remain firm so as to control the key with sufficient delicacy. One particular passage where an extremely light and precise touch is necessary is found at the end of the prelude (measures 95-96).

¹Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 267.

In this touch, previously mentioned in Voiles,¹ Matthay suggests that the arm be fully-poised (a feeling of its floating or being suspended) with the fingers playing almost on the nail.²

The performer must be very careful not to over-pedal in this prelude. The staccatos at the beginning of the piece must not be blurred over with the pedal. The pedal is first used on the arpeggiated ninth chords in measures 8-12. The pedal should be released as the top note of the roll is played and left up for the remainder of each measure.

Ex. 54: measure 8



The trills should be pedaled in measures 12-13 and 16-17. No pedal should be used in measures 14-15. Full measure pedals should be used in measures 18-19. The ties in the bass would indicate that the pedal be left down for two measures in measures 20-21 and 22-23. The pedal should

¹See page 50.

²Tobias Matthay, The Visible and Invisible in Piano-forte Technique. (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), pp. 77-78.

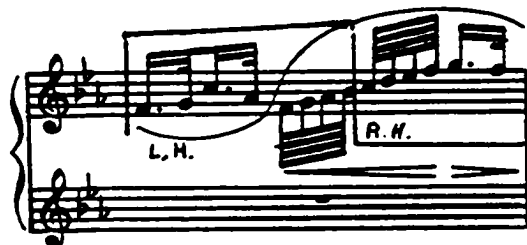
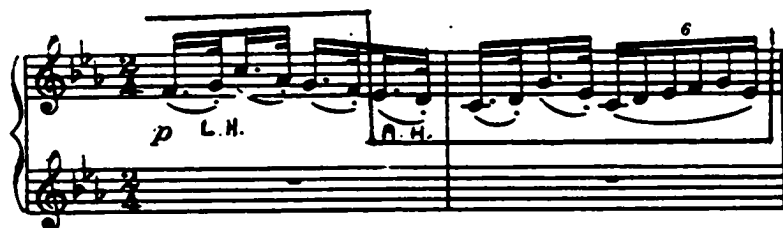
be changed every beat from measures 24 through 27. The half note values in measures 28-29 indicate full-bar pedals in each measure. The pedal is left down through measures 30-31. The pedal is changed every beat in measures 32-33 and measures 36-48. Full measure pedals are used again in measures 34-35. The duration of the pedal is determined by the bass note values in measures 49-52. In measures 53-54 the pedal is left down for three beats and changed on the rest in measure 54. The pedal is changed every beat in measures 55-56 and 59-60. In measures 57-58 and 61-62 the bass note value determines the length of the pedal (four beats). In measure 63 one must catch the B flat in the bass with the sostenuto pedal which is left down for the duration of the tie. The damper pedal is changed every beat in measures 63-69 and in measures 71-72. In measure 73 the pedal is changed on beat one and beat two and remains down through the ties (through measure 74). Measures 75-76 are pedaled exactly the same as measures 73-74, except that there should be no pedal on the second beat of measure 76. The pedal is changed every measure in measures 77-78 and left down for two measures in measures 79-80. The pedal is changed every beat from measures 81 through 90. In measures 91-94 the tied half notes in the bass determine the length of the pedal. The scales in measures 95-96 should be pedaled with an upper-half pedal (half-damping).¹ The pedal should be

¹See page 13.

gradually released through the last five notes of the scale. The low bass E flat at the end should have a short pedal because of the fermata.

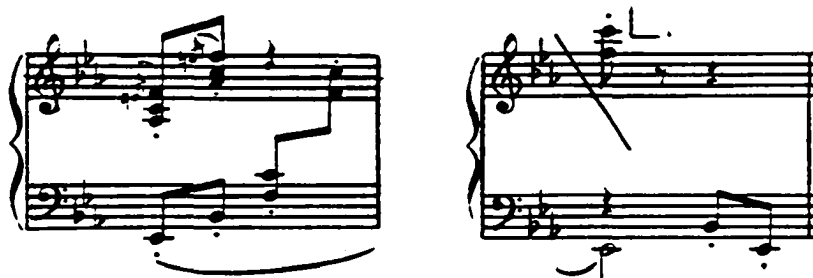
There are a number of passages in the prelude where redivision of notes between hands is beneficial. In measures 1-6 the left hand should be over a five-tone pattern consisting of F, G, A flat, B flat, and C (f minor) and the right hand should be over a five-tone pattern consisting of C, D, E flat, F, G (c minor).

Ex. 55: measures 1-3



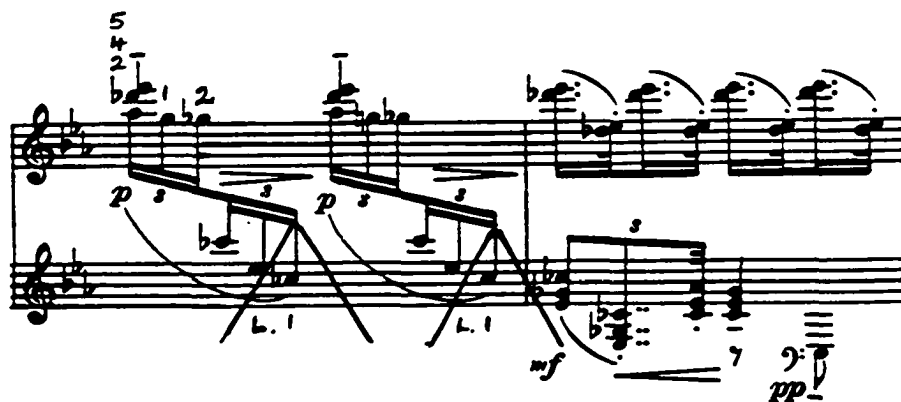
In measure 21 the fifth in the treble is more easily played with the left hand.

Ex. 56: measures 20-21



In measures 42-43 it is very difficult for the left hand to get to the C flat major chord in measure 43. Redividing the notes in measure 42 and using thumb for the left hand solves the problem.

Ex. 57: measures 42-43



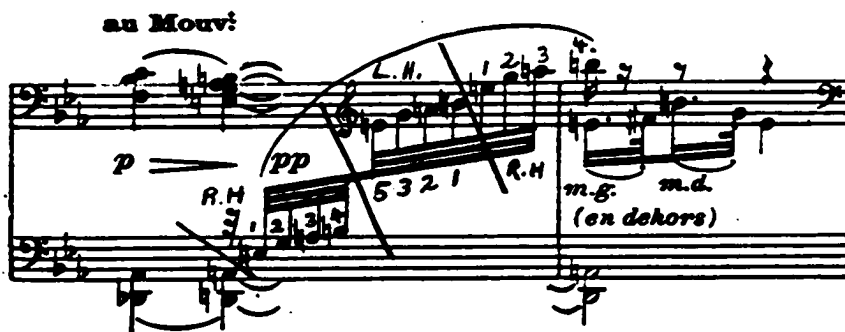
Measures 53-54 are much easier to play if the right hand plays the trill for three beats with one pedal. Left hand should take over the trill on beat two of measure 54 with a gradual release of the pedal.

Ex. 58: measures 53-54



In measure 69 the first A flat is easier to reach with the right hand thumb. The playing of the pentatonic scales (measures 73 and 75) is facilitated by dividing the scales four notes to each hand. The composer indirectly suggests this by marking left hand to play the E in measure 74.

Ex. 59: measures 73-74



The piquancy and light, mischievous humor displayed in this prelude show yet another side of Debussy's many-faceted character and make it well worth the performer's time to conquer the many problems which the piece presents.

Prelude XII: Minstrels

Thompson¹ and Schmitz² agree that the prelude was inspired not by medieval troubadours or minstrels providing entertainment for feudal nobility, as one might first assume from the title, but rather by the American minstrel show of Negro heritage. Schmitz notes that the American minstrel show originated around 1828 in plantations and the performers were household servants.³ Schmitz lists some of the main features of the minstrel show as "cake-walks, cornet solos, scratchy banjos and drums, a sentimental song, a few corny jokes, and feline dances."⁴ Minstrel groups first appeared in Europe around 1900. Debussy was charmed by the minstrel groups and, as Schmitz says:

. . . this prelude is a tribute to his keen sense of observation and capture of the mime and humor, the quickly shifting moods and offerings of the show, the catlike precision and suppleness of the rhythmic concept.⁵

Schmitz discerns in measures 1-8 of the prelude an imitation of the banjo with cornet and drums and the beginning of the dance. Measures 9-34 are seen as evocative of tap dancing with possibly some pirouettes or somersaults. Schmitz sees measures 35-44 as an imitation of a corny joke.

¹Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 267.

²Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 160.

³Schmitz, p. 160.

⁴Schmitz, p. 160.

⁵Schmitz, p. 160.

There are two passages suggestive of drums. In fact, in the first of these passages (measures 58-63), the composer has written Quasi tambouro (like a drum). The parallel passage is measures 81-84. Measures 63-77 is thought by Schmitz to be an imitation of a sentimental song.¹

The tonal feeling is generally diatonic with the principal key being G major. The use of the tonic triad with added sixth may be noted throughout the prelude. There are temporary excursions into the keys of F sharp major (measures 16-17 and measures 45-49), E flat major (measures 26-31), A flat major (measures 51-52), and A major (measures 55-56) and a rather interesting passage containing parallel, chromatic augmented triads (measures 37-44), in which the key is indeterminant but there is always a return to G major. Another interesting passage is the syrupy sweet chromaticism of the sentimental song (measures 63-74), which also remains in the key of G major.

The pedal should not be used wherever there are staccatos. Two-note slurs should be pedaled as in measures 10-11 and 13-14.

¹Schmitz, p. 161.

Ex. 60: measures 13-14



Accent pedaling on the last three chords in measure 18 is needed. These pedals should be very short so that the staccatos are not blurred. Pedaling only the slurs in measures 28-31 gives a jazzy, syncopated effect. Schmitz notes the use of jazz elements in the minstrel show.¹

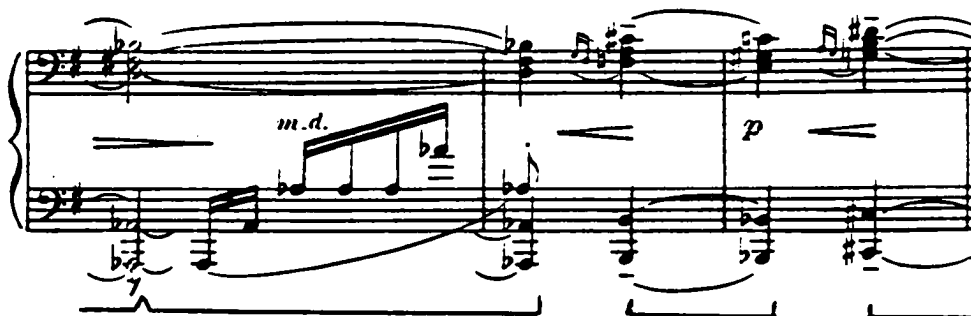
Ex. 61: measures 28-29



Note values that are impossible to hold with the hands determine the pedaling in measures 39-44. The two-note slurs in quarter notes in measures 42-44 are also pedaled.

¹Schmitz, p. 160.

Ex. 62: measures 41-43



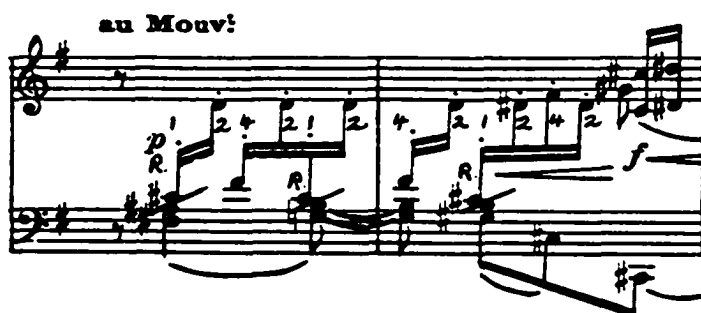
The three-note slurs from measures 46-47 and measures 48-49 should be pedaled. Otherwise, there should be no pedal from measures 45-62. The bass note values determine pedaling in the passage from measures 63-77. There is no more pedaling for the remainder of the prelude except for the chord in measure 86. The extreme staccatissimo touch implied by the term sec precludes the use of the pedal. The soft pedal should be used in several passages, i.e., measures 51-52, 55-57, and 81-84.

Debussy is careful to indicate that the ornaments are to be played on the beat (les "gruppetti" sur le temps).¹ The touch should be light but firm throughout much of the prelude, but there are outbursts of sound where the tone quality is almost brassy (measures 16-18, 26, 86, and 89-90). The tone should be firm but singing in the sentimental song (measures 63-74).

¹Schmitz, p. 160.

For the most part, the division of notes between hands works well. A passage that does require redivision, however, is measures 45-49. The lower notes of the left hand part are connected, but the sixteenth notes which alternate with right hand sixteenth notes are marked staccato. Execution of the passage is greatly facilitated by playing all of the staccato sixteenth notes in the right hand.

Ex. 63: measures 45-46



In the drum passages, the composer indicates the division of notes between hands by writing right hand note stems up and left hand note stems down in measures 58-62 which are to be repeated in the same manner in measures 81-84.

There are only a few passages where special attention must be given to fingering problems. The principal place concerns the grace notes in measures 40, 42-43 and 76.

CHAPTER IV

PRÉLUDES, BOOK II

Although Thompson sees the second set of Préludes as more uneven in quality than the first set,¹ Schmitz feels that:

. . . the two books are a natural sequel to each other in their musical texture, moods, techniques, subject matters. That the second set should at times prove more advanced in its musical language, more difficult in its interpretations, and perhaps tending toward a more abstract treatment of its literary connotations, is only a normal evolution, not a breach of style.²

Schmitz' opinion appears more valid than Thompson's from a present day vantage point, in that, in the light of present musicological and theoretical knowledge, the more dissonant polytonal and atonal style and more advanced compositional style found in the second book is seen as natural progress, not as regression.

Prelude I: Brouillards (Fog)

The "advanced musical language" spoken of by Schmitz is immediately apparent in this prelude. The polytonality hinted at in some of the preludes of Book I is thoroughly exploited here. The musical effect is one of unreality, of

¹Oscar Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., Inc., 1937), p. 268.

²E. Robert Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pierce, 1950), p. 129.

isolation, of unreasoned fear of the unseen and the unknown. As Schmitz says, ". . . the imagination of evil spirits, lurking dangers, awesome happenings brings a shiver of Poe-like intensity."¹ Thompson calls the prelude a "Whistlerian sketch with moments of luminosity in a fog of tonalities, with the minor second playing its typical Debussyan part."² These half-step relationships are both melodic and harmonic. In measure 1 minor seconds occur in the left hand between the roots of the C major and b diminished triads. The melodic half-step may be observed by comparing the triad in left hand with the right hand note patterns in thirty-second notes. The last three thirty-second notes are a half-step above or below each note in the triad much of the time. The half-step relationship is present throughout much of the prelude and is the basis for the bitonality.

The upper (right hand) part of this bitonal relationship is in Phrygian mode on E flat. (It cannot be E flat minor, as Schmitz suggests, because of the F flats.) The lower (left hand) part is in C major throughout much of the piece. Schmitz notes pentatonic patterns in measure 4 in right hand which produces a bitonal "struggle . . . of black keys against white keys."³ This same type of bitonality is also found in measures 9-17 although changed from

¹Schmitz, p. 162.

²Thompson, p. 268.

³Schmitz, p. 163.

flats to sharps. Measures 5-9 again are Phrygian mode versus C major. The unison passage from measures 18 through 20 and its sequel (measures 22-24) begin with a d minor feeling but this changes to c sharp minor (the half-step relationship again). Because measures 18-24 are in unison, the harmonic tension created by the bitonality is reduced. There are some bitonal interjections (measures 20-21) alluding to material from the first of the prelude. There is a return to the opening material from measures 24 through 28. This is followed by F# arpeggios with a dissonant G natural in right hand, where once again the half-step relationship may be observed in measures 29-30. The grace note chords in this passage are polytonal (C major against G flat major and D major against A flat major). The next passage (measures 32-37) is also polytonal with the upper part all black keys (G#, D#, and D flat, A flat) and the lower part in a chromatic G major texture. The material from measures 18 through 24 is restated in measures 38-42, once as originally stated and once in diminution (measure 41). In the final passage, there are two restatements of the first material (measures 43-46 and measures 48-52) and the second material (measures 47-48).

