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A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PRELUDES  
(BOOK I) OF CLAUDE DEBUSSY

THESIS

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## CHAPTER I

### HISTORY OF THE PRELUDE

The history of the prelude is of interest since it represents not only one of the earliest types of keyboard music, but the earliest type of idiomatic keyboard music as distinct from the vocally-influenced types. In the early period (c. 1450-1650) the prelude is a single composition which may be used for any suitable purpose, either in the church or in the home.<sup>1</sup>

The prelude, as a form, apparently resulted from the fact that fifteenth-century North Germany was far removed from the big musical centers such as the Burgundian court at Dijon or the cathedral of Cambrai in Northern France where vocal music at the time was highly advanced. This very remoteness probably encouraged the growth of this keyboard form since it is very likely that competition with the more advanced vocal music would have proved a handicap rather than a stimulus. The German organists were able to develop slowly and patiently the resources of the great instrument

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<sup>1</sup>Willi Apel, "Prelude," Harvard Dictionary of Music (Cambridge, 1944).

without any outside influences.<sup>2</sup> The preludes of this period are short pieces (10-20 measures) which are remarkable for their free keyboard style, mixed of passages and chords, and thus offer a marked contrast to the strict contrapuntal style of contemporary vocal music.

The first recorded prelude is taken from a manuscript by Adam Ileborgh, written in 1448, in Stendal, North Germany.<sup>3</sup> The inscription to the fifty preludes therein reads as follows:

Here begin preludes in various keys (composed) in the modern style, clearly and diligently collected, with diverse mensurae appended below, by brother Adam Ileborgh, in the year of our Lord 1448, during the time of his rectorate in Stendal.

There follows the inscription for the first staff of music:  
 "Here follows a prelude in the key of C, which can be transposed into the keys of D, F, G and A."<sup>4</sup> After deciphering this music, it appears thus:

<sup>2</sup>Willi Apel, Masters of the Keyboard (Cambridge, 1947), p. 25.

<sup>3</sup>"This manuscript is in the library of the Curtis Institute of Music . . . and is probably the oldest and most valuable codex in the United States," Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

The image displays three systems of handwritten musical notation. Each system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The first system shows a melody of eighth notes in the treble clef, with several groups of three notes (triplets) indicated by brackets and the number '3'. The second system continues the melody, featuring a sharp sign (#) on a note. The third system shows a more intricate melodic line with a sharp sign and a fermata over the final note. The bass clef staves contain minimal accompaniment, with a few notes and a sharp sign visible.

Fig. 1--"Prelude," from the Ileborgh Tablature

The next example of the prelude appears in Conrad Paumann's Fundamentum organisandi of 1452. Unfortunately, there are only a few examples of his compositions, thereby giving only a slight idea of the significance his work must have had in the eyes of his contemporaries. Along with the numerous short instructive pieces, his Fundamentum contains

a few preludes which are, however, according to Apel,<sup>5</sup> less interesting than those of Illeborgh and were possibly not written by Paumann himself.

Following the Fundamentum was the Buxheim Organ Book of 1475. This collection contains, among other things, thirty preludes which show definite advancement over those by Illeborgh by being more extended and better developed, as can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2 displays three examples of musical notation for organ preludes, arranged vertically. Each example consists of two staves: a right-hand staff (treble clef) and a left-hand staff (bass clef). The first example shows a right-hand staff with a melodic line of eighth and sixteenth notes, and a left-hand staff with a simple bass line. The second example shows a right-hand staff with a melodic line and a left-hand staff with a bass line featuring chords and rests. The third example shows a right-hand staff with a melodic line and a left-hand staff with a bass line featuring chords and rests.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 28.



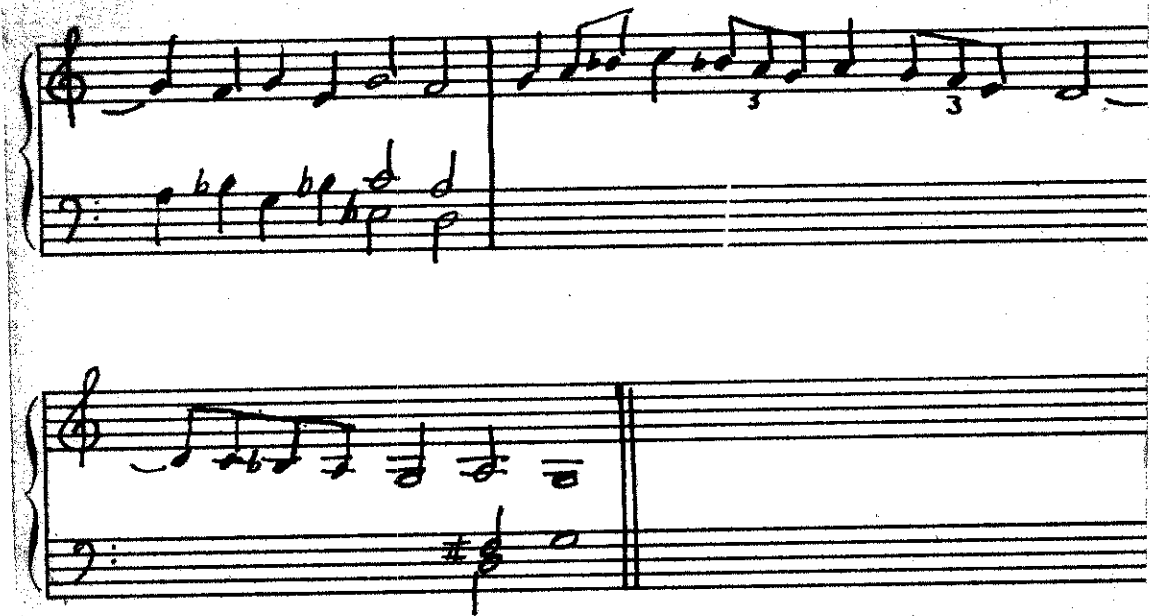


Fig. 2--"Organ Prelude," from the Buxheim Organ Book

In the Ricercari moteti canzoni (1523) of Marcantonio da Bologna are found lengthy pieces written in the chordal and scalic style of the toccata, rather than in the contrapuntal style of the motet. These apparently served in the function of a prelude because each of the two ricercars is followed by a piece in the same key. The ricercars are evidently the "motets" of the title.<sup>6</sup>

The repertory includes also pieces in the Hans Kotter's tablature (c. 1520) and in Leonhard Kleber's tablature (c. 1520). The lute preludes preserved are in the tablatures of Francesco Spinaccino (1507) and Joan Ambrosio Dalza (1508),

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<sup>6</sup>Willi Apel, "Ricerca," Harvard Dictionary.

Hans Judenkunig (1523), Hans Neusiedler (1536), Hans Gerle (1552), and others. Toward the end of the century William Byrd (1543-1623) and John Bull (1563-1628) wrote a number of preludes which are noteworthy for their virtuosic character, and to which the simultaneous lute pieces of Johannes Besardus (1617) offer a striking contrast of style and expression.

In the fifteenth century, composers had learned to amplify their works by linking several of the popular dance forms together. At first this involved only two dances, and for some reason neither the Germans nor the French went much beyond this simple coupling. But in Italy Ottaviano dei Petrucci (1466-1539) published his fourth lute book (1508) which contained a respectable form consisting of three dances in which a pavan was employed as an introductory movement. Twenty-five years later are to be found several well-developed suite forms consisting of from two to five dances. The initial tuning of the lute is said to have led to this particular prelude form by evolving into a short introductory piece.<sup>7</sup>

It seems appropriate to mention some of the various names applied to these free forms of this and later periods.

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<sup>7</sup>Paul H. Lang, Music in Western Civilization (New York, 1941), pp. 246-247.

