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A STYLISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE PIANO WORKS
OF DEBUSSY AND RAVEL

THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Birth of Modern French Music

Up to the time of the Franco-Prussian war, there was no doubt but that German music held sway over French music. During the first half of the nineteenth century, French music, which had been largely given over to opera, had been unduly eclectic in character.¹ Rossini and Meyerbeer had been the dominating personalities of that era, despite the genius of Berlioz, whose dynamic qualities and importance were not recognized until long after his death. After the Prussian war, there was an awakening of interest in chamber music, which caused a revolution in public taste; furthermore, there was created a need for the delving into the literature of all instrumental music. As a consequence, many orchestras and chamber music societies were established.

Saint-Saens- the brilliant organist, pianist, conductor, composer author, and instructor of Gabriel Faure - who later became the instructor of Ravel - was a pioneer in the field of instrumental music of France along

¹ Edward Burlingame Hill, Modern French Music, p. 4.

with the violinist Lalo and the organist Franck. As a minor but conjunctive point, it is interesting to note that Saint-Saens himself twice failed to receive the Prix de Rome.

After the bitterness of feeling caused by the Franco-Prussian conflict had somewhat waned, Paris, and not a few of the French composers, fell under the spell of Richard Wagner and the Neo-Russians. At the same time, however, a strong national feeling had come into being among the French people. The result, as will be seen, was that the music and the arts became strongly imbued with this new quality.

The French of today may feel very grateful to Cesar Franck and his pupils for their re-introduction into French music of classic forms and methods of an individual style; likewise they may feel grateful to Chabrier and Faure, the first of the modernists, whose independent styles reveal an indubitable assertion of French traits.

So the gradual abandonment of dependence upon foreign styles and models and the accompanying development of originality in musical style and thought is noted.

In 1905, the Paris critic and writer, Romain Rolland, although still expressing his appreciation and praise of Richard Strauss as the first musical personality, made the

assertion that French art was silently taking the place of German art.²

After a period of unquestioned leadership extending over a century and a half, the influence of German music was beginning to suffer a serious decline. At the same time, French influence was making great strides through advances in technical mastery, originality, subtlety of expression, and, above all, through the aforementioned nationalistic tendencies.

The achievements of French composers within the last seventy years have outranked all contemporary schools, with the possible exception of the later Russians, who ante-date the modern French, and to whom the latter are rather indebted. The influence of the French, who explored new fields of harmonic effects, stylistic adaptability, clarity and fineness of emotional discrimination, has been felt by the entire civilized musical world.

Closely related to French music, and undeniably playing their parts in the rejuvenation of instrumental music, are the impressionistic arts and symbolical writing. Debussy, whose music has been considered by some as the most Gallic of the French,³ is a striking example of the

²Ibid., p. 1.

³Ibid., p. 6.

composers who have been influenced by various aesthetic sources. This practice of deriving influence from aesthetic sources tends to a more comprehensive expression of sentiment and emotion in French music.

When the development of French music is viewed from the time of Franco-Prussian dominance and Cesar Franck to the present day, Debussy and his younger contemporary, Ravel, are two outstanding figures. It is possible that these two composers did more to bring about the present trend of French music than any other composers. Debussy, the elder of the two, received the many harsh blows that usually come to those who are innovators; but after his death his compositions became more readily accepted by the public and made the course easier for Ravel.

These two men, whose styles of writing and personal characteristics varied so differently, created a form of music which sounds strangely similar to the ear. Both of them played important parts in creating a new style of musical literature. Although neither has left a direct following, such as the school created by Franck and his pupils, their influence has been felt upon the whole of modern French music, indeed upon the whole musical world. From them grew the "French Six," Honegger, Poulenc, Auric, Milhaud, Durey, and Tailleferre. Even in Stravinsky one may perceive some of the characteristic uttering, a

voicing of the contemporary spirit which these two Frenchmen strove to achieve.

Problem

In literature, each author creates his own individual style of writing by the combination of certain literary devices arranged in a particular form; in art, each artist creates his own distinctive style of painting by the combination of certain colors mixed in a particular manner, as well as linear form and proportion. So it is in music: a composer creates his own characteristic style of composition by the combination of certain elements of music arranged in a specific fashion.

These elements of music are generally conceded to be: harmony, rhythm, melody, spacing, and form. By diffusion, expansion, or combination of these basic elements, other elements of style may be formed. For example, a melodic and harmonic rhythm may be achieved by combining melody and rhythm, or harmony and rhythm, or all three. Likewise modulation is achieved through the use of the mechanics of harmony.

This study has three purposes: first, to point out the stylistic elements of music that are present in the piano works of Debussy and Ravel; second, to determine how the composers have used these elements; and third,

to discover the effects that have been achieved through individual uses of the elements.

Need for the Study

Although there has been a considerable amount of material published about Debussy and Ravel, it is of a controversial rather than a technical nature. One of the major controversial issues of French music was whether Debussy copied from Ravel, or vice versa; therefore it is understandable that a critical analysis of the music of Debussy cannot be obtained from a biographer of Ravel, nor can a similar analysis concerning the music of Ravel be acquired from a biographer of Debussy.

The chief significance of this study is its technical nature and its attempt to present accurate data concerning the style of composition used by Debussy and Ravel.

Scope of Study

This study of the stylistic elements of music as employed by Debussy and Ravel has been limited to the piano works of the two composers, and these, in turn have been limited to a representative number of the piano compositions.

In an exhaustive study of the stylistic elements found in the piano works of Debussy and Ravel, it would

be necessary to examine carefully every piano composition written by the two composers and to list the recurrence of every portion of each stylistic element. This detailed investigation, however, is unnecessary, since a very good impression of the characteristic musical traits of a composer may be found from the study of a representative number of his compositions.

Each of the following compositions selected as being representative of the piano works of Debussy and Ravel was chosen for a specific reason. E. B. Hill's book Modern French Music was used as authority.

The Ballade of Debussy was chosen because it is one of Debussy's early works which is considered to be uninteresting and lacking in the qualities which later characterize his music.

Clair de lune was considered to be representative of the transition period of Debussy's life from a stage of relative insipidity to one of indisputable originality. This composition shows definite premonitions of his later style, and is the autotype of an atmospheric presentation of an aspect of nature, in which Debussy shone during the years of his maturity.

Jardins sous la Pluie was considered to be valuable for study because it is from Estampes, Debussy's first

work in which he definitely reconciles his impressionistic aspirations with his personal idiom in piano style.

L'Isle joyeuse likewise was included because it is a work formed on a larger scale than anything previously attempted by Debussy, while Reflets dans l'eau was believed to be valuable to the investigation because it is a vivid example of the coordination of sensitive observation and musical imagery.

The Preludes, (Book I and II) were of inestimable value in this analysis because they are considered to be the most comprehensive exposition of Debussy's pianistic standpoint, and because they crown the maturity of Debussy as a piano composer.

The Habanera and Pavane pour une Infante defunte were selected for study of Ravel's style because they are two of his earliest works, preceded only by the unpublished Menuet, and constitute a precocious assertion of Ravel's maturity.

Jeux d'eau, considered to have no forerunner in French or any other piano music, is perhaps the most important piano composition written by Ravel. No study of Ravel's piano style would be complete if Jeux d'eau were not included.

The Sonatine is of importance to this study because it exemplifies the classic sympathies of Ravel, his

acceptance of the limitations of the sonatine form, and his skill in overcoming the handicap.

The suite, Gaspard de la nuit (Ondine, Scarbo, and Le Gibet) was of special interest because all three compositions of the suite are difficult, both in a technical way and in an interpretive way, and also because they exemplify the maturity of Ravel.

The Valses Nobles et Sentimentales are of importance chiefly because impressionism is abandoned, and new emphasis is given to the waltz.

Le Tombeau de Couperin was selected because it exhibits invention and skill, and the Concerto in G because it is the largest and most brilliant of all Ravel's piano compositions.

"Five O'Clock", the short excerpt from the ballet L'Enfant et Les Sortilèges, was included for study because it shows the influence of American jazz on the compositions of Ravel.

Procedure

In making a stylistic analysis of any composer's music, the first step necessarily involves the selection of such musical elements as are pertinent to the study. Harmony, melody, rhythm, spacing and form are usually considered to be the most important elements of

style, and as was previously mentioned, other elements of style may be formed from them.

After the elements of style are listed and fixed firmly in mind, a cursory examination of the music should be made. Certain definite, unusual or traditional treatments of particular elements of style stand out after the primary survey. Unique and excessive recurrences must be classified. In other words, the preliminary examination should be made to obtain a general idea of the music and to note the stylistic elements which are outstanding.

The second step in a stylistic analysis is to catalog the occurrences of different traits, and then make a careful study of the music to determine whether or not the traits are characteristic of the composer. A trait is generally considered to be characteristic of the composer if it appears three times in his works.

In the search for one particular trait, it is obvious that many others will come to light. These are added to the list of those to be investigated, and are subsequently given the same examination as the first trait.

The last step in an analysis of this sort is to determine the musical effect gained by the composer through his particular treatment of the various elements.

Examples and tables are compiled for clarification and illustration of the composer's manner of writing.

Presentation

The results of this investigation will be presented in six main sections. The first section will be devoted to the life and works of Debussy. The second section will deal with the life and works of Ravel. The third section will make a stylistic analysis of the piano works of Debussy; the fourth section will make a stylistic analysis of the piano works of Ravel. The fifth section will briefly compare the styles of the two composers, and the last section will draw a conclusion resulting from the preceding investigation.

CHAPTER II

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF CLAUDE DEBUSSY

Life

On August 22, 1862, Achille-Claude Debussy, the feline, solitary, artistic, amorous hedonist, sybarite, and sensualist,¹ was born into an humble family of artisans, workmen, and small farmers.² This child of pure French parentage, who was to revolutionize piano music and become the extreme monarch of the impalpable, chose to grace a suburb of Paris with his birth. This small vicinity was already famous. It had been the birthplace of Louis XIV, the former summer capital of France, the exile home of the Stuart pretenders, the birth and burial place of James II of England and his widow, Mary of Modena, the place where Dumas wrote Camille, the chateau of Francis I, namely, Saint-Germain-en-Laye.⁴

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

² Leon Vallas, Claude Debussy, His Life and Works, p.1.

³ Thompson, op. cit., p. 247.

⁴ Ibid., p. 30.

Situated in the heart of the verdant Ile de France, only twenty minutes from Paris, it was a favorite lounging place for painters, poets, and musicians.

Debussy entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of eleven years, through the aid of Madame Maute de Fleurville, who was a former pupil of Chopin and the mother-in-law of Paul Verlaine, the friend of Debussy's later years. At the Conservatoire, Debussy became known as a pupil who was passionately fond of music, but who could not play the piano. Although the seven prizes which he won during his eleven years there culminated in the Prix de Rome, he was always at variance with his instructors because of his refusal to agree with, or to conform to the harmonic conventionalities of the time. He thoroughly confounded his professors by turning his simple exercises of thorough bass into strange forms with parallel fifths and fourths, and by his bold experimentation. Even at this early stage his little harmony exercises began to give some indication of what his later compositions would be.

Debussy, who was never so fortunate as to be able to attend school, was always ungrammatical in his writing, and even at the age of thirty, his spelling was faulty. A short thickset, awkward boy, he was dressed like a child of the working-classes, and he looked like a real

little Bohemian. Uncommunicative and elusive, he had the tastes of an aristocrat, although he had been born into a most ordinary class of society. He loved minute objects, delicate and sensitive things, and good food to eat. Since he was a reserved and sullen boy, he was not popular with his fellow students, and, all in all, he must have spent several miserable years during his period of study.

It was Albert Lavignac, his professor of solfege, who found that he possessed a remarkable degree of musical sensibility, combined with a taste for unusual chords, complex rhythms, and unexpected progressions of subtle harmonies. It was largely due to this kind master that Debussy managed to overcome his hatred of theory and its rules.

However, he did not have so fortunate an experience with his professor of piano, Marmontel, with Ambroise Thomas, the director of the Conservatoire, nor, still later, with his harmony instructor, Emile Durand. The daring manner in which he exploited the resources of the piano shocked the old piano professor, Marmontel, even though he realized the originality and exceptional talents of his pupil. Ambroise Thomas, however, would not even tolerate the subtle shades of expression which the young Achille introduced into his playing of the

Well-Tempered Clavichord, and there was a weekly conflict between Durand and Debussy. Durand, who imposed rigid rules and mechanical exercises upon his classes in composition, was infuriated over Debussy's continued use of fifths and octaves, and his negligible use of cadences on the IV and VI. This last practice was considered a necessity by the old professor.

In view of such unpleasant experiences, it is a great surprise to learn that Debussy was awarded the Prix de Rome. He was not to do this, however, until after his more happy experiences with the von Meck family.

In 1878 and 1879, after having failed to win a prize in either piano or harmony, Debussy was engaged by the wealthy Russian widow, Nadedja Filaretovna de Meck, the benefactress of Tschaikowsky, as pianist in her trio of musicians. This trio consisted of a pianist, violinist, and cellist.

It was during this time that Debussy heard his first Wagner, and for a brief time he became quite a Wagner enthusiast. (Vallas states frankly that the modern harmony of Debussy is directly derived from Tristan and Isolde.⁵ Although it is not definitely known,

⁵
Vallas, op. cit., p. 12.

it is thought that Debussy spent at least three summers with Mme. von Meck, her eleven children, and her entourage.

While making one of the journeys from Russia to Rome, he fell in love with Sophie von Meck. As he was only eighteen at the time, it may be concluded that this affair was not very serious, especially since she was immediately replaced in his affections by Mme. Vasnier, a handsome woman much older than Debussy, and the wife of a prominent Parisian architect. Claude-Achille was introduced into this family as an accompanist to Mme. Vasnier, and he lived with them until his departure for Rome in 1884, a period of some five years.

At this time, Debussy appears to have developed a peculiar temperament. He was unsociable, extremely sensitive, and unpolished. He seems to have been gracious enough to those whom he liked, but extremely surly with those who fell into his disfavor. Even at this early age, he was not easily satisfied with his work, and it was only after he had improvised for a long time and became definitely sure of what he wanted to write that he ever put his pen on the paper.

Charles Gounod appears to have cast the final assenting vote on Debussy's L'Enfant Prodigue, which won for him the Prix de Rome. "It is the work of a genius," said Gounod. However, it seems to have been only through the

influence of the powerful Vasnier family that Debussy was enabled to remain at the conservatoire long enough to win the prize.

From 1885 to 1887, Debussy was in Rome. Unhappy, miserable, and desolate, he produced nothing of value during his sojourn there. After two years, he returned to Paris. La Demoiselle Elue, his contribution for his third year, was written in its entirety after his return.

It was after his return that Debussy began to be influenced by the symbolism of the modern French poets and painters. He frequented night-haunts with them. Of their influence on Debussy Cortot says that Debussy was a literary composer, in that he had to have the thought or idea in his mind before the musical expression was born. It is certainly true that he was greatly impressed and influenced by Manet, Monet, and the poets, Verlaine and Mallarme.

It is concerning this time of Debussy's life that Vallas writes: "Debussy, like many artists, had little strength of character, and always remained, in some respects, a child. He never grew up, and was easily swayed and led."⁶ When things went wrong, Debussy was helpless. He was a typical Bohemian and he lacked all financial

⁶Vallas, op. cit., p. 54.

instincts; consequently, he was constantly in pecuniary difficulties, though he was always completely without avarice. Until the production of Pelleas and Melisande Debussy was wholly insecure, financially. Upon his return from Rome, he had contrived to make a living by teaching pianoforte and by making transcriptions for the publishers, Fromont and Durand.⁷

It was about this time that he met the woman who was to be his first wife, Rosalie Texier. She was a pale, pretty girl, who earned her living as a dressmaker. She had no taste for music and apparently was not particularly intellectual. They were married on October 19, 1899. Debussy was forced to give a piano lesson that morning in order to have enough money to pay for a wedding breakfast.

This new adventure, embarked upon so gaily, was to have a tragic end. In 1904 Debussy deserted his wife, giving as one of the reasons for desertion the fact that her voice annoyed him! She was replaced in his affections by Emma Moyse, the Jewess, wife of a prominent financier, Sigismond Bardac, and the mistress of Gabriel Faure. Rosalie attempted to commit suicide, and this, together

⁷ Edward Lockspeiser, Debussy, p. 70.

with the other events, created a severe scandal. Debussy refused to have anything further to do with Rosalie, and his friends, most of whom resented his conduct in the affair, took up enough money to take care of the unfortunate woman.

None of the exact history of the affair is known, and the statement that Debussy's reason for turning to Mme. Bardac was his love of financial freedom may or may not be true. At any rate the attempt - if such it was - proved to be anything but successful. During the long process of the divorces on both sides, Mme. Bardac failed to receive anything like the settlement which she had expected. However, in 1905 there was born the daughter of whom Debussy was to be so passionately fond, and somewhat later her parents were married.

Nevertheless, the effects of the trouble remained with Debussy, influencing his work and taking away his idealism. As early as 1910 he manifested a desire for release, and this fact has indicated that his second marriage was not as happy as he had hoped that it would be.

In 1918, at the age of fifty-one, Debussy died as the result of a cancer. The years before his death were characterized by an extreme lassitude and a long period of unproductiveness, broken only by the composition of Les Douze Etudes, En blanc et noir, two sonatas, and one song.

Claude-Achille Debussy, whose life had been full of storms and disputes both in his work and in his personal life, died and was buried during the bombardment of Paris. This man, endowed with a great musical gift, had the courage and stubbornness to break away from that which had gone before, and in so doing he established a new school of musical thought and composition. He realized that all arts - literary, plastic, and sonorous - are kin, and that perfumes, colours, and sounds correspond to one another.⁸ This new school was to align more closely all the arts.