Schmitz warns against over-pedaling in this prelude. He feels that the pedal should be "frequently changed and half-depth."¹ This upper-half pedaling or

¹Schmitz, p. 164.

half-damping has been discussed at some length in the first chapter.¹ The pedal should be changed every eighth note in measures 1, 3, 4, 7, and 8. In general, it is necessary to divide the musical content into smaller units for clarity and precise tonal emphasis. Hence, this number lends itself to a feeling of the eighth note as the beat. In measure 2 the pedal should be changed every two beats. In measure 4 the pedals on beats two and four should be very shallow. In measures 5-6 the pedal is changed on beats one, three, and four. The pedal is left down from beat three of measure 8 through measure 9. The pedal should be changed on the first beat of every measure in measures 10-11. In measures 11-12 the pedal should be released on the grace note and depressed on the half note. The pedal should be changed every two measures in measures 12-15. The pedal is changed on beats one and three in measure 16 and beat three in measure 17. The pedal should be depressed to half-depth in the technique known as half-damping from measures 10 through 17. In the unison octaves (measures 18-19 and 22-23), each octave should be pedaled using the half-damping technique. In measures 20-21 lower half-pedaling should be used on beats three and four so that the dotted quarter note is fully sustained. A similar technique should be used in measure 24 on the first C major triad. Measures 25-28 are pedaled like the opening four measures. In measures 29-30 the pedal

¹See page 13.

is depressed on the beginning note of the arpeggio and released on the final note. A short accent pedal should be used on the eighth note chord after the grace notes in each measure. The pedal should be changed on beats one and three from measures 32 through 37. In measures 38-39 each bass octave is pedaled using the half-damping technique. The pedal remains depressed through measure 40. In measure 41 the pedal is up until the last eighth note of the measure and remains down until the first beat of measure 43. The pedal is changed on the first beat of every measure from measures 43 through 46. The pedal remains down from the first beat of measure 47 to the end of the piece.

The soft pedal should be used from the beginning through measure 27. It is released in measure 28 and remains up through measure 31 to allow for the crescendo to a forte plane in measures 29-30. The soft pedal is depressed again in measure 32 and remains down to the end of the prelude.

The composer gives a definite indication of the touch needed when he states that the sound is to be extrêmement égal et léger (extremely uniform and light). This injunction applies mainly to the thirty-second note passages in right hand although left hand must be soft also. To execute this type of passage, the arm must be fully poised and the fingers must play almost

on the nail.¹ Matthay states that the fully poised arm is achieved in balancing "the whole arm by raising muscles, causing it (as it were) to float above or on the keyboard."² Matthay also calls this technique "'arm off.'"³ This "arm off" feeling is particularly useful in the passage from measures 32 through 37.

A rather unusual marking is used at the end of the prelude (measure 50). The term, Presque plus rien, is translated "almost nothing left." This is the only instance in Debussy's keyboard compositions where this term appears and reflects his attempt to obtain as soft and delicate a tonal shading as possible. To achieve this effect for the final left hand chords, the performer must play with the fingers almost flat. The wrist must be below the key surface before each chord is played and must lift in as the chord is played.

Closely paralleling the problem of tone control is that of achieving a good balance. In measures 10-15 the composer has used a third staff and tenuto marks to set off the right hand melody in half and quarter notes. This part must be heard above the other part (which is marked *piu pianissimo*). In the passage from measures 32

¹See page 50 for a more complete discussion of this technique.

²Tobias Matthay, The Visible and Invisible in Piano-forte Technique (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 27.

³Matthay, p. 32.

through 37, the left hand has the melodic line which must "sing out" above the rest of the texture. Throughout the prelude the performer must be careful to "shape" phrases as the composer has precisely indicated by means of crescendo, diminuendo, and tenuto markings.

Although this prelude is not programmed as frequently as some of the other preludes, it certainly should be. The dissonant, polytonal sounds heard in the prelude display a quality in Debussy's music that is not often realized or recognized.

Prelude II: Feuilles mortes (Dead Leaves)

Thompson feels that Debussy has used chord formulas in this prelude which "represent . . . the sense of melancholy in nature."¹ Schmitz also recognizes in the prelude a mood reminiscent of

. . . the Rite of Autumn, in which the falling leaves are a signal of the suspension of life, creating a static expectancy, a mood of intense regret of a past now so far gone, of great sadness and the poignant melancholy of fall²

The key feeling of the prelude is vague. Thompson notes that the key signature is that of C sharp minor but that the opening chords are not in that key.³ There is a C# outline in the bass in measure 2 which suggests a C# tonal center, but this tonal feeling is short-lived. There is a return to a C# feeling at measure 15, measures 41-43, and measures 50-52 (the final measures). The G# pedal from measures 19 through 30 may be considered as a dominant pedal in C# minor, although the harmonies above the pedal do not suggest this key. Measures 31-35 center around an F# major triad, the sub-dominant of C# major which gives further evidence of a C# tonal center. The G# feeling returns in measures 37-40. Other temporary key centers suggested by pedal-points include A (measures 6-9) and G (measures 10-14), although again the harmonies above do not support

¹Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 268.

²Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, pp. 164-165.

³Thompson, p. 268.

these tonal centers as major or minor keys. Schmitz notes: "The harmony fluctuates rapidly in its coloring and in its choice of tone centers; a state of constant suspense, of avoidance of a defined status is created."¹ Other tonal devices include a whole-tone scale in the melodic line (measures 21-24) and polytonality (measures 25-34).

Debussy's choice of harmonic materials in the prelude is most interesting. Inverted minor ninth chords progressing in parallel motion open the prelude (gliding chords). The composer also makes use of added seconds in triads and seventh chords (measures 6-14). The parallelism for which Debussy is noted is readily apparent in these measures. Eleventh chords in parallel movement appear in measures 23-24. Measures 25-30 contain an ostinato of parallel major triads with enharmonic spelling. The rapid alternation of major triads in measures 32-35 weakens any sense of tonal center. In measures 38 and 40 a polychordal effect is produced by combining an E# major-minor seventh chord with a G# major-minor seventh chord. Parallel major triads are seen again in measures 47-48.

The complex harmony used in the prelude demands a careful use of the damper pedal. In general, note values will determine the length of time which the pedal should be

¹Schmitz, p. 165.

depressed. At the beginning the pedal should be changed on the first beat of every bar. The pedal should be released throughout all unison passages (measures 4-5 and 44-46). In measure 6 the pedal is depressed on beat one and changed on beat three. In measure 7 the pedal is changed on every beat. The pedal remains down from beat three of measure 7 to beat one of measure 9. The pedal is changed on the first beat of every measure from measures 9 through 16. The pedal is not used in measures 17-20. Shallow half-damping is used in measures 21-24 with changes on every chord. The pedal is changed on the first beat of every measure in measures 25-27. It is changed every two measures in measures 27-30. At measure 31 the pedal is changed on beat one and remains down through the dotted eighth note in measure 32. A pedal is needed on the second dotted eighth chord for resonance in measure 32. Pedaling similar to that done in measures 31-32 is needed for measures 32-33. The pedal is changed at measure 35, again at measure 36, and released on the f minor chord. The pedal is changed every measure from measures 37 through 43. The pedal should be changed on every chord in measure 47. The pedal is changed on beat one of measure 48 and released on the rest in measure 49. The pedal is depressed on beat one of measure 50 and remains depressed to the end because it is impossible to sustain the tied C# in the treble otherwise.

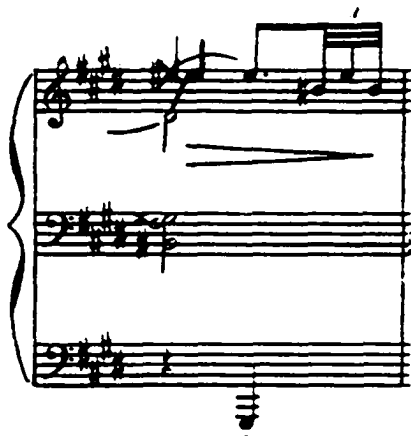
The soft pedal should be used extensively in the prelude, especially in those passages marked *pianissimo* or *pianississimo*.

Redivision of notes between hands in some of the widely-spaced chords is helpful to every performer and is essential to those with small hands. It is possible to redivide such chords in measures 1-3.

Ex. 65: measures 1-3

In other widely-spaced chords where redivision is impossible, another solution exists. In measures 21-24 it is effective to block the lower notes and play them as grace notes to the melodic tone which comes on the beat. It is also helpful, in this case, to sustain with the fingers the two tones immediately under the melody. The pedal will be sustaining the lowest tones. In measure 38, if the performer cannot reach the ninth in the right hand, the D# should be played on the beat with the E# following immediately after.

Ex. 66: measure 38



Touch and tone control are particularly important in a piece which remains on such a soft dynamic plane. It would be well to reiterate the technique used for playing soft chords which occur in the opening measures and throughout the prelude. Before playing each chord, the wrist must be below key level and the fingers must lie flat, resting on the key surface. The chord is produced by lifting in with the wrist and, at the same moment, gently stroking the key with the flat cushion of the finger tip. There should be an effortless, "floating" sensation in the arm as the tone is produced.

There are some interesting dynamic effects indicated in measures 10-12. The composer has indicated a crescendo on the third beat of measures 10-11, dropping back instantly to a piano level on the next beat, a subito piano effect.

The performer must take particular pains with the balance of melody and accompaniment, always difficult in a piece on such a soft dynamic plane. Balance is particularly difficult in the passage from measures 25 through 30. The composer has taken great pains to show the appropriate balance by indicating a pianississimo level for the right hand chordal ostinato and a piano level for the left hand melody. He has also indicated that this melody is to be "brought out a little" (un peu en dehors). (The chords in right hand, incidentally, may be played with greater control and accuracy by thinking thumb notes on each chord.)

The soft, melancholy beauty of this prelude makes it a piece of suitable contrast to be programmed, perhaps, between two other preludes of greater vitality and brilliance.

Prelude III: La Puerta del Vino (The Gate of Wine)

The inspiration for this prelude was a postcard sent by Manuel de Falla to Debussy. The postcard was a picture of La Puerta del Vino, one of many gates in the famous Alhambra Palace in Grenada. The palace was built by Moors after their invasion of Spain and dates back to the thirteenth century. It is Schmitz' view that the prelude is not so much a description of the Alhambra or the gate as it is of the earthy swirl of life in front of it. The prelude attempts to depict the delights of wine and music, flamenco singing, and drunken revelry. The habanera rhythm of the piece adds the element of dance to the scene.¹ Schmitz feels that:

It forms, with "Soirée dans Grenade" and "La sérénade interrompue," a felicitous Spanish tryptych for the piano, by this man who never visited Spain and yet was recognized by the greatest master of its music, de Falla, as having written its truest art music²

A variety of tonal and harmonic elements is used in the prelude. The ostinato in the bass establishes D flat major as the primary key, although many contrary tonal elements appear against it. This, of course, is the basis for polytonality, in which this piece abounds. At the beginning of the prelude, fifths on white keys are above the D flat major bass line. A second conflicting

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 166.

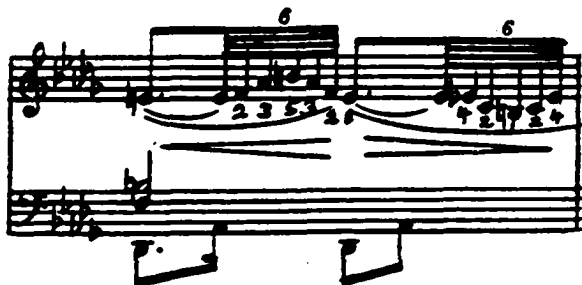
²Schmitz, pp. 166-167.

element to the bass is an artificial scale (B-C-D-E-F-A flat-B). The dissonance in measures 5-16 increases with the prominence of the E natural against a harmonic F which produces a conflict of minor against major. The passage approaches bitonality in the latter half of measures 13, 14, and 16. This is accomplished by use of the melodic C against the harmonic B (C flat) as well as the melodic E (F flat) against the harmonic F. The ultimate harmonic goal is the D flat major triad in measures 19-20. Measure 21 contains an inverted C dominant ninth chord which is repeated in measure 25. The succeeding dominant ninth chords progressing in parallel movement over the D flat pedal produce additional polychordal effects from measures 25 through 30. This device, previously mentioned in the study and common to Debussy's compositional style, is called planing or gliding chords. A chromatic sequence of parallel major and minor triads over the D flat pedal in measures 35-41 continues the polytonal feeling. Measures 42-43 are similar to the opening measures. B flat major is established in measure 44. This tonal feeling begins to break down in measure 50. The key feeling continues to be vague after this until measure 62 when the A flat in the bass functions as a dominant bringing back D flat major. In the passage from measures 50-66 the composer enhances the dissonant effect by frequent superimposition of augmented triads on major triads on the same root. Examples of this are found in measures 50-54. Augmented eleventh chords (measures 55-57) and parallel half-diminished seventh

chords (measure 58, beat three through measure 59) are also used. Augmented dominant seventh chords over a pedal A flat occur in measures 62-64. The dissonant effects first heard in measures 5-16 are restated in measures 66-74. Inverted dominant ninths are used toward the end as they were in an earlier parallel passage. The final cadence chord is interesting in that the composer adds a second above the root in the D flat major chord.

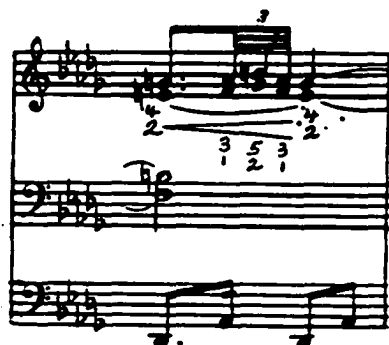
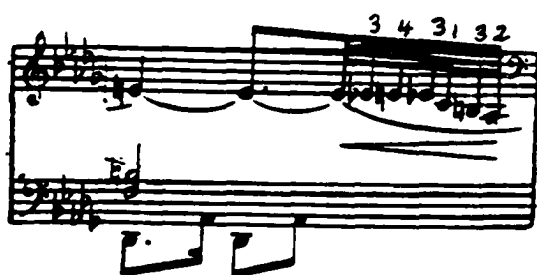
The fingering is, for the most part, conventional in the prelude. There are three places where correct fingering is particularly critical to successful execution. These passages are measures 13-14, measure 16, measure 72, and measure 74.

Ex. 67: measure 13

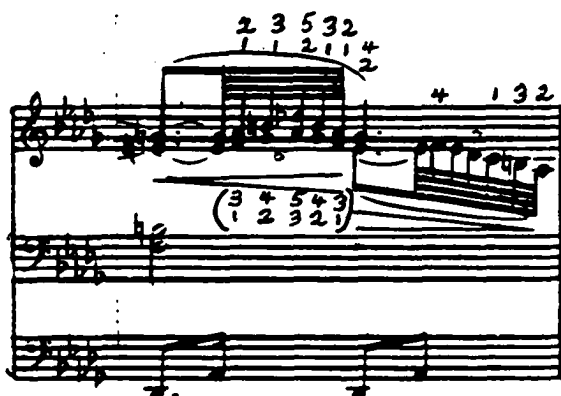


Ex. 68: measure 16

Ex. 69: measure 72

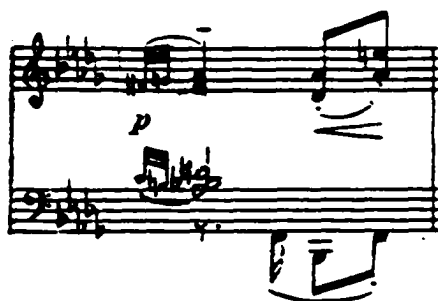


Ex. 70: measure 74



There are several passages where redivision of notes between hands is essential for ease and control. One such passage occurs in measures 55-56. While it is possible to play the passage as notated, it is difficult to achieve the light, graceful (gracieux) quality required when the thumbs interlock on the chord. The following redivision solves the problem:

Ex. 71: measure 55



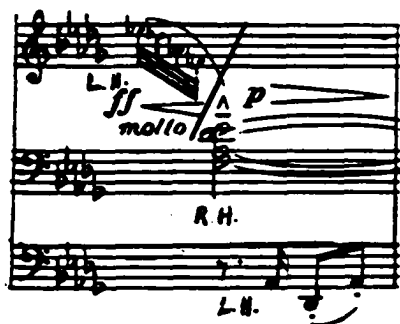
In measures 59-61 it is awkward to play a grace note in the left hand going to double notes. The following redivision with the grace note in right hand makes it possible to play the passage with sufficient lightness and control:

Ex. 72: measures 59-61



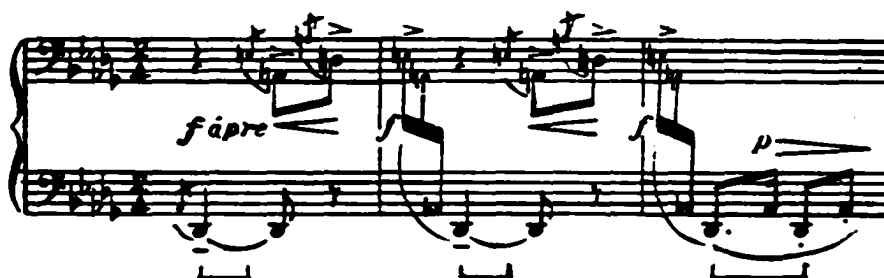
In measure 85 it is awkward for the left hand to play the chord on the middle staff and the bass note in the lowest staff. This awkwardness is removed if the grace notes are played with the left hand and the chord with right hand.

Ex. 73: measure 85



Effective use of accent pedaling at the first enhances the dance character of the piece. Care must be taken not to pedal the grace notes and the pedal must be released on the staccato eighth notes.