Ileborgh's were called ricercari or tastar de corde. Andrea Gabrieli (1510-1586) termed his pieces Intonazioni, and it is interesting to note that he was one of the first composers of toccatas, which found their origin in the prelude. Others of the prelude style are likewise found under the names of praeludium, preamble, sinfonia, sonata and pavane. These terms were, however, used to denote the stylized introductory movements preceding the dances proper and, as independent introductions, paved the way for the overture in the late Baroque suite.

When Gabrieli became of note as an organist at Saint Marcus cathedral in Venice, his importance in the field of keyboard music lay mainly in the establishment of a new organ style which is free from contrapuntal elements and in which idiomatic keyboard formations, such as full chords and scale passages, predominate. (See Figure 3.)

The image displays two systems of handwritten musical notation. The first system consists of two staves: the upper staff is in treble clef and the lower in bass clef. It features a series of chords and melodic lines, with some notes marked with 'p' for piano. The second system also consists of two staves, with the upper staff in treble clef and the lower in bass clef. The upper staff shows a scale passage, while the lower staff contains chords and a few notes.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a piece titled 'Intonazione' by Andrea Gabrieli. Each system consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The first system shows a melodic line in the treble clef starting with a series of eighth notes, followed by a bass line in the bass clef with a few notes and a fermata. The second system continues the melodic line with more complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth notes, and the bass line has a similar structure with a fermata. The third system shows a melodic line in the treble clef with a series of eighth notes, and the bass line is simpler, with a few notes and a fermata.

Fig. 3--Intonazione by Andrea Gabrieli

Claudio Merulo (1533-1604), a colleague and fellow-organist of Gabrieli at Saint Marcus, wrote a number of toccatas of worth. He amplified its formal structure, stylizing a form which consisted of three to five sections written alternately in a free improvisatory style derived from the early toccatas and in the strictly contrapuntal style of the contemporary ricercar. This toccata form was taken over in the seventeenth century by the North German

organ masters and thereby found its way into the toccatas of Bach.<sup>8</sup>

Dieterich Buxtehude (1637-1707), Franz Tunder (1614-1667), Matthias Weckman (1621-1674), Georg Böhm II (1661-1733), Nikolaus Bruhns (1665-1697) and Heinrich Scheidemann (1596?-1663), the most noteworthy composers of the North German school, favored the prelude and toccata as forms. It is interesting to note that the preludes of Scheidemann open with a section in free style and usually close with a section in fugal style, thereby pointing the way for the combination of prelude and fugue. As a matter of fact, the title Praeludium cum Fuga was frequently used for compositions which consisted of two fugues enclosed by three sections in free style--a prelude, an interlude and a postlude.<sup>9</sup>

The North German school also cultivated the organ chorale based on German Protestant Church hymns and otherwise known as chorale preludes. These were used in the church service as a prelude preceding the singing of the hymn by the congregation.

It is apparent now how the prelude developed in two hundred years from a short, isolated idea into a form whose

<sup>8</sup>Apel, Masters of the Keyboard, p. 55.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 110-113.

function was to introduce, usually, a longer and more seriously calculated piece.

Along with Buxtehude and Scheidemann, other composers were making great progress with these combinations. Probably the most important document, particularly in the evolution of temperament before J. S. Bach, was the Ariadne musica (1695) of Johann Kaspar Ferdinand Fischer (1650-1746). This was a collection of preludes and fugues with reference to the Ariadne of Greek mythology who helped Theseus find his way out of the labyrinth. Fischer's musical labyrinth seemingly is the multitude of major and minor keys, and he wrote a prelude and fugue in nineteen keys at a time when only five or six were being used. Obviously, this work is an important forerunner of J. S. Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier. Fischer also gained importance by virtue of his highly developed suites which were among the earliest to have a prelude preceding the dance movements. Although miniature in length, these small pieces are truly admirable. A motive is fully exploited, the harmony modulated and brought back to its beginning.

Louis Couperin (1626-1661) created a unique type of prelude completely free in rhythm and, therefore, notated without the conventional note value.<sup>10</sup> (See Figure 4.)

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<sup>10</sup>Willi Apel, "Prelude," Harvard Dictionary of Music.

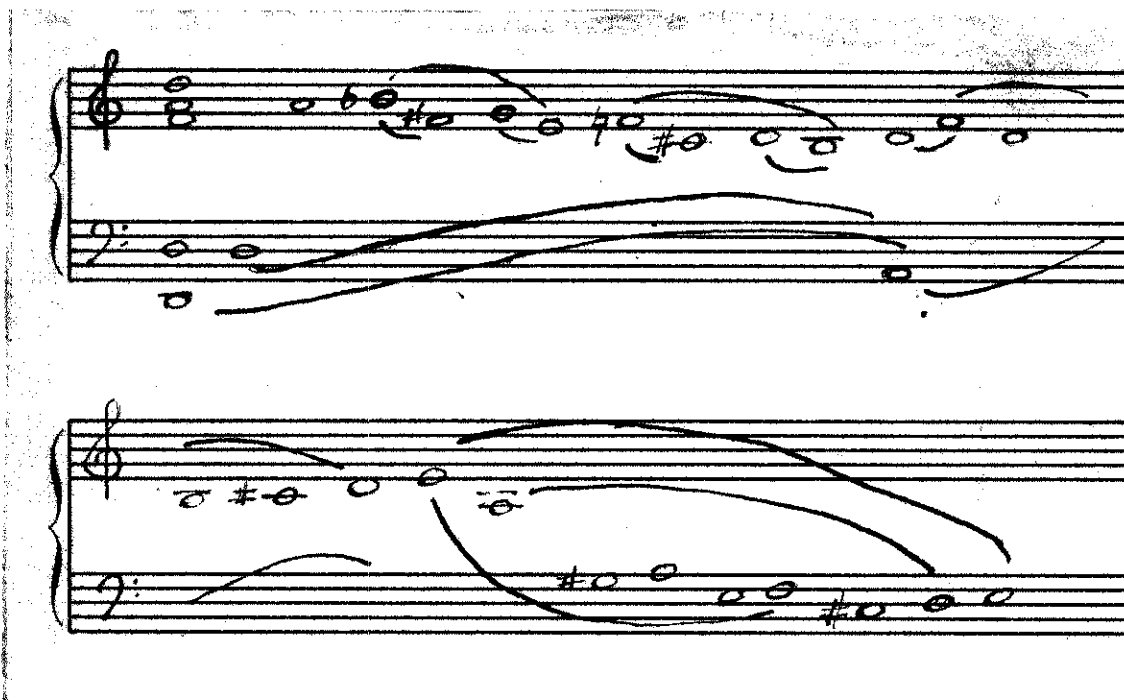


Fig. 4--"Praeludium," Number 1 from The Complete Works of Louis Couperin.

Handel (1685-1759) composed preludes to suites in the free and improvisatory style, and preludes and fugues in a free-voiced texture after the Italian manner.<sup>11</sup>

The most important collection of preludes and fugues for the harpsichord is J. S. Bach's Well-Tempered Clavier. This work consists of two sets of twenty-four preludes and fugues in all keys, major and minor, illustrating the advantages of the new equal-tempered tuning. It is amazing to note that the inscription to this monumental work reads as follows:

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<sup>11</sup> Manfred Bukofzer, Music in the Baroque Era (New York, 1947), p. 341.

The Well-Tempered Clavier or Preludes and Fugues through all the tones and semitones both as regards the tertia major or Ut Re Mi and as concerns the tertia minor or Re Mi Fa. For the Use and Profit of the Musical Youth Desirous of Learning as well as for the Pastime of those Already Skilled in this Study drawn up and written by Johann Sebastian Bach, Capellmeister to His Serene Highness the Prince of Anhalt-Cöthen, etc., and Director of His Chamber Music Anno 1722.<sup>12</sup>

What irony that this revered monument was humbly intended only to serve as study material.