Works

It is interesting to note that there was no piano music written by Debussy until 1888, four years after he had won the Prix de Rome; and from 1888 until 1903, there are only fifteen works. It was not until Debussy was forty that he came into his forte as a composer for the piano, and that was to be for only fourteen years, since his best works are conceded to have been written from 1892 to 1904. The period from 1904 until his death in 1918, seems to have been one of decline, with his later works becoming a prey to his own formulas. There

⁸
Vallas, op. cit., p. 53.

are sixty of these works, and although they are written with perfect taste, they lack feeling, and are considered to be of less value than his former compositions. Musically, Debussy died in 1914, four years before his death in March of 1918.⁹ Strangely enough, it seems that only during the middle period of Debussy's life did he accomplish his best work. His early piano compositions are disappointing and perplexing, and they show little indication of his later, individualistic style.¹⁰

The Paris to which Debussy returned in 1887 was an era of symbolist poets and impressionistic painters, and it was into this atmosphere that Debussy came.

He speedily became the leader in the movement toward impressionistic expression, not simply for its pictorial effect, but as the embodiment of delicate and subtle inner experience. For the setting forth of this highly subjective conception of music, he did not hesitate to diverge from established notions of tonal construction, utilizing scale-series that were unusual, (often avoiding semi-tones) seeking novel harmonic successions, even to the reversal of accepted procedures, tending toward plastic and even vague rhythmic patterns, and everywhere more interested in color progressions and contrasts than in those of figure and contour.¹¹

9

Lockspeiser, op. cit., p. 150.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 134.

¹¹

Waldo Selden Pratt, The New Encyclopaedia of Music and Musicians, p. 307.

Those authorities who believe that Debussy's music is impressionistic hold that "art is tied up with music by reason of the research of color harmonies, causing pictures to resemble a symphony with the most luminous degree of light as the principal theme,"¹² and that his employment of chords and their combinations resembles the manipulation of colors by Le Sidaner, Whistler, or Monet.¹³

Debussy had a keen observation of minute detail, a taste for the simple and unconventional, and a dislike for any pose or studied effect.¹⁴ The fact that at one time he aspired to become a painter¹⁵ may explain why he fell into the ranks of the impressionists so easily.

However, he was not only in close sympathy with such impressionistic painters as Monet, Manet, Latour, Renoir, Degas, Sisley, Pissarro, Whistler, and Le Sidaner;¹⁶ but also at the same time he was being influenced by the diaphanous poetry of Paul Verlaine and by the symbolism of Stephen Mallarme.¹⁷ For example, Mallarme's method of

¹² Louise Liebich, Claude-Achille Debussy, p. 24.

¹³ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

¹⁵ Thompson, op. cit., p. 18.

¹⁶ Liebich, op. cit., p. 24.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 10.

employing single isolated words in the text resembles¹⁸ Debussy's use of unrelated chords; and the placing of titles at the end of each piece - a device which is used for the purpose of making the reader guess the musical sentiment - parallels a graphic art tactic of Mallarme, inspired by pure symbolism.

Alfred Cortot compares his "luminous and incisive composition technique to certain Degas canvasses or Chinese prints,"¹⁹ while Debussy himself says that he was primarily influenced by nature, and that "the quality which touches him. . . is a transposition into sentiment of the invisible in nature."²⁰

Lockspeiser states that Debussy needed at all times some extra-musical poetic or pictorial stimulus, since his music was a music of sensations rather than of sentiment.²¹ This may bear out perhaps both the impressionistic and symbolic viewpoints of his music.²² Is it not possible that the songs were suggested by the symbolist poets,

¹⁸ Liebich, op. cit., p. 40.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 30.

²⁰ Alfred Cortot, Piano Music of Claude Debussy, p. 12.

²¹ Ibid., p. 16.

²² Lockspeiser, op. cit., p. 134.

and the piano works by the impressionistic painters? ²³

Before a single note is played Debussy begins his impressionistic devices. Through the choice of such titles as Gardens in the Rain,²⁴ he establishes a mood of idle reverie. Thompson says that this accomplishment was not original, but was perceived from Schumann's affection for extra-musical titles. Debussy however, is more objective, more artist-like, and less concentrated on nature and the destiny of man.²⁵ Liebich says that Debussy's device of placing the titles at the end of the composition is borrowed from Mallarme, and inspired by symbolism.²⁶

Liebich holds that the characteristics of impressionism and symbolism are the use of sounds as colours blended in varied juxtaposition, forming into delicately-tinted sonorous aggregations. Impressionism invests certain chords with existence, either sufficient unto themselves or capable of germinating into a series of shaded, many-hued chord sequences. ²⁷

²³Lockspeiser, op. cit., p. 134.

²⁴Daniel Gregory Mason, Contemporary Composers, p. 40.

²⁵Thompson, op. cit., p. 248.

²⁶Liebich, op. cit., p. 30.

²⁷Ibid., p. 27.

The type of musical writing called "impressionism" appears in Debussy's piano music for the first time in the Sarabande from the Suite Pour Piano. This effect is achieved by the reproduction of a chord on different degrees of the scale.²⁸ It is in the Estampes, based upon popular music of the Orient, Spain, and Ile de France, however, that Debussy's characteristic and highly individual style of writing appears.

Debussy's mediums of expression were the piano and his compositions for it, but it was only with the piano that he was able to realize, unaided, such a shifting of tonalities as to suggest an absence of tonality, since this was something of chord successions.²⁹

It must be admitted that Debussy added to and altered the resources of piano technique, and though no school was founded by him, he remains with Liszt and Chopin as the most idiomatic of all the composers who wrote for the instrument.

Laloy, the Paris critic and friend of Debussy, has set down these rules to observe in playing the music of Debussy:

1. Avoid all romantic affection.

²⁸Lockspeiser, op. cit., p. 138.

²⁹Thompson, op. cit., p. 247.

2. Make no effort to particularize or emphasize the melody.
3. Do not stress chords which form an harmonic framework of thematic substance.
4. Aim at blending of patterns to produce a "sonorous halo."
5. Do not detach the notes surmounted by a small stroke.
6. Do not disturb the tonal unity.

There is nothing heroic in Debussy's music. Finesse always takes precedence over muscularity. He insinuates, but never proclaims; he characterizes, but never dramatizes. His rhythm and accent render picturesque and evocative curl of phrases, and tone blends are used in place of counterpoint. Everything partakes of the fantasy with Debussy; he heightens the sensuous pleasure to be derived from piano playing and restores to it a lyrical quality.³⁰

³⁰Thompson, op. cit., p. 248.

CHAPTER III

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF JOSEPH MAURICE RAVEL

Life

Joseph Maurice Ravel, the modern French composer whose name has been linked so frequently with that of Claude Debussy, was born March 2, 1875, in the little Basque town of Ciboure, thirteen years after the birth of Debussy. His father, Joseph Ravel, was a Swiss engineer. He had been sent into the Basque country to assist in the construction of a new railroad, and while there he met Marie Eluarte, whom he married in 1874.

Marie's people were sailors and fishermen -simple people, but aristocrats in sentiment and fine feeling. Joseph Ravel's family were originally French, but after their migration into Switzerland, they adopted Swiss nationality. It is thought that originally the name was not Ravel, but Ravex, Ravet, or even Ravez, all of which were pronounced alike. It has been suggested that perhaps Ravel was Jewish since he was very sympathetic toward the race, but there are no facts to substantiate such a belief.

Joseph Ravel, forty-two years old at the time of his marriage, was much older than his young wife. He had two interests, continuous inventions, which always barely skimmed the surface of success, and music. At one time, he had aspired to the career of a concert pianist, and the dream of the ambition lived with him all of his life.

In 1875, after the birth of Maurice, the family moved to Paris. This city henceforth became the headquarters for the entire family, which consisted of Maurice, his younger brother Eduard, and the parents, Joseph and Marie. There remained, however, a warm spot in the hearts of the Ravels for Ciboure and the Basque people, and on every possible occasion they arranged to spend their vacations in the Basque country. The Basque country, the people, their customs, and their music all were important sources of influence upon Maurice Ravel. This boy of slight stature and delicate features, with black hair and eyes, delighted to hear his mother tell him stories of Basque folklore, fairy tales, and Fete days at Ciboure. The dominating influence in Ravel's life was the great devotion to his family which began at an early age.

Although the Ravels had only the barest necessities during those days in Paris, they never felt actual

privation, and little Maurice was given every possible advantage. There was a piano in the apartment, for Joseph Ravel still found great enjoyment in playing. When Maurice was seven, it was decided that he should have lessons. Many musical friends of the elder Ravel were often in the apartment, and it was to one of these, Henry Ghys, the composer of the famous Amaryllis, that Ravel's early music study was entrusted.

Maurice did not show exceptional promise for several years, and in his later life he expressed an appreciation for his father's unfailing interest and encouragement in him at all times.

When Ravel was fourteen years of age, he passed the audition tests for the Conservatoire National de Musique and entered the school. At this time, 1889, the Conservatoire was considered the best place of instruction to be found in France. Here Ravel studied with Emile Pessard, and later with Gabriel Faure.

The young boy was mischievous by nature, and until his last great illness he delighted in playing pranks and surprising his friends. He tormented his instructors at the Conservatoire with his innovations. It will be remembered that this trait was characteristic of the young Debussy. Ravel, however, was much more fortunate

than Debussy in his professors. Although they objected to his methods, they were farsighted enough to see that there might be something there of value, after all. Ravel, in turn, realized that perhaps they were not entirely wrong in their criticisms, and he sought to benefit by them.

Satie came into Ravel's life just at the time when he was first beginning to compose. A strong friendship developed between the two. Ravel was fascinated by Satie's music and to the very end of his life Ravel remained a firm admirer of Satie. He produced consternation in his class at the Conservatoire by daring to play Satie's Gymnopedies.

After the success of Habanera and Menuet Antique, published in 1895, Ravel definitely gave up the idea of becoming a concert pianist, and devoted himself to writing. Habanera, a short but perfect work which was done under Emile Pessard at the Conservatoire, was later incorporated in Rapsodie Espagnole.

It is ironic to note the manner in which Fate rations her gifts. Debussy unthankfully received the Prix de Rome, ungratefully refused to fulfill his stay there, and produced but one composition of value during the two years he was in Rome. Ravel, on the other hand, tried many times to gain this coveted prize. It would

have been wonderful, he thought, to have been able to secure three care-free years in an atmosphere conducive for the gathering of the Muses.

It was after Ravel had been in the class of Gabriel Faure for four years that he decided to try for the Prix de Rome. That year the poem which was chosen to be set to music was a sentimental one, and Ravel, with his ever-present sense of humor, chose to burlesque the poem. This treatment infuriated most of the authorities, and together with his sketchy orchestration, which he had neglected to do until the last minute, lost for him the coveted prize.

This incident occurred in 1901. In 1902 and 1903 he tried again, but with no success. In 1905, with Jeux d'eau already published and he himself nearing the age limit of thirty, he decided to try again. This time, his failure to be chosen became a public matter. The affair created a furor. Ravel, despite his silence, was deeply hurt. He was unfortunate in having a nature which never forgave nor forgot an injury; and later, when the French government wished to confer the Legion of Honor upon him, he refused three times to accept it. In his mind, the government was a part of those who had refused to award him the Prix de Rome prize, and so far as he was concerned all friendly relationship had ceased and could not be renewed.

In 1905, Ravel's family moved to Levallois-Perret, where his father started a small factory. Joseph's health began to fail soon after the move, and even after a holiday in Switzerland with Maurice, he grew steadily worse. On October 13, 1908, he passed away at Levallois-Perret. Maurice was inconsolable, and during the year following his father's death, he wrote only one composition, the Menuet sur le nom d'Haydyn.

In 1914, the first World War broke out while Ravel was vacationing in the Basque country. He immediately sought to enlist, despite the entreaties of his friends, who tried to tell him that his work as a composer was of greater value than his work as a soldier. It was of no use. Ravel could not be prevailed upon, and when the army refused to take him, he was bitterly disappointed. He continued to insist that he be given the right to assist his country, and in 1916, he left for the front as the driver of a motor truck.

Morally and physically, the war was a devastating experience from which Ravel never really recovered. He was in the service only two months when the urge to write began to torment him. After his petition for admittance into the air corps was not granted, he became seriously ill and returned to Paris to convalesce.

Sad news awaited him. Ravel learned of his mother's death. Ravel was completely lost, and in the summer of 1917 he went to Normandy, ill and depressed, but determined to finish the Tombeau de Couperin. He had conceived the idea for the composition while he was at the front.

In 1922, Ravel felt that he would be happier if he had a home of his own; consequently, he bought the small villa, Le Belvedere, in the village of Montfort-l'Amaury, just twenty-eight miles from Paris. Here he remained until his death, December 28, 1937.

In the fall of 1932, Ravel was hurt in a motor accident in Paris. The blow to his head was not considered serious at the time, but it was the underlying cause of his death five years later. He gradually lost all command of his powers of coordination, and at the last, with a brain over-flowing with musical ideas, he could neither put them on paper himself nor dictate them to anyone else. Seeking to better his condition through a very delicate operation, he went to a hospital on December 18. The morning after the operation he sank into an unconsciousness from which he never roused. He died on December 28.

Frank, courteous, humorous, and faithful, Ravel was, like Cesar Franck, unconscious of evil or perfidy. He was as meticulous in his daily life as he was to detail in his music. He believed in the individuality of every

person, and he refused to be copied. He would never take a pupil, and as a result, he left no disciples to help us to interpret his works. Although his total number of compositions is less than that of any other composer of equal standing, his works assume importance because of their perfection.

Works

In the study of the life of Debussy it was apparent that the Paris to which he returned from Rome in 1886 was teeming with symbolist poets and impressionistic painters. In 1902-03 there was in Paris much of the same atmosphere which Debussy had found earlier. It was at this time that Ravel was beginning to rise steadily into fame. Jeux d'eau and Pavane pour une Infante defunte had been published, and despite his failure to win the Prix de Rome, Ravel was being accepted musically.

As was the case in Debussy's youth, a group of enthusiasts came together for mutual encouragement, calling themselves "The Apaches." Many of the names listed among this group are names of men who have achieved much in their line of work, such as Ravel, Vines, Calvocoressi, Klingsor, Charles and Paul Sordes, Haour, Chadeigne, Benedictus, Seguy, Ingelbrecht, Schmitt, Roger-Ducasse, Caplet, de Falla, Stravinsky, and Roland Manuel.

During this period of association with the poets and painters who leaned to the symbolical and impressionistic ideas, Ravel wrote the suite Miroirs. Each of the five numbers is dedicated to an "Apache."

In this suite, Ravel shows the influence of his stimulating environment, the tendency toward the impressionistic, and what was called later "pseudo-modernistic," viewpoint of painting. He felt that art should be a reflection of an object, emotion or impression, rather than an imitation of the thing itself.

According to the critics of the day, Miroirs was the beginning of a new piano music. When it appeared, Debussy had published only the Suite Bergamasque, and the first set of Images. The Sonatine is also a result of this period, as is the poetry which Ravel felt inspired to bring forth and set to music. In fact, the beauty of poetry was to be the inspiration of much of his piano literature. This fact had already been shown by the composition Jeux d'eau, which had been inspired by a verse of Henri Regnier.

Gaspard de la Nuit and Ma Mere l'Oye, later orchestrated, appeared in 1908, Menuet sur le Nom d'Haydyn in 1909, Valses Nobles et Sentimentales in 1911, Prelude in 1913, A la Maniere de . . . Borodine, Chabrier, in 1913. Le Tombeau de Couperin in 1917, Sur le Nom de Gabriel Faure

in 1922, and Concerto in G in 1932. These few compositions, in addition to the ones which were in the preceding paragraph, and a concerto for the left hand alone, written for Paul Wittgenstein, comprise the piano literature which was written by Ravel.

Ravel's first compositions have never been published, but even these show polish.¹ All of his compositions, from the earliest works to the concertos, are filled with a perfection which labels them as masterpieces.

¹
Madeline Goss, Bolero, p. 44.

CHAPTER IV

STYLISTIC ELEMENTS OF DEBUSSY'S MUSIC

Rhythm

A primary element of any music is the type of rhythm which it contains. Is it a driving rhythm? Is it a free rhythm? Is the rhythm one of the characteristics of the music which causes one to remember the composition? Or is it of such a changeable or complex nature that the score would have to be carefully studied to determine its nature? These are some of the points of any rhythmic style which need consideration.

Rhythm means a steady flowing . . . In music, time is regarded as broken up into a series of equal beats or pulses, quick or slow. These are then differentiated and gathered into groups by means of an extra stress at equal intervals, such groups in music being called measures. Where stress falls is the accented beat, as opposed to weak ones. If every second beat is accented, the rhythm is duple; if every third beat, triple.¹

In this study of the rhythm of Debussy, the word rhythm will be used to denote the even pulse or flow which is formed by certain patterns of notes. Meter will be

¹Waldo Selden Pratt, The New Encyclopaedia of Music and Musicians, p. 125.

used to indicate the time elements, such as the signature which is given at the beginning of the composition, the changes of time which occur during the composition, or the new time signature which is formed by the changing note patterns.

Lawrence Gilman says that Debussy uses waverings, organic rhythms, which are an embodiment of the imagination. They neither desire nor hate, because they are done with time.² Calvocoressi states that Debussy has assigned an unimportant role to his rhythms.³

It is not possible to know what was taking place in Debussy's mind in relation to rhythmic structure during the process of composition, but a thorough study of his music should disclose the actual mechanics of his rhythmic forms. Therefore, the definite purpose of this part of the study is to attempt to discern the forms, treatments, or characteristics of the Debussyian rhythms which cause the critics to classify them as fluid and wavering.

Diversity of metric plan.---The time signature is usually the first feature which is noticed in any study of rhythm. Although Debussy is not adverse to the use of

² Lawrence Gilman, Music of Tomorrow, p. 28.