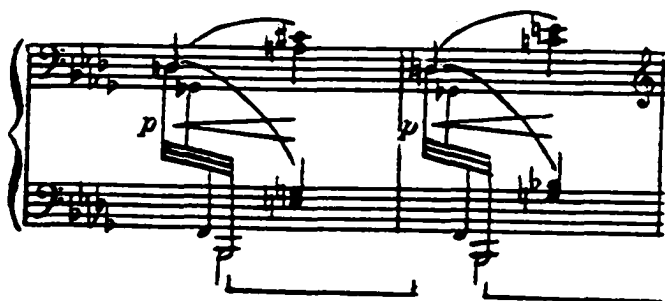
Ex. 74: measures 1-3



There are several instances where this type of pedaling is not appropriate. In most cases where long note values cannot be held with the fingers, the pedal must be used. Also, the composer's device of putting ties after chords that do not connect to other notes, including ties across barlines, is used to indicate pedals sustained beyond the normal note values of the tones. Examples of this are found in measures 21, 25, 26, 79-80, 83, and 84. The ties

across the bar lines in measures 79-80 indicate that the pedal should be left down through both measures. It would be well to reiterate that in every passage where there are grace notes, the pedal must not go down until after the grace notes. In some instances the composer indicates that the first grace note is to be sustained with fingers while the rest are released, i.e., measures 50-51, 53-54, and 58. The pedal would still be depressed after the grace notes.

Ex. 75: measures 53-54



Two measures that are more effective without pedal are measures 52 and 59. An unusual pedaling may be done at the end which is most effective. In this case the pedal is gradually phased out by raising it from full pedal to half-pedal to quarter-pedal. The pedal is fully depressed in measure 89 to add resonance to the octave D flat.

Ex. 76: measures 86-90



A passage where half-pedaling is desirable is measures 35-41. The pedal should be changed on each beat with the pedal going from full-depth to quarter-depth.

The soft pedal may be used to good effect in the following passages: measures 55-56, 58-61, 66-69, 80-84, and 86-90.

The composer indicates that the piece is to be played "with sudden changes of extreme violence and passionate gentleness" (avec de brusques oppositions d'extrême violence et de passionnée douceur). There are obvious implications here regarding touch and tone. Two passages are marked âpre, which is translated "biting" (measures 1-4 and 42-44). This type of tone quality is achieved with a sudden, hard grip of the nail joint. The quality is modified a great deal in measure 5 which has a piano dynamic level along with a très expresif (very expressive) marking which would imply a tone without the sharp biting quality.

This is achieved with a more gradual stroke from the nail joint. The crescendo and diminuendo in measure 13 and parallel passages should be a bit more than one would normally expect (again because of the "extreme contrast" needed). The chord at measure 21 should have the "sharp" quality mentioned earlier. The same chord in measure 25 is played in a completely different manner. It should be extremely light, almost weightless in feeling. All the chords in this passage (measures 25-30) should be played in a similar way. This delicate touch is needed again in measures 55-61 and measures 83-84.

There are small tempo changes that are effective throughout the piece. At measure 31 it is effective to slow down a bit. There should be a little pulling back at measures 40-41. This is presumed at any passage immediately preceding au Mouvement. On beat two of measure 44 the tempo should broaden a bit for the "passionnément" section. The tempo returns to the original tempo at measure 50.

The performer must be very careful to play the correct rhythm in measures 13-14 and 72-74. He must count sixteenths through both of these passages to insure that the sixty-fourth notes are played immediately after the fourth sixteenth of each beat. Otherwise, there is a temptation to begin the sixty-fourth note passages too soon.

This prelude is an excellent recital piece and is effective when programmed singly, in a group with contrasting preludes, or as an encore.

Prelude IV: "Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses" (The Fairies are exquisite dancers)

As in La Danse de Puck from Book I, Debussy has turned to mythology for his inspiration. Schmitz notes that:

Fairies became associated with the purest aspirations of knighthood . . . ; immortalized as the Eternal Feminine, shy, capricious but tender, diminutive and fleet in their motions, enchanting in their capacity for beauty and grace of motion They live in a rarefied atmosphere, free from ugliness of worldly ills and squalor.¹

Thompson sees the prelude as "a work of gossamer lightness and of a darting sort of virtuosity."² The grace, quickness, and lightness of these fairy dancers is strikingly evoked in Debussy's music.

The harmonic and tonal analysis in this prelude is as elusive as any of the fairies the composer attempts to depict. There is a certain similarity between the bitonal effects in this prelude and in Brouillards, although the bitonality is much stronger in the earlier prelude. There is here, as in Brouillards, the opposition of black keys versus white keys (C major and A flat minor). These polytonal figures occur in the opening sections (measures 1-4) and again in measures 18-23 and measures 101-116. Other polytonal effects may be seen in measures 42-46, 49, 51, 55, and 58-64. There are sections where the

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 169.

²Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 268.

tonality is extremely nebulous although not bitonal. These include measures 27-41 and measures 67-72. The key of E flat major is found in measures 6-10 which displays a deceptive tonal feeling. Dorian mode on D flat occurs from measures 11 through 14. Measures 24-28 have a feeling of D flat major with a long A flat dominant and pedal tone A flats, but the dominant never resolves to tonic and the passage becomes more chromatic and begins to lose its D flat feeling from measure 27 on. The passage beginning at measure 67 and continuing through measure 72 is most interesting from a tonal standpoint. Although the passage contains eleventh chords found in tonal music, none of the chords progress as they would in functional harmony. The passage is tonally ambiguous.

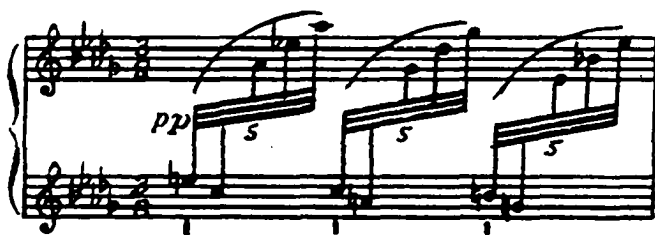
Because of these unusual tonal qualities as well as the "rapid and light" character required, pedaling must be carefully and subtly executed. To achieve the light quality called for at the beginning, the performer must use only half-damping (upper half-pedaling) and change each beat. This type of pedaling maintains the lightness without the sound getting too "dry" as it would if pedal were completely omitted. The performer should continue with half-damping through measure 23 with the exception of measures 11-12, where a full pedal is needed through both measures, and measure 16, where full pedal is used but released on the rest. Full pedaling is needed in measures 24-27 where changes will be governed by note

length and harmonic change. Lower half-pedaling is needed in the last half of measure 27 to maintain the pedal point A flat and yet avoid a blurring of harmonies in the upper parts. No pedal should be used from measures 28-31. Full pedal should be used from measures 32 through 100 with the exception of measures 57 and 73-75 where half-pedaling is used. Changes are dictated by harmonic and melodic changes. The pedal is changed every beat in measure 32 and on the first beat of measure 33. It remains depressed through measure 33 and the first two beats of measure 34. It is changed on beat three of measure 34 and again on beats two and three of measure 35. Full measure pedals are appropriate from measure 36 through measure 39. The pedal should be changed every two measures from measure 40 through measure 43. The pedal should remain depressed from measures 44 through 46. It is changed at measure 47 and again at measure 48. It then remains depressed until the second beat of measure 49 where a lower half-pedal is taken. The pedal is changed at measure 50 and again at measures 52 and 53. It is released on the third beat of measure 53. The pedal is depressed on beat one of measure 54 and released on beat three. The pedal is depressed on beat one of measure 55. It is changed at measure 58 and at measure 60. The pedal is changed on beats one and three of measures 62 and 63. It is changed on beat one of measure 64 and remains depressed through measure 65. The pedal is changed on beat one of measure 66 and released on beat three. The

pedal is depressed on beat one of measure 67 and changed on the first beat of every measure through measure 73. It remains depressed through measure 74. The pedal is changed on each chord in measure 75. It is changed on the second chord of measure 76 and remains depressed through measure 87. The pedal is changed at measure 88 and again on beat two of measure 91. It is changed on each chord in measure 92 and again on the second chord of measure 93. The pedal then remains down through beat one of measure 99. Half-damping is used again from measures 101 through 116 as at the beginning. A full-depth pedal is needed from beat three of measure 116 to the first beat of measure 122.

The fingering in the prelude is, for the most part, fairly conventional. It is, however, suggested that the thumb be used on the first left hand note in the opening passage.

Ex. 77: measure 1



Certain other passages where the redivision of notes between hands is necessary require careful fingering. These fingerings are indicated in the musical excerpts below.

The division of notes between hands indicated by the composer works very well for the most part. There are some passages which are greatly facilitated by redivision of the notes. One such passage is found in measures 36-39. The awkwardness caused by interlocking the hands as indicated is greatly relieved by the following redivision:

Ex. 78: measures 36-39

The image displays a musical score for measures 36-39, illustrating a redivision of notes between the left and right hands. The score is written on three systems of staves. The top system shows the original notation with labels 'L.H.' and 'R.H.' indicating the hands. The middle system shows the redivided notation, with labels 'L.', 'pp R.H.', and 'R.' indicating the hands. The bottom system shows the original notation again. The redivision is indicated by curved lines and arrows, showing how the notes are redistributed between the hands to facilitate playing. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#), and various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'p' and 'pp'.

In the passage from measures 40 through 44, the right hand should play the upper two staves except for the last sixteenth of measure 44.

Ex. 79: measures 40-44

The musical score for measures 40-44 is presented in two systems. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The right hand (R.H.) plays the upper two staves, and the left hand (L.H.) plays the lower two staves. The score includes fingerings, dynamics, and articulation marks.

Measure 40: The right hand plays a triplet of eighth notes (F#, A, C) with a slur and the marking "Retenu". The left hand plays a half note (F#) with a slur. The dynamic is *p*.

Measure 41: The right hand plays a triplet of eighth notes (A, C, E) with a slur and the marking "Retenu". The left hand plays a half note (A) with a slur. The dynamic is *p*.

Measure 42: The right hand plays a triplet of eighth notes (C, E, G) with a slur and the marking "Retenu". The left hand plays a half note (C) with a slur. The dynamic is *p*.

Measure 43: The right hand plays a triplet of eighth notes (E, G, B) with a slur and the marking "Retenu". The left hand plays a half note (E) with a slur. The dynamic is *p*.

Measure 44: The right hand plays a triplet of eighth notes (G, B, D) with a slur and the marking "Retenu". The left hand plays a half note (G) with a slur. The dynamic is *p*.

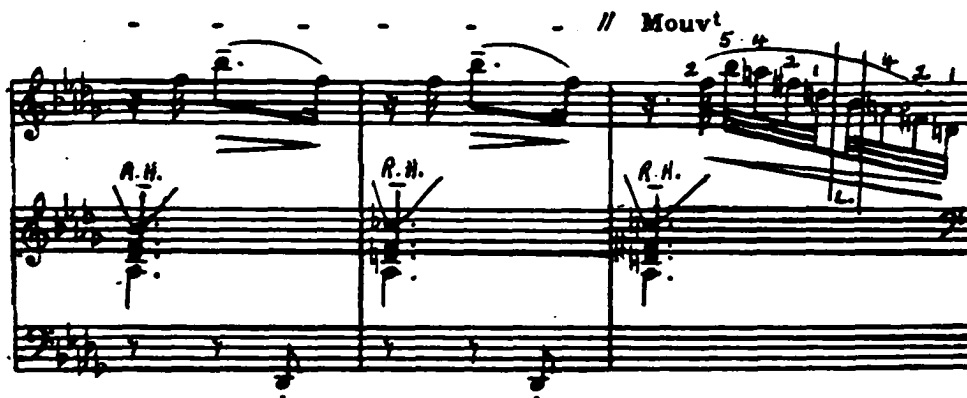
In measures 46-47 redivision is also necessary.

Ex. 80: measures 46-47



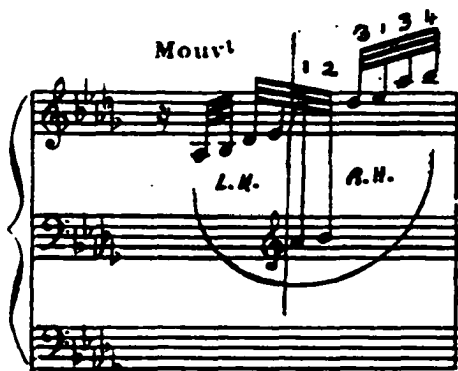
Because of the wide compass of the left hand chords in measures 53-55, the top note of each chord may be played with the thumb of right hand. In measure 55 the thirty-second note passage is greatly facilitated by playing one note with left hand.

Ex. 81: measures 53-55



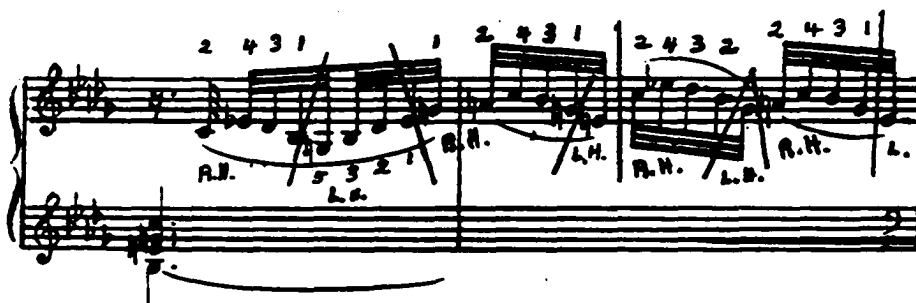
A redivision of notes is needed in measure 57 to facilitate the thirty-second note passage.

Ex. 82: measure 57



Redivision is also most helpful in the thirty-second note passage in measures 64-66. The passage is most awkward if played just with right hand.

Ex. 83: measures 64-66





As previously noted, the composer has indicated that a light touch is needed at the first of the prelude. The performer should strive to achieve a suspended "arm off" feeling. This effortless "floating" sensation has been previously described in earlier preludes.¹ A tone of greater body and firmness is needed in the middle sections of the prelude (measures 24-100). The lighter touch is needed again from measure 101 to the end.

This prelude is found less often than many of the others on recital programs. This is due to the technical facility and tone control required as well as the need for a subtle pedal technique which makes this number one of the more demanding of the preludes to perform.

¹See Chapter III, page 53.

Prelude V: Bruyères (Heather)

Heather is a bush which grows close to the ground. Its blossoms are small and of a lavender color. One may find it growing in the moors of Scotland, in Ireland, or on the coast of Brittany. Schmitz suggests that Debussy may have been captivated by the paintings of an artist who specialized in landscapes which included heather. These paintings were displayed in the Paris exhibits of the years 1900 to 1914 which Debussy visited frequently.¹ It is most likely that these lonely woodland scenes were the inspiration for this prelude.

The pentatonic melodic line at the beginning gives a folk-song quality to the piece reminiscent of La fille aux cheveux de lin from the first book of Préludes. The underlying key feeling for the prelude is A flat major with the middle section in B flat major.

Compound chords (ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords) enrich the harmonic texture of the prelude. Tonic ninth chords are used in measures 9, 10, 38, and 39. The tonic triad with added sixth, ninth, and seventh is found in measures 15-16. The supertonic eleventh chord is used in measures 9, 14, 15, and 39. Many of the chords are almost quartal in construction. (See measures 14-16 and measures 19-22.) This phenomenon may pertain to the pentatonic background of the prelude. In measures 24, 26,

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 171.

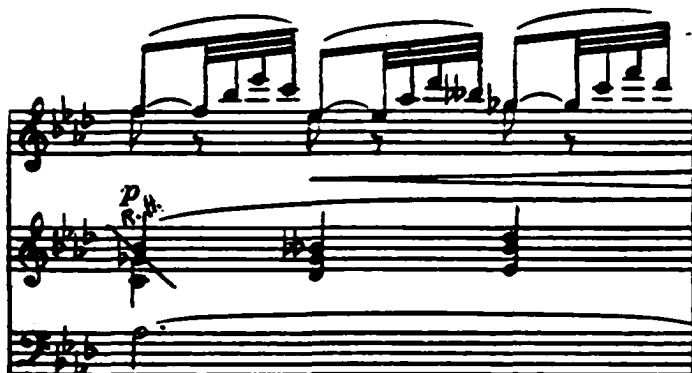
34, and 36, there is a subdominant triad with added second. The composer has used some lush sounding dominant thirteenth chords in measures 29-32. In general, the tonal materials look back to the romantic period rather than forward to the increased dissonance and bitonality of the twentieth century as in many of the other preludes in the second book.

The pedal should be used almost constantly throughout the prelude. Legato pedaling is needed through much of the piece with pedal changes in conventional places, i.e., at chord changes or significant melodic changes. The pedal is changed with the bass notes in measures 8-15. These bass notes are the supports that unify the melodic patterns into impressionistic sonorities. In measure 16 the pedal is changed on beats one, three, and five. In measures 19-20 the pedal is changed on each measure. Half-pedaling is employed for the first time in measures 21 and 22. The pedal should be changed every measure in measures 23-26 and every two beats in measures 27-28. As previously mentioned in the study, ties across bar lines indicate that the pedal remains down through those measures as in measures 29-30. The ties appearing at the end of measure 31 and at the beginning of measure 32 have the same effect. The soft pedal is effective if used at measures 49-50.