We would be mistaken if we considered Bach's most intimate works, such as the Well-Tempered Clavier or the Two and Three-Part Inventions "free works of art in the sense that Chopin's Preludes are." Bach excused them as being of pedagogical value rather than as entertainments.<sup>13</sup>

With reference to the Preludes, Robert Schumann, who was a very competent judge of Bach's work, was of the opinion that many of them had no original connection with the Fugues. This opinion is substantiated by the fact that Bach did create the prelude as an independent form and that he himself collected all the preludes of both volumes of the Well-Tempered Clavier into an independent whole, and also that several of them in the first book were originally conceived as independent compositions in Friedmann Bach's Clavier-Büchlein (1720).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Hans T. David and Arthur Mendel, editors, The Bach Reader (New York, 1945), p. 85.

<sup>13</sup>Alfred Einstein, Music in the Romantic Era (New York, 1947), p. 12.

<sup>14</sup>Phillip Spitta, The Life of Bach (London, 1899), p. 152.



So, it would seem that although one definition of "prelude" states that it is a piece of music designed to be played as an introduction to another composition,<sup>15</sup> this is not necessarily so, even during the period when that function was the usual custom.

The Preludes are of various styles, although most of them seem to be kept in one and the same form--that which Bach was accustomed to adhere in his independent preludes; a subject is worked out from an animated phrase that sometimes develops into a theme, but often wanders from one harmony to another or is distinct only in rhythm. A model of this form is the C major prelude from the first book.

The preludes to the suites of Bach must also be mentioned. The English suites open with preludes, and the great partitas in the Klavierübung with preludes, symphonies, fantasies, overtures, preambles and toccatas; the French suites, however, begin at once with the allemande.

After Bach, the prelude enters into its third stage of development, that is, it is no longer an introductory piece but stands alone and comes under the heading of Characterstück.<sup>16</sup> It is conceivable that Bach, having compiled all of the preludes of the Well-Tempered Clavier in a separate

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<sup>15</sup>Apel, "Prelude," Harvard Dictionary of Music.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

volume, and also having actually composed small independent preludes, was the pivot on which the prelude swung back and became once again an isolated piece.

As a form, the prelude lost its popularity except for a few rather undistinguished attempts, until Frederic Chopin (1810-1849), the great Polish pianist and composer, wrote his twenty-four Preludes, Op. 28 (1839) in all keys. These pieces are short free forms with only an idea expressed and little or no development. Niecks does not feel that Chopin created a new type in the prelude because they are of various types in form and character. Despite the different moods and tonalities, there is a unity of feeling in these preludes that are grouped in approved Bachian manner.<sup>17</sup>

It is interesting to see what Chopin's contemporaries had to say about these pieces and, in particular, to note the effect of surprise they caused:

This heterogeneous collection of pieces reminds me of nothing so much as of an artist's portfolio filled with drawings in all stages of advancement--finished and unfinished, complete and incomplete compositions, sketches and mere memoranda, all mixed indiscriminately together. The finished works were either too small or too slight to be sent into the world separately, and the right mood for developing, completing, and giving the last touch to the rest was gone and could not be found again.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Frederick Niecks, Frederick Chopin as a Man and Musician, Vol. II (New York, 1890), pp. 254-255.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

Schumann had a few delightful things to say of the Preludes:

I must mention the preludes. I will confess that I had expected something different: compositions carried out in the grand style, like his etudes. We have almost the contrary here; these are sketches, the beginnings of studies, or, if you will, ruins, eagles' pinions, wild and motley pell-mell. But in every piece we find in his own pearly handwriting, "This is by Frederic Chopin"; even in his pauses we recognize him by his agitated breathing. He is the boldest, proudest poet of these times. To be sure, the book also contains much that is sick, feverish, repellent; but let everyone seek for what becomes him. Only let the Philistine keep away.<sup>19</sup>

The celebrated pianist-composer Sergei Rachmaninov (1873-1943) wrote a set of twenty-four Preludes in all keys, emulating thereby not only his predecessor Chopin but even Bach. As will be pointed out later, this was not the only Chopinesque device employed in these works. The famous Prelude in C-Sharp Minor comes from the early Opus 3, Five Pieces for Piano, written in 1892; not until 1904 did he complete the Ten Preludes, Opus 23. The second of this group, called the "Revolutionary" appears very similar to the Chopin Etude bearing the same name. Not only the mood and character are imitative, but also the sweeping bass, characterized by difficult finger work for the left hand. In 1910, he completed the cycle of keys by composing Thirteen Preludes as Opus 32. Although Rachmaninov was a

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<sup>19</sup>Robert Schumann, On Music and Musicians (New York, 1946), p. 137.

contemporary and fellow-countryman of that other composer of preludes, Alexander Nicolaevitch Scriabin (1871-1915), he did not adhere to the same modern principles of harmony. The preludes of Rachmaninov are rhapsodic and passionate, employing the harmonic style of the romantic school.

Alexander Scriabin composed eighty-nine preludes for the piano, some of which are Chopinesque in quality and content.

Before he became a devotee of mysticism, Scriabin was a composer of exquisite miniatures which have been favorably compared with the best of Chopin.<sup>20</sup>

Scriabin's first group of preludes is his Opus 11. In this group, as in the other collections, there exist twenty-four in all--one in every key. After his Opus 31, his harmonic writing became more complicated. During his last period he succumbed to a great religion-philosophy which he called the "Mystery." He invented a new harmony based on the "Mystic Chord" built out of fourths.<sup>21</sup> The preludes of Opus 66 and Opus 74 were conceived during this period when Sabaneyev said Scriabin's style reaches "an extraordinary exquisiteness and refinement, the harmony a rare complexity, along with a saturation of psychological content. . . ."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>David Ewen, The Complete Book of 20th Century Music (New York, 1952), p. 359.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 360.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 363.

From what has been presented concerning the development of the prelude, much can be surmised. Apparently there were three periods of this development. During the first period (1450-1650) the prelude was a short, free, improvisatory form not connected with any other piece or pieces. Later composers began to employ the preludes as introductory pieces to dance suites and fugues, thereby creating the second period. After Bach, the form once again became independent and rhapsodic, thus completing the cycle. The use of all keys in writing these groups of preludes from Bach to Scriabin is a point of interest.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PRELUDES (BOOK I) OF DEBUSSY

Achille-Claude Debussy (1862-1918) wrote twenty-four Preludes for piano (1810-1913), one in every key. As was discussed in Chapter I, this custom had prevailed throughout the centuries since Bach, with every important composer of this particular form. Nor does similarity between these preludes and those by other composers previously written stop at this point. These pieces, like the others, are free and improvisatory and, with only a few alterations of character from those preludes conceived in the nineteenth century, suited the impressionistic style of Debussy as no other form could. He did not employ the ardent expression of human sentiment tormented or exalted unrestrainedly as Chopin had, but rather, he molded the form according to the exigencies of a more objective art and of a less impulsive sensibility. He insists, in these last works, on the apparent reserve of feeling which characterizes these pieces. Adapted to this new and expressive mode, the prelude, improvisatory, poetic and unrestricted, "was

bound to offer Debussy the resources of a form especially favorable to the realization of his tendencies."<sup>1</sup>

Impressionism was suggested to Debussy by the paintings of Claude Monet (1840-1926), Edouard Manet (1832-1883), Pierre Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) and the poetry of Paul Verlaine (1844-1896), Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) and Stephane Mallarmé (1842-1898).<sup>2</sup> Symbolism was the movement in literature corresponding to Impressionism in music and art. Verlaine was an important instigator of the Symbolist movement in France. "He had . . . a taste - not for the exalted, over-literary fancies of the romanticists - but for those confused swirlings of imagination through which one glides as if in a fog."<sup>3</sup> He reached a point where he could no longer distinguish between reality and fancy. From this state, he created the poetry which is called symbolic. The symbolists believed that there exists a world of vague emotions, instincts and desires that cannot be considered rationally without making them vanish, and which cannot be expressed in a clear and rational way without falsification.

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<sup>1</sup>Alfred Cortot, The Piano Music of Claude Debussy (London, 1920), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>Willi Apel, "Impressionism," Harvard Dictionary of Music.