³ Hill, op. cit., p. 242.

a single metric plan in a composition, he frequently makes use of more than one meter. It should be kept in mind, however, that the Debussyian changes of meter are of a mild flavor, since the lower figure usually remains constant. It is the change of this figure and not the upper figure, which causes a drastic alteration of the rhythmic pulse. It should be noted also that none of these changes in meter are as diverse as those employed by modern composers such as Stravinsky. In "La Semaine Grasse", from Stravinsky's suite Petrouchka, the following changes in time signatures are found: $9/8$; $3/2$; $4/4$; $6/8$; $2/4$; $3/4$; $5/8$. Examples of Debussy's changes of meter are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

DIVERSITY OF METRICAL SCHEME FOUND IN SIX DIFFERENT
COMPOSITIONS OF DEBUSSY PRELUDES, BOOK II

Composition	Metrical Signatures			
Mists	$4/8$ $3/4$	$3/8$ $4/8$	$3/4$ $3/8$	$4/8$ $4/8$
Dead Leaves	$3/4$ $2/4$	$2/4$ $3/4$	$2/4$	$3/4$
Fogs	$3/4$	$5/4$	$3/4$	
Terrace of Audiences	$6/8$	$3/8$	$9/8$	
Ondine	$6/8$	$9/8$		
Fireworks	$4/8$	$2/8$	$3/8$	$5/8$

Ordinarily, the feature of changed meters has as its objective the construction of the meter around the phrase line. Debussy's use of the plan differs from Brahms' use, for example, in that Brahms did not change the bar line when he changed his metric scheme.

Figure 1 shows an excerpt from Brahms' piano sonata in f minor. The first measure is in 6/8 time. The second measure actually is in 4/4 time, but Brahms has not changed the time signature. Though the 4/4 meter exists for nine measures, he has merely written "4" below the measure to indicate the change of meter.



Fig. 1.--An illustration of Brahms' manner of changing the meter but not the time signature, taken from the f minor piano sonata, page forty-nine, brace three, measure two, and from page forty-nine, brace four, measure one.

In Figure 2 which is taken from Debussy's Danse de Puck, the first two measures are in 2/4 time. In order

to complete the phrase properly, the next measure must fall in 5/4 time. Therefore, Debussy has changed the time signature.



Fig. 2.--An example of the way in which Debussy changes the time signature with the metric scheme, from Danse de Buck page forty-five, brace one, measure one, and page forty-five, brace two, measure two.

Syncopation.--The use of syncopation to change the meter is another old metric plan which has received new treatment at the hands of Debussy. Brahms, perhaps, is considered to be the greatest exponent of its use. Consequently, another excerpt from his work is used to illustrate the use of syncopation by musicians prior to Debussy.

Figure 3 shows the use Brahms makes of syncopation in one of his compositions.



Fig. 3.--An illustration of Brahms' use of syncopation found in Sonata in f minor, page thirty-seven, brace one, measures three and four.

Figure 4 illustrates the use of syncopation by Debussy. Note the strong rhythmic pulse set up by Brahms as compared with the subtle rhythm used by Debussy.



Fig. 4.--An example of Debussy's use of syncopation found in Ballade, page five, brace one, measure one.

By tying the notes on the first and third beats of the measure, Debussy has implied a change of meter. Because the notes on the strong beats of the measure are silent, the meter is immediately thrown to the next half beat, so that the primary and secondary accents fall on the last half of the first beat of the second measure. The metric pattern made by Debussy is marked in red, and the basic accents are marked in blue.

Other examples of Debussy's use of syncopation to vary the metric pattern are to be found in Reflets dans l'eau, page two, brace one, measures two, three and four, and page seven, brace one, measures one and two; La Cathedrale engloutie, page thirty-eight, brace two, measure one; Des pas sur la neige, page 22, brace four, measures one and two.

Change of subject matter.--Figure 5 illustrates what is meant by Debussy's variation of subject matter to imply a change of meter. First, it is noted that the group of notes in the first measure is changed from the regular pattern of six sixteenth notes to a beat to four sixteenth notes to a beat. (Principle of elongation). This slight change of the note pattern begins the change of meter, which comes with the first note of the next measure. Following the measure of droning content is one in which there is a sudden splash caused

by three chords which move contrariwise until they meet. Then the droning operation is resumed. It is easy to see that there is no definite expressed rhythmic pulse in the first measure, because of the subject content, conceived to give the impression of a blurred murmur, as is the bass in the last three beats of the second measure. Therefore, when the three strong chords enter in a forceful rhythmic pattern, the effect of the changes from an indefinite rhythm to a definite one, then back to the indefinite rhythm seems to indicate a different metric pattern.

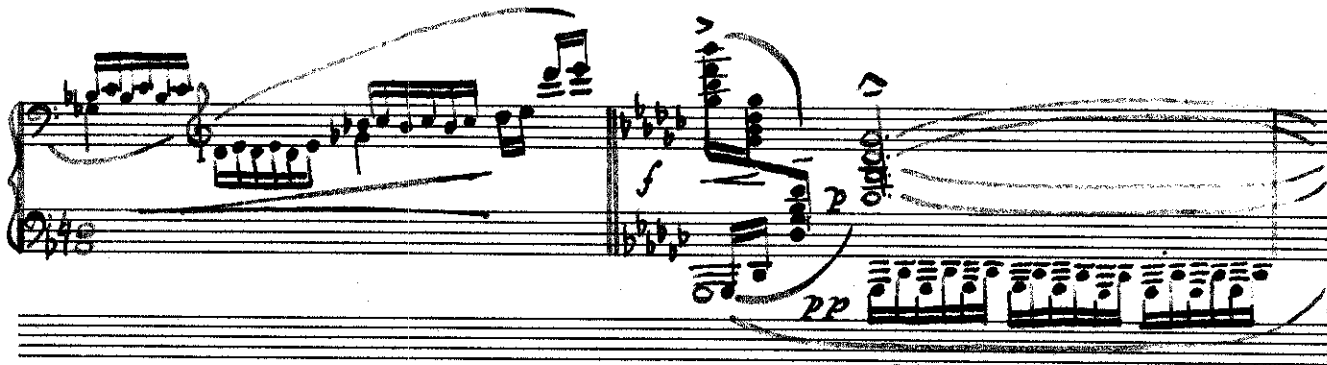


Fig. 5.--An illustration of Debussy's change of subject matter to vary the meter, from Le vent dans la plaine page nine, brace four, measures one and two.

Figure 6 shows an example of Debussy's use of the rest on the first beat of the measure.



Fig. 6.--An example of Debussy's use of rest on the first beat of the measure.

Use of the rhythmic pause.--An effect of similar metric-change implication is gained by Debussy in his use of the rhythmic pause. Figure 6 shows clearly that Debussy by placing a rest on the first beat of the measure, loses the primary metric accent.

This use of a rest on the first beat of the measure is not in any way an innovation of Debussy's. Liszt, in the second movement of the E^b piano concerto consistently uses a rest on the first beat of the measure. The rhythm of the remainder of the measure, however, recurs in such a regular repetitive pattern that the rest becomes as full of a silent beat as the pattern of notes is full of an expressed beat.



Fig. 7.--An example of Liszt's use of the rest on the first beat of the measure, found in his Concerto in E^b, page sixteen, brace one, measures one and two.

Debussy, however, changes his subject matter both before and after the two measures wherein the rest occurs. Therefore, no effect of a definite rhythmic pulse is established. Furthermore, the metric pattern which is formed by the contraction of the chords themselves places the accent on the second beat of the measure, rather than on the first beat, with the result that a change of meter seems indicated.

Principle of elongation.--Another metrical device employed by Debussy is the principle of elongation. Through the use of this principle, Debussy achieves the effect of a ritard as shown in Figure 8.

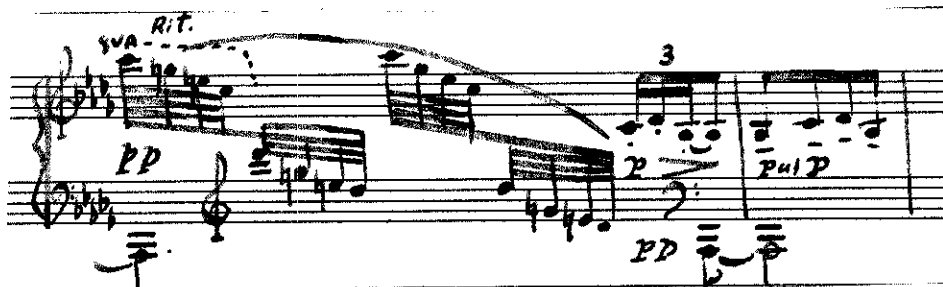


Fig. 8.--Excerpt from Reflets dans l'eau, page three, brace four, measures two and three, showing Debussy's use of the principle of elongation.

In Figure 8, it is noted that the first time the figure appears it is in triplet form. In the next measure, each note of the motif has been lengthened to an eighth note, which gives an effect of gradual decrease of motion.

In the same way, Debussy achieves an effect of increase of motion by inverting the principle of elongation.

Figure 9 shows an example of Debussy's inversion of the principle of elongation found in one of his compositions.



Fig. 9.--An example of Debussy's inversion of the principle of elongation found in Les collines d'Anacapri, page nineteen, brace five, measure four, and on page twenty, brace one, measure one.

Fermato effects.--Closely connected with the principle of elongation and the effects of the cessation of motion, is the fermato.

Debussy rarely uses the actual fermato. Instead, he achieves the effect of a fermato by changing the note values. An effective illustration of this unique feature of Debussy's is shown in Figure 10. The example in Figure 10 is from Debussy's La fille aux cheveux de lin.

It is quite obvious that Debussy has suspended the rhythmic pattern, thus creating the impression of a

fermato. The listener does not realize that the major portion of two measures is consumed and utilized for the effect of a fermato.



Fig. 10.--An example of Debussy's unique method of creating a fermato, found in La fille aux cheveux de lin, page thirty-one, brace one, measures three and four.

Figure 11 shows the conventional manner in which the phrase would be written.

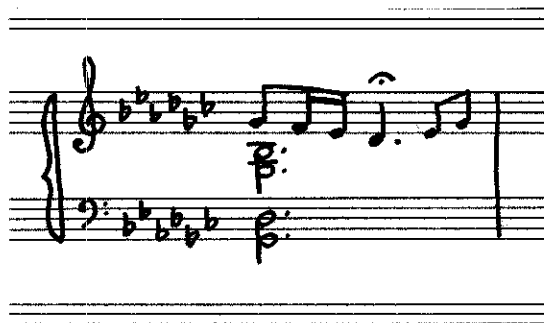


Fig. 11.--An example of the manner in which a fermato would ordinarily be written.

Combination of meters.--It is not unusual to find two meters given as a time signature. It is unusual to find a metric scheme similar to the one which is illustrated in Figure 12.



Fig. 12.--Debussy's use of a combination of meters, taken from Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir, page thirteen, brace one, measures one and two.

Debussy has used a combination of the meters, 5/4 and 3/4, and has set in a dotted bar line at the end of the third beat. In this way he indicates that he wants a slight accent to fall on the fourth beat, but not so heavy an accent as if the dotted bar line were a true one. As a result, though the 5/4 rhythm remains, the small accent on the fourth beat sets up another metric pattern, so that now there is a combination of the meters 3/4 and 2/4. Because we are accustomed to duple

and triple time used singly, five seems and unusual meter, and the combination of the meters $3/4$ and $2/4$ suggests that two strong rhythms are pulling against each other. The same may be said of uneven groups of notes played one against another.

Uneven groups of notes played against each other.--

This rhythmic device, like the metric-diverse plan, is not peculiar to Debussy alone. One has only to look at the third movement of Beethoven's Emperor Concerto to find as many different groupings of notes as Debussy uses. However, it is the manner in which the groupings are used which makes the difference in the resulting effect.

Beethoven used uneven groups of notes in order to add variety and color to his music, but there is always a strong expressed basic rhythm to which the uneven groups of notes are hinged. Debussy uses the uneven groups of notes without the expressed basic rhythm as a foundation. The fundamental purpose of the two composers is likewise different: Beethoven used the odd groups of notes to add variety to the basic rhythm; Debussy uses them to achieve a different metric pattern.

Figure 13 shows two excerpts from Beethoven's Emperor Concerto.

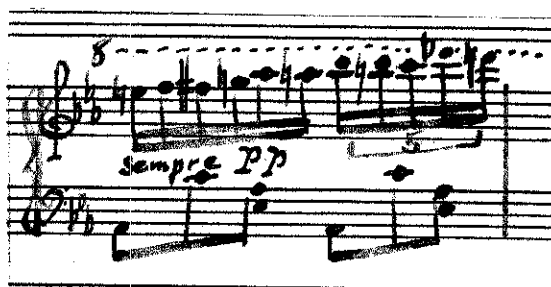


Fig. 13.--Two excerpts from Beethoven's Emperor Concerto, page fifty-eight, brace two, measures two and three, and page fifty-nine, brace one, measure one, showing the way in which Beethoven used uneven groups of notes.

A few of the unusual note groups found in Debussy's music are illustrated in Figure 14. It should be noted that often he combines two legitimate groupings to form an unusual combination.

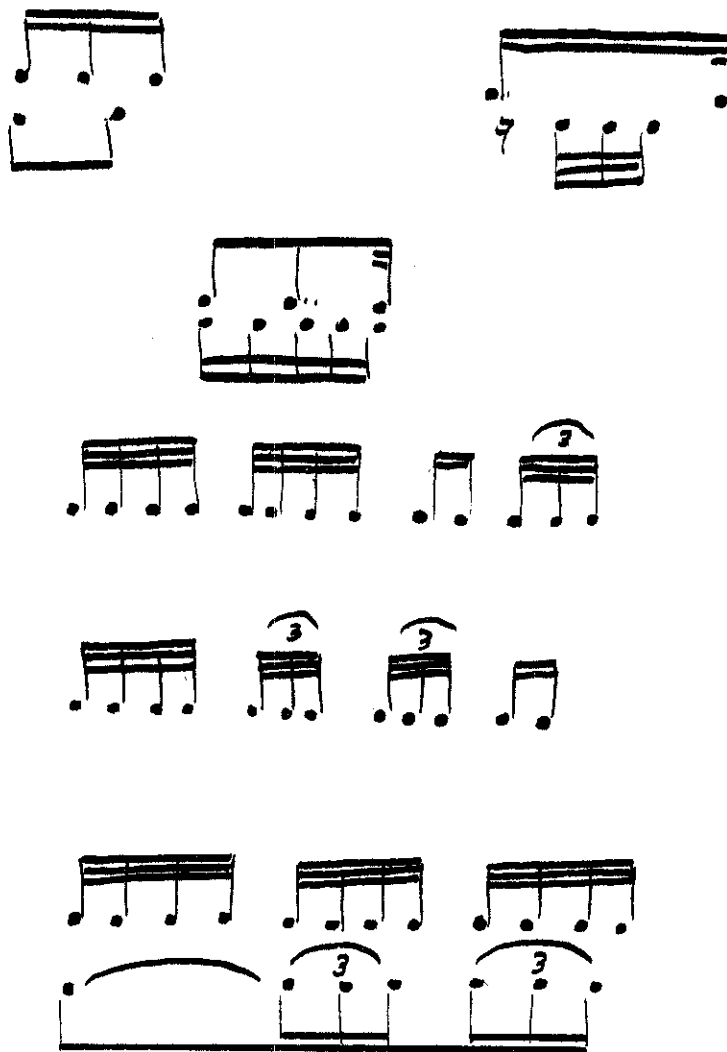


Fig. 14.--Examples of unusual rhythmic patterns found in L'isle joyeuse.

The first grouping displays the use of three sixteenth notes against two sixteenth notes. This is a common practice in musical literature, and is known as cross rhythm. No matter how evenly the notes are played, there is always an effect of two conflicting rhythms. The second example shows the unusual grouping of a dotted sixteenth note and thirty-second note against four sixteenth notes. The third example is rather complicated. It is concerned with one eighth note, one dotted eighth note, and one sixteenth note, all played against five sixteenth notes. The fourth and fifth examples show unusual groupings of notes. Compare with the Beethoven groups of Figure 13.

These unusual note groupings, because of their numerous occurrences, justify a classification of them as rhythmic characteristics of Debussy.

Use of the triplet form.--The triplet is another note group which occurs to a great extent in Debussy's music.

The triplet, as it is generally defined, is a time-pattern consisting of three even notes of one category played in the time of one note of the next larger category. For example, three eighth notes are equal to one quarter-note only because they are written in triplet form.

Debussy uses not only the simple form of triplet described, but he originated many unique forms of triplets. Figure 15 shows how he has distorted a triplet by dotting the second eighth note. This disrupts the primary rhythm of the triplet, and sets up a different metrical pattern. Similar examples are found throughout Debussy's music.



Fig. 15.--An example from La Danse de Puck, page forty-five, brace two, measure three, showing how Debussy distorted the triplet by dotting the second eighth note.

Table 2 shows the types of triplets found in piano compositions of Debussy and the places where they are found.

TABLE 2

TYPES OF TRIPLETS FOUND IN PIANO COMPOSITIONS
OF DEBUSSY AND PLACES WHERE THEY ARE FOUND













Composition	Places Found			Types of Triplets
	Page	Brace	Measure	
Le vent dans la plaine	12	2	2	
De pas sur la neige	22	1	1	
	22	4	2	
	Characteristic of composition			
Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest	30	4	3	
La fille aux cheveux de lin	32	1	3	
	32	5	1	
La cathedrale engloutie	39	3	1	
La danse de Puck	48	3	3	
Minstrels	49	1	1	(triplet grace notes)
Poissons d'or	4	3	1	
	7	2	2	
	9	4	2	
	10	2	2	

TABLE 2--Continued

Composition	Places Found			Types of Triplets
	Page	Brace	Measure	
L'ile joyeuse	1 2 3 6	2 1 3 5	1 2 2 1	
Reflets dans l'eau	2 7	1 2	3 1	
Gardens in the rain	6 7 7	2 2 3	2 2 1	
Ballade	2 3 10	1 2 3	1 1 2	
Dead leaves	9	3	1	
Bruyeres	28	3	2	
Canope	56	2	3	
Port of Vino	12	2	4	
Fairies are exquisite dancers	21 21	1 5	3 4	

Use of dotted-note patterns.--In Figure 16, it is noted that the accompanying figure of the upper treble clef is a dotted-note pattern. It is possible to create a very definite, forceful rhythmic pulse by the use of a dotted-note pattern which consists of the regular repetition of a group of dotted-notes organized into a certain pattern, such as illustrated in the upper treble clef of Figures 16 and 17.