While the composer's division of notes between hands works well most of the time, there are some passages where redivision of notes between hands is helpful.

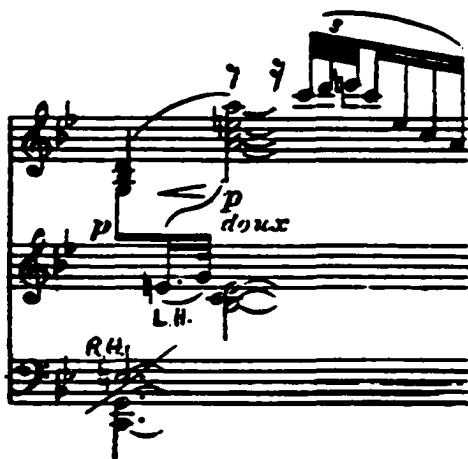
One such passage is measures 21-22 where redivision allows the performer to sustain the low A flat. In this case, the upper note in the middle staff is played with right hand thus:

Ex. 84: measure 21



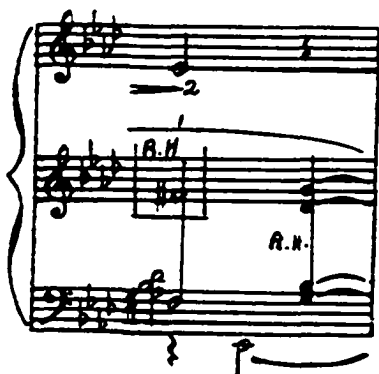
In measures 29 and 31 the excessive stretch of the left hand chord is relieved by playing the upper note of the chord with right hand.

Ex. 85: measure 29



In measure 47 the awkwardness of interlocking hands is relieved by playing the upper note of the left hand part with right hand. The third beat chord should be played with right hand.

Ex. 86: measure 47



The composer has indicated a tempo of $\text{♩} = 66$, the only tempo marking he has given in Book II. This seems a bit fast to achieve the "calm" mood indicated. A tempo of $\text{♩} = 56$ seems more appropriate to execute the thirty-second notes which appear for the first time in measure 14. At measure 23 the composer suggests a small tempo increase. In this case, the tempo of $\text{♩} = 66$ is appropriate. According to Frank Mannheimer, a *meno mosso* marking should appear at measure 29 with a return to *un peu animé* at measure 33.

The tempo of the prelude, then, is flexible and suggests the use of a slight rubato. A bit of "pushing on" (*accelerando*) is effective in measures 8-9 followed by a slight easing of the tempo (*ritenuto*) in measure 10. The

tempo should push on again in measures 11-12 with a ritardando in measure 13. Measures 14-15 are very strict with a slight pulling back in tempo toward the cadence point (measures 16-17). The tempo is then strict through measure 20 and pushes on slightly in measures 21-22. It is fairly strict from measures 23 through 28 although an easing of the tempo is needed in measure 28 to anticipate the slower section which follows in measures 29-32. At measure 37 the composer indicates a slight pulling back (Cédez). Measures 38-50 are similar to the first with a ritardando (en retenant) indicated at the end.

The tone quality throughout should be firm for the melodic lines. Care should be taken to play the detached notes in measure 9 short although the pedal remains depressed. The resulting tone has a lovely, bell-like quality. A very light, delicate quality is called for in measure 29 with a fuller tone required at measure 23. At measure 29 there is a negative accent, i.e., suddenly reducing the dynamic level after a big crescendo. The quality of the tone at measures 29-33 is colorless with very little dynamic inflection. Frank Mannheimer called this quality "clear white."

The prelude, though charming, is not difficult and might be a suitable alternate to La fille aux cheveux de lin and others as an introduction to the Préludes.

Prelude VI: General Lavine-eccentric

The prelude was inspired by Edward Lavine, a celebrated American vaudeville clown, who performed in Paris in 1910. He was a juggler as well as a clown, and was dressed as half soldier and half tramp. He was known as "General Lavine." Similarities between this prelude and Minstrels, as noted by Schmitz, include the mood, "the opposition of strident rhythms with sentimental moments," and even some of the motifs used. At the same time, Schmitz sees Lavine as "more discreet, more refined in his humor."¹ All in all, the piece is a delightful, light-hearted study in American humor.

The key feeling for the first section (measures 1-45) and the last section (measures 70-109) is F major, although this is mixed with a great deal of bitonality and chromaticism. In measures 1-10 there is a so-called "pedal ostinato"² consisting of three grace notes (G,G,C) and a C. This figure forms the outline of the dominant triad in F. Against this pedal ostinato, the composer has written a series of triads unrelated to the key of F (E flat minor, G major, B flat minor, etc.) which produces a polytonal sound. This alternation of major and minor triads is a favorite device of Debussy. From measures 11 through 22 the key of F major is heard. In fact,

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, pp. 172-173.

²Schmitz, p. 174.

the texture is pentatonic with the exception of a rather startling dissonant tone cluster at measure 17 (a prat fall?). A note of harmonic interest is the tonic triad with added sixth seen in measure 12, a harmony often used by Debussy. The chromaticism in measures 25-31 produces a tonal ambiquity which is not resolved until the return of F major in measures 31-38. A polytonal effect is produced in measures 31-32 with a B dominant seventh superimposed on a dominant (C) pedal point. Another tonally ambiguous passage is found in measures 44-45. Triads with various tonal centers over a pedal point A flat produce what Schmitz calls a "successive polytonality"¹ in measures 45-67. The remainder of the piece is similar to earlier passages. There is a final cadence in F major at the end.

Fingering choice is important at the very beginning of the piece. The grace notes are executed most easily with the following fingering:

Ex. 87: measure 1



¹Schmitz, p. 174.

At measure 15 the following fingering is recommended.

Ex. 88: measure 15



The passage at measures 23-28 requires a fingering which, at first, seems unorthodox, but will, with sufficient repetition, prove to be the most practical. The increased ease is produced by eliminating excessive extension in the hand.

Ex. 89: measures 23-28





For facility and accuracy measures 44 and 107 should be divided as indicated in measures 18 and 77.

Ex. 90: measures 44 and 107



A passage where performers with small hands would benefit by redivision is measures 94-95.

Ex. 91: measures 94-95



If the hand is very small, measures 11-12 could be redivided in a similar way.

It is important in the prelude that the pedal not blur the sharp piquant staccatos characteristic of Debussy. As has been previously noted, the composer used the term sec (dry) to indicate the shortest staccatissimo possible which also implies that the pedal should not be used.¹ The term appears several times in this prelude, the first of which is in the first measure. The only pedal necessary until measure 11 is rhythmic pedaling of the half note and quarter note C's. The pedal is also used for purposes of rhythmic emphasis and resonance from measures 11 through

¹Reimar Riefling, Piano Pedaling, trans. by Kathleen Dale (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. 8.

21 and in measure 43. In measures 15 and 16 short touches of half-damping (upper half-pedal) are needed on each dotted note for melodic emphasis. At measure 17 the pedal is used to reinforce the sforzando. It is released on the first beat of measure 18 and is not used in measure 18 (sec). In measures 23-28 the clumsy, ludicrous movements of the clown are portrayed in the music by pedaling only on the off-beat. (See Excerpt 89.) The sostenuto pedal is needed in measures 31-34 to sustain the pedal point C while the damper pedal is changed on each new harmony. Half-pedaling would be permissible in measure 33 in lieu of the sostenuto pedal.

Ex. 92: measures 31-34

The musical score for measures 31-34 shows a complex texture with multiple staves. The first staff is a treble clef, and the second is a bass clef. The music includes various dynamics: 'f' (forte) in measures 31 and 32, and 'p' (piano) in measure 33. The score is marked with 'S.P.' (Sostenuto Pedal) and includes a diagram of the pedal mechanism at the bottom.

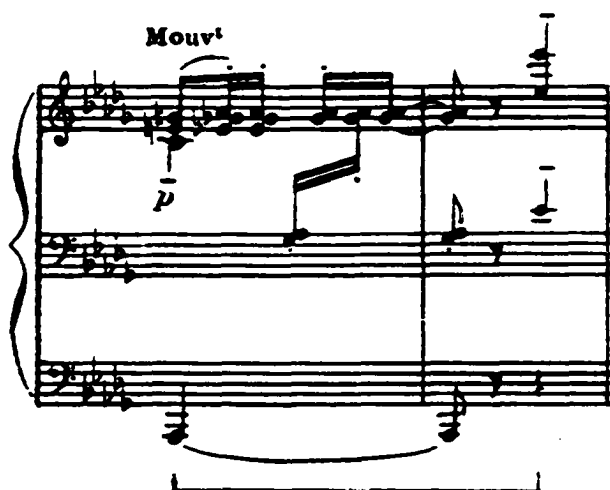
The technique of half-damping should be used in measures 45-46. Half-pedaling should be done in measures 57-58 as the dynamics are louder and the half-pedal helps sustain the pedal point A flat without blurring the upper

chords in measure 58. A full pedal is used on the bass A flat and half-pedaling is done on each eighth note chord following.

Ex. 93: measures 57-58

In measures 47, 49, 59, and 61 there are staccato sixteenths over a similar pedal point A flat which is impossible to sustain without pedal. Again, half-damping is needed to sustain the pedal tone without sacrificing the detached effect of the staccatos.

Ex. 94: measures 47-48



Accent pedals sustained for a full measure each are needed in measures 65-67. The pedal should be released on the last note of each measure.

Ex. 95: measures 65-66



Full measure pedals are needed for added resonance in measures 101-102.

Ex. 96: measures 101-102



The pedal is changed on beat one and released on the staccato eighth note on beat two in measures 103-106.

Ex. 97: measures 103-104



Of interest also in the prelude is the wide variety of touches required. In the opening measures a firm grip is required for the full-bodied drum beat of the opening grace notes which are marked strident (strident).

Immediately after this, the quality changes to light, dry staccato chords. This is achieved by a light, yet firm "plucking" from the nail joint of the finger. The contrast between strident and light, dry qualities lasts throughout most of the introduction although the grace notes in measure 8 are very soft.

The soft, discreet (discret) quality needed in the main body of the piece which begins at measure 11 is achieved by playing with the arm suspended, almost floating in feeling. This quality recurs through much of the rest of the piece. This mood is frequently interrupted by loud interjections as in measures 17, 31-32, 43-45, 51-52, 57-58, 63-69, etc., which add to the humorous effect.

The tempo is strict, almost military, as might be expected for a "general." There are passages where the strictness is relaxed. In the passage at measures 31-34, there is a slight broadening in measure 33. In the middle section of the piece (measures 45-69), the mood changes more frequently. Measures 46 and 58 are marked Trainé', which means slurred and *legatissimo*. These passages are a little broader in tempo. At Mouvement the tempo returns to normal. It is effective to broaden the tempo slightly beginning at measure 56 before the Trainé' at measure 58. The composer has marked a large *ritard* in measures 67-69 (Très retenu) and again in measures 94-98. There is then a quickening of the tempo from measure 99 to the end (Animez).

There are several matters of a technical nature which will aid the performer. To execute the grace notes each time with clarity and control, one must choose a rather light tone for the first grace note and crescendo to the long note. Otherwise, it is difficult to reiterate the repeated notes. In measures 23-28 it is easier to learn the fingering by playing just the middle score and noting where thumb and second finger play. In measure 47 and similar measures it is easier to sustain the thumb note if one thinks of the weight resting on that thumb while the lighter, staccato notes are played with a very light arm. The tone quality from measure 103 on should be of a hard, almost forced quality although the correct inflection is still needed for the grace notes.

This prelude is one of the most delightfully comical pieces that Debussy has written and makes an excellent foil when grouped with preludes of a more serious or brilliant nature.

Prelude VII: La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune
(The Reception Terrace in the Moonlight)

Schmitz observes that there is some question as to the source of the "poetic, esoteric, and charmingly tortuous title" of this prelude. Its origin is variously attributed to Pierre Loti's L'Inde Sous les Anglais in which there is a description of the terraces where counsel is held at moonlight and to a phrase from a letter by Rene Puaux which appeared in the newspaper Les Temps and described the coronation of King George V as Emperor of India, in which the author speaks of "'the terrace for moonlight audiences'"¹ Thompson agrees that this phrase from the letter of Puaux was the inspiration for the title.² The mysterious, sensuous, ethereal qualities heard in the piece hint of Oriental influence, although any connection between the music and the coronation ceremony is certainly tenuous. Schmitz sees the phrase from the letter as simply stimulating Debussy's imagination. Schmitz discerns in the music qualities of "tenderness, cold loneliness, passionate unrest, delight, and sensuous languor, . . . a sense of unreality with which moonlight endows all it touches."³ Thompson feels that this is

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 175.

²Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 269.

³Schmitz, p. 175.

. . . . one of the more sensuous and scented of the Preludes The sensibility of Debussy is essentially amorous, and in the moon-drenched scene is more of caress than of painting.¹

While all of these comments are simply speculation as to the inspiration and the mood of the piece, perhaps the truest statement comes from Celia Mae Bryant who says that this prelude is "as impressionistic as one will find in all of Debussy's music."

The tonality in the prelude is often obscure. There is, as Schmitz notes, some bitonality at the beginning.² The chords in the first measure are unrelated tonally. Taking into consideration the pedal point C# beginning at measure 2, the recurring C# dominant sevenths, a key signature of six sharps, and a final cadence chord of F# major, the underlying key feeling must be analyzed as F# major. A G dominant seventh chord above the dominant pedal point beginning at measure 2 produces the bitonal effect spoken of by Schmitz. The inverted mordent figuration above this intermittently outlines both harmonies. In measures 3-4 the use of the pedal in the series of unresolved and unrelated dominant seventh chords against the C# dominant results in a polytonal feeling. Measures 5-6 are similar tonally to the opening measures. A series of parallel major and minor triads in measures 7-9 lead to the key of B flat major at measure 9.

¹Thompson, p. 269.

²Schmitz, p. 176.

At measure 12 there is a return to F# major which lasts through measure 18. From measures 19 through 24 the key feeling is so obscure that any attempt at analysis is futile. A whole-tone basis is implied because of the French sixths and augmented dominants in measures 21-24. There is a tenuous feeling of E flat major from measures 25-27, although the presence of many unrelated triads greatly obscures the key feeling. Measures 28-31 are in C major, although again the use of unrelated chords (parallel dominant sevenths in second inversion this time) tends to undermine the key. There is a return to F# major at measure 32, although the continual bitonal struggles similar to the beginning are not resolved until the final cadence.

The composer uses one of his usual devices to indicate the pedaling, i.e., writing notes which are impossible to sustain to full duration without the pedal. In measure 1 the pedal is changed on every new harmony. It is changed on beat six of measure 1 and remains depressed until beat one of measure 3 where it is changed. The pedal is changed again on beat four of the same measure. In measure 4 the pedal is changed on beats one, two, four, five, and six. The pedal is changed on the first beat of measure 5 and remains depressed through measure 6, although it should be gradually released in measure 6 as the thirty-second note figuration descends into the lower register. The pedal

is changed on beats one, four, five, and six of measure 7. It is changed on beat four of measure 8 and remains down until beat three of measure 10. The pedal is actually released slightly before the beat at this point to accommodate the thirty-second staccato with legato pedaling on each successive left hand chord.

Ex. 98: measures 10-11

Legato pedal changes are used on beat six in measures 10-11. The pedal is changed on beats three and six of measure 12. It then remains depressed until beat four of measure 13. In measure 14 it is changed on beats one, three, and five. The pedal is changed on beat one of measure 15 and remains down until beat one of measure 16 where the pedal is changed. Lower half-pedaling should be used in measures 16-18. When the pedal is changed in these passages, the pedal should not be completely released but should come up to the depth of a very shallow half-pedal. The pedal is changed on beat five

of measure 16, beats one and four of measure 17, and beats one and five of measure 18. A full pedal is taken at measure 19. In measure 20 the pedal is changed on beats one and seven. A legato pedal change occurs on beat one of measure 21 and a half-pedal change is needed on beat four. In measure 22 a legato pedal change should be done on beat one, a half-pedal change on beat four, and full legato pedal changes on beats five and six. Measure 23 needs pedal changes on beats one and four. In measure 24 the pedal should be changed on beats one, five, and six. The pedal is changed on beats one, four, and six in measure 25, beats one, three, four, and six in measure 26 and beats one, four, and six in measure 27. In measures 28 and 30 the pedal is changed on beats one and four. The pedal is changed on every beat except the first in measure 29. It is changed on every beat in measure 31. In measure 32 the pedal is changed on beats one and four. The pedal is changed on the first beat of measure 33 and remains depressed until beat one of measure 34 where it is changed. It is changed again on beat four of the same measure. The pedaling in measure 35 is identical to that of measure 34 except that the pedal is also changed on the last sixteenth note in measure 35. It remains down until beat one of measure 37 where it is changed again. The pedal is changed on beat one of measure 38. In measure 39 the pedal is changed on each new harmony. In measure 40 the pedal is changed on beats one and four. The pedal is depressed on the first sixteenth note in measure

41 and changed on beat four. The pedal is changed only on the first beat of measures 42-43. The pedal is up for the grace note each time in measure 44 and is depressed to a very shallow upper half-pedal immediately after the chord is played.