<sup>3</sup>Daniel Mornet, A Short History of French Literature, translated by C. A. Choquette and Christian Gauss (New York, 1935), p. 279.

"True feeling cannot be expressed in words any more than a perfume or a harmony can be defined. . . . true poetry will be the direct revelation of the world of feeling, undistorted by the interference of reason."<sup>4</sup> This new poetry is more akin to music just as the classical and romantic belonged in the realm of painting. The meanings of the words are of less importance than their musical quality. Carried to extremes, this technique becomes hallucination and incantation so that the reader must be in the same state of hallucination as was the poet when he wrote it in order to appreciate the work. This poetry was created by Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891) and was employed in a somewhat different way by Mallarmé. Although Verlaine suggests subtle dreams and emotions, he uses the classical language. Rimbaud, on the other hand, created his own words with which he expressed his visions of "superior reality" as opposed to "apparent reality." Mallarmé adhered to the hallucination theory, but retained the classical language, abolishing all rules of grammar, however. The symbolists felt that the purpose of poetry is to express feeling and that the rules governing feeling are not always logical.

Therefore, this type of music chooses to hint rather than to state; to touch rather than to see. The realization of these ideas led to a complete abandonment of such

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 280.



typically "German" achievements as sonata, symphony and thematic material, and led to the employment of devices which are antithetic to the main features of classical and romantic music. And yet, "It is a somewhat tragic truth that Debussy's work stands before the eye of the present-day viewer not as what he intended: the negation of Romanticism - but as a part thereof, in fact, its very acme and conclusion."<sup>5</sup>

The Preludes were planned to consist of two sets of twelve each. While trying to fulfill this artistic obligation, Debussy's inspiration probably fell short, a fact which would account for the three-year delay of the appearance of Book II and the inequality of the pieces. Debussy did not like them played as a whole and admitted that they were not all good. They contain the intimacy of chamber music and are not effective in big concert halls. His English biographer, L. S. Liebich, recorded a statement by Debussy to the effect that some pieces, such as Danseuses de Delphes and Des Pas sur la neige, should be played only "entre quatre-y-yeux." Also, contrary to common belief, the composer did not choose the title Prelude heedlessly. As a matter of fact, he regarded these less as works intended to be played by themselves

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<sup>5</sup>Apel, op. cit.

than as real preludes, or short introductions to more important pieces in the same keys. Therefore, this "revolutionary" did adhere to many of the conservative characteristics of tradition.<sup>6</sup>

Debussy attached at the ends of these miniatures picturesque titles. One wonders why he added them at the ends rather than at the beginnings. With this device, he not only avoids the timidity of those who have a subject but declines to mention what it is, but also makes clear that the music is of prime importance and the stimulus to its added enjoyment is only an after-thought, "a helping hand for those who need it, and a confirmation for those who are wavering, and of no importance for those who have found their own thoughts so completely in the music as to need no further suggestions."<sup>7</sup>

By this time, Debussy, who had as a child very little of fundamental education, had developed into maturity with a magnificent wealth of knowledge of things other than music. Otherwise he would never have been able to characterize so clearly all the subjects of these Preludes which pertain to legends, literature, vaudeville, painting,

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<sup>6</sup>Leon Vallas, Claude Debussy, His Life and Works (London, 1933), p. 210.

<sup>7</sup>E. Robert Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy (New York, 1950), p. 130.

architectural landmarks, archeological objects, natural phenomena and a multitude of scenes and of personages.

Concerning the extra-musical context of these Preludes, Daniel Gregory Mason has said,

The Frenchman's imagination, on the contrary, is primarily literary, dramatic, and pictorial. He is led by it, not to the creation of musically significant forms, but to a keenly sympathetic realization of the mood suggested by the program, and to a most subtle musical evocation of it by appropriate means, chiefly sensuous. He is thus, literally, a painter of "mood pictures." And as most people do not care to make the effort to follow and relive a musical experience, but prefer to be lulled by agreeable sounds into a trance in which their fancy may weave adventures and project pictures for itself, his audience is delighted. From this point of view symbolism is the type of art which most appeals to the inartistic, and Debussy is the musician most beloved by the unmusical.<sup>8</sup>

Since the attachment of these descriptive titles is one of the main points of distinction between these and previous preludes, the following discussion of the twelve in Book I will deal largely with the relationship of the music with the titles.

#### Danseuses de Delphes

The city of Delphi existed in Ancient Greece at the foot of Mount Parnassus, the site of the Temple of Apollo. This piece represents a dignified religious dance of the three bacchantes. Most probably Debussy's source of

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<sup>8</sup> Daniel Gregory Mason, Contemporary Composers (New York, 1929), pp. 141-142.

inspiration was the depiction of them in sculpture on the top of a pillar of an ancient villa; these may still be seen in the Louvre Museum. The over-all key scheme is definitely classical since it merely moves from the tonic key to the dominant and back.

The graveness and sustained quality of the melody which suggests incantations may be seen in Figure 5.

The image shows a musical score for measures 1-4 of 'Danseuses de Delphes'. The score is written for piano and consists of two systems of staves. The first system has a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. The second system has a bass clef and a 2/4 time signature. The key signature is one flat (B-flat). The tempo/mood marking 'doux et soutenu' is written above the first system. The first system contains measures 1 and 2, with a dynamic marking 'p' at the beginning. The second system contains measures 3 and 4, with dynamic markings 'p', 'p', 'p', and 'pp' under the notes. The music features low, sustained chords and a slow tempo.

Fig. 5--Measures 1-4 of Danseuses de Delphes

The low sonorous chords and slow tempo certainly add to the seriousness of the occasion.

At measures 4 and 5 the light chords of accompaniment seems to suggest the three women moving smoothly and gracefully. (See Figure 6.)

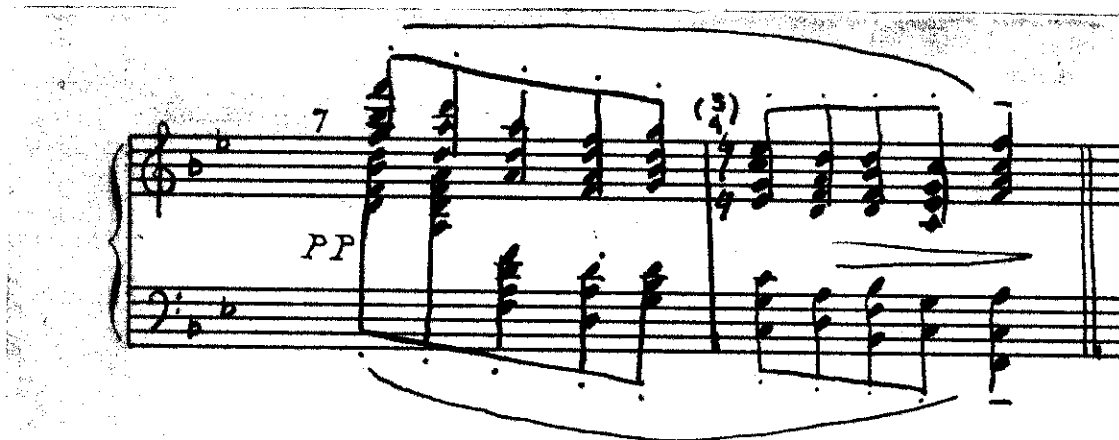


Fig. 6--Measures 4-5 of Danseuses de Delphes

"Crotals," or small cymbals used by the priests of Cybeles, could indeed be represented by the soft but metallic sounds derived from the use of the major second in the accented chords of Figure 7.

A musical score for piano accompaniment, measures 27 and 28 of 'Danseuses de Delphes'. The score is written on two staves, treble and bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The music consists of chords in both hands. The first measure is marked with 'PPP' (pianississimo) above the treble staff and 'PP' (pianissimo) below the bass staff. The second measure is marked with 'PPP' above the treble staff and 'PPP' below the bass staff. The chords are accented and suggest a soft but metallic sound.