Fig. 16.--An illustration of Debussy's use of dotted-note patterns found in La danse de Puck, page forty-four, brace five, measure three.

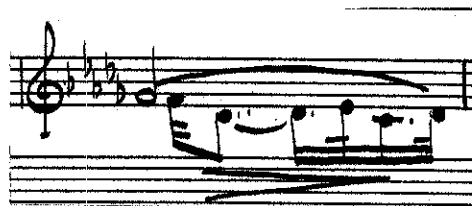


Fig. 17.--Another example of the dotted-note figure found in Reflets dans l'eau, page seven, brace three, measure two.

Debussy, however, combines this definite pattern of dotted-notes with the unusual rhythmic patterns of the lower treble clef. In so doing, he loses the clear-cut rhythm of the upper dotted-note pattern, and creates the effect of an uneven and obscure rhythm. Figure 17 shows another form of the dotted-note pattern. The word "pattern" is not used in this instance, because, although the group of four notes would ordinarily constitute an example of a dotted-note pattern, Debussy has tied the double-dotted eighth note to the first dotted note of the group of four; therefore, what would have been a definite dotted-note rhythm becomes an indefinite, dilatory rhythm.

Summary.--It seems that in Debussy's effort to portray the abstract rather than the concrete,⁴ his primary objective has been to destroy any feeling of definite meter to which one may have become accustomed. This destruction of a regular rhythm is accomplished by means of various devices. These devices are not primarily products of Debussy's innovating mind; usually they are combinations of established practices, which he proceeds to utilize to achieve the effect he desires. Always he writes with the purpose of fitting his rhythms to the mood of the composition, rather than of fitting the mood of the composition to a set rhythm. Consequently, his rhythms show a marked tendency to be free and varied.

This does not mean, however, that there are no examples of a definite rhythm to be found in his music. In Figure 18 a very good illustration of a firm rhythmic motif is seen.



Fig. 18.--An example of a forceful rhythmic pattern found in Minstrels, page forty-nine, brace one, measures one and two.

If Debussy had continued to use this motif as a rhythmic basis for the rest of the composition, as Ravel did with the short rhythmic motif of Bolero, a composition with a clear-cut, unbroken rhythmic background would have been produced. But the motif is used only spasmodically throughout the composition, and as a result, no definite rhythm is set up as a foundation for the composition. Perhaps this is what Calvocoressi meant when he said, "Debussy assigns an unimportant role to his rhythms."⁵

⁵Hill, op. cit., p. 28.

Melody

It is strange that there should be conflicting statements concerning the melodies of Debussy when it is realized that he has been called the offshoot of Chopin, the master of melodic line.⁶ Daniel Gregory Mason says that in the sustained melody of Debussy sustained melody is avoided, and nothing arrests attention or dominates mood like melody; Debussy's melodies are only "bits of tune."⁷ On the other hand, Vincent d'Indy offers a contradictory statement, saying, "All is melody in Debussy's music,"⁸ and a most confusing figure of speech is given by Louise Liebich: "There is an infinite melody of fine flowing rhythm."⁹

It seems improbable that all three of these authorities had the same conception of melodic line. Waldo Selden Pratt gives the following definition of melody:

. . . Any agreeable series of tones. . . the successive sounding of tones so related and disposed in such order as to form a coherent expression. . . Melody aims to give contour or outline .¹⁰

By means of this definition the possibility is

⁶ Cortot, op. cit., p. 17.

⁷ Mason, op. cit., p. 40.

⁸ Liebich, op. cit., p. 27.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Pratt, op. cit., p. 83.

pointed out that each of the authorities may have a definite foundation for his criticism.

The present discussion is concerned with the problem of determining the reason for disagreement among critics concerning Debussy's melodies. Figure 19 shows an example taken from Chopin's "Funeral March".



Fig. 19.--An example of a Chopin melody, taken from the "Funeral March" of the Sonata in B^b Minor, page fifty-two, brace one, measures one, two, three and four.

Figure 20 is an example taken from Debussy's Minstrels.



Fig. 20.--An example of a melody of Debussy, taken from Minstrels, page fifty-one, brace five, Measures one, two, three and four, and from page fifty-two, brace one, measures three and four.

Character of melodies.--A comparison of the two melodies of page sixty-two of this thesis shows the freedom of rhythm in the Debussy melody, a feature which is absent in the Chopin melody. Note also the pattern which is formed by the first phrase of the Chopin melody, and repeated in the second phrase.

Debussy employs two types of melodies: the flowing melodic line, as illustrated in Figure 20, and the short motival figure, illustrated in Figure 21.



Fig. 21.--An example of the type of Debussy melody, which is classified as a motif, taken from Reflets dans l'eau, page one, brace one, measure one.

Length of melodies.--Brevity is the first striking characteristic which is seen in the Debussy melodies. One of the longest melodies, eight measures in length, is illustrated in Figure 22. The melody of La fille aux cheveux de lin is second with six measures, and four and six measure melodies are found in Les collines d'Anacapri,

Cathedrale engloutie, and Poissons d'Or. These few melodies comprise the number of Debussy melodies more than one or two measures in length. This disclosure is in agreement with Daniel Gregory Mason's statement that there are only "bits of tune."¹¹



Fig.22.--An example of a four-measure melody found in Les collines d'Anacapri, page eighteen, brace one, measure one, and page eighteen, brace two, measure one.

Extent of use.--After Debussy first introduces his melody (or motif) into the composition, he generally continues to use it throughout. An exception to this is the eight measure melody of Minstrels, as shown in Figure 20, which appears only once in the composition.

The three note motif heard in the first measure of Reflets dans l'eau, is used in different forms from the

¹¹Mason, op. cit., p. 40.

beginning to the end. Likewise, the two-measure motif of Jardins sous la pluie is developed into an extended figuration which is used as a background for the whole composition.

Excellent examples of Debussy's extensive use of motivial figures are found in Danseuses de Delphes, Voiles, La fille aux cheveux de lin, and L'isle joyeuse. This last melody appears many times in various stages of arrangement, and in the end is repeated in almost the original form.

So it appears that Debussy's repetitive use of the principal motif is in line with Pratt's explanation that a melody aims to give outline or contour to a composition.¹² It also explains d'Indy's statement: "All is melody in his music."¹³

Development of melodies.--One of the most interesting developmental treatments used by Debussy is found in Voiles.

The first motif consists of a two-measure phrase of eight tones, six of which descend in the whole tone scale pattern. This is shown in Figure 23.

¹² Pratt, op. cit., p. 83.

¹³ Liebich, op. cit., p. 27.



Fig. 23.--The first motif from Voiles, page three, brace one, measure one.

The first measure is repeated, and the second measure leads into the second motif. This is shown in Figure 24.



Fig. 24.--An excerpt from Voiles page three, brace two, measures three and four, showing the second and third motifs.

One measure later, the third motif enters, and three

measures later there is a junction of the first and second motifs with the fourth motif which has been formed from the first motif. This is shown in Figure 25. This type of treatment continues throughout the composition with the motifs mentioned providing the only thematic material used.



Fig. 25.--An illustration of the first, second, and fourth motifs from Voiles, page three, brace three, measures one and two.

The example, shown in Figure 26, illustrates how the first theme has been torn apart. Its double-third state, in which the original entry was made, has been eliminated; in its place is a figure which borders on the mordent form, and instead of the rhythmic bass there is a dotted-note pattern.

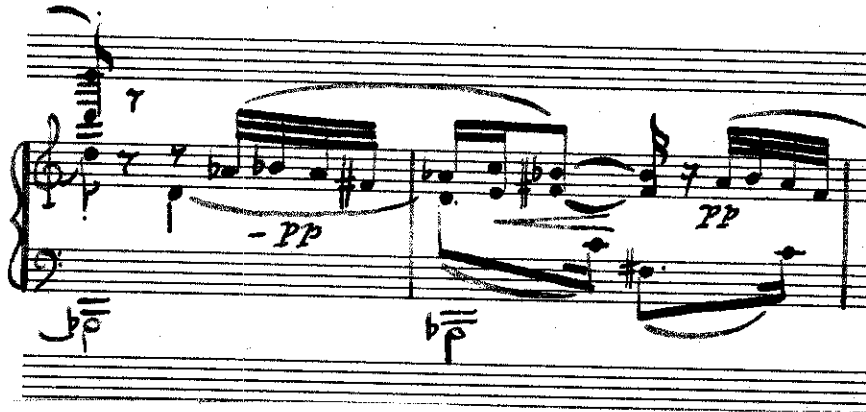


Fig. 26.--An example of Debussy's development of melody in Voiles, page four, brace two, measures one and two.

In Figure 27 a filament of the primary theme is still being used as developmental material. This time the middle voice has been formed from the third motif C (See Figure 24).



Fig. 27.--Further melodic development of Voiles, page four, brace four, measure one.

In the next example, Figure 28, the melody (Motif C) has been doubled in the treble, and the primary theme has become only embroidery; nevertheless, its present stage can be traced back to the first of the composition.

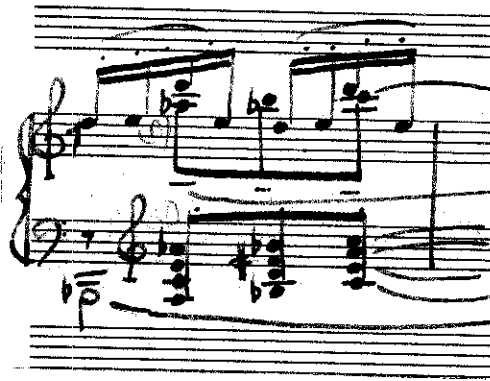


Fig. 28.--Another example of Debussy's melodic development of Voiles, page four, brace five, measure two.

Thus in the study of Voiles something is seen of the way in which Debussy developed his melodic motifs: first, he combined them in different ways; second, he changed the note-values; and third, he divided the original motifs into fragments and developed the fragments.

In the development of the primary rhythmic motif of Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest, Debussy used a series of motifs fashioned after the primary motif but having different scale steps with each appearance. He also changed the tonality.

In Poissons d'Or, another type of development is employed by Debussy. The primary motif is composed of a sixteenth note followed by a half note, descending a tone. These two notes are used by Debussy as a four-measure transitional passage from the repetition of the second theme to the re-statement of the first melody in its original form. (See Poissons d'Or, page three, brace one, measure three, and page three, brace two, measures one, two, and three).

Debussy's method of development of his melodies is seen to be the use of both extension and reduction of the melodic figures, sometimes to the extent that the two forms of development are employed simultaneously.

Angularity.--Debussy's melodies are characterized by a lack of angularity which keeps them from standing out from the harmonic background in a more definite outline. There are scarcely, if any, cases of a Debussyian melody characterized by wide skips. More often, the melodic line follows a definite pattern in a sequential manner.

Figure 29 is an example from La fille aux cheveux de lin illustrating a melody built on the pentatonic scale. It falls in a pattern of skips of a third, with the exception of the last three tones, which descend scale-wise.



Fig. 29.--An example of a Debussy melody taken from La Fille Aux Cheveux, page thirty-one, brace one, measures two and three.

The melody of Poissons d'Or is of an even closer scale relationship. In Figure 30 one may see how the two tones are played back and forth upon each other.

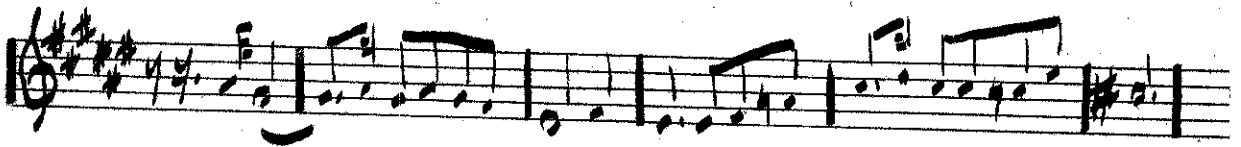


Fig. 30.--An example of a Debussy melody showing its lack of angularity, taken from Poissons d'Or, page one, brace two, measures one and two; page three, brace three, measures one and two; and page two, brace one, measure one.

The second melody of Poissons d'or is composed almost entirely of scale-wise steps, while in Danseuses de Delphes a double melodic line of a diatonic figure combined with a chromatic figure is seen. An illustration is shown in Figure 31.



Fig. 31.--An example of a double melodic line found in Danseuses de Delphes, page one, brace one, measure one.

All three melodies of Voiles (previously discussed in the section on development of melodies) are scale wise progressions, and all three motifs are built upon the whole tone scale. (Figures 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28)

The melody of Le vent dans la plaine is very similar to the primary motif of Poissons d'Or in that there is a play upon adjacent scale degrees.

Therefore, it may be seen that the melodies of Debussy, far from being angular, possess three characteristics which create a feeling of smoothness; first,

they employ scale-wise progressions; second, there is much usage of an interplay of adjacent tones, and third, tones are frequently repeated.

Range of melodies.--Since Debussy's melodies are not angular and are usually only one or two measures long, there is slight possibility that the range of the melody will be wide. The chorale-like melody of Cathedrale engloutie has a range of a fifth. Both melodies in La fille aux cheveux de lin and Les collines d'Anacapri have a range of an octave, while the melody from Le vent dans la plaine has a range of a sixth.

To the listener, such a statement seems to be most ridiculous, in view of the fact that Debussy utilizes the whole keyboard in his compositions. It is in the episodic, accompanying or ornamentative material, however, that he employs the use of such a wide range. Actually, his melodies are always of small range.

Register of melodies.--Debussy uses a great many changes of register in his melodic treatment. In Reflets dans l'eau the primary motif, a three-note figure, occurs the first time on the A^b above middle C. (See Figure 21). It occurs the last time on the A^b above the C of two added lines above the treble clef. In Poissons d'or the melody rises from the last C^\sharp in the bass to the first added line C in the treble clef.

Therefore it is evident that Debussy makes use of the whole range of the keyboard in the transposition, development, and repetition of his melodies.

Harmony

In music, impressionism is "a style of composition designed to create descriptive impressions by evoking moods through rich and varied harmonies and timbres."¹⁴

Debussy, who has been classed by the critics as a musical impressionist, has also been called the beloved of the unmusical because of his creation of beautiful sounds which lull one into imagination.¹⁵ He is said to accomplish this feat of kaleidoscopic, floating, elusive vagueness through the use of blunt contours,¹⁶ veiled harmonies,¹⁷ and shaded, many-hued chord sequences.¹⁸

The problem of this stylistic analysis of Debussy's harmony is to attempt to perceive by what technical means Debussy produced the music which seems to be characterized by an impressionistic elusiveness.

All musical compositions of the classical form being

¹⁴Noah Webster, New International Dictionary of the English Language.

¹⁵Mason, op. cit., p. 40.

¹⁶Cortot, op. cit., p. 17.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Liebich, op. cit., p. 27.

based upon some form of a scale, this analysis shall begin with a study of the various types of scales which Debussy incorporated into his compositions.

Scales.--Debussy has been called the inventor of the whole-tone scale, and he has been said to have applied it indiscriminately to all of his music. Nothing is further from the truth. Actually, the first use of the whole-tone scale is noticed in the music of a seventeenth century German, one Heinrich Schutz.¹⁹ It was also used slightly by Liszt, Rimsky-Korsakoff, and Chabrier, among others. However, the use of the whole tone scale is connected with Debussy because of his excessive use of it. It is generally considered to be his chief innovation, and much of the harmony which is peculiar to him is achieved by his use of the scale in various ways.

The whole-tone scale is composed of six tones, and has either no tonic, or six tonics. There are only two possible transpositions, C or C[#], as beginning tone. Major thirds and augmented chords, the harmonic outcome of the whole-tone scale, will be discussed under chord structure. The examples shown in this section will include only illustrations of Debussy's use of the whole tone scale in a single line form.

¹⁹ Hill, op. cit., p. 223.

Other examples which illustrate Debussy's use of the whole-tone scale are found in La Cathedrale engloutie, and Voiles. In the latter, the whole-tone scale is used as a background for the whole composition. (See Figure 23).

It was found in this study, that although Debussy does not hesitate to use the whole-tone scale at will, it is fallacious to state that it is used indiscriminately. Such a statement is refuted by his employment of the pentatonic scale, which appears almost as frequently in his works as does the whole-tone scale.

This scale is made up mostly of whole tones, but includes the skip of a minor third or an augmented second. For example: $G^b A^b B^b D^b E^b$. Different series of scales may be formed, depending upon which scale step is used as the tonic. The pentatonic scale is a scale of primitive origin, and is still used by the Chinese and Japanese, as well as the Scotch. It is called the "folk song" scale because instances of such scales have been found among the Chinese, Kelts, and others.²⁰ Because of the skips between E^b and G^b and between B^b and D^b , it lends a peculiar atmosphere to the music in which it is used. It is usually considered as Oriental, and Debussy's use of it explains why his music has sometimes been said to have an exotic atmosphere.

²⁰ Pratt, op. cit., p. 130.

An example of Debussy's use of the pentatonic scale is given in Figure 34.

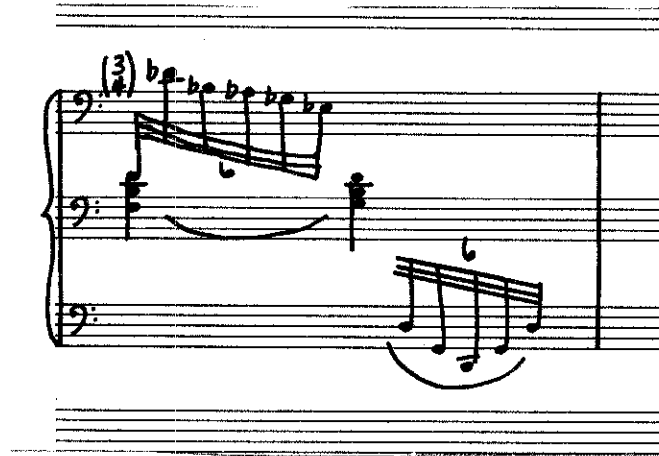


Fig. 34.--An example of Debussy's use of a form of the pentatonic scale.