Ex. 99: measure 44



The pedal then remains down until the end.

Although the fingering is conventional for the most part, there are some passages where special consideration and planning will conserve learning time. One such passage is measures 1-2. In this case, locating the placement of the third and fourth fingers is the key to successful execution of the passage.

Ex. 100: measures 1-2

8³ 1 3 1 4 3 3 1 3

un peu en dehors

8° b2

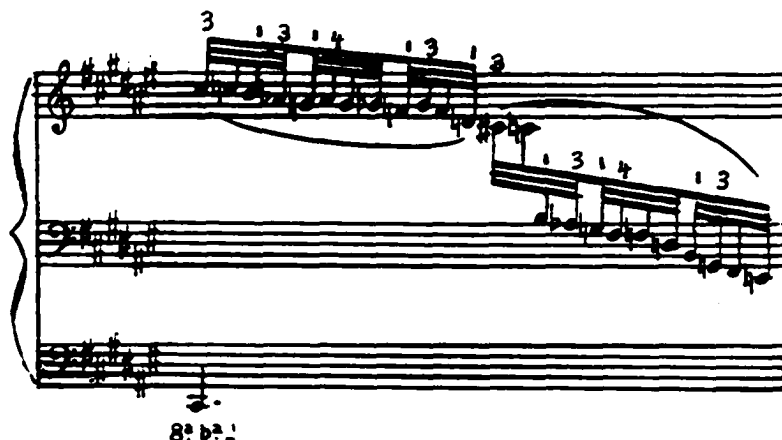
Measures 5-6 present a similar problem.

Ex. 101: measures 5-6

8³ 1 3 1 4 1 3

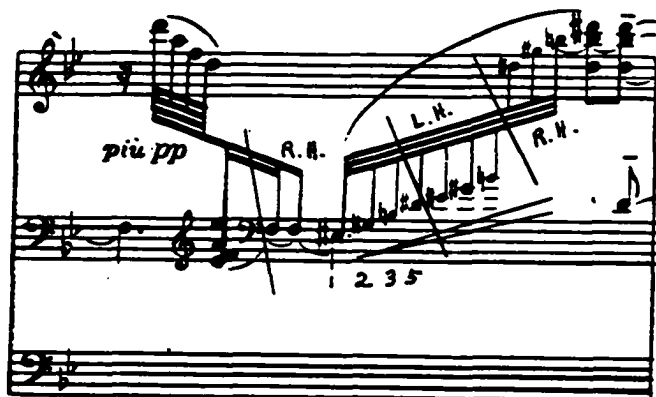
pp

8° b2



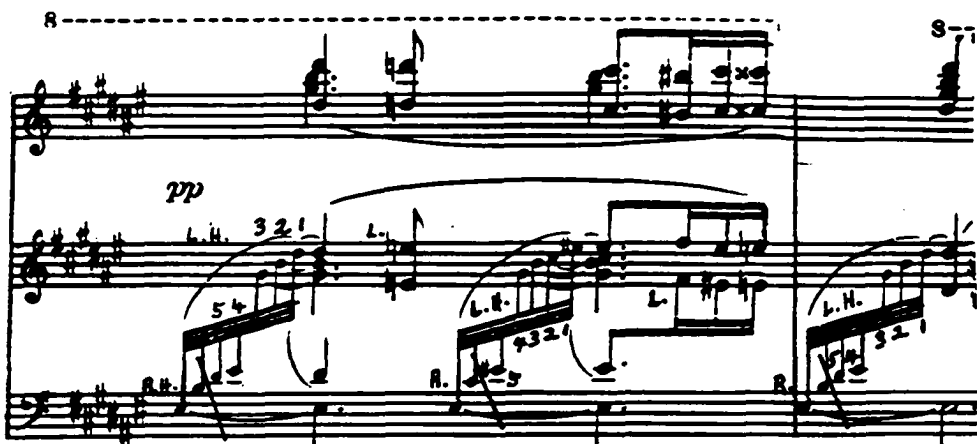
The division of notes between hands is, for the most part, felicitous in this prelude. In measure 10 the composer has indicated that the right hand play the final F in the measure. The performer must play the F with right hand in measures 11-12 where the same figures occur. It is particularly important that the F be played with right hand in measure 12 so that the arpeggio immediately following may be played with the best division of notes between hands.

Ex. 102: measure 12



Measures 32-33 is a passage which is greatly facilitated by redivision of notes between hands.

Ex. 103: measures 32-33



In measures 34-35 the composer indicates a reversing of hands in beats five and six. In measure 44 redivision is needed for sufficiently light articulate execution of the grace notes. (See Excerpt 99.)

Most of the technical problems in the prelude have to do with touch and tone. Due to the extremely soft dynamic level, one must use a light, effortless touch on all the thirty-second note passages (measures 1-2, 5-6, 10-12, 32-33, and 37-38).¹ In this touch, the arm should remain poised and balanced with a floating sensation. The chords in measures 4-5 also require special care. As the hand prepares to play the chord, the wrist should be below the key surface. As the wrist rolls up and in, the hand and fingers should have the feeling of "molding" the chord. In soft chords throughout the piece the hand should play flat with fingers stroking the key on the flat cushion of the finger, not on the tip. An extremely light, feather-like touch is needed in the ascending arpeggio in measure 12.² No crescendo should be done here until the right hand plays. The parallel seventh chords in measures 29 and 31 are played with much greater accuracy if the second finger is used as a "guiding finger," i.e., one must think the note in each chord that is played by the second finger. For those with small hands, a C# should be substituted for the B in the right hand on the C# dominant seventh chord and the C# should be omitted in the left hand (beats three and five of measure 29 and beat three of measure 31). There is a balance problem

¹See Excerpts 100 and 101.

²See Excerpt 102.

in measure 44. The grace note G and the F# in the chord should be clearly heard. A good way to practice this is to play it without the low C#.

The subtle beauty of the piece is not easily projected, but is well suited to the artist who is sensitive to delicate shadings of touch, tone color, and pedaling which truly evokes the beauty of "the reception terrace in the moonlight."

Prelude VIII: Ondine

Ondines are water nymphs belonging to Scandinavian and German mythology. This choice of subject matter reflects Debussy's fascination with supernatural beings and his love of the elements of nature. Schmitz notes that, according to legend, water nymphs have their palaces in the deeper areas of lakes or river beds and that, in their singing, dancing, and darting through the water, "they lure unwary fishermen and voyagers, and transport them to their deep palaces where days pass in oblivious bliss surrounded by beauty, and timeless forgetfulness."¹ Thompson notes that the music is murmurous and reticent" and "has the watery suggestion often found in compositions of Debussy in which there is no such obvious reason for water to be present."² Schmitz also observes "the allusions to water, to ripples, to flitting figures darting capriciously" which permeate the prelude both in melodic and accompaniment figuration.³

The tonal components in the prelude evoke in a most remarkable way the graceful, darting movements of the water nymphs. The piece begins deceptively in d minor, but the key of D major enters at measure 2. Unrelated quartal harmonies in measures 4, 6, and 7 produce a certain

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 178.

²Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 269.

³Schmitz, p. 178.

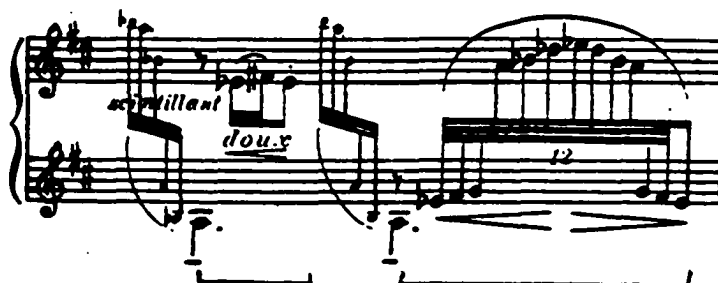
tonal ambiguity in the opening measures. Although the harmonies heard at the beginning are dominant thirteenth chords (both major and minor), the arrangement of the chords hints at tone clusters as well as quartal harmony. The dominant thirteenth in the third measure is found again in measure 5. The key of E flat is alluded to briefly in measures 8-9. Measures 11-13 are rather nebulous tonally. The pedal point A is a rather tenuous allusion to D major, but this is contradicted by the upper parts. A polychordal effect results from the pedal A and the E flat dominant seventh chord. The total effect of this passage, however, is tonally ambiguous. The Lydian mode is heard in measure 16 and the a melodic minor scale is the tonal basis for measures 20-21. Interspersed throughout the remainder of the piece are the "watery" motives which Schmitz calls "balneal motifs."¹ Examples of these are found in measures 18-19, 28-29, 40-41, and 62-72. These motives are always polychordal. In measures 22-25 there is a chromatic succession of seventh chords which return to the D tonal center in measures 25-26. This tonal center breaks down in measures 30-31 where a new chromatic motive centering around E flat is stated. From measures 32 through 43 the tonal center is confirmed as E flat with a pedal point. The tonal elements, which include both the melodic line and the repeated pedal tone augmented fifth (E flat-B natural) and the French sixth chords on B natural imply a whole-tone

¹Schmitz, p. 179.

basis. At measure 38 the Lydian mode of measures 16-17 recurs and, at measures 40-41, the polychordal "balneal" motives are heard. At measure 46 the chromatic motive over chromatic accompaniment figurations returns again in measures 62-64. An interesting polychordal juxtaposing of D major and F sharp major is found in measures 65-74 with D major emerging at the final cadence.

The composer indicates in his usual manner where the damper pedal is to be used (writing note values that are impossible to hold without the pedal). The pedal is depressed in measure 1 and changed on the first beat in measures 2-3. The pedal is released on beat one of measure 4 and is not depressed again until beat one of measure 5. It is released again on beat one of measure 6 and is not depressed again until beat one of measure 8. The pedal is changed on measure 9 and released on the first beat of measure 10. In measure 10 the pedal is depressed on the first eighth note and released on the second eighth note in each of the two-note slurs. The grace notes should not be pedaled in measures 11-13. The pedal should be depressed immediately after the first note in large type (A) and released immediately before the next grace note.

Ex. 104: measure 11



This type of pedaling continues through measure 13 although the pedal is changed on beat two of measure 13. There is a pedal change on beat one of measure 14. The tied bass notes require the pedal to remain depressed through measure 16. The pedal is changed on beats one and four in measure 17. The pedal should be changed on beats one and three in measures 18-19. The pedal is changed on beats one and five in measures 20-21. The pedal is changed on beat one of measure 22 and full pedaling is used from that point on. The pedal is changed on the fifth and sixth eighth notes of the measure. From measures 23 through 26 the pedal should be changed on every beat. The pedal is changed on beats one and four in measures 26-27. Measures 28-29 are pedaled like the parallel passage at measures 11-12.

No pedal is needed in measure 30 and is used only on the D flat and the quarter note G in measure 31. The pedal is depressed on the first beat of measure 34 and is changed on every chord change in the middle score through measure 37. In measures 38-39 the pedal should be changed on every eighth note because of the left hand register. Full bar pedals are needed in measures 40-41. Measures 42-43 are pedaled like measures 30-31 (a parallel passage). The pedal remains depressed from the G in measure 43 through measure 44. A new pedal is required for each change of texture in measures 46-47. The pedal is changed on beat one in measure 48 and on each beat in measure 49. In measures 50-53 the pedal is changed on each harmony. No pedal is to be used from measures 54 through 61 except for the quarter note octaves in measures 58-59. The pedal is depressed on beat one of measure 62 and changed at every dotted quarter through measure 63. The pedal is depressed on the first note of the twelve thirty-second notes and released on the last note of the group in measure 64. In measures 65-66 the pedal is depressed for two measures as it is in measures 67-68 and measures 69-70. The pedal is changed on beat one of measure 71 and released on the rest in measure 72. The pedal is depressed on the first grace note in measure 72 and released on the rest in measure 74.

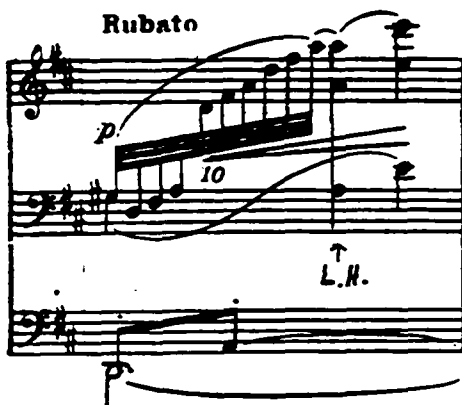
There are several passages where correct fingering is critical to successful performance. One such passage is measure 4 and parallel passages, measures 6-7. This passage is awkward at best. The following fingering is recommended. (Incidentally, the grace notes should be played on the beat.)

Ex. 105: measure 4



Measure 14 presents a problem which redivision of notes between hands can solve.

Ex. 106: measure 14



Tone control and fingering are problems encountered in measures 16-17. The second sixteenth note in each slur should be played as a light pickup to the next slur. The fingering, although not difficult, needs to be carefully planned. A parallel passage is seen in measures 38-39.

Ex. 107: measures 16-17

au Mouvt

2 3 3 4 4 5 5 4 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3

5 4 4 3 3 2 2 1 1 2 2 3 2 3 3 4 3 4 3 4

In measure 11 and all similar passages, the composer has indicated two contrasting sound qualities, scintillant (scintillating, sparkling) and doux (soft, calm, smooth). Schmitz sees all of the motifs in the piece as falling into one or the other of these two types: the scintillant motifs which, he says, are evocative of the "scintillating surface effects" of water and the doux motifs which, Schmitz feels, evoke the "opalescence of underwater." Schmitz notes that both dynamics and tone quality are affected by these opposites with the "underwater" qualities depicted by a softer level of dynamics and a singing tone quality while the "surface" qualities are characterized by

a stronger dynamic level and a sharper, crisper tone.¹

It should be mentioned here that pedaling will also affect these opposing tone qualities. The pedal should be used for the "underwater" effects and omitted for the "surface" effects.

Maintaining a good balance between the melodic line and accompaniment patterns is a problem in several passages. In measures 18-19 the composer has divided notes between hands (and has used three staves to do so) in order to indicate the melodic line in the left hand (the middle staff). One note on the middle staff is not melodic (the first F#). Care must be taken to avoid playing this F# with the firm melodic touch appropriate to the other notes in the middle staff. A similar situation is seen in measures 40-41. The composer continues to use three staves to highlight the melodic line from measures 20-25 and indicates that the middle staff is to be "brought out" (en dehors). The dynamic level is mezzo forte for this melody while the accompaniment in the upper staff is marked piano. The composer is also careful to show correct balance in measures 32-37. In this case, he has marked the lower two staves pianissimo while indicating a piano level for the upper staff which is the melodic line. Another balance problem occurs in measures 46-53. Here, the composer indicates that the melody (in eighth notes in the highest part) is to be

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 179.

"gently stressed" (douce^{ment} marq^{ue}). This is best achieved by a firm grip with the nail joint of the finger combined with a firm outward rotation of the forearm.

A tone control problem of a different sort is seen in measures 65-71 where the composer indicates that the passage is to be played "as light as possible" (aussi lég^{er} que possible). The touch needed here, mentioned in discussions of preceding preludes, requires an arm sensation of extreme lightness, a feeling of weightlessness, and fingers playing almost on the nail.

This prelude, combining as it does Debussy's interest in legend and his love of nature, is typical of his piano works in that it demands a facile finger technique along with the ability to change tone qualities quickly.

Prelude IX: Hommage à S. Pickwick, Esq. P.P.M.P.C.
 (Homage to S. Pickwick, Esq. P.P.M.P.C.)

The prelude is a musical portrait of Samuel Pickwick, the principal character in Charles Dickens' book, The Pickwick Papers. Schmitz views the piece as a tribute to Dickens "which worthily matches its goodhumored wit with that of the famed author" Schmitz sees Pickwick characterized as pompous, but good-natured, at times absent-minded, at times gay, but with a quick temper.¹ Thompson observes that the humor perceived in the piece seems to depend largely on national outlook with the French finding it much more amusing than English or American listeners. He notes that Ernest Newman has called the piece "'laboriously humorous'" while observing Alfred Cortot's comment that "'it is impossible to conceive of a wittier musical expression'"²

The piece begins in the key of F major, which is the predominant key. The composer begins with a sonorous reference to "God Save the King" in the bass. A temporary modulation to d minor occurs in measures 5-6, but F major returns immediately after this and continues through measure 19. An interesting harmonic usage is seen in measure 9 where the composer has written parallel augmented triads. Augmented triads also spice the harmonic texture in measures

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 180.

²Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, pp. 269-270.

37 and 39. Another harmonic device common in Debussy's style is the tonic triad with added sixth and ninth. This chord is found in measures 15, 17, and 19. The key of C major is the predominant key in the middle section of the piece. The triads moving in exact parallel movement are also typical of the composer's style. There are hints of c minor in measures 27-30. F major returns in measure 31 with an inflection to B flat major in measures 33-34. An interesting contrapuntal passage of thirds in the right hand against a chromatic scale line in the left hand produces a highly chromatic effect in measures 35-40. This counterpoint produces a series of unrelated half-diminished seventh chords interspersed at random with augmented, major, and minor triads. These harmonies seem to occur as a result of the counterpoint and the sequences rather than being a planned progression. A tonal surprise is the entry of D major in a pentatonic context in measures 44-46. Schmitz sees this unrelated melodic fragment as a whistled popular jig tune.¹

The use of legato pedaling is appropriate in the opening measures (measures 1-11). Little or no pedal should be used in measures 13-14 in order that the left hand staccato notes are heard clearly. The use of shallow half-pedals immediately before melody changes in right hand helps to insure the legato connection indicated in measures

¹Schmitz, p. 181.