Fig. 7--Measures 27-28 of Danseuses de Delphes

The upward movement throughout the piece can be thought to denote the height of Parnassus or the elevation of the Gods.

### Voiles

Diverse opinions as to whether the title of this Prelude suggests "veils" or "sails" still linger.<sup>9</sup> Pictorially speaking, however, there seems to be more evidence in the music to point toward the latter connotation.

The "floating" thirds and fourths seem to suggest the idle sails of a boat in port. The intervals depicted in Figure 8 occur throughout the first and closing sections of this piece.

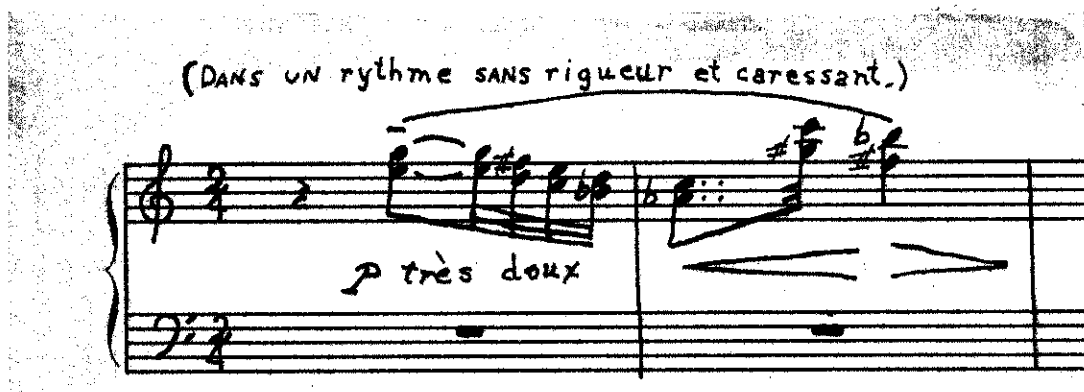


Fig. 8--Measures 1-2 of Voiles

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 133, ". . . this prelude in the memory of the author was given both connotations by Debussy, i.e., veils or sails."

Debussy also uses the classical device of the pedal point on a low B flat through the entire piece. This may be said to be the anchor by which the boat is secured. (See Figure 9.)

The image displays a musical score for measures 5-9 of the piece 'Voiles' by Debussy. The score is written for piano, with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor). The time signature is 9/8. The music features a continuous whole-tone scale in both hands, with a prominent pedal point on a low B-flat in the bass register. The notation includes various dynamics and performance instructions: 'pp' (pianissimo), 'PP expressif' (pianissimo, expressive), and 'toujours PP' (always pianissimo). The score is annotated with handwritten markings, including 'pp', 'PP', and 'toujours PP', and includes a '7' in the bass line, likely indicating a fingering or a specific rhythmic value. The music is characterized by its continuous, rocking motion, typical of Debussy's style in this piece.

Fig. 9--Measures 5-9 of Voiles

The relentless movement of the wind and waves may be suggested by the continuous use of the whole-tone scale which seemingly has no resting point. Added to this usage is the actual up-and-down movements of the voices which would symbolize a rocking motion. (See Figure 10.)

Fig. 10--Measures 23-24 of Voiles

Debussy exercised great economy in regards to material when he wrote this prelude. As a result, the piece seems to go nowhere, which is the precise effect the anchor would have on the boat.

### Le Vent dans la Plaine

The descriptivism of this prelude hardly needs explanation. The Wind in the Plain may be heard in various moods as it wisps at a breakneck speed. This piece forms a midpoint between the gentle breeze of Voiles and the tempestuous gale of Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest. This is a



capricious, rollicking wind that darts playfully from one object to another.

The opening measures seen in Figure 11 seem to come from nowhere as would this humming type of wind. This

The image shows a handwritten musical score for the first two measures of a piece. The score is written on two systems of staves. The top system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the upper staff and a bass clef on the lower staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo/mood is indicated as 'Animé aussi légèrement que possible'. The first measure of the top system contains a melodic line of eighth notes, and the first measure of the bottom system contains a bass line of quarter notes. The second system continues the same pattern. The score is marked 'pp' (pianissimo) and includes fingering numbers (6) under the bass notes.

Fig. 11--Measures 1-2 of Le Vent dans la Plaine

musical figure appears in some manner or form throughout the whole prelude either above or below a suggestive melody, with the exception of six measures.

In these exceptional moments the breeze is either slowly dying momentarily, as seen in Figure 12a with the written "Cédez," or blowing in strong short-lived gusts, as appears in Figure 12b.

a

Cédez //

b

Fig. 12--a) Measures 9-10, b) measures 30-31 of Le Vent dans la Plaine.

Each of these cases is followed by a return to the same whirring sound which is developed to its most interesting state by a chromatic device, as shown in Figure 13.



Fig. 13--Measures 38-39 of Le Vent dans la Plaine

The humming sound is further substantiated in the three closing bars where Debussy does not allow this breeze to die, but with a notation of "laissez vibrer" causes it to flit away on its merry chase. (See Figure 14.)

*Un peu retenu*

*laissez vibrer*

Fig. 14--Measures 57-59 of Le Vent dans la Plaine

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

This prelude was inspired by the beautiful poem  
 "Harmonie du soir" from Baudelaire's Les Fleurs du Mal  
 (1861).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Charles Baudelaire, "Harmonie du soir," Les Fleurs du Mal. The collection has been translated by Arthur F. Kraetzer as The Flowers of Evil (New York, 1950). "Harmonie du soir" is translated as "Evening Harmony," p. 79:

Behold now on its stem vibrating to and fro  
 Like incense pot, each flow'r gives off its fragrant  
 scent,  
 Within the evening air perfumes and sounds are blent;  
 Oh, melancholy waltz and langourous vertigo!

Voici venir les temps où vibrant sur sa tige  
 Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir;  
 Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir;  
 Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige!

Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir;  
 Le violon frémit comme un cœur qu'on afflige;  
 Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige;  
 Le ciel est triste et beau comme un grand reposoir.

Le violon frémit comme un cœur qu'on afflige  
 Un cœur tendre, qui hait le néant vaste et noir!  
 Le ciel est triste et beau comme un grand reposoir;  
 Le soleil s'est noyé dans son sang qui se fige.

Un cœur tendre, qui hait le néant vaste et noir,  
 Du passé lumineux recueille tout vestige!  
 Le soleil s'est noyé dans son sang qui se fige . . .  
 Ton souvenir en moi luit comme un ostensor!

In this prelude Debussy, in various manners, gives the impression of evening sounds and perfumes blending and swirling. The movement is always up and down, giving the effect of circular movement. He begins the piece pianissimo and at no time does the dynamic level exceed mezzo-forte,

---

Like incense pot each flow'r gives off its fragrant  
 scent;  
 The violin trembles like a heart that's full of woe;  
 Oh, melancholy waltz and languorous vertigo!  
 Like flower-laden shrine, the fair, sad firmament.

The violin trembles like a heart that's full of woe,  
 Hating the vast black void, a heart with pity rent,  
 Like flower-laden shrine, the fair, sad firmament;  
 Drowned in its clotted blood the sun has gone below.

. . .  
 Hating the vast black void, a heart with pity rent  
 Gathers each vestige of the shining long-ago!  
 Drowned in its clotted blood the sun has gone below

. . .  
 Shining like monstrance is your mem'ry in me blent!

thereby producing the quietude that the lull of evening projects.

These melodies alternate and are superimposed in a rather long development section amid very rich but vague harmonies characterized by seventh and ninth chords. Debussy interweaves this section with the recapitulation, confirming even more the impression of sounds mingling. The coda consists of a hunting horn sounding in the distance. (See Figure 15.)

*Comme une lointaine sonnerie de Cors*

Fig. 15--Measures 52-53 of Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir.