Figure 35 shows Debussy's use of four tones of the pentatonic scale.



Fig. 35.--An example of Debussy's use of four tones of the pentatonic scale, taken from La fille aux cheveux de lin, page thirty-one, brace one, measures one and two.

Figure 36 shows a unique figure which Debussy formed from the pentatonic scale, and subsequently used as a motif. However, unlike the motif of La fille aux cheveux de lin, which is used throughout that composition, this figure is of a purely episodic nature, and after the eight measure repetition of it, it disappears from the composition.



Fig. 36.--An example of Debussy's use of two tones of the pentatonic scale, found in Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir, page thirteen, brace four, measure four.

Another excellent example of a motif founded upon the pentatonic scale is noted in Les collines d'Anacapri, page thirty-one, brace one, measure one, and page thirty-two, brace five, measure one. This motif, like the one in La fille aux cheveux de lin, forms a large part of the context of the composition.

Debussy's use of neo-modality is evidenced by his employment of the Dorian mode. This scale, one of the old Greek modes, is most easily explained as lying between the octave D - D on the white keys of the piano with resulting pattern: whole-tone, half-tone, three consecutive whole-tones, half-tone, whole-tone. The excerpt given in Figure 37 is taken from Ballade, one of Debussy's early compositions.



Fig. 37.--An example of what may be Debussy's use of the Dorian mode, taken from Ballade, page seven, brace two, measure two.

This portion of the composition is considered to be in the Dorian mode because B^b is canceled and the C is natural, yet there is a strong tonality of D. In the compositions analyzed, however, this is the only example of the Dorian mode found.

Two unusual scales which are less frequently used by

Debussy are scales without a leading tone and scales with flat sevenths. Both scales are illustrated in Figure 38.



Fig. 38.--An example of Debussy's use of a scale without a leading tone, and with a flat seventh degree, taken from La fille aux cheveux de lin, page thirty-one, brace four, measure two and three.

Because only the unusual odd scales Debussy used have been discussed and illustrated here, it is not to be thought that his music is restricted to their exclusive employment; he does not fail to use both the conventional major and minor scales. It is only the oddity of the previously mentioned scales which justifies their place in the study.

Chord structure.--A new type of chord structure was opened up through Debussy's use of the whole-tone scale. The major third is not an unusual chord, but to use it in sequence as Debussy does, gives it an unconventional effect. The excerpt in Figure 39 is from Voiles.



Fig. 39.--An example of the whole-tone scale used in chord structure, taken from Voiles, page three, brace, one, measure one.

As has been previously mentioned, this motif forms an integral part of the whole composition.

The augmented triad is another chord formed upon the whole-tone scale. Figure 40 shows an example of this.



Fig. 40.--An example of Debussy's use of the augmented chord found in Jardins sous la pluie, page six, brace two, measures two and three.



Fig. 42.--Another example of Debussy's use of the ninth chord, taken from Reflets dans l'eau, page one, brace four, measures three and four.

In this example the ninth chords resolve into diminished chords, the first of which is VII_7 of N_6 , another characteristic chord structure of Debussy's. Although the third diminished chord is the VII_7 of I , a conventional chord, the other two diminished chords are foreign to the key. Note also that the last diminished chord does not resolve normally, but is followed by the chord II_{11} .

Figure 43 illustrates Debussy's use of ninth chords in a series, with seventh, eleventh and thirteenth chords interspersed.

Countless other examples illustrating Debussy's use of the ninth chord, may be found throughout the content of his music. This justifies the assertion of the authorities that Debussy made extensive use of seventh, ninth,

and eleventh chords, and that as a consequence, his use of them is considered to be an important characteristic of his harmonic style.

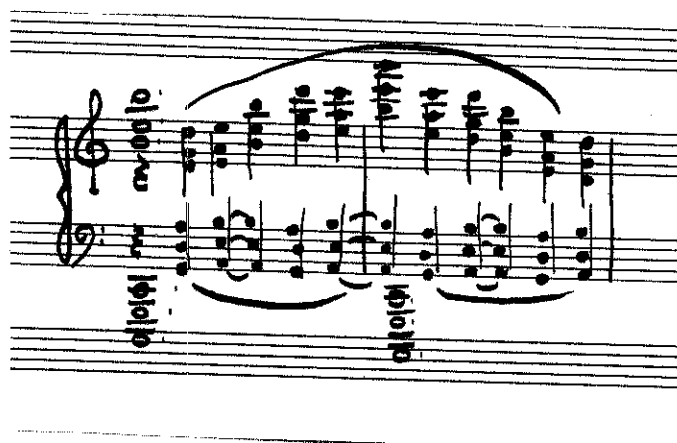


Fig. 43.--An illustration of Debussy's employment of seventh, ninth and eleventh chords found in La Cathedrale engloutie, page thirty-eight, brace four, measures two and three.

Three other harmonic devices which are used extensively by Debussy are open fourths, open fifths, and chords without thirds. These chord structures give an archaic flavor to the compositions in which they appear.

Figure 44 shows Debussy's use of all three chord structures. Note also the pentatonic scale.



Fig. 44.--An illustration of Debussy's use of open chords found in La fille aux cheveux de lin, page thirty-two, brace two, measures two and three.

The unusual figuration of two consecutive, chromatic fifths appears as a rhythmic motif in La serenade interrompue. This is illustrated in Figure 45.



Fig. 45.--An example of fifths used as a motif by Debussy in La Serenade Interrompue, page thirty-three, brace five, measure one.

These examples are only two of many examples of open fourths, open fifths, and chords without thirds found in Debussy's music. Wherever they appear, an impression of hollowness is apparent.

Chord progressions.--Closely connected with Debussy's use of open chords, is his use of parallelism. This device likewise is of modal character, and is one of the contributing factors to the archaic effects achieved by Debussy.

Figure 46 clearly shows this treatment as further illustration of parallelism, and it has something of the character of an old chant. Debussy is said to have been familiar with the Gregorian chant from his childhood.²¹ It is possible that the chant is the origin of this motif.

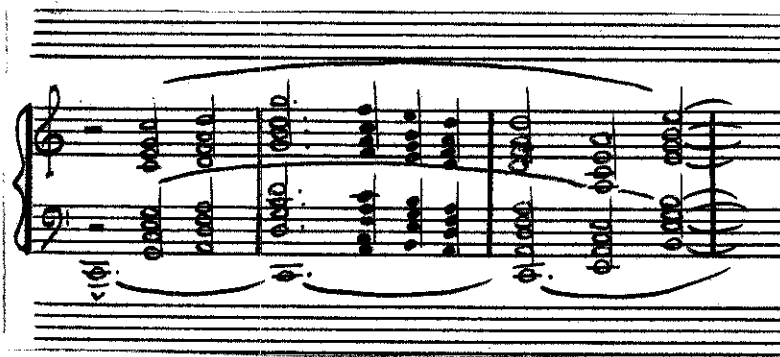


Fig. 46.--An illustration of parallelism found in La Cathedrale engloutie, page thirty-nine, brace five, measures three, four, and five.

²¹

Liebich, op. cit., p. 40.

The parallel progressions illustrated in Figure 46 are indicative of the character of the whole composition. Note also the use of the modal progressions V-IV.

An unusual progression of parallel major chords is shown in Figure 47.



Fig. 47.--An example of parallelism found in Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air, page fourteen, brace four, measures three and four, and on page fourteen, brace five, measure one.

The effect of this progression is similar to that obtained by the use of the whole-tone scale. The progression illustrated here is not characteristic of the composition from which it is taken, since it occurs only the one time. However, it has been used frequently in other works by Debussy.

Dissonance.--Debussy's music is no longer considered to be either modern or dissonant. Because of the great

changes in harmonic structure since the time of Debussy, our ears have become accustomed to chords much more stark and brutal than those used by Debussy. Consequently, the chord structures which Debussy employed have long since lost their dissonance effect and have become quite mellow. At the time that Debussy was composing, however, the public ear was not familiar with his chord structure. Therefore, it is possible to see that some of Debussy's harmonic innovations may have shocked them. One such innovation was probably the use of successive seconds. Figure 48 shows how Debussy used seconds as basis for figuration.

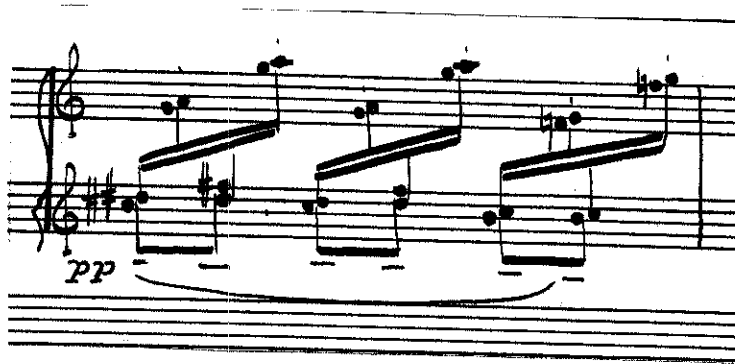


Fig. 48.--An example of successive seconds found in Poissons d'or, page eight, brace one, measure one.

The fourteen measures in which the succession of seconds are used form small episodic movement which gives a

slight degree of dissonance to that part of the composition.

In Jardins sous la pluie, shown in Figure 49, there is further evidence of arbitrary addition of non-chordal tones for dissonant and colorful effect.



Fig. 49.--An excerpt from Jardins sous la pluie, page six, brace two, measure two.

The first broken chord (each triplet group has been considered as one chord) is composed of an augmented triad, B^b D F[#], with the seconds, G^b and A^b, superimposed upon it. The second chord consists of a ninth chord, G B D[#] and A, with an augmented fifth. The next chord is another augmented triad, A^b C E, with a superimposed diminished fifth, E-B^b. The last chord is another augmented triad, F A C[#], combined with an augmented fifth E^b-B. A closer examination of the

illustration shows that all the chords are formed upon the whole-tone scale, and Debussy, by combining the chords, has created variety in the tone-colour of the composition.

The use of the chromatic grace-note is also used by Debussy for the purpose of creating dissonance. Figure 50 shows its use as ornamentation to a sixth chord.



Fig. 50.--An example of the chromatic grace note found in Poissons d'or, page four, brace three, measure one.

Summary.--Debussy's harmony has been called his great-²²est single achievement because of his signal expansion of harmonic horizons.²³ Thus it is singular that unique though Debussy is, and modern as his music seems to be, some of the effects which he has utilized are as old as

²²Thompson, op. cit., p. 248.

²³Hill, op. cit., p. 207.

polyphonic music itself, parallelism, modality, and the whole-tone scale.²⁴

Debussy, by his advances in harmonic idiom horizons²⁵ and by his development of harmonic individuality²⁶ has cleared the technical background of music of much needless and encumbering "scientific apparatus."²⁷

As a result, his unique and individual use of harmony is valuable chiefly because it enabled the artist to widen the boundaries of musical utterance, to enrich its substance with new shades of emotion and thus to enter fresh fields of musical thought.²⁸

Consequently, Debussy's progress in the field of harmony was of far-reaching value. It has reacted directly upon his compatriots and his successors²⁹ and effects of his experimentations and research may be seen in a large portion of the modern music of all the nations of the western world.

²⁴Mason, op. cit., p. 40.

²⁵Hill, op. cit., p. 207.

²⁶Thompson, op. cit., p. 248.

²⁷Hill, op. cit., p. 297.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

Modulation

It has been said of Debussy that he modulates on every beat of the measure. This condition, however, did not prevail during the time he studied with Franck at the Conservatoire. Franck, one of the great masters of modulatory art, insisted that Debussy use more modulations in his compositions. Debussy provokingly replied: "Why should I? I am quite satisfied in the key in which I am."

It is true that in Ballade, one of his early compositions, there are only three modulations. The first modulation is from F to the Dorian mode, the next is to E, and the last is from E back to F.

In L'isle joyeuse, a composition written much later in his life, but stylistically classified with his earlier works, the key center of A is apparent for thirty-five measures. There is then a modulation by chromaticism into B. However, this modulation is not a true modulation, but merely the first of a series of passing modulations which continue throughout the composition.

Clarity of modulation.--In some of Debussy's music, such as the Ballade, and the L'isle joyeuse, the clarity of Debussy's modulations is easy to perceive. In others, such as Reflets dans l'eau, the modulations are obscure.

Because of Debussy's preponderant use of altered

chords, ninths, elevenths, accidentals, arpeggiation, broken chords, and unusual scale passages the key centers and modulatory devices do not stand out clearly. For example, in Reflets dans l'eau, only two definite tonalities stand out, one in A, and one in E^b. The other tonalities are obscured.

Keys used in modulation.--The keys used in the modulations of Ballade, (already mentioned) are keys which are very closely related: F Dorian mode, (relative minor of F with raised sixth degree) F, E (sub-tonic, or leading tone to F). In L'isle joyeuse, there is a greater disparity in the relationship of the keys employed:
 A B G[#] (relative minor of B) G[#] A E (dominant to A)
 G[#] E^b F A.

In Poissons d'or, however, the key relationship again is fairly close: F[#] E^b C G^b F[#] E^b C F[#]. Any modulations of the enharmonic keys G^b and F[#] would necessarily be quite smooth.

Therefore, it is noted that there seems to be no definite rule used by Debussy in his modulations, such as tonic to dominant, etc. He apparently planned his modulations with an idea of gaining certain effects

through the use of certain keys, rather than the limiting of his effects by the use of specific keys.

Treatment of modulations.--In Ballade, Debussy used the dominant as the method of modulation from F to the Dorian mode, so that the plan is this:

F IV III

Dorian V I

This method of modulation through the minor dominant is quite conventional. In L'isle joyeuse, however, Debussy uses methods of modulations other than conventional dominant. In this composition he achieved modulation through the use of the whole tone scale and augmented chords.

The conclusion is that although Debussy began his early treatment of modulations in a conventional manner, the treatment of the modulation of his later works is colored by his exploration into new fields of harmony.

Form

Debussy's love of miniatures is carried over into his piano compositions in his use of short, undeveloped forms. Because of his revolt against the classic school of writing, he apparently discarded all thought of a strict, formal style of writing. In his youth, a copy of his Danse Bohemienne was sent to Tschaikowsky by Mme. von Meck. The master wrote the following criticism: "Not a single thought is developed to the end, the form

is bungled, and there is no unity."³⁰ Cortot condones his lack of form by saying:

. . . . structure and subdivision are not according to form, but are based upon a principle of strict thematic unity which admits of a diversity of given themes, or an indefinite evolution of the cyclical method, originated by Liszt, and developed by Franck. It consists in using one or two themes as generators of composition. The modifications of these are progenitors of numberless others which in turn, have their development and ramifications while the parent themes are maintained more or less integral throughout the work. ³¹

Table 3 bears out Cortot's statement that Debussy used two types of form: half of the compositions analyzed were found to be developed by thematic unity; the other half were developed by the cyclical method.

Thematic unity, as was explained above, is the development of a composition by the variation of the themes; the cyclical method is the employment of one or two themes as generators of the thematic material used throughout the composition.

The forms A B C D are used to denote a change of material.

³⁰Lockspeiser, op. cit., p. 134.

³¹Cortot, op. cit., p. 44.

TABLE 3

ANALYSIS OF FORM OF DEBUSSY'S PIANO WORKS

Compositions	Form
Poissons d'Or	A B A C B D A
Jardins sous la pluie	A
Reflets dans l'eau	A B A B C B A
L'isle joyeuse	A B A C A C A
Clair de lune	A B A
Danseuses de Delphes	A
Voiles	A
Le vent dans la plaine	A
Les sons et les parfumes	A B A
Les collines d'Anacapri	A B C A B A B
Des pas sur la neige	A
Ce qu'a le vent d'Ouest	A
La fille aux cheveux de lin	A
La serenade interrompue	A
La cathedrale engloutie	A
La danse de Puck	A B C A
Minstrels	A B C A

Tonality

The C tonality is very pronounced in Cathedrale engloutie. The middle section of Les collines d'Anacapri

has a definite tonality of B major, and in a part of L'isle joyeuse the tonality of A major is very strong.

In Debussy's music, however, these compositions which indicate a definite tonality are the exception rather than the rule. For, with the exception of the early works, such as Clair de lune, Ballade, and others, the greater part of Debussy's music is characterized by indefinite tonality, ninth, eleventh, thirteenth, altered, augmented, and unrelated chords, unresolved suspensions, chromatics, and tone clusters. This impression of vague tonality is due largely to Debussy's excessive use of ninth, eleventh, thirteenth, altered, augmented, and unrelated chords, unresolved suspensions, chromatics, and tone clusters.

A good example of tonality, clouded by chromatics, is found in Poissons d'or. Although the tonic chord is introduced in the first measure, the key tonality is destroyed by the introduction into the chord figuration of an augmented ninth. On page four, the key tonality of E^b is obscured by the use of a lowered seventh and a raised ninth.

The same composition provides examples of chromatic grace notes and added sixths.

Figure 51 shows Debussy's use of chromatics.

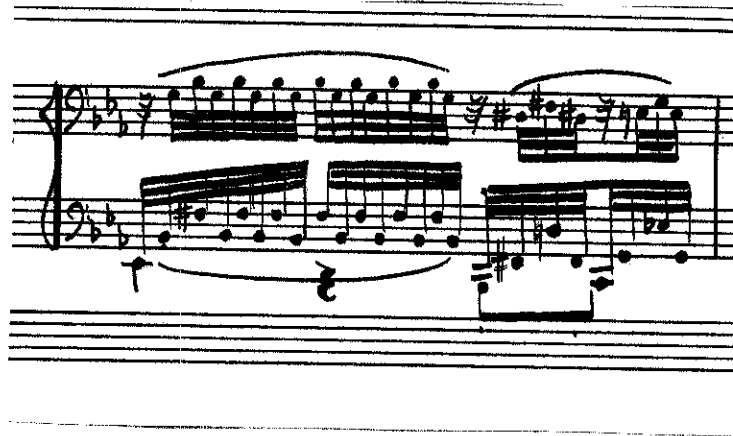


Fig. 51.--An excerpt from Poissons d'or, page four, brace four, measure one, showing Debussy's use of chromatics.