15-19. Legato pedaling must be used in the chordal sections which follow (measures 21-22 and 24-25) with the note length dictating the duration of the pedal. Measures 26-36 should be played with little or no pedal. Legato pedaling is needed in measures 37-43. No pedal should be used in measures 44-50 except for the trill in measures 46-47. The octaves in the bass in measures 51-52 need legato pedaling. In measure 53 the pedal should be depressed on beat one, changed on beat three, and left down through the final chord.

Careful fingering in measure 5 is needed for the smooth connection of the contrapuntal lines.

Ex. 108: measure 5



The fingering patterns suggested for measures 19-20 follows almost exactly the sequence patterns of the double thirds.

Ex. 109: measures 19-20

4 3 1 3 2 4 3 4 3 4 3 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 2 5 4 2 2 5 4 3 4

2 1 1 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 3 2 1 2

cresc. mollo

The sequence of fingering follows exactly the tonal sequence in measures 35-36.

Ex. 110: measure 35

[illegible]

In measures 37-38 the staccato on the last thirty-second note in measure 37 makes it possible to move the thumb from C to D.

It would be well to note a felicitous division of notes between hands by the composer which is easy to overlook in performance. In measure 50 the second and third beats should be played with right hand alone as it is awkward for the left hand to skip up to the B flat.

While the prelude has a certain charm and wit, perhaps one has to have an intimate knowledge of the character of Pickwick and perhaps also be French to fully appreciate the humor of the piece.

Prelude X: Canope (Canopic Urn)

In this prelude the composer has looked to ancient Egypt for his inspiration. The city of Canope or Canopus was located on the Nile River near the Mediterranean Sea, according to Schmitz. Burial urns containing the digestive organs of mummified bodies were named for this city. These vases were covered with head-shaped lids bearing the likeness of Osiris, an ancient Egyptian deity. Similar containers, used by the Etruscans and covered with a likeness of the deceased, were also called Canopic jars. Schmitz sees Debussy as describing not the funeral urn itself but the mood evoked from it.¹ The composer seems to be looking back to the archaic ceremonies of the city calling forth visions of

antique processions, stately, calm, permeated by a dignified, gentle, and resigned sadness. There are pleading, questioning accents, . . . insistent but not impatient²

These questions seem to seek the answer to the age-old mystery of death.³ Thompson feels that:

. . . its funereal lyricism has a slumbrous character and its melancholy is that of an impersonal sort of reverie . . . , together with an abiding tenderness for what is too long gone to pierce the heart.⁴

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, pp. 181-182.

²Schmitz, p. 182.

³Schmitz, p. 181.

⁴Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 270.

The piece is, for the most part, modal in feeling with D as the tonal center. The parallel major and minor triads in the opening measures are typical of Debussy's harmonic style. There is an unusual modulation into flats in measure 4 which, strangely enough, leads back to a cadence in D in measure 5. In measures 7-12 there is a feeling of g minor. In this passage there are what Schmitz chooses to call "two insistent and plaintive motifs."¹ The first motif (measures 7-10) is very dissonant and chromatic against a dominant seventh in the bass. This motif recurs in measures 20-21 and 22-23. The second motif, occurring in measures 11-12, Schmitz sees as "more tender, but equally sad."² This motif recurs in measures 13, 30-31, and 32-33. There is a feeling of C major in measures 14-16, but this is compromised by the E flat in the F dominant seventh chords. Another harmonic device often used by Debussy is that of adding additional notes to the tonic triad. A tonic triad with added sixth appears in measure 11 and a tonic triad with added ninth is seen in measures 14-15. Some unusual quartal effects occur in measures 17-20. The key feeling is somewhat nebulous from measure 17 through measure 25, although there are allusions to both D and C tonal centers.

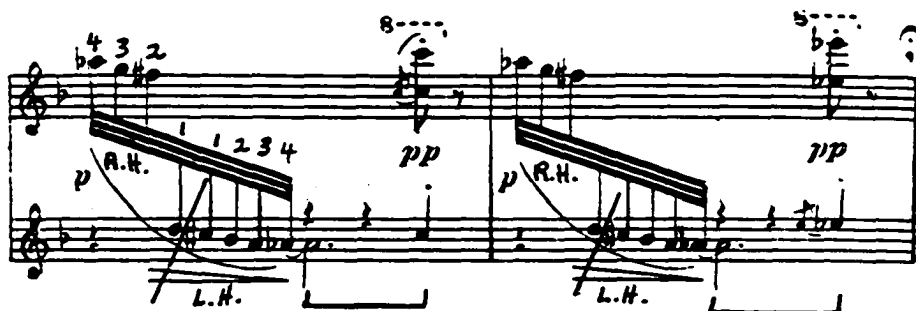
¹Schmitz, p. 182.

²Schmitz, p. 182.

There is a return to D in measure 26, with a temporary inflection into flats again in measures 28-29. The last four measures are, to a degree, polytonal in feeling with C major and d minor both present.

For the most part, the division of notes between hands is practicable. The thirty-second notes in measures 24-25, however, are greatly facilitated by redividing so that four notes are played in each hand.

Ex. 113: measures 24-25



In all other passages the performer should be careful to divide the notes between hands as the composer has indicated.

Legato pedaling is needed in the parallel chord passages (measures 1-4 and 26-29). Elsewhere, pedaling is determined by note values which are impossible to maintain with fingers alone. In measure 5, for example, the pedal must remain depressed throughout the measure to accommodate the whole note chord. The pedal is released on beat one of measure 6. Note length including ties across the bar line also determines pedal length in measures 7-8.

The pedal is depressed on beat one of measure 7 and released on beat two of measure 8. Measures 9-10 are pedaled in the same manner. The pedal is depressed on beat one of measure 13 and changed on the first of every measure to measure 20 with the exception of measures 14-15. The pedal is again changed at measure 20 and remains depressed through measure 21. It is changed on measure 22 and released at the bar line of measure 23. The pedal is depressed on beat two and released on beat four in measures 24-25. In measure 30 the pedal is depressed on beat one and remains down through measure 31. It is changed on beats one of measures 32-33. The chord in measure 33 should be replayed silently before the pedal is changed.

Touch and tone control are definite problems in a piece such as this where the dynamic level remains at piano to pianissimo. It has been noted elsewhere that there are several prerequisites to this kind of tone control. First of all, the arm must be as free and relaxed as possible. Very little tone control of any kind is possible when excessive tension is present. For the opening chords, the wrist must begin below the key surface with fingers almost flat. As the flat cushion of the finger strokes the key, the wrist should lift in and up. In each place where a soft chord is indicated, this technique should be used. The fingers should remain close to the keys in soft passages for better control of tonal coloring and inflection. A different touch is required on the thirty-second note passage in measures 24-25.

Here, the arm must again be light and poised, but the fingers should play almost on the nail. The piquant staccato octaves on beat four of each of these measures should be lightly plucked with the finger tips.

The prelude exhibits in a unique way a mood of calm peacefulness and would be excellent as a contrasting piece when programmed with pieces of more energy and vigor.

Prelude XI: Les tierces alternées (Alternating Thirds)

The title of this prelude, unlike all the others in the two sets, makes no allusion to subjects outside of music. Schmitz suggests that the composer was already anticipating the Études, which were written two years later in 1915. Schmitz also sees in the prelude the influence of the French clavecinistes.¹

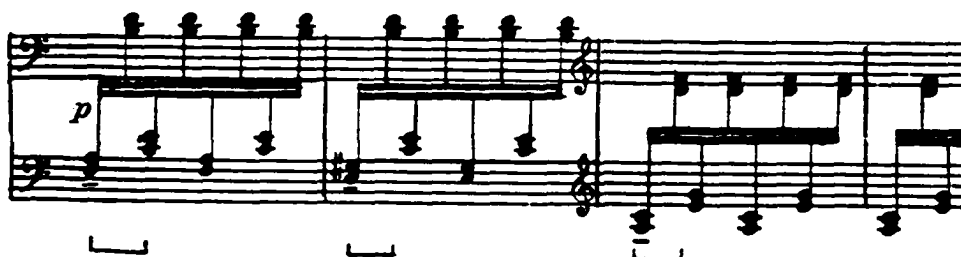
Although the composer has limited himself to thirds, the wide variety of tonal color which he achieves is truly amazing. In the opening measures the incomplete dominant ninths mask a rapidly changing whole-tone texture. At the tempo change (measure 11), the harmonies are chiefly seventh chords in inversion and in root position with alternating thirds producing constant upper neighboring tones. The key is a minor at measure 11 with modulation to C major at measure 19. The key remains C major through measure 33 although with considerable chromaticism. Beginning at measure 34 there is a type of polytonality seen earlier in the second set, consisting of white keys opposing black keys. The left hand remains in C major while the right hand is in F# major. Measures 40-45 pit C major in the left hand against whole-tone sonorities in the right hand. Measures 46-62 are in E flat major although with some chromaticism. A return to earlier material at measure 65 brings a return to a minor. E flat major is heard again in measures 71-80. In measures

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 183.

81-90 the key is E major. The whole-tone scale prevails in measures 91-101 in subject matter similar to the introductory measures (measures 1-10). The key of E flat major enters at measure 102 and continues through measure 116. The whole-tone scale is heard briefly again in measures 117-120. The texture is very chromatic with no apparent key in measures 121-124. There is again a return to opening material in measure 125 with the keys of a minor and C major being heard once more. The thirds progress down chromatically in measures 149-153. Measures 154-161 allude to material heard in measures 34-39 and are polytonal. The closing measures are in C major.

The pedaling is determined by the character of the passage as well as by the melodic line. In measures 2-4 the pedal remains down. It is changed on beats one of measures 5-6. The pedal is depressed on beat two of measure 7 and changed on beat one of measure 8. It remains down through measure 9, is released on the rest in measure 10, and depressed on beat two of measure 10. In measures 11-33 and in all similar passages, the composer limits pedaling by indicating that the thirds are to be "lightly detached but without dryness" (légerement détaché sans sécheresse). He also indicates that "the notes marked with a line softly ringing" (les notes marquées du signe-doucement timbrées). These "softly ringing" thirds are melodic in character and are enhanced by touches of pedal for resonance. In measures 14 and 18 the thirds on the first beat should not be pedaled.

Ex. 114: measures 11-14



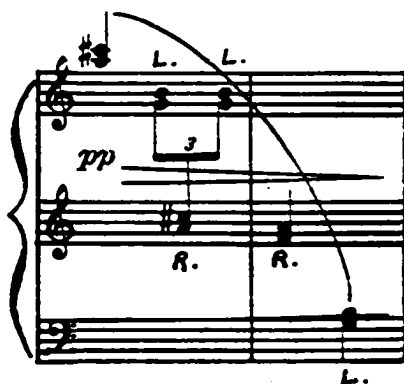
No pedal is needed from measures 34 through 64 except perhaps a very shallow half-damping for added resonance in the crescendo and forte passages in the high register (measures 50-54). Measures 65-88 are similar to measures 11-33 and should be pedaled in the same manner. In the soft and connected passages which follows (doux et lie), the pedal should be used much more extensively. The pedal is changed on beat one of measure 89 and remains down through measure 94. It is changed on beat one of measure 95, beat one of measure 99, and beat one of measure 103. The pedal is released immediately before the sixteenth note in measure 103. It is depressed on beat one of measure 104 and released at the end of the measure. Measure 105 is pedaled in the same manner as measure 103. The pedal is depressed on the A flat-C sixteenth third in measure 106 and changed on the same third in measure 107. Beats one and two of measure 107

should be pedaled in an identical manner. In measure 108 the pedal is depressed on the sixteenth. The pedal is changed on the sixteenth in measure 109 and released on beat one of measure 110. It is depressed immediately after the staccato and released on beat one of measure 112. It is then depressed on the sixteenth immediately following. The pedal is changed on the last sixteenth of measure 113 and on the first sixteenth of measure 115. It remains depressed through measure 116. No pedal should be used from measures 117 through 124 except for accent pedaling on the sforzandos in measures 121 and 123. Measures 125-148 are pedaled in a similar manner to measures 11-33 and 65-88. No pedal should be used after measure 148.

In the alternating thirds in sixteenth notes beginning at measure 11, the moving thirds are more easily played with the strongest hand, i.e., if the performer is right-handed the moving thirds (the first, third, fifth, and seventh thirds in each measure) should be played with right hand and if the performer is left-handed, these same thirds should be played with the left hand. Conversely, if the performer wished to use the prelude as a study to strengthen the weaker hand, he would deliberately choose to play the moving thirds with the weaker hand. In measures 34-64 both hands are moving most of the time and thus, it would not be necessary to change the thirds to a stronger or weaker hand. However, in measures 65-88 the hands should play the same thirds as in measures 11-33. Measures 125-148 should be

played in the same manner. There are three other passages which are facilitated by redivision of notes between hands. These are measures 93-94 (and parallel passages measures 101-102), measures 107-108, and measures 112-113.

Ex. 115: measures 93-94 Ex. 116: measures 107-108



Ex. 117: measures 112-113



Since this prelude is so closely related to the Études, some discussion of technique is appropriate. Schmitz suggests placing the hand which plays the moving thirds over the hand which plays the stationary thirds.¹ This does seem to work well. The thirds will be played with greater ease if hand movements are used and finger movements are eliminated. Also, it is important to make the thirds inflect with a subtle crescendo towards the beat. This not only produces greater ease technically, but also greater interest musically.

Although a solid technique is a prerequisite for performing this prelude, the piece is much more than an exercise. It is most interesting musically with a variety of moods which require subtlety of touch and tone control.

¹Schmitz, p. 186.

Prelude XII: Feux d'Artifice (Fireworks)

In describing this prelude, Schmitz notes that

There is a well-established custom which prescribes that the last display shot off in a fireworks exhibit . . . should be the richest, most varied, most powerful of the evening It is the embodiment of a general aesthetic principle, and, deeper yet, of the philosophy of life which aspires to ever greater achievements and expects a final crowning achievement.¹

In the same manner, this prelude is the consummation of the twenty-four. It surpasses the other preludes in several ways. First of all, it is the most technically demanding of all the preludes and is one of the more difficult pieces in all piano literature. As Schmitz says, "In the performance of this work, one is faced with a most taxing technical feat" ² At the same time, it is the most brilliant in effect of all the preludes. Thompson notes that "Impressionism . . . goes hand in hand with virtuosity in this, the most superficially brilliant of the Préludes." He also observes that the pianistic display in the piece places Debussy nearer to Liszt than in any other composition.³ The prelude is also one of the most descriptive of the set. The use of the "Marseillaise" at the end of the piece fixes the occasion as Bastille Day, the fourteenth

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 186.

²Schmitz, p. 189.

³Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist, p. 270.

of July, which is celebrated with a large fireworks display over the Seine River. Schmitz sees in the prelude a musical description of the scene including

. . . fiery interplay of pyrotechnics and reflections, brilliant colors, kaleidoscopic in patterns, flashing in speed: red fire, pinwheels, rockets, Roman candles, Bengal lights, multicolored stars, entire scenes or landscapes vibrating momentarily in the sky and showering sparks in the July air¹

Schmitz also notes that the richness and variety of tonal materials used in the prelude "is not among the least of its many 'tours de force.'"² In the opening measures the composer employs a B flat minor scale as an ostinato making use of both the ascending and descending forms of the scale. The interjections in octaves and seconds against this ostinato outline a B flat dominant seventh chord with occasional added ninths. In measure 17 a pentatonic glissando on black keys breaks down the stability of the B flat dominant because of tones not present in that chord. The composer's use of seconds increases the dissonance and prepares the ear for the next section (measures 20-24). This section is tonally nebulous because of major and minor seconds. The next passage (measures 25-34) may be analyzed as a dominant ninth on C in the key of F. This sonority is interrupted at measure 30 by successive dominant ninth chords on C# and D. Measures 35-38 are composed of only

¹Schmitz, p. 187.