### Les collines d'Anacapri

Anacapri is one of the two small cities on the famous island of Capri which is located in the Gulf of Naples. This beautiful isle has for centuries attracted people from all parts of the world because of its vivid flowers, blatant sun and sea, magnificent cliffs rising from the

water, its beautiful view of Naples and Mount Vesuvius in the distance and its constant holiday spirit. The unbounded joy reflected in this prelude is a fair tribute to this glorious garden and its people. The famous bells sound from afar in the opening measures. (See Figure 16.)

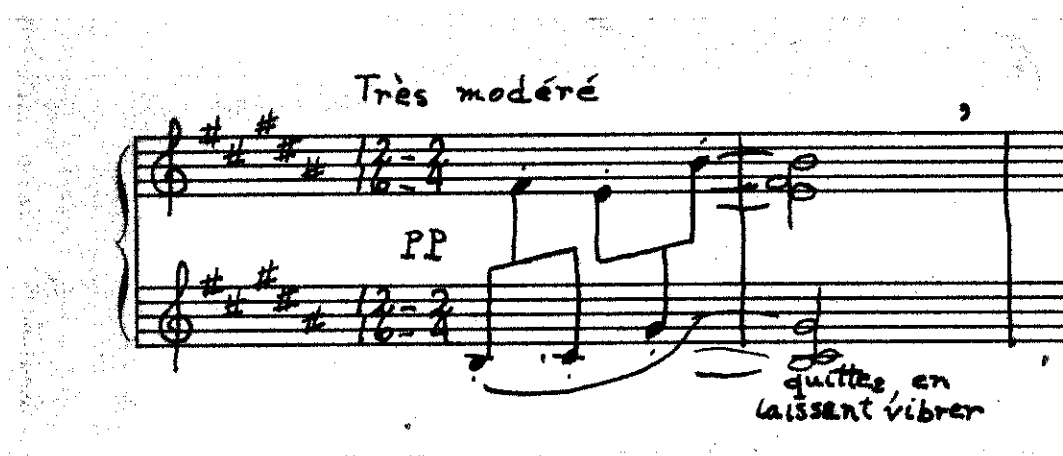


Fig. 16--Measures 1-2 of Les collines d'Anacapri

A hint of the tarantella rhythm is heard, more bells are sounded and the tarantella resumes in full swing. Originally devised as a cure for the bite of the tarantula, this lively dance was adopted by the Neapolitans as their national dance. (See Figure 17.)

Handwritten musical score for measures 14-15 of "Les collines d'Anacapri". The score is written for two staves in treble clef, with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 7/7 time signature. The upper staff features a melodic line with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) and the instruction "joyeux et léger". The lower staff features a bass line with a dynamic marking of *pp* (pianissimo).

Fig. 17--Measures 14-15 of Les collines d'Anacapri

The dance is finally interrupted by a popular tune which is introduced in the bass, as in Figure 18 and later displayed brilliantly in octaves in the upper register of the keyboard.

Handwritten musical score for the piece "Cédez". The score is written for two staves in treble clef, with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 7/7 time signature. The upper staff begins with the instruction "Cédez // a Tempo (Avec la liberté d'une chanson populaire)". The lower staff begins with the instruction "Cédez - - - // a Tempo". The score includes dynamic markings of *pp* (pianissimo) and *un peu en dehors* (a little out of tune).



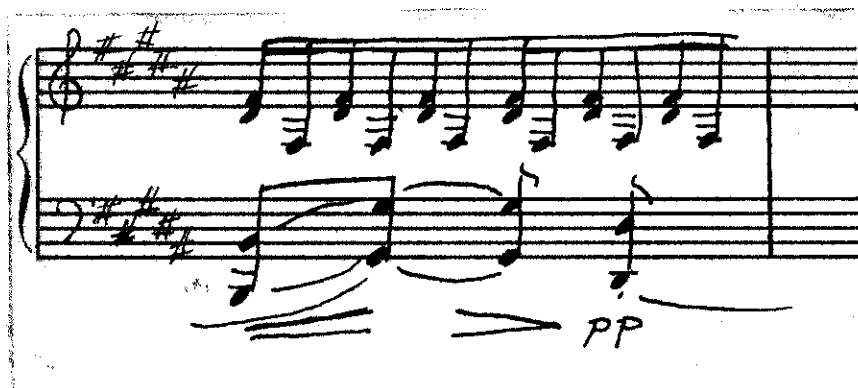


Fig. 18--Measures 31-35 of Les collines d'Anacapri

Following the "chanson populaire" is an almost vulgar, but clever, Neapolitan song, complete with the guitar sounds, as depicted in Figure 19.

A musical score for measures 55-58 of 'Les collines d'Anacapri'. The score is written for piano in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The piece is marked 'Plus modéré' and 'pp' (pianissimo). The melody in the treble staff is a series of eighth notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4. The bass staff features a bass line with a 'pp' dynamic marking. The piece concludes with a double bar line. The score includes the instruction 'Rubato' and the phrase 'un peu marqué'.

Fig. 19--Measures 55-58 of Les collines d'Anacapri

The bells are heard again increasing in tempo and volume until it seems as though everything were happening at once, and this flamboyant piece is closed in a dazzling blaze of light depicted by means of a tonic chord with added sixth in the brilliant upper register.

Des pas sur la neige

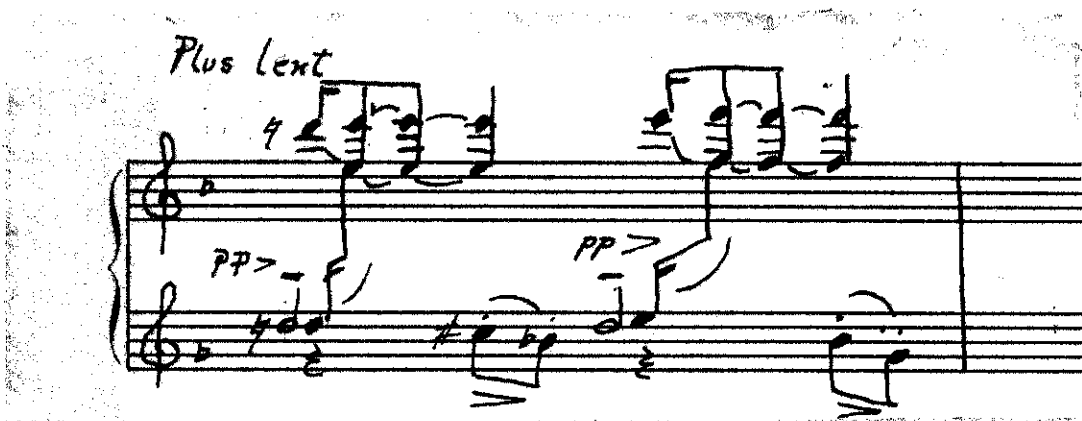
A feeling of bleakness and cold persists throughout this piece by means of Debussy's use of a rather remarkable rhythmic device and some stark harmonies. Debussy himself said its basic rhythm "should have the aural value of a melancholy, snowbound landscape."<sup>11</sup> The crunching footsteps from an ostinato about which the piece is built. (See Figure 20.)

<sup>11</sup> Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 145.



Fig. 20--Measures 1-4 of Des pas sur la neige

The melody, as can be seen in Figure 20, is of a softly sighing character which becomes even more desolate as it moves on. Only through the melody can be heard the varied emotions, since the other voices have merely a mournful droning quality. Debussy has indicated the piece to be sad and slow throughout until it reaches the closing bars which are more tragic still, since they are dying away. (See Figure 21.)



The image shows a handwritten musical score for measures 32-36 of the piece "Des pas sur la neige" by Debussy. The score is written on two systems of grand staves. The top system contains measures 32-34, and the bottom system contains measures 35-36. The music is in B-flat major and 3/4 time. The tempo is marked "Tres lent". The dynamics include "ppp" and "morendo". The notation features complex textures with many beamed notes and rests, characteristic of Debussy's style.