Figure 52 illustrates Debussy's use of the added sixth.

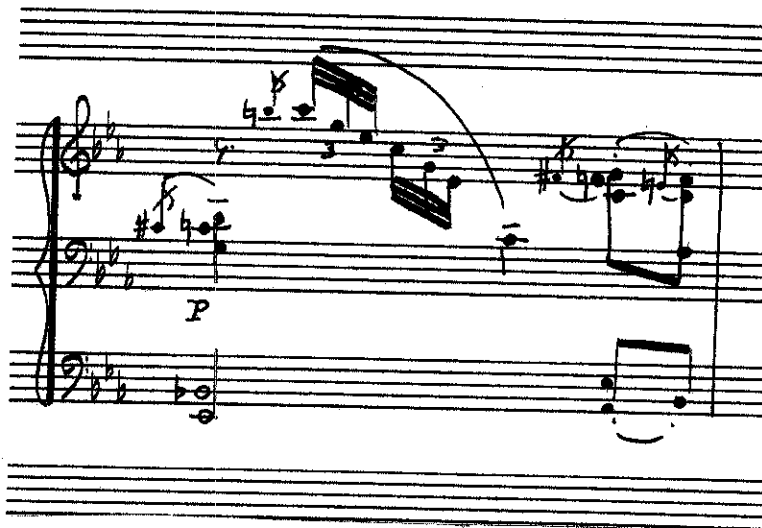


Fig. 52.--An example of Debussy's use of the added sixth, found in Poissons d'or, page four, brace three, measure one.

The added sixth in strict harmonic terminology is nothing more than the submediant triad in first inversion. In Figure 52 the sixth is from the E^b of the lower bass clef to the C in the upper bass clef, and from the A^b in the second chord to the F above. The use of the added sixth is a common practice in jazz music.

Figure 53 illustrates the way in which Debussy makes use of series of major and altered chords to create an impression of shifting tonality.



Fig. 53.--An illustration of Debussy's use of altered chords found in Danseuses de Delphes, page two, brace four, measures one, two, three and four.

A series of open chords (that is, widely spaced) built upon the pentatonic scale lend an air of peculiar and uncertain tonality to Reflets dans l'eau and La fille aux cheveux de lin as shown in Figures 54 and 55.



Fig. 54.--An example of open chords found in Reflets dans l'eau, page two, brace one, measure one.

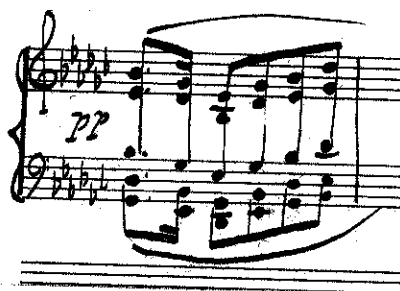


Fig. 55.--Another example of Debussy's employment of open chords, taken from La fille aux cheveux de lin, page thirty-two, brace two, measure two.

A modal tonality also is present in Figures 54 and 55, caused by the parallel open fifths and octaves in

La fille aux cheveux de lin, and by the open chords of Reflets dans l'eau.

The whole-tone scale, by its definition - six tonics or no tonic - tells one instantly that Debussy's employment of this scale is an important explanation for the insecure tonality which exists in his music. The use of the pentatonic scale likewise may be classified as important, and ninth chords, eleventh chords, open chords, altered chords, tone cluster, unresolved suspensions, and chromatics all take their places in the list of devices which Debussy has used to create his unique tonal characteristics.

Cadences

It is not often that a true, authentic cadence is to be found in Debussy's music. However, three notable exceptions are listed: La fille aux cheveux de lin, page thirty-one, brace one, measures two and three; page thirty-one, brace two, measures two and three; page thirty-one, brace five, measures two and three; Danseuses de Delphes, page one, brace two, measure two, and Minstrels, page forty-nine, brace five, measure one.

The cadence from Danseuses de Delphes is illustrated in Figure 56.

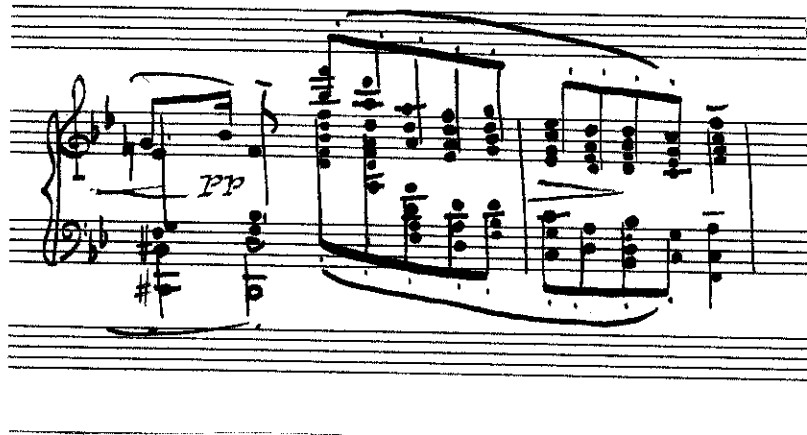


Fig. 56.--An example of an authentic cadence found in Danseuses de Delphes, page one, brace two, measures one and two.

Examples in other parts of this section have pointed out Debussy's use of V-IV progressions, parallelism, open chord structures and the Dorian mode. The example in Figure 57 shows the use of another device, the modified Phrygian cadence, VII- 1 to I.



Fig. 57.--An example of the modified form of Phrygian cadence used by Debussy, page nineteen, brace five, measures two and three, of Les Collines d'Anacapri.

Two types of cadences used by Debussy have been mentioned: authentic and modal. More frequently, there is either no cadence at all between two musical thoughts, or else the cadence is veiled. In Figure 58 it is obvious that Debussy, instead of using a cadence at the end of the phrase, has merely changed the material, and left the melodic line abruptly stranded. As a result, the lack of cohesion between the two phrases is most apparent.

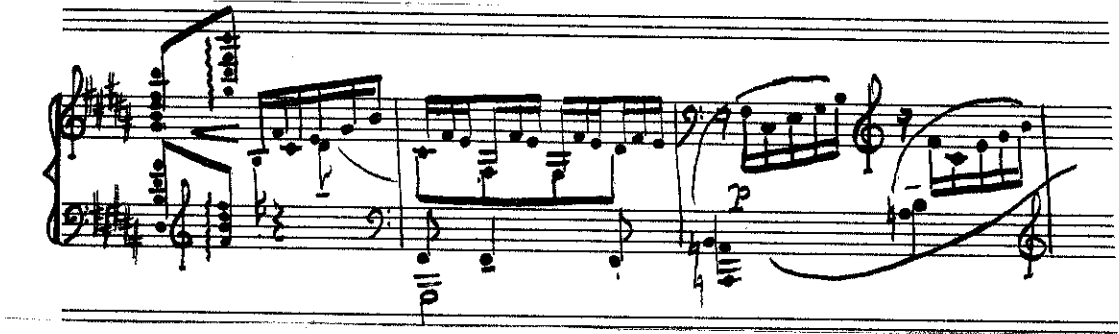


Fig. 58.--An illustration of Debussy's change of material without cadential treatment, taken from Les collines d'Anacapri, page twenty-one, brace one, measure three, and page twenty-one, brace two, measures one and two.

Figure 59, the last example of this section, is from Reflets dans l'eau and illustrates a veiled or incomplete cadence.

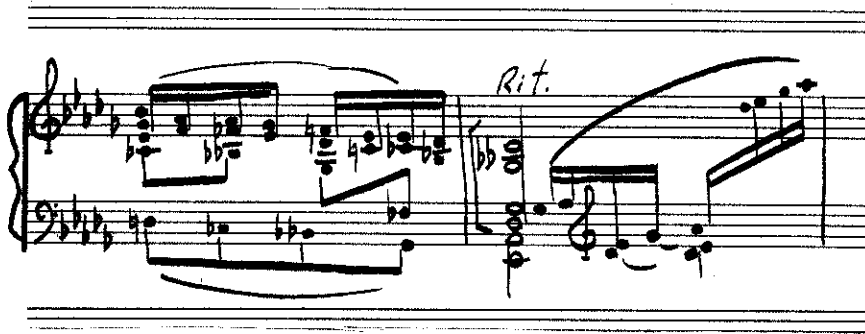


Fig. 59.--An example of the veiled cadence used by Debussy, found in Reflets dans l'eau, page one, brace four, measures three and four.

The cadences found to be used by Debussy may be classified into four types: the authentic cadence, the modal cadence of VII-1 to I, the veiled cadence, or the complete absence of a cadence.

Dynamics

Each composer has some dynamic level which he uses as a basis for the character of his music. With Debussy, it was the use of pianissimo. The pp and ppp marks present in every Debussy composition point to his use of pianissimo as an outstanding characteristic of his dynamic panel. This does not mean that there are no marks of dynamics to denote a tone louder than pp. There are passages in Debussy's music as loud and forceful as is necessary to express the mood of the composition (See Jardins sous la pluie and L'isle joyeuse). Sometimes these forte passages are continued for a period of several measures, sometimes they are used for only an instant to create a sudden change in dynamics and subject

matter. Before, and usually after, these forte passages, however, is the inevitable pianissimo.

Table 4 points out several interesting features of Debussy's dynamics.

TABLE 4

COMPOSITIONS OF DEBUSSY, THE NUMBER OF MEASURES
MARKED PIANO AND THE NUMBER OF
MEASURES MARKED FORTE

Compositions	Number of Measures Marked Piano	Number of Measures Marked Forte
Poissons d'or	64	36
Reflets dans l'eau	73	18
Danseuses de Delphes	24	6
Voiles	62	3
Le vent dans la plaine	54	5
Les sons et les parfums	54	4
Les collines d'Anacapri	52	29
Des pas sur la neige	36	0
Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest	37	35
La fille aux cheveux de lin	38	2
La serenade interrompue	99	14
La Cathedrale engloutie	63	13
La Danse du Puck	79	5
Minstrels	60	15
L'isle joyeuse	133	117

L'isle joyeuse and Ce qu' a vu le vent d'Ouest show that it was possible for Debussy to use a wide range of dynamics, while Des pas sur la neige points out that it was possible for him to write an effective pianoforte composition involving the use of only piano.

Texture

The texture of Debussy's music is both transparent and dense. A quality of ethereal vagueness is characterized by his use of widely spaced chords, especially in the concluding notes of a composition. Examples: Poissons d'or, Reflets dans l'eau, Clair de lune, Des pas sur la neige, and La Cathedrale engloutie.

On occasion, Debussy creates a full, rich texture with his use of block-like chords, such as are found in La Cathedrale engloutie. A similar effect is achieved by his use of ninth and eleventh chords. More frequently, however, the major portion of his composition is composed of broken chords, as in Jardins sous la pluie. If it were not for the rich and varied harmonic treatment which is given these broken chords, the use of them would create a composition of a very transparent texture.

The impression of emptiness is very often present in Debussy's music, caused by his extensive use of open chords.

CHAPTER V

STYLISTIC ELEMENTS OF RAVEL'S MUSIC

Rhythm

Rhythm has been considered the real fountain head and foundation of Ravel's art.¹ This conception of his rhythm is clearly illustrated by the numerous ballets which he wrote. He was interested in the rhythmic patterns of all peoples, whether savage or civilized, and even in his last illness, he became attracted by oriental rhythms, and planned to write an Arabian composition. He also possessed a gift for assimilating the rhythmic language of the various countries into his own works. This ability is exemplified by the jazz rhythm of America reflected in the G Major Concerto, and in the excerpt "Five O'Clock", from the Child and the Sorcerer; it is also reflected in the gypsy rhythm of the violin and piano rhapsody. His Hebrew songs are so thoroughly imbued with the Jewish religion that he was accused of being a Jew.

Dance forms.--Ravel's early interest in the dance form is shown in his first work, the Piece en form

¹
Goss, op. cit., p. 7.

d'Habanera, which he wrote while still at the Conservatoire. This composition, as the title denotes, is built upon a Spanish dance rhythm, the habanera, and the characteristic rhythmic pattern of the dance prevails throughout.

Figure 60 shows an example of the habanera rhythm found in Ravel's Habanera.

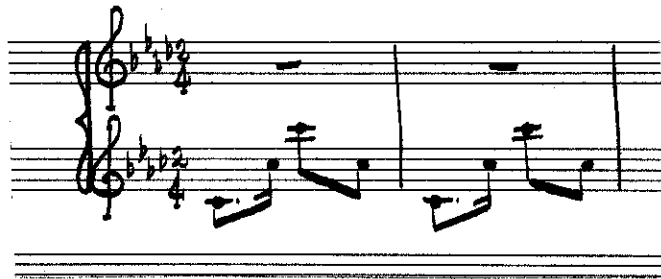


Fig. 60.--An example of habanera rhythm found in Ravel's Habanera, page one, brace one, measures one and two.

Figure 61 shows the Pavane pour une Infante defunte, which was Ravel's first composition to achieve favorable recognition. This composition is formed upon the pavane, a sixteenth century court dance written in 4/4 time.

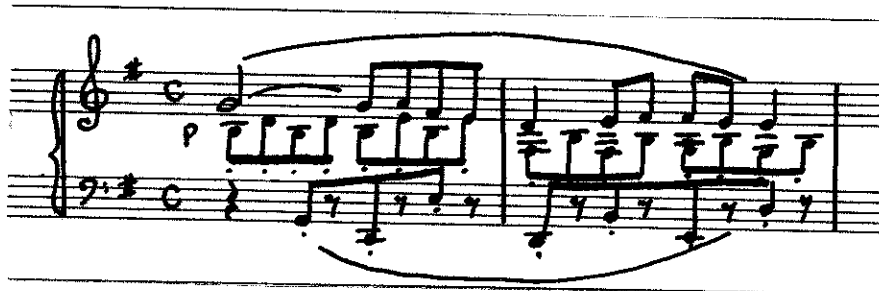


Fig. 61.--An example of the rhythm of the pavane found in Ravel's Pavane, page three, brace one, measures one and two.

The "Forlane" from the Tombeau de Couperin is named from the Venetian dance of that name, but carries the rhythmic pattern of the French Canarie (named from the Canary Islands). Figure 62 shows an example of the rhythm of the forlane.



Fig. 62.--An example of the rhythm of the forlane, found in Ravel's "Forlane", page ten, brace one, figure one.

The influence of the jazz rhythm upon Ravel's work is clearly shown in both the Concerto in G, and in "Five O'Clock," a small dance taken from the ballet, L'Enfant et les Sortilèges. An illustration from "Five O'Clock" is shown in Figure 63.



Fig. 63.--An example from "Five O'Clock," page three, brace six, measures two and three.

In Figure 64, which illustrates the use of the jazz rhythm in the Concerto, the syncopated jazz accents on different beats of the measure are clearly evident. Such examples occur throughout the concerto.



Fig. 64.--An example of the jazz rhythm found in the Concerto, page three, brace three, measures three, four, and five.

Diversity of metric scheme.--Although Ravel is usually consistent in maintaining only one or two time signatures in a composition, there are occasions when more than one time signature appears in his writing. The most extreme case of metrical diversity found in this study was in Ondine. In this composition, the following time signatures appeared: 4/4; 3/4; 4/4; 3/4; 2/4; 4/4; 3/4; 2/4; 3/4; 2/4; 3/4; 2/4; 4/4; 2/4; 3/4; 2/4; 4/4; 3/4; 2/4; 4/4; 5/4; 4/4; 3/4; 4/4; 3/4; 4/4; 3/4; 2/4; 3/4; 2/4; 4/4; 3/4; 4/4; 3/4; 4/4; 3/4; 4/4; 2/4; 3/4; 4/4; 5/4; 4/4; 3/4; 4/4.

It should be noted, however, that these metric changes, though numerous, all keep the same lower figure. Therefore, as it was explained in the chapter on Debussy's rhythm, the metric changes merely indicate that the phrase lines fall unevenly, and that the bar lines have been made to fit the phrases. This, however, does not mean that the rhythm is broken. The rhythm of Ondine is flowing from beginning to end, and Ravel has merely clarified the pulse of the phrase by changing the time signature as the meter changes. Another example of the same order is found in Jeux d'eau, page three, brace four, measure two, and page four, brace two, measure two. In the first example, the time signature has been changed from 4/4 to 2/4 because the phrase is completed at the end of the sixth beat; therefore the signature has been changed to 2/4 for one measure to include the two extra beats. In the second example, only one beat was necessary for the conclusion of the phrase; therefore the time signature was changed to 1/4 for one measure.

Accented beats.--The use of accented beats is prevalent throughout Ravel's music. These accents seem to be of two types. The first type of accent merely lends emphasis to a note which is usually a significant part of the melodic line. This is shown in Figure 65.

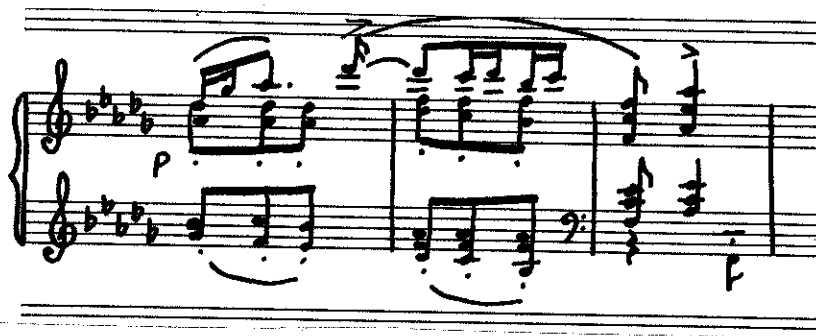


Fig. 65.--An example from Sonatine, page six, brace one, measures two, three and four, showing a type of Ravel's accents.

The second type of accent causes a change in the metric plan. This is shown in Figure 66.