²Schmitz, p. 188.

one of the whole-tone scales, while measures 39-40 are alternately fragments of whole-tone and pentatonic. The dominant ninth returns in measure 41 in the key of D flat major. The next passage (measures 44-52) is tonally unstable. Seventh chords are heard as well as whole-tone sonorities, but there is no apparent tonal center. Measures 53-64 are almost entirely whole-tone. The presence of French sixth chords and French sixth chords with added ninth in measures 57-60 continue the whole-tone sound. The first half of each measure contains nonharmonic tones which resolve to these French sixths. The nonharmonic tones are usually appoggiaturas. For example, in measure 57 the C# appoggiatura in the first half of the measure resolves to B# in the French sixth in the last half of the measure. In measures 61-64 the composer has written a series of parallel major triads whose roots are taken respectively from the two whole-tone scales. The roots of the triads in measures 61-62 are C, F#, E, B flat and the roots in measures 63-64 are E flat, A, G, C#. The composer writes a black key pentatonic glissando in the last two measures. In measures 65-66 the dominant ninth arpeggio is heard again, but in the key of F# major. A bichordal effect is heard in the cadenza (measure 67) with an F major triad superimposed on an A flat dominant seventh. The C# dominant ninth recurs in measures 68-69. In the next passage the breakdown of tonality is initiated in measure 70 by a quick succession of major triads in

half steps. The two whole-tone scales alternate in measures 74-75 and one scale is used in measures 76-78. A C dominant occurs in measures 79-80 with an implication of F major. This is disturbed by a D flat sonority in measure 81 with a return to the dominant in measures 82-83. The accumulation of the whole-tone sound emerges in measure 88 with a new effect. The beginning ostinato is now given a whole-tone implication by means of the addition of the note D following the descending B flat, A flat, G flat. Measures 90-97 are polytonal with C major superimposed on D flat major.

In much of the prelude the correct fingering is obvious. There are some passages, however, where the correct fingering is not so apparent. One such passage is measure 37. This passage is one of the more awkward passages in the prelude and good fingering choice is essential to its successful execution.

Ex. 118: measure 37

The image displays a musical score for measure 37, featuring three staves. The top staff contains two triplet chords, each marked with a '3' and a flat symbol (b). The middle staff shows a complex melodic line with various fingerings indicated by numbers 1 through 5. The bottom staff provides a bass line with fingerings 1, 4, 3, 2, 1 and 5. A large slur connects the middle and bottom staves, indicating a continuous melodic flow. The notation includes various accidentals and dynamic markings, such as a 'p' (piano) at the beginning of the bottom staff.

Measures 41-43 is another passage where fingering choice is critical. See excerpt 124 for the fingering of measure 41.

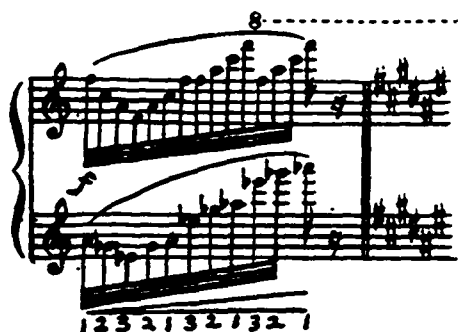
Ex. 119: measures 42-43

Measures 44-46 present a slightly different problem in fingering as the left hand line becomes less scale-wise and more arpeggiated in character.

Ex. 120: measures 44-45

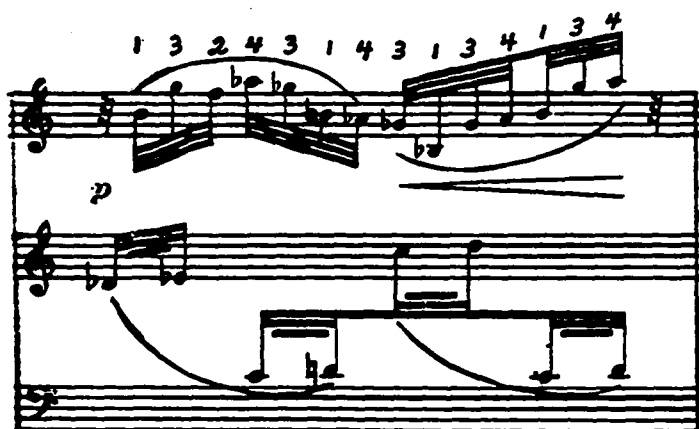
The next fingering problem occurs at the end of the cadenza (measure 67) with a left hand arpeggio on black keys. In this case, the strongest three fingers (1, 2, and 3) are the most felicitous choice.

Ex. 121: measure 67



Another passage where large skips cause some difficulty is measure 74. Using fingers 1 and 3 on the skip solves the problem.

Ex. 122: measure 74

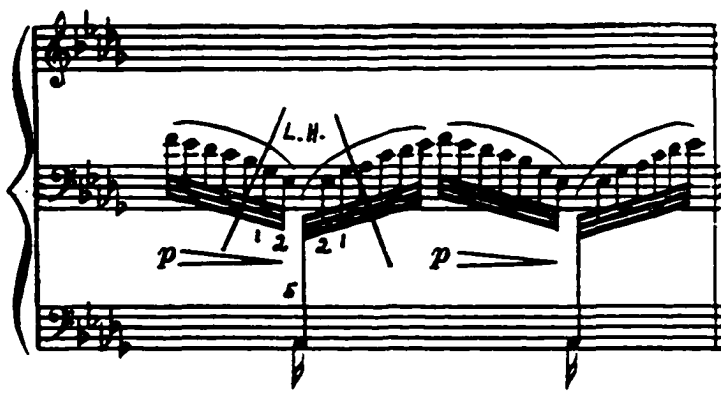


As in any piece where wide-ranging scale and arpeggio passages are common, redivision of notes between hands is needed to facilitate the playing of these passages. This problem occurs first in measures 35, 36, and 38 and the problem is identical in all three measures, i.e., keeping the C flat in right hand all of the time and thus avoiding an awkward skip in left hand from F to C flat.

Ex. 123: measure 38

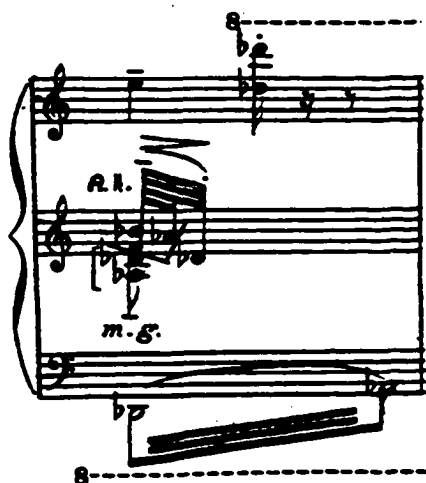
The scale passages in measures 41-43 are also greatly facilitated by redividing notes between hands. See Excerpt 119 for measures 42-43.

Ex. 124: measure 41



One other passage which benefits by redividing notes between hands is measure 96.

Ex. 125: measure 96



The pedaling in the opening measures is determined by the dynamic plane (pianissimo) and by the character of the passage ("light, uniform, and distant"). A very shallow half-damping is helpful in evoking the whirring, pinwheel effects which are heard at the beginning and continue

through measure 16. The pedal should be changed on the first beat of every measure in this passage, primarily to prevent the sound from growing too loud. The soft pedal should also be used for the same purpose. The soft pedal should be released and the damper pedal depressed completely in measure 15 because of the crescendo molto. There should be no pedal in measures 18-19. In measures 20-21 the pedal should be changed every beat, and in measure 22 it should be changed every two beats. The pedal should remain depressed throughout measures 23-24 to strengthen the crescendo. A slight break in the sound is effective at the end of measure 24. The pedal is depressed in measures 25-29 to maintain brilliance in this forte passage. It should be changed on the melodic "G's" in the lowest staff in measures 27 and 29. The pedal is changed on beat one in measures 30-31. The pedal remains down through measure 34 except for a change on the melodic "G" in measure 31. In measures 35-37 the half note in the bass dictates full bar pedals. The pedal remains depressed from measures 37 through 43 with half-pedal changes on the A flat eighth notes in the bass. In measures 42-43 the pedal is used in such a way as to keep the dynamics at the piano level and to allow the staccatos to be heard. The pedal is changed on beat one of measures 44 and 45. The pedal is released at the end of beat three in measure 45. The slurs are pedaled in the normal way, i.e., the pedal is depressed on the first note of the slur and released

on the second note. Measure 46 is pedaled in the same manner as measure 45. The slurs should be pedaled in the same way through measure 52. The pedal is depressed on the last dotted sixteenth of measure 52. In measure 53 where the notes are tied into a rest and the interpretative term laissez vibrer (allow sound to vibrate) is seen, the pedal is to remain down through the measure. The pedal is changed on the second triplet of measure 54 and remains depressed through measures 55-56. The long note values in the bass in measures 57-60 dictate the length of the pedal and, thus, the pedal is changed on these bass notes. In measure 61 the pedal is changed on beats one, three, and four. Measures 62-64 are pedaled in an identical manner. In measures 65-66 a rare pedal marking by the composer himself is found (under the second staff). The notes at the end of each measure have tenuto markings. A touch of accent pedaling on these notes gives the necessary stress. The pedal is depressed on beat one of measure 67 and changed on the quarter note D. In order to give the necessary brilliance of sound in the cadenza, the pedal should remain down until the rest at the end of the measure. Measures 68-69 are pedaled in the same fashion as measures 65-66. In measure 70 the pedal is depressed on beat one, released on D, depressed on E flat, and released on E natural. The pedal is depressed on beat two, released on the F#, depressed on beat four, and released on the G# in measure 71. The pedal

is depressed on beat one of measure 72 and is retained to the D# of the following measure. Measure 73 is pedaled in the same manner as measure 71. In measure 74 the pedal is depressed on beat one and changed on beat two. The pedal is changed on beats one and two in measure 75. The pedal remains down until beat three of measure 76 where it is changed. In measures 79-80 Debussy again indicates the pedaling. Accent pedaling should be used on the fourth beat of each measure to insure the "dazzling" effect called for (éclatant). In measure 81 the pedal is depressed on beat one and changed on beat three. Measures 82-83 again contain pedal markings by the composer and are pedaled in the same manner as measures 79-80. The pedal is depressed on beat one of measure 84 and changed on beat three of that measure. In measures 85-86 the pedal is changed on every bass octave. The pedal is changed on beat one of measure 87 and released after the last note of the glissando. No pedal should be used in measures 88-89. The pedal is depressed on beat one of measure 90, changed on beat one of measure 91, and left depressed through measure 92. It is changed again on each of the "G's" in measure 93 and on the first rest of measure 94. The pedal remains down through measure 95 and is changed again on beats one and two of measure 96. A very shallow half-damping is continued to the end. The soft pedal may be used in any pianissimo passage, but must always be released when louder dynamic effects are called for.

There are a number of technical problems which the performer must solve in order to perform the prelude in a musically acceptable manner. The tempo is "moderately animated." Schmitz suggests that at

. . . this tempo, the clarity of texture will give a greater sense of speed than will a performance at presto tempo, in which nothing can be heard¹

The triplets at the beginning require a light, even, yet articulate touch. The arm must be free and poised, a "floating" sensation, and the fingers must play almost on the nail. Another problem in the opening section is the rapid register shifts necessary to play the staccato octaves, etc. The performer must practice moving over the octave before playing it in order to achieve maximum accuracy. In measures 20-24 the performer must use hand movements for the best articulation and control of the double notes. It is also helpful to move to the C with a slight crescendo. Making this inflection not only makes the passage more interesting musically, but also relieves the excessive muscular tension which this passage seems to generate. Strong, articulate finger work is necessary to achieve the brilliance needed in measures 25-40. In measure 30 the left hand must produce sharp, pointed tones to bring out the melodic line sufficiently. In order to play the left hand more smoothly in measure 37, the performer should practice moving to F through the passage.

¹Schmitz, p. 190.

(See Excerpt 120). For accuracy in the octave skips in measures 45-46, the performer should think to the thumb on the A flat octave. (See Excerpt 118.) The problem of correct articulation, inflection, and execution of the triplet chordal passage in measures 46-52 is solved by mentally regrouping the triplets so that the third triplet of each group moves to the first triplet in the next beat followed by the natural diminuendo which normally occurs on the second note of a two-note slur.

Ex. 126: measure 47



In measures 57-60 the touch is determined by the pianissimo dynamic level. Thus, a touch similar to that used in the beginning of the prelude is needed, i.e., a free, poised arm with fingers playing almost on the nail. The glissandos in measures 61-64 are to be played rubato. Each one should begin slowly and accelerate to the top of the glissando. For greatest clarity in these glissandos, the nail should be used. In measures 85-86 care must be taken to keep the right hand eighth notes evenly spaced

within a dotted quarter note beat, a feeling of triplets, so to speak. The tremolo in left hand in measures 90-98 should be played with forearm rotation only. The pianissimo tone of the closing measures requires constant contact with the keys for minimum hand and finger movement.

Certain short motives which recur throughout the piece must be emphasized when they appear. These motives first occur in measures 27-31 in the lowest staff. The composer indicates that they are to be "strongly brought out" (très en dehors). A slight variant of these motives occurs in measures 35-38 in the top staff. A further variation occurs in measures 41-46. The motives are heard again in measures 65-67, 68-70, and 79-84. Each time they occur they should be stressed.

This difficult prelude is one of the most brilliant piano pieces written by Debussy and would have dramatic results on any recital program.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

In the two books of Préludes by Claude Debussy, the musical score is most explicit regarding the character, dynamic shading, and tempo requirements of each composition. Precise directions in several related areas essential to stylistic performance, however, are lacking. The study endeavors to identify, categorize, and profer solutions to performance problems encountered in the Préludes. The present chapter presents a summary of the purpose and procedures of the study, performance problem solutions, semantical terms encountered and translated, generalizations, and areas for further study.

Purpose and Procedures

The purpose of the study was to devise solutions for performance problems encountered in the Préludes for piano of Claude Debussy. The study was initiated by a review of related literature which served as a resource in the harmonic and performance analysis of each of the twenty-four preludes. Harmonic analysis sought to determine tonal organization and textural qualities, as contextual considerations in the practical and stylistically authentic solutions of performance problems. The performance analysis was approached by means of the study and realization of each

prelude noting problem areas encountered. Solutions as proffered in the extant pedagogical and interpretive literature referring to the Préludes were applied and evaluated on the basis of harmonic context, stylistic authenticity, and technical practicality. Problematic areas identified in the referenced literature and verified in the initial performance study of the Préludes resulted in the consideration of fingering, redivision of notes between hands, pedaling, touch and tone, semantics, and interpretative markings as the major criterion areas for formal study. An additional verification was made on the basis of the teaching of Frank Mannheimer, who collaborated with concert pianists Walter Giesecking and Artur Schnabel in developing practical solutions for performance problems in the Préludes. Much of this information undoubtedly was an outgrowth of contacts with the composer by these three eminent musicians.¹ A summary of the harmonic analysis and compilation of practical performance problems for each of the two books of Préludes comprise Chapters III and IV, respectively. Semantic terms encountered on the score of each prelude were authentically translated and served as a primary source in the development of performance problem solutions. A tabulation of terms and their translations

¹Access to this invaluable resource was available through Professor Celia Mae Bryant, who studied all of the Préludes with Mannheimer and recorded his suggestions in some detail.

is provided in the Appendices section with longer terms classified chronologically by prelude title and shorter terms listed in alphabetical order.

Harmonic Summary

The study revealed that a variety of tonal elements are found in the majority of the Préludes. These elements include the whole-tone scale, pentatonicism, modality, polytonality, pandiatonicism, parallel chords, triads with added sixths, seconds, and ninths, and "guttled" chords. Harmonic analysis of each prelude also disclosed that harmonic materials found in one prelude do not necessarily occur in every other prelude. The only consistent development in this area is the increase of polytonality in the second book although the composer continues to use key signatures. Detailed consideration of the harmonic components for each prelude is provided in Chapters III and IV.

The whole-tone scale. Voiles is the prelude in which the whole-tone scale is most predominant. The scale is utilized throughout the entire piece with the exception of one six measure section. Other preludes where the whole-tone scale is employed to a considerable degree include Le Vent dans la plaine, Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest, Les tierces alternées, and Feux d'Artifice. It is used sparingly in La Danse de Puck. The augmented fifth occurring

in this scale often leads to the use of the augmented triad and other similar harmonies.

Pentatonicism. In reference to Debussy's use of the pentatonic scale, one must recall that the composer not only employed the traditional pentatonic scale consisting of a major scale with fourth and seventh tones omitted, but also the Oriental pentatonic scales of which there are some 115 resulting from various half-step, whole-step, and step-and-a-half relationships.¹ Several of the non-traditional Oriental scales are found in Le Vent dans la plaine.² The traditional pentatonic scale is used to some extent in Voiles, Les collines d'Anacapri, and La Danse de Puck, and again in the melody with a diatonic accompaniment in La fille aux cheveux de lin and Bruyères, and is employed polytonally in Brouillards against a G major scale.

Polytonality. Very little polytonality is found in the first book of Préludes although it is present in Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest and La Danse de Puck. As noted in the study the second book of Préludes are much more advanced tonally and, as might be expected, polytonality occurs with much greater frequency. In fact, it is found in every prelude with the exception of Bruyères, Hommage

¹E. Robert Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pierce, 1950), p. 27.

²See page 58 of the study.

\a S. Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C., and Canope. Unusual polytonal effects include pentatonic against diatonic, as previously mentioned, in Brouillards, and, to a lesser extent, in "Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses" and Les tierces alternées. Another unusual polytonal effect pits diatonic major against a mode in Brouillards. A technique closely related to polytonality is bichordality, a superimposition of two independent harmonies. The composer frequently obscures the tonality with this device without developing the conflicting sonorities into true polytonality. The composer uses bichordality in Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest, Le sérénade interrompue, La Danse de Puck, Feuilles mortes, Ondine, and Feux d'Artifice. As may be noted, the technique is much more common in the second book of Préludes than in the first book.