Fig. 21--Measures 32-36 of Des pas sur la neige

Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest

Indeed, the west wind is to Debussy that fearsome, 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, subjugating each to a state of exalted terror.<sup>12</sup>

Here for the first time in the preludes does Debussy exhibit the violence and destruction such as is found in the "Sturm und Drang" of romantic literature. The composer's devices for a rumbling sound are remarkable not only for the

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

effects achieved, but also by the sheer number of them. He uses arpeggio figures, bass tremolos, series of major chords moving up chromatically, scale passages, and other tricks difficult to describe. The over-all feeling is one of great contrasts ranging from pp to fff. The many crescendi marked throughout the piece give it a surging forward movement at all times. What a climax for the three diversified "wind" preludes to reach!

La fille aux cheveux de lin

Inspired by a poem of the same name in the collection Poemes Antiques: Chansons Ecossaises by Liconte de Lisle, this Prelude is perhaps one of the most lyrical written by this composer.

Sur la luzerne en fleurs assise  
 Qui chante dès le frais matin?  
 C'est la fille aux cheveux de lin,  
 La belle aux lèvres de cerise.

L'amour, au clair soleil d'été  
 Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Ta bouche a des couleurs divines,  
 Ma chère--et tente le baiser!  
 Sur l'herbe en fleur veux-tu causer,  
 Fille aux cils longs, aux boucles fines?

L'amour au clair soleil d'été  
 Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Ne dis pas non, fille cruelle!!  
 Ne dis pas oui!!! J'entendrai mieux  
 Le long regard de tes grands yeux  
 Et ta lèvre rose, O ma belle!!

L'amour au clair soleil d'été  
 Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Adieu les daims, adieu les lièvres  
 Et les rouges perdix!! Je veux  
 Baiser le lin de tes cheveux,  
 Presser la pourpre de tes lèvres!!!

L'amour au clair soleil d'été  
 Avec l'alouette a chanté.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Unpublished translation by Esther Lois Cully (New York, 1955):

On the lucerne seated by the flowers,  
 Who sings from early morn?  
 It is the maid with the flaxen hair,  
 The lovely girl, with lips as red as cherries.

Love, in the bright summer sun  
 Rejoices with the lark.

And your mouth with its bright colors,  
 My dear--tempts a kiss!  
 In the flowering meadow will you, perhaps, speak  
 to me,  
 Maid with long lashes and tiny curls?

Love, in the bright summer sun  
 Rejoices with the lark.

Don't say no, cruel girl!!  
 And don't say yes yet!!! For I would rather  
 Look deeply into your eyes  
 And at your red lips, O beautiful girl!!

Love, in the bright summer sun  
 Rejoices with the lark.

Farewell, deer and hares,  
 And farewell, bright red partridges!!  
 For twice I have kissed her flaxen hair,  
 And pressed her dark red lips!!!

Love, in the bright summer sun  
 Rejoices with the lark.

The mood of the music is graceful, youthful and sometimes gay. The structure is very simple, as is the young and naive maid. The opening bars may be a tune she is softly humming. (See Figure 22.)

*Tres calme et doucement expressif*

*p sans rigueur*

Fig. 22--Measures 1-3 of La fille aux cheveux de lin

The first section continues and is followed by a more lively one in which she seems to laugh gaily. (Perhaps she smiles at a squirrel's chattering!) (See Figure 23.)



Fig. 23--Measures 19-21 of La fille aux cheveux de lin

Thoughts of her sweetheart return and she resumes her humming with the recapitulation of the first theme.

La sérénade interrompue

In this prelude Debussy creates a Spanish scene and one that is decidedly humorous. The hero, despite many interruptions of his serenade to the fair lady, is persistent, though sorely tried. He tunes his guitar in the opening bars and then begins to strum, as seen in Figure 24.





Fig. 24--Measures 19-20 of La sérénade interrompue

All has gone smoothly for him until there is a violent interruption. (Does some irate neighbor reward him with a well-aimed shoe?) (See Figure 25.)



Fig. 25--Measures 46-47 of La sérénade interrompue

He resumes his introduction and love song, only to be rudely interrupted again, as seen in Figure 26. (Is it some inebriate stumbling homeward?)

The image shows two systems of musical notation for measures 80-84. The first system (measures 80-82) features a treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is marked *pp* and *lointain*. The bass line consists of chords with a '7' below them, indicating seventh chords. The second system (measures 83-84) continues the bass line with similar chords and a '7' below them. The treble clef part in the second system shows a melodic line with a slur over it, but it is mostly obscured by the bass line's notes.

Fig. 26--Measures 80-84 of La sérénade interrompue

He begins again; the same disturbance persists. In a final endeavor the harassed lover tries to muster his enthusiasm, but by this time it has faded and the serenade grows weaker and weaker. At last he ends with an expression of disgust characterized by a jarring *sfz*. (See Figure 27.)

The image shows a single system of musical notation for Figure 27. It consists of two staves. The top staff is empty. The bottom staff has a key signature of three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab) and a 3/4 time signature. The melody starts with a half note chord marked *sfz* and a '1' above it. This is followed by a quarter note chord marked *p*. The bass line consists of chords with a '7' below them, indicating seventh chords. The system ends with a final chord.



Fig. 27--Measures 133-137 of La sérénade interrompue

La Cathédrale engloutie

According to an old legend of Brittany, the Cathedral of Ys was engulfed in the fourth or fifth century "because of the impiety of its inhabitants." As an example to others who might be wayward, it is allowed to rise again and be seen at sunrise. Despite its supernatural character, this legend is strongly believed in and has been the object of poetic and scientific observation.<sup>15</sup>

Debussy's passion for the sea almost assumed the proportions of a religion, and one might debate as to whether he were substantiating either religious concept by association with the other, or whether he deliberately depicted a struggle between them.

There seem to be three main musical ideas: the melody is based on a plain chant idea (see figure 28a); the

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<sup>15</sup> Schmitz, The Piano Works of Claude Debussy, p. 155.

harmony, giving the effect of an organ, comes from medieval organum (see Figure 28b), and the quiet sea is depicted by a rolling bass. (See Figure 28a.)

a

sempre pp

b

Fig. 28--a) Measure 16, b) measures 7-8 of La Cathédrale engloutie.

The bells ring and the priests are heard chanting in Figure 29.

The image shows a musical score for measures 23-27 of 'La Cathédrale engloutie'. The score is written for piano and features a prominent pedal point on C in the bass register. The music is characterized by dense, arpeggiated textures and a dramatic dynamic range from piano to fortissimo (sff). The score is written in G major and 3/4 time. The first system shows the right hand playing a melodic line with a fermata over the first measure, while the left hand plays a bass line with a fermata. The second system shows the right hand playing a complex arpeggiated texture with a fermata over the first measure, while the left hand plays a bass line with a fermata. The third system shows the right hand playing a melodic line with a fermata over the first measure, while the left hand plays a bass line with a fermata. The score is marked with 'sff' and 'pda bassa'.

Fig. 29--Measures 23-27 of La Cathédrale engloutie

- As the cathedral rises majestically into view the
- piece reaches a climax over a ponderous pedal point on C. Finally the vision recedes and sinks once again into the depths.

Schmitz draws an association between the Roman and Gothic arches, which might have suggested a cathedral to the mind of Debussy, and the appearance of the music on the page.<sup>16</sup>

### La Danse de Puck

Debussy has succeeded in producing a charming caricature of this lively fellow from Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream. Puck is not really bad, but delights in his merry pranks and mischief-making. As page to Oberon he is known for his error in administering the love elixir and causing an incredible mixup among the characters in the fairy kingdom. The tools employed to define the lovable imp are truly remarkable. The prelude opens as Puck skips airily in, going from one object to another. (See Figure 30.)