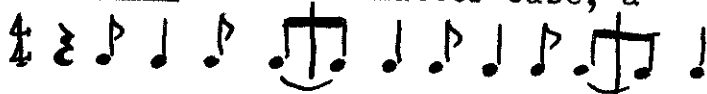


Fig. 66.--An example from the Concerto, page six, brace three, measures one and two, showing another type of accent used by Ravel.

In Figure 65 it is seen that the first accent is placed on a melody note which is tied through the first beat in the next measure. The second accent appears over another melody note which ends a phrase. At the same

time that the melody notes are accented, however, there is a very rhythmic bass pattern which continues uninterrupted. This steady pulse in the bass maintains the original metric pattern and as a result, the accents become only a point of stress for particular notes.

In Figure 66, however, an entirely different situation is seen. This time, there is no melody, only chords which fall on the secondary beats. The strong accents of the chords thus set up another metric pattern to that designated in the signature.

Syncopation.--In Figure 65 it was pointed out that a melody note was tied over the measure bar. It was also pointed out that in this case, because of the strong basic rhythm of the lower clef, the metric pattern was unchanged. However, another different type of syncopation is found in the same composition. On page three, brace three, measures three, four, and five, there is a series of ties, (see Figure 67) which include all voices, and therefore a change in the metric pattern is made. A similar example is found in the Concerto, page two, brace three, measures one and two. This is shown in Figure 68 and in Le Gibet. In this latter case, a syncopated rhythm, 

caused by a suspension, is used as a motif throughout the composition.



Fig. 67.--An example of Ravel's use of tied notes, found in Sonatine, page three, brace three, measures three, four and five.

Figure 68 shows Ravel's use of syncopation.

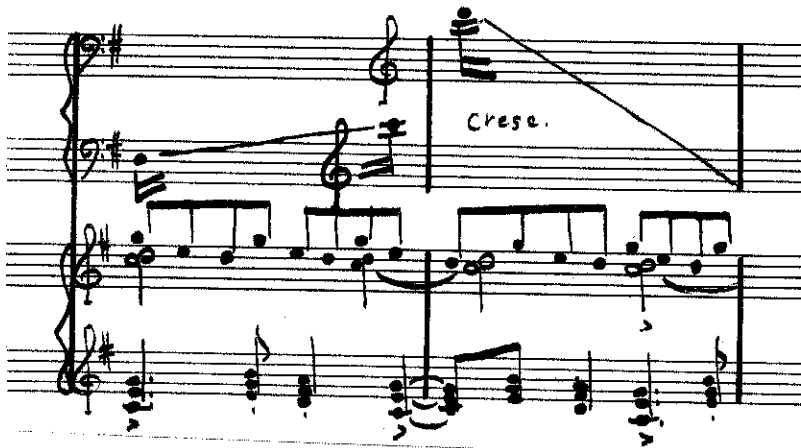


Fig. 68.--An example of Ravel's use of syncopation, found in the Concerto, page two, brace three, measures one and two.

Rhythmic patterns.--There seems to be no evidence that Ravel had a preference for any particular pattern of notes, although one pattern did appear in two compositions. The first two times it appears in the Concerto, page thirty-seven, brace one, measures one,

two, three, and four, and page thirty-nine, brace one, measures one, two, three, and four, it is in 2/4 time:

$\frac{2}{4}$ ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ |. The next time it appears, page forty-one, brace three, measures three, four, and five, the same notes and rests are used, but are placed differently in the measure, and therefore another meter is obtained: $\frac{2}{4}$ ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ |.

It appears in Valses, page one, brace four, measures three and four in 3/4 time, but the notes are arranged in such a manner that the rhythm becomes that of the first example: $\frac{3}{4}$ ♩ ♩ ♩ | ♩ ♩ ♩ |

Complex rhythms.--In Ravel's early work, Pavane pour une Infante defunte, there is a hint of the complex rhythm which is used to a greater extent in his later works. Figure 69 illustrates this complex rhythm.

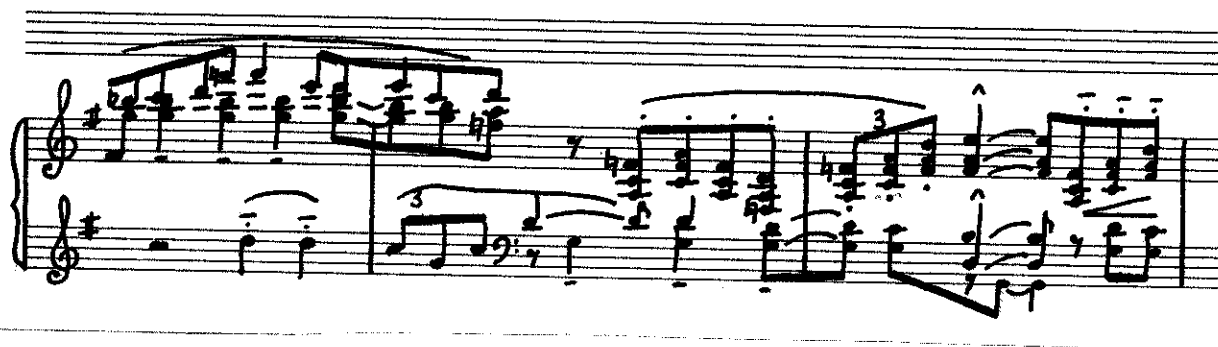


Fig. 69.--An example of complex rhythm, found in Pavane, page five, brace four, measures four, and page five, brace five, measures one and two.

In the Valses Nobles et Sentimentales, the use of two against three is found. This is shown in Figure 70.



Fig. 70.--An example of the rhythm of two against three, found in Valses Nobles et Sentimentales, page nineteen, brace three, measures three and four.

Also in the Valses is found a complicated example of two unusual triplet forms used against each other. This is shown in Figure 71.



Fig. 71.--An example of unusual triplet forms found in Valses Nobles et Sentimentales, page twenty-three, brace four, measures two and three.

These complex rhythms are rare with Ravel, however. His rhythm as a whole has a smooth, flowing character based upon a definite pulse. Even when the accents fall on the secondary beat rather than on the primary beat, the new rhythm has a definite meter, so that there is always a rhythmic satisfaction in the music of Ravel.

Basic rhythmic patterns.--In the slow movement of the Concerto, a form in which it is usually felt that composers may take more liberties than in fast movements, there is likewise a steady pulse beat. Figure 72 shows the basic rhythm which is continuous throughout the movement.



Fig. 72.--An illustration of the basic rhythm of the second movement of the Ravel Concerto, page twenty-seven, brace one, measure one.

Note also that the ornamentation of the melody is arranged in an even pattern. Figure 73 shows an illustration of this from the second movement of Ravel's Concerto.



Fig. 73.--An example from the second movement of the Concerto, page thirty-four, brace two, measure two, showing the even pattern of the ornamentation of the melody.

Jeux d'eau, Sonatine, and Pavane are all excellent examples of Ravel's steady basic rhythm which is a characteristic of his music.

Principle of elongation.--This device is little used by Ravel. If he wants a ritard, the word ritard is written. Or if the tempo is to be changed entirely, the tempo to which he wants it changed is written, as, "Allegro" to "Lento."

Fermato.--Likewise, the above treatment is applied to Ravel's use of the fermato.

Use of the rhythmic pause.--Ravel makes use of the rhythmic pause much the same as Liszt. (See Chapter IV, Figure 5). The rest as applied by Ravel is as full of meaning as the expressed beats, as shown in Figure 74.



Fig. 74.--An excerpt from Valses Nobles et Sentimentales, page one, brace four, measures three, four, five and six, showing Ravel's use of the rhythmic pause.

Summary.--It has been found that Ravel's music has been greatly influenced by his interest in the dance form, and as a consequence, all of his compositions possess a steady flow of rhythm. The few devices which he has used to change the meter have been found to be largely the use of accents and suspensions.

Melody

Figure 75 shows a melody of Ravel, while Figure 76 illustrates a melody of Liszt, whose style is said to have been a source of influence upon Ravel.

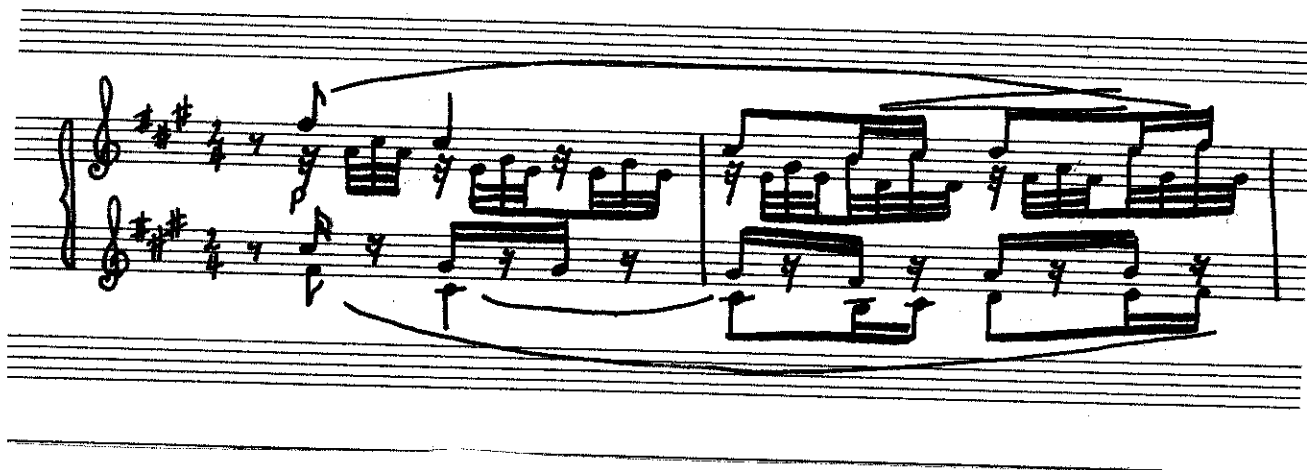


Fig. 75.--An example of a melody from Sonatine, page two, brace one, measures one and two, and page two, brace one, measure one.



Fig. 76.--An illustration of a Liszt melody, found in Funerailles, page seven, brace two, measures one and two.

If the examples of Figures 75 and 76 are studied closely, a degree of similarity is seen. Ravel's melody is three measures in length, Liszt's is two. Each melody states its theme, and is repeated. (Not shown in the Figure). Each melody is clearly outlined, and is pleasing to the ear. There is, however,

no similarity in the actual lines of the melody, and little similarity in the development of the melody. The comparison of a melody of Ravel with one of Liszt's, however, does prove that Ravel's melodies are clearly outlined, and possess an agreeable character.

Character of melodies.---Ravel's melodies seem to be of two classifications, those which have a tuneful character and those which border upon the motif pattern. Figure 77 shows the two melodies from Jeux d'eau, the composition which gave Ravel his first recognition in the musical world.

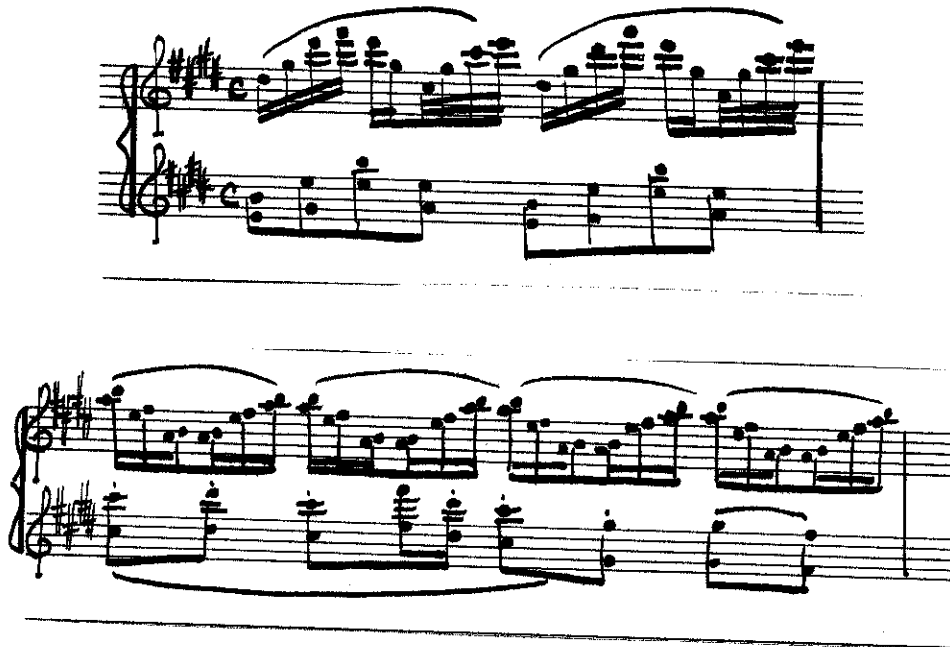


Fig. 77.--An example of two types of melody found in Jeux d'eau. The first is on page three, brace one, measure one; the second is on page five, brace one, measure one.

The first melody, the primary theme, is more of the motif

idea, while the second melody is nearer the flowing line of melody found in Pavane, Ondine, and other compositions. Each of these melodies is one measure in length.

In the example from the Sonatine, Figure 75, it should be noted that the melodic line of the upper treble clef is doubled in the lower line of the lower treble clef. This is a characteristic trait of Ravel, and is seen again in Habanera, page one, brace four, measure one; and Pavane, page three, brace three, measures two and three, and page three, brace four, measure one.

Length of melodies.--The greater number of Ravel's works for the piano are delegated to small forms, and consequently, the melodies are made to conform to the pattern. Hence the usual length of Ravel's melodies is from two to four measures. However, they are nearly always repeated immediately in the original form, and then extended, so that there seems to be an almost continuous flow of melody. Two melodies are shown in Figure 78, the first of which is taken from Ravel's early work, the Habanera. It is two measures in length, and forms the motif for the composition. The second melody is likewise from Habanera.



Fig. 78.--Two examples of melody found in Habanera, page one, brace three, measure four, and page one, brace three, measures three and four.

Figure 79 shows a melody from the second Valse of the Valses Nobles et Sentimentales. This measure is four measures in length, and is immediately restated after its entrance.



Fig. 79.--An illustration of a melody in Valses Nobles et Sentimentales, page four, brace four, measures four and five, and on page four, brace five, measures one and two.

Angularity.--It may be seen by the foregoing examples that there is little angularity in Ravel's melodies. The second melody from Jeux d'eau, seen in Figure 77, shows the interplay of two successive notes, a characteristic trait of Ravel. Note also the scale wise progressions which appear in all the melodies

shown. Figure 80, from Ondine, shows Ravel's use of the skip of a third. This skip appears again in the examples shown from Habanera, Jeux d'eau, Valses, and Sonatine. Therefore, it also is classified as a characteristic of Ravel's melodic line.



Fig. 80.-An illustration of the melody of Ondine, found on page one, brace one, measures one and two, and one page one, brace three, measure one.

Development and extent of use.--The plan which Ravel uses for the development of his melodies is always very clear. This fact is illustrated by a discussion of the melodic plan of Pavane pour une Infante defunte.

The composition is divided into three definite sections, and the melodies of each are so closely joined that each section seems to be composed of one long melodic line. In order to see how this effect has been achieved, however, it is necessary to break up the melodic line into phrases and to note the relationship between the phrases.

The first melody is only two measures long, but in the next two measures it is repeated a third higher and with one measure of extension. This extra measure leads

into a cadence which in turn leads into the second phrase of the melody. This second melody is a third higher than the first melody and bears a rhythmical similarity to it.

The first phrase of the second section, which was introduced by a two-measure transition, is likewise two measures long. This time, however, the second melody in this section is lowered a third for its repetition, instead of rising a third, as did the first melody. The next time that it is repeated, it is a sixth lower than the first phrase of the second section. Also, the second measure of the phrase has been deleted, and a two-measure cadence added. The entire section is repeated, and is followed by a repetition of the first section.

The third section now begins. This time, the melody is four measures long and is repeated a fifth lower. The extension of the fourth measure forms the cadence. This section is likewise repeated.

It is therefore determined from this analysis of the development of a Ravel melody that the effect of flowing melodic line is the result of the combining of two or more melodic phrases which are hinged closely together and use the same rhythmic pattern or a slight variation of it.

Range of melodies.--The range of the first melody in Pavane pour une Infante defunte is a fourth, the range

of the second melody a fifth, while the range of the third and fourth melodies is a fourth. The melodies of Jeux d'eau and the second "Valse" from the Valses Nobles et Sentimentales both use a range of a fifth.

It is therefore concluded that the range of Ravel's melodies is rarely more than that of a fifth.

Register of melodies.--Although Ravel shows a decided preference for the upper portion of the keyboard (see Jeux d'eau, Sonatine, Pavane, Ondine) the lower register of the piano is also found to be used by him. Figure 81 shows an excerpt from Five O'Clock which is placed in the lower register of the keyboard.



Fig. 81.--An excerpt from Five O'Clock, page one, brace one, measures one and two, showing Ravel's use of the lower register of the keyboard.

However, the thematic material in the next brace of this composition is written an octave higher than the bass motif of the example in Figure 81, and in the third brace, the material is still another octave higher than it was in the second brace. Likewise the melody and

thematic material of Jeux d'eau utilize more than one octave.

Folk song melodies.---The G major Concerto is reputed to have been formed around the folk tunes of the Basque country. Although investigation upon this subject failed to show definitely which themes were the folk tunes, the inference is that the melody of the second movement is the folk song. This conclusion is drawn from the following facts: first, the themes of the first and last movements can be more nearly classified as motif material than as melodies whereas there is a clearly defined melody in the second movement ; second, the fact is known that this second movement was the first movement of the concerto to be written.

An example of the melody from the second movement is shown in Figure 82.



Fig. 82.--An illustration of the melody from the second movement of the Concerto, page twenty-seven, brace one, measures two, three and four.

Harmony

Scales.---It was previously mentioned in Chapter V that the use of the whole-tone scale was an innovation

generally attributed to Debussy. An examination of Ravel's works reveals the fallacy of such a statement. The whole-tone scale appears in Ravel's compositions to an extent comparable to that of Debussy. Figure 83 illustrates Ravel's use of it in the Jeux d'eau.