Modality. The composer made sparing use of modes in the Préludes. Dorian mode is found in La Cathédrale engloutie, La Danse de Puck, "Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses," and Canope. Phrygian mode is employed in La Cathédrale engloutie and Brouillards. La Cathédrale engloutie also contains the Lydian and Mixolydian modes.

Pandiatonicism. Only one prelude contains a pandiatonic style and that prelude is La Cathédrale engloutie.

Parallel chords. One very common element in Debussy's manipulation of harmony is his use of parallel

chords in which all notes of each chord progress in parallel motion. The chord may be a triad, a seventh chord, a ninth chord, an eleventh chord, or a thirteenth chord. Parallel triads occur in Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest, La Cathédrale engloutie, Minstrels, La Puerta del Vino, Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C., and Canope. An unusual example of parallelism is found in Feuilles mortes where the composer has written triads with added seconds in parallel movement. Parallel seventh chords are seen in Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest, La Cathédrale engloutie, and La Puerta del Vino. Examples of parallel ninth chords are found in Feuilles mortes and La Puerta del Vino. Parallel elevenths are found in Feuilles mortes and parallel thirteenth chords are used in Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest and Ondine.

Triads with added notes. Another element of Debussy's style is his enrichment of triadic harmony by adding sixths, ninths, or seconds. Triads with added sixth are found in Les collines d'Anacapri, Minstrels, Bruyères, General Lavine-eccentric, and Canope. Triads with added seconds or ninths occur in La Cathédrale engloutie, Feuilles mortes, Ondine, Canope, and Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C.

Gutted chords. A very unusual harmonic element in Debussy's vocabulary is found in his use of the "gutted" chord, that is, triads which omit the third, or ninth chords

in which the third and seventh are deleted. La Cathédrale engloutie contains both gutted triads and gutted ninth chords.

Performance Problems Solutions

Very few pedal markings and no fingerings appear in the original edition of the Préludes. The composer has employed a wide range of the keyboard, interlocking of hands, and extreme contrast in dynamics as well. These problems create a need for special fingering, touch, redivision of notes, and a very careful application of the pedal.

Fingering. The selection of fingering was governed by several criteria and all recommended fingerings were tried in the performance situation to insure their practicability. Finger grouping or "blocking" is a principle of fingering that proves most effective in several of the Préludes including Voiles, La fille aux cheveux de lin, La sérénade interrompue, La Danse de Puck, and General Lavine-eccentric. The principle of repetitive finger patterns in tonal sequence is desirable in Le Vent dans la plaine, Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest, La sérénade interrompue, La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune, and Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C. The application of choosing stronger fingers over weaker ones is necessary particularly in Les collines d'Anacapri, General Lavine-eccentric, and Feux d'Artifice. The basic principle of

selecting fingering that favors contraction of the hand over extension is found in General Lavine-eccentric and Feux d'Artifice.

Redivision of notes between hands. Closely related to fingering is the necessity for some redivision of notes between hands. One reason for redivision is to relieve excessive tension in the hand. Preludes in which these changes were made include Le Vent dans la plaine, Bruyères, and General Lavine-eccentric. Another valid reason for redivision is to simplify passages where the hands interlock. This kind of redividing was done in Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest, La sérénade interrompue, La Danse de Puck, Minstrels, Feuilles mortes, La Puerta del Vino, "Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses," and Bruyères. Additional redivisions were included to simplify extended passages which were written for one hand when the other is available for use also. Examples are found in Les collines d'Anacapri, Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest, La sérénade interrompue, La Danse de Puck, "Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses," Bruyères, General Lavine-eccentric, La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune, Ondine, Canope, and Feux d'Artifice.

Pedaling. The matter of pedaling is one of the more confusing problems facing the performer in the Préludes. The composer has included pedal markings in only three of the Préludes: Voiles, Brouillards, and Feux

d'Artifice. Pedaling is indicated in other ways, however.

In nearly every prelude the composer has written note values which are impossible to sustain without pedal, thus requiring its use. The composer often wrote ties from notes which did not connect to succeeding notes. In Les collines d'Anacapri the composer inserts an explanatory phrase with such ties stating that the player should release the key while allowing the sound to vibrate (quittez, en laissant vibrer). Other preludes where this type of tie appears are Voiles, Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest, La Danse de Puck, La Cathédrale engloutie, Brouillards, La Puerta del Vino, "Les Féés sont d'exquises danseuses," and Bruyères.

Half-pedaling is another technique frequently required in the Préludes, particularly where lower bass sonorities must be sustained while harmonic changes in the treble dictate more frequent changes than those in the bass. Raising the pedal halfway to its fully released position on each treble harmonic change and depressing it again immediately after the change produces the desired effect. This procedure avoids excessive intermingling of treble sonorities while continuing to sustain the bass sound. Preludes where this device is used include Danseuses des Delphes, Le Vent dans la plaine, Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir, Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest, Brouillards, La Puerta del Vino, "Les Féés sont d'exquises danseuses," General Lavine-eccentric, La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune, and Feux d'Artifice.

A variation of half-pedaling is half-damping. The pedal is depressed halfway to its fully depressed position and raised with each change to its fully released position. The technique is sometimes called upper half-pedaling and produces a very delicate "haze" of sound. This device is used in Le Vent dans la plaine, Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir, La Danse de Puck, Brouillards, "Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses," General Lavine-eccentric, La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune, Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C., Les tierces alternées, and Feux d'Artifice.

The soft pedal is useful in all of the preludes where the dynamic level is pianissimo or less, but is particularly effective in Des pas sur la neige, Brouillards, Feuilles mortes, and in La sérénade interrompue where the composer indicates that "the two pedals are to be used."

Although Debussy's piano did not have a sostenuto pedal, there are three passages where the sostenuto pedal seems preferable to half-pedaling. These passages occur in La Cathédrale engloutie, La Danse de Puck, and General Lavine-eccentric.

In several of the preludes the composer has inserted the term, sec, which indicates a "dry" detached sound. The implication is that the pedal is to be omitted. Preludes where this term is found include Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest, Minstrels, and General Lavine-eccentric.

Touch and Tone. From all accounts of Debussy's playing, he most frequently played with a non-percussive touch. According to Thompson Debussy rarely thought of the piano as a percussive instrument.¹ Most of the preludes require this touch even in the loudest passages. In La Cathédrale engloutie, for example, in a passage marked fortissimo, the composer enjoins the performer to play with sonority, but without hardness or harshness. It is obvious, then, that passages of a softer character must also employ the non-percussive touch. Preludes where these softer effects are required include Danseuses des Delphes, Voiles, Le Vent dans la plaine, Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir, Des pas sur la neige, La Cathédrale engloutie, Brouillards, Feuilles mortes, La Puerta del Vino, "Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses," Bruyères, La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune, Ondine, and Canope.

Passages of a quick, light character, on the other hand, require a different touch entirely. They must be played cleanly and with clarity. Passages where this touch is effective are found in Voiles, Le Vent dans la plaine, La Danse de Puck, Brouillards, "Les Fées sont d'exquises danseuses," Bruyères, La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune, Ondine, and Feux d'Artifice.

¹Oscar Thompson, Debussy, Man and Artist (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1937), p. 248.

Semantic Terms

Another aspect of Debussy's music which often presents a problem in the performer is that most of the interpretative markings are in French. While terms may be translated from the standard French-English dictionary, many have a special musical connotation. All terms encountered in the Préludes were translated and utilized in the procedural development of performance problem solutions. Translations for all terms are provided in the Appendices section of the thesis manuscript.

A specific instance of a word with special musical connotation is the term, cédez. The translation given in the French-English dictionary is "to yield," but the musical meaning is "go a little slower." Another phrase which might cause some confusion is found at the beginning of Minstrels. The phrase, "les 'gruppetti' sur le temps" is almost impossible to translate from a French-English dictionary. The correct translation is: "the grace notes [played] on the beat."

Generalizations

On the basis of the study, it can be generalized that:

1. These preludes are not for the novice. As Schmitz says, "It is proverbial that Debussy's piano pieces do not 'fall under the finger'"¹ A well-developed

¹Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 36.

technique is essential including not only digital dexterity, but maturity in fingering, as well as sensitivity to touch in tonal production, and a thorough knowledge of the many facets of pedaling.

2. The pianist must have a thorough understanding of the tonal elements employed by the composer, including his use of the whole-tone scale, the pentatonic scale, polytonality, modality, pandiatonicism, parallel chords, chords with added notes, and "guttled" chords.

3. As most of Debussy's interpretative terms are in French, the student must ascertain the translation of these terms and must be particularly careful of terms with special musical connotations which are not included in the standard French-English dictionary.

Areas for Further Study

Considering that many of the significant piano works of Debussy and Ravel are still in their original form, the problems confronting the performer of these works would be similar to those in the Préludes. Hence, a detailed study of these compositions would be of benefit to the less knowledgeable performer as well as to the serious student and teacher.

As frequent use of polytonality is encountered in the second book of Préludes, a study might be made of other Debussy works of this and later periods to determine if this penchant for polytonality was unique to the second book or whether the composer made increased use of the device in other works as well.

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APPENDICES OF FRENCH TERMS

APPENDIX A

Danseuses de Delphes

Measure 11-doux mais en dehors-soft but stands out

Voiles

Measure 1-Dans un rythme sans rigueur et caressant-
In a rhythm without precision and light touch

Measure 48-comme un très léger glissando-like a very
light glissando

Measure 50-doucement en dehors-gently stressed

Measure 58-Très apaisé et très atténué jusqu'à la fin-
Very calmly and with much fading away to the end

Le Vent dans la plaine

Measure 1-aussi légèrement que possible-as light as
possible

Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir

Measure 34-la basse un peu appuyée et soutenu-the bass
slightly stressed and sustained

Measure 50-Comme une lointaine sonnerie de Cors-like
the distant sound of horns

Measure 52-Encore plus lointain et plus retenu-Still
farther away and slower

Les collines d'Anacapri

Measure 2-quittez, en laissant vibrer-release, allowing
sound to vibrate

Measure 32-Avec la liberté d'une chanson populaire-With
the freedom of a popular song

Des pas sur la neige

Measure 1-Ce rythme doit avoir la valeur sonore d'un
fond de paysage triste et glacieux-The sound of the
rhythmic figure should convey a melancholy, icebound
landscape

Measure 20-En animant surtout dans l'expression-Becoming more animated especially in the expression

Measure 29-Comme un tendre et triste regret-Like a tender and sad regret

Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest

Measure 15-Commencer un peu au-dessous du mouvt.-Begin a little slower than main tempo

Measure 18-Revenir progressivement au mouvt. Animé-Return gradually to the tempo Animé

Measure 26-p mais en dehors et angoissé-soft but expressing anguish

Measure 33-En serrant et augmentant beaucoup-Pressing on and increasing [in sound] considerably

La fille aux cheveux de lin

Measure 33-Murmuré et en retenant peu à peu-Murmuring and holding back little by little

La sérénade interrompue

Measure 1-Comme en préludant-Like an introduction

Measure 32-expressif et un peu supplie-expressive and a little beseeching

Measure 32-estompé et en suivant l'expression-diminish while following the expression

La Cathédrale engloutie

Measure 1-Profondément calme (Dans une brume doucement sonore)-Profoundly calm (As in a mist softly sonorous)

Measure 7-Doux et fluide-Gentle and fluid

Measure 16-Peu à peu sortant de la brume-little by little going up out of the mist

Measure 20-Augmentez progressivement (Sans presser)-Gradually increasing [in sound] without haste

Measure 28-Sonore sans dureté-Sonorous without harshness

Measure 47-Un peu moins lent (Dans une expression allant grandissant)-A little less slowly (With increasing tension in expression)

Measure 72-comme un écho de la phrase entendue précédé-
ment-like an echo of the phrase heard previously

Measure 72-Flottant et sourd-Floating and muffled

Measure 84-Dans la sonorité du début-With the sonority
of the beginning

La Danse de Puck

Measure 95-Rapide et fuyant-Rapid and flying away

Minstrels

Measure 1-Nerveux et avec humour-Nervous and with humor

Measure 1-les "gruppetti" sur le temps-the decorative
notes on the beat

Brouillards

Measure 1-extrêmement égal et léger-extremely uniform
and light

Measure 1-la m.g. un peu en valeur sur la m.d.-the left
hand a little more important than the right hand

Measure 43-en retenant et en s'effaçant-drawing away
into the background

Measure 50-Presque plus rien-Almost nothing left

Feuilles mortes

Measure 19-Un peu plus allant et plus gravement expres-
sif-A little faster and more deeply expressive

Measure 41-dans le sentiment du début-in the same mood
as the beginning

La Puerta del Vino

Measure 1-Mouv^Nt. de Habanera-Tempo of the Habanera

Measure 1-avec de brusques oppositions d'extrême
violence et de passionnée douceur-with sudden changes
of extreme violence and passionate gentleness

General Lavine-eccentric

Measure 1-Dans le style et le Mouvement d'un Cake-
Walk-With the style and tempo of a Cakewalk

La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune

Measure 44-timbrez légèrement la petite note-play
the small note lightly

Ondine

Measure 42-Le double plus lent-twice as slowly

Measure 44-un peu au-dessous du mouvt.-a little under
the tempo

Canope

Measure 1-Très calme et doucement triste-Very calm and
peacefully sad

Les tierces alternées

Measure 11-légèrement détaché sans sécheresse-lightly
détached without dryness

Measure 11-les notes marquées du signe-doucement
timbrées-the notes marked with a line-softly
ringing

Feux d'Artifice

Measure 12-en se rapprochant peu à peu-drawing nearer
little by little

Measure 59-les basses légères et harmonieuses-the bass
light and harmonious

APPENDIX B

a-to, in, at
aerien-airy, ethereal
aimable-amiable, pleasant
aise-ease; a l'aise-at ease, comfortable, joyful
animant, en animant-quicken
anime-lively, animated
animez-quicken
apaise-quiet, calm; s'apaiser-to quieten down, calm down,
^ to soften
apre-biting
au-to the
au-dessous-under
au mouvement-to time, a tempo
augmentant-increasing
augmentez-increase
aussi-as
avec-with

beaucoup-considerably

calme-calm, tranquil
capricieux-capricious, whimsical
caressant-carressing
cedez-go a little slower; en cedant-going on a little slower
comme-like
concentre-introverted, reflective, thoughtful

dans-with
debut-beginning
détache-detached
deux-two
discret-discreet, reserved
double-twice, le double plus lent-twice as slowly
doux-soft, calm, peaceful, gentle, sweet; doucement-softly
douloureux-painfully, sorrowfully
du-of the, from the, some
dureté-harshness

éclatant-brilliant, dazzling
égal-even, equal, uniform
élargi-broader
emporte-brilliant, fiery, excited, carried away
encore-again, yet, still
en dehors-bring out, stress
en retenant-holding back
en s'effaçant-fading away
en s'éloignant-receding into the distance

expressif-expressive
et-and
extrêmement-extremely

flottant-floating, flowing
fluide-fluid
furieux-furious, wild
fuyant-flying away, receding

gracieux-graceful
grave-solemn, with gravity, low pitched, deep, full toned
guitarra-guitar

harmonieux-harmonious

incisif-incisive
ironique-sarcastic, mocking

joyeux-joyful, merry, gay

la, le, l'-the
laissez vibrer-allow to vibrate
léger-light; légerement-lightly
lent-slow
les-the
librement-freely
lié-connected
loin-distant, de très loin-from very far off; loin de-far
 away from
lointain-distant, far off; dans le lointain-in the far
 distance
lourdeur-heaviness; sans lourdeur-without heaviness
lumineux-luminous, brilliant

mais-but
marqué-marked, stressed, marcato
mélancolique-melancholy, sad
même-same
modéré-moderate; moderato, modérément-moderately
moins-less
moquer-to mock, to scoff, to scorn
mouvement-tempo, time, movement
murmure-murmur
murmurando-murmuring

nuances-inflections

passionnément-passionately, great feeling, intensity
pédales-pedals
perdendo-gradually dying away, growing softer and softer
peu-little
plaintif-plaintive

plus-more
possible-possible
presque-almost, nearly
pressez-hurry, hasten, press

quasi-like, resembling
que-as

rageur-raging, furious, angry
rapide-rapid, fast
retenu-holding back, ritardando
revenir-return to, come back to
rêveur-dreamlike, in a reverie, pensive, thoughtful
rigueur-strictness, precision, rigor; sans rigueur-without
precision [in rhythm], not metronomic

sans-without
scintillant-scintillating, sparkling
sec-dry
sécheresse-dryness
serrant-pressing, getting quicker, pushing on
serrez-press on, getting faster
sonore-sonorous, deep-toned, full sounding, richly resonant
souple-flexible, pliant, supple
soutenu-sustained
spirituel-witty
strident-strident
suppliant-imploring, entreating, beseeching, begging

tambouro-tambourine, drum
tendre-tender
traîne-slurred, legatissimo
tranquille-tranquil
très-very
triste-sad
tumultueux-tumultuous, stormy, loud, extreme tone

un, une-a, an

vibrer-to vibrate
vif-lively, brisk, quick
volubile-easily rolling, rotating, turning, voluble