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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

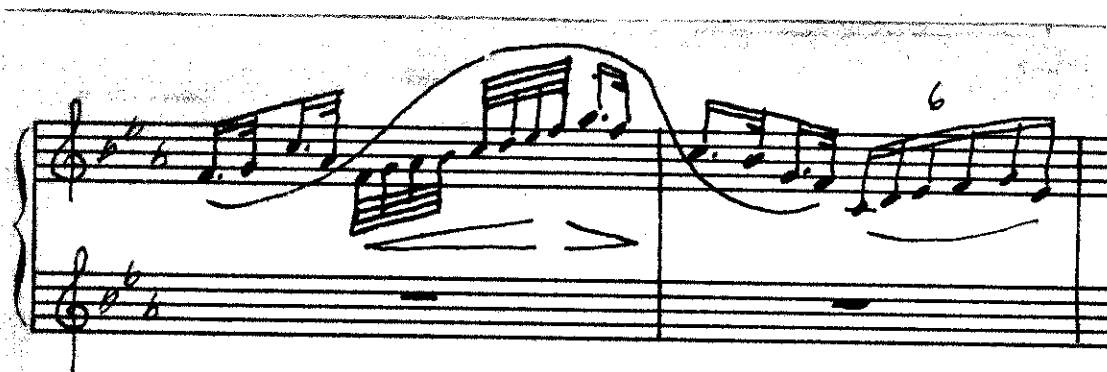


Fig. 30--Measures 1-4 of La Danse de Puck

His actions become even more blithe as the arpeggiated figure is followed by the dotted-note series in Figure 31.



Fig. 31--Measures 8-9 of La Danse de Puck

In the development section, it seems that he is being scolded by the gods for his devilish tricks. The rather

solemn melody in the left hand, depicting this upbraiding, is shown in Figure 32.

The image shows a musical score for two systems of piano accompaniment. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The first system includes the instruction *p* *lancement soutenu* written below the bass staff. The music is in a key with two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 3/4 time signature. The right hand of both systems features a series of chords with dotted rhythms, while the left hand plays a more melodic line with sustained notes.

Fig. 32--Measures 32-33 of La Danse de Puck

Puck, however, shows no remorse and shortly thereafter defies them with his laughter. (See Figure 33.)





Fig. 33--Measures 49-52 of La Danse de Puck

After a period of flitting about, he is up to his old tricks again, but evidently he has added a few new ones since his first theme has been altered and elaborated. (Does he annoy a couple secretly making love?) As usual, after the harm is done, he vanishes in a puff! (See Figure 34.)

*Rapide et fuyant*

Fig. 34--Measures 95-96 of La Danse de Puck

### Minstrels

There are diverse opinions as to the source of inspiration of the final prelude in this group. The English claim that he depicted their circus acrobats and clowns, but American commentators will say that Debussy had a black-faced pair in mind. The latter seems to be the favored opinion by virtue of a snatch of an obviously American tune which will be seen in one of the following figures.

Figure 35 shows the beginning of the dance with drums and banjo:

*Modéré (Nerveux et avec humour)*

*p les "gruppetti" sur le temps*

*Cédez -- ||*

*p* *pp*

Fig. 35--Measures 1-4 of Minstrels

The second material seems reminiscent of the comical tap-dancing with various other stunts intermingling. (See Figure 36.)

*Mouvt*

*p*

*(très détaillé)*

Fig. 36--Measures 9-12 of Minstrels

They begin to make funny faces and turn somersaults!  
 (See Figure 37.)

*Moqueur*

*p*

*m.f.*

8

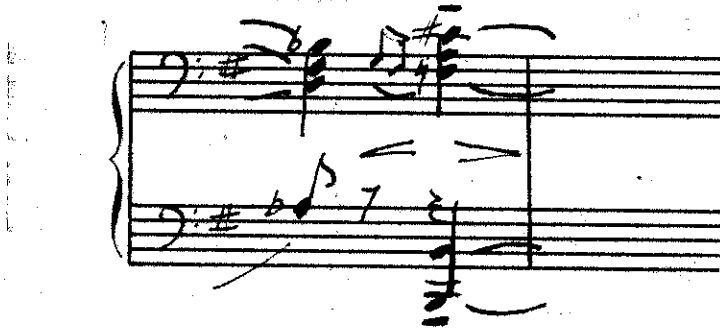


Fig. 37--Measures 37-40 of Minstrels

An obvious drum interlude is introduced, as is seen in Figure 38.



Fig. 38--Measures 58-62 of Minstrels

Then the song previously referred to intervenes and reminds one of the old Broadway type. (See Figure 39.)

*Expressiv*

The image shows two systems of handwritten musical notation. The first system consists of two staves (treble and bass clefs) with a grand brace on the left. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The first measure starts with a piano (p) dynamic. The notation includes various accidentals (b, #) and slurs. The second system also consists of two staves with a grand brace, continuing the melodic and harmonic lines with slurs and dynamic markings.

Fig. 39--Measures 63-66 of Minstrels

A short recapitulation of the first material and the drum roll is heard, and the antics of the minstrels are over. Points of interest are the elements of jazz that are heard in this piece and the over-all gaiety with which Debussy hilariously closes the group.

## CHAPTER III

### CONCLUSION

The history of the prelude is one of constant change. From an independent piece (1450-1650), it developed into a short introduction to the suites and fugues of the late Baroque period. During this time, for the purpose of displaying the advantages of equal temperament, Bach composed forty-eight Preludes and Fugues, two in every key. Then as a form it lost favor until 1839 when Chopin conceived them in all keys again, but as poetic miniatures and once again independent. Around the turn of the century Rachmaninov, Scriabin and Debussy upheld the tradition of going through the circle of keys. The preludes of these last three composers are seemingly pieces of an independent nature. However, Scriabin, who wrote eighty-nine, did place preludes at the beginnings of Opus 9 and Opus 56, and Debussy uses the introductory form in the Suite Bergamasque and Pour le Piano. He also felt that some from Book I should be played as introductions to larger works in the same keys. So apparently there has been a trend leaning slightly toward the Bachian use.

Some of the preludes of Debussy, twelve of which are discussed in this study, are intended as introductions to other pieces, while others are intended to be isolated; all are free in style thereby resembling all those types previously mentioned in these respects, but they are also different from all of the other collections by virtue of their use of picturesque titles, symbolism and impressionism. Because of the fact that symbolism as a term is more vague and less understood, the treatment of it has been more extensive than that of impressionism. The symbolist poets and the impressionist painters have each tried to claim Debussy as their own. Actually Debussy seems to have been influenced by both, although in the Preludes of Book I, more are like paintings than symbolic poems. Good examples of the use of symbolism, however, can be found in Danseuses de Delphes, Voiles, Les sons et le parfums tournent l'air du soir and La Cathédrale engloutie. (Of the two which were inspired by poetry, Les sons et les parfums tournent l'air du soir and La fille aux cheveux de lin, only the former has traces of symbolism in it.) The other preludes, La Vent dans la plaine, Les Collines d'Anacapri, Des Pas sur la neige, Ce qu'a vu le vent de l'ouest, La Fille aux cheveux de lin, La Sérénade interrompue, La Danse de Puck and Minstrels are depictive sketches.



Since Debussy, Dmitri Shostakovich (b. 1906) wrote a usual collection of twenty-four preludes in his Opus 34 (1933), and these are again in the Chopin tradition of independence. However, the Bachian movement has been revived by the use to which Paul Hindemith (b. 1895) has put the prelude in the Ludus Tonalis (1943). This is a collection emulating the Well-Tempered Clavier in that there is an opening prelude followed by fugues and interludes around twelve keys. The fact that these pieces are called interludes does not detract from the fact that they are free and improvisatory and that they introduce each fugue.

Thus it can be seen that in the history of the prelude, Debussy's efforts in that form are unique in that they are of a descriptive nature and are reflective of other art forms of their time; while at the same time they follow tradition in that they utilize the common format of twenty-four pieces in all keys and that they are in a free and improvisatory style.

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