Fig. 83.--An example of Ravel's use of the whole-tone scale found in Jeux d'eau, on page three, brace three, measure two.

Other examples of Ravel's use of the whole-tone scale are found in Sonatine, page ten, brace three, measures one and two, and Concerto, page twenty-six, brace three, measures four, five and six.

The pentatonic scale, also discussed in Chapter V, is used by Ravel to a great extent, and is also to be found in the early work, Jeux d'eau, and example of which is shown in Figure 84.



Fig. 84.--An example of Ravel's use of the pentatonic scale, found in Jeux d'eau, page three, brace one, measure one.

Since the original motif is formed upon this scale, extensive use of the scale is made throughout the entire composition.

Other examples of the pentatonic scale are found in Concerto, page one, brace one, measure one, and Ondine, page six, brace one, and measure one.

The use of modal scales has played a large part in lending a strangeness of character to the music of Ravel. One of the scales which is frequently used by him is the Aeolian, which ascribes to our natural minor, the chief characteristic of which is the use of whole steps between the sixth, seventh, and eighth degrees. In a large portion of conventional composition, the harmonic minor is used rather than the natural.

An illustration of Ravel's use of the Aeolian mode is given in Figure 85. Here we see the use of F[#] minor without the more usual E[#] as raised seventh degree.

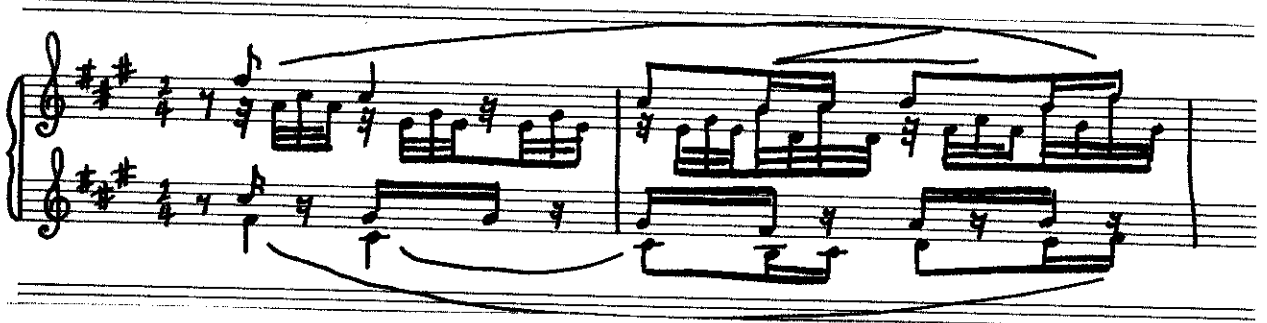


Fig. 85.--An illustration of the Ravel use of the Aeolian mode, found in Sonatine, page two, brace one, measures one and two.

Ravel's use of the conventional major and minor scales should not be ignored. An excellent example of his use of the major scale is illustrated in the Concerto, pages thirty-two and thirty-three.

Chord structure.--The chord structure used by Ravel is sometimes simple and sometimes complex, as may be seen in an analysis of Pavane pour une Infante defunte. In this work, Ravel has varied harmonic background by adding ninth chords, seconds, and pedal points. Figure 86 shows two measures which contain five ninth chords combined with two tonic chords.

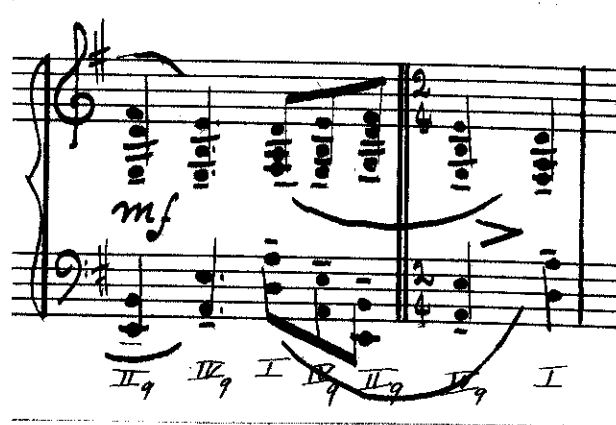


Fig. 86.--An example from Pavane pour une Infante defunte, page four, brace two, measure three, and page four, brace three, measure one, showing Ravel's use of ninth chords.

In Jeux d'eau, both ninth and thirteenth chords are found, as well as the major seventh. Figure 87 shows how Ravel has mixed the seventh and ninth chords.



Fig. 87.--An excerpt from Jeux d'eau, page fourteen, brace one, measure one, showing the use of major seventh.

Figure 88 is an excerpt from Sonatine, and shows Ravel's combination of ninth and thirteenth chords.

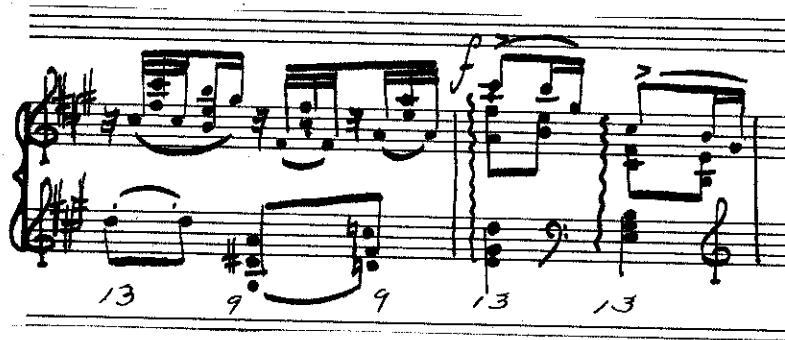


Fig. 88.--An excerpt from Sonatine, page two, brace four, measures two and three, illustrating Ravel's use of the ninth and thirteenth chords.

Figure 89 shows two examples from Five O'Clock, Ravel's works showing the influence of American jazz.

The first example illustrates the augmented triad and the second example illustrates the augmented second. Both these augmented chords are characteristic of Ravel's chord structure and are to be found in all of his music.



Fig. 89.--Two examples of Ravel's use of augmented triads and augmented seconds, found in Five O'Clock, page one, brace two, page one, brace four, measure one, and page four.

The use of open fourths, fifths, and chords without thirds is a harmonic device which Ravel employs to a great extent. The accompanying figure in Jeux d'eau is composed of open fifths. Open fourths, open fifths, and chords without thirds are found throughout the composition. In Figure 90, which illustrates the motif, note also the use of the major seventh, another favorite chord of Ravel.

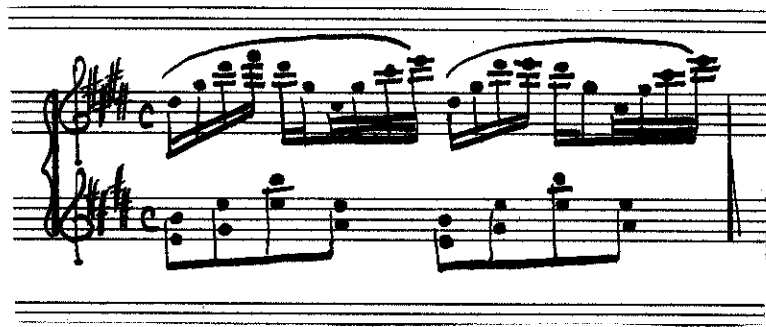


Fig. 90.--An excerpt from Jeux d'eau, page three, brace one, measure one, showing Ravel's use of major seventh chords.

In Figure 91 the use of a diminished third is shown, as well as the use of altered ninth chord without a third.

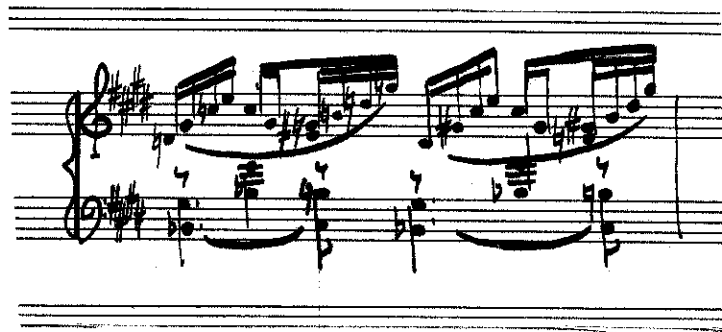


Fig. 91.--An illustration of Ravel's use of a diminished third and altered ninth chord, found in Jeux d'eau, page three, brace three, measure one.

An unusual type of chord-spelling is found in the Sonatine. This chord, spelled as an altered ninth chord, really sounds the I in a minor. Figure 92 shows an unusual spelling of a minor triad.



Fig. 92.--An illustration of an unusual spelling of a minor triad found in Sonatine, page five, brace six, measure five.

Summary.--Ravel's chord structure is composed of unaltered chords placed in juxtaposition with altered chords, such as augmented triads and augmented seconds. The use of major seventh chords, as well as ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords, is indicated.

Chord progressions.--Parallelism is most evident in Ravel's music. A very good example of the way in which Ravel uses this archaic device is illustrated in the Sonatine, an excerpt of which is given in Figure 93.



Fig. 93.--An excerpt from Sonatine, page two, brace one, measures one and two, showing Ravel's use of parallelism.

Figure 94 shows Ravel's use of parallelism in the Concerto. Note also the use of the whole-tone scale, and

the structure of the chords. With the exception of one chord, all of the chords are major.



Fig. 94.--An illustration of Ravel's use of parallelism from Concerto, page twenty-six, brace three, measures four, five, and six.

Dissonance.--A hint of the dissonance which was later to become a characteristic of Ravel's work is seen in his first work, the Habanera. In this composition, he has used altered chords, seconds and dissonant ornamentation. Figure 95 shows several of the altered chords which are found in the Habanera. Note the use of the natural against the flat in the third example.

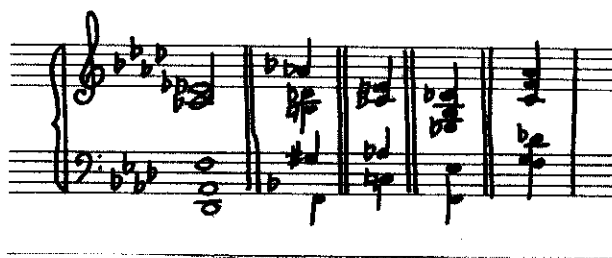


Fig. 95.--Five examples of altered chords found in Habanera.

In the Pavane pour une Infante defunte, Ravel's most apparent method of achieving a slight effect of dissonance is the use of seconds. Figure 96 shows the manner in which he has altered the chords in the repetition of a cadence by adding seconds to them.

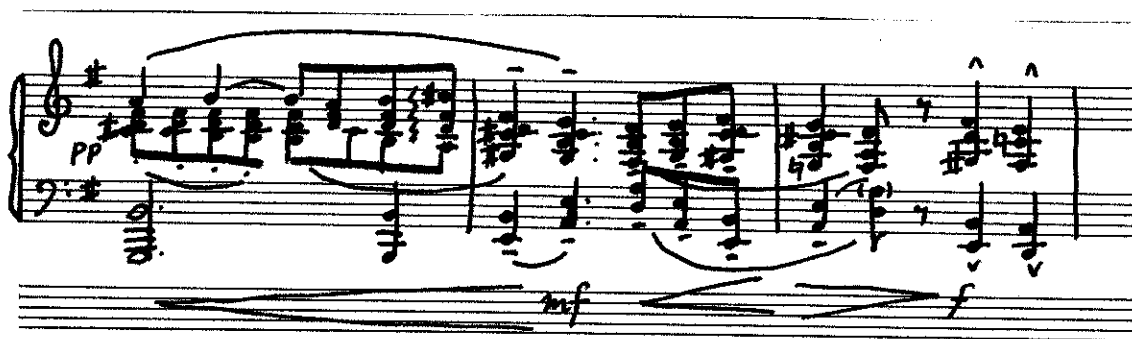


Fig. 96.--An excerpt from Pavane pour une Infante defunte, page four, brace four, measure three, and page four, brace five, measure two, showing the use of seconds.

The Valses Nobles et Sentimentales are filled with examples of dissonance, such as is shown in Figure 97.



Fig. 97.--Two measure from Valses nobles et Sentimentales, page one, brace one, measures one and two, showing Ravel's employment of dissonance.

In Figure 97 Ravel has used tone cluster, seconds, and naturals against sharps. This last named device is known as a simultaneous cross relation and recurs frequently in Ravel's music. Figure 98 shows its use in the Concerto.



Fig. 98.--An illustration of Ravel's use of cross relationship found in the Concerto, page twenty-nine, brace one, measure two.

In Jeux d'eau Ravel uses seconds in series to gain an effect of mild dissonance. Also in this same composition, is seen the background of a device which is used by him to great extent in his later works: chromaticism. An illustration of this use in the Sonatine is shown in Figure 99.

Notice also in Figure 99 that the fifth has been augmented.

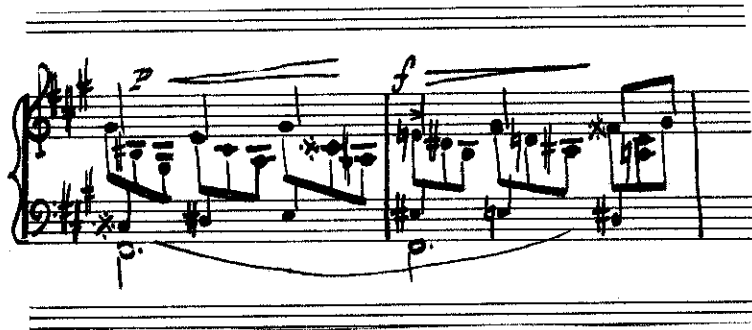


Fig. 99.--An example of Ravel's use of chromaticism found in Sonatine, page eight, brace four, measures one and two.

Figure 100 shows another form of Ravel's chromaticism.

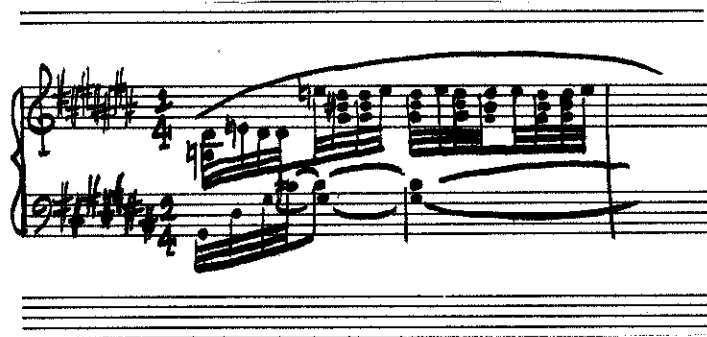


Fig. 100.--Another example of chromaticism taken from Ondine, page four, brace one, measure one.

Figure 100 shows a form of Ravel's chromaticism, in which the tonality has been changed by adding a sharp to b, the third of the chord.

Modulation

Keys used in modulation.--Pavane pour une Infante, one of Ravel's first works, uses the following keys in modulation: G b D G^b g c g G, all closely related keys. However, in the next work, Jeux d'eau, the use of the whole-tone and pentatonic scales, open chords, tone clusters, chromatics, enharmonic keys, ninth, eleventh and thirteenth chords all make it increasingly difficult to find the key center. The modulation to the tonic in the recapitulation is the only clearly defined modulation given. As a consequence, only the following key centers stand out with any degree of clarity: E A c[#] . . E^b C[#] A[#] G[#] g[#] . E.

Clarity of modulations.--In Pavane pour une Infante defunte, the fact that modulations stand out clearly is due largely to the fact that the cadences are definite. In the major portions of Ravel's compositions the tonality being largely obscured by his complicated system of harmony, the clarity of the modulations is dependent upon the cadences to establish the key center.

Form

It has been said of Ravel that he studied the form first. Impressions and mechanics came later. However that may be, Ravel's form has been considered to be the

most important phase of his work.⁴

Jeux d'eau has been mentioned many times in the analysis of Ravel's music, and it is necessary that it be mentioned again, since its creation set up a new type of piano music.

This new sonata of Ravel's, written to portray an impressionistic idea of a fountain, and inspired by a symbolic poem, set up a new conception of the sonata form. It was founded upon the first movement of a sonata, without being subjected to classical form.⁵

It will be seen by studying the table showing the forms of Ravel's music, on page 142 of this study, that most of the compositions use only two basic materials. Two exceptions are noted: "Ondine" and "Le Gibet" from the Gaspard de la Nuit by Ravel.

The Tombeau de Couperin, written by Ravel in admiration of the French harpsichordist, follows closely the prescribed form for each one of the movements: Prelude, Fugue, Forlane, Rigaudon, Menuet, and Toccata. The same thing is true of the Sonatine. Each movement, though diminutive, as implied by the term, follows the conventional structure of that form.

⁴F. H. Shera, Debussy and Ravel, p. 6.

⁵Goss, op. cit., p. 68.

The ease with which Ravel's music has been used for the dance, and the amount of music which he wrote for the ballet, such as Daphnis et Cloe, Ma Mere L'Oye, Adelaide, L'enfant et les Sortilèges, and Bolero, all demonstrate his clarity of form.

The Concerto in G and the Concerto for the Left Hand Alone are his largest works, with the Tombeau de Couperin and the Sonatine next in order. The remainder of his compositions are all of small form but of great importance because of their excellent quality.⁶

Table 5 gives an analysis of the form of ten piano compositions of Ravel.

TABLE 5

FORM ANALYSIS OF RAVEL'S PIANO WORKS

Composition	Form
Habanera.	A B A B
Pavane pour une Infante defunte . .	A B A C A
Jeux d'eau	A B A B A B
Sonatine	
Modere	A B A B A B
Menuet	A B A B
Anime	A B A B A B
Five O'Clock	A B
Ondine	A
Le Gibet	A

⁶Goss, op. cit., p. 97.

Tonality

Ravel's interest in poly-tonality is first evident in his use of the altered ninth chord which appears in Habanera. In Pavane, the addition of a second to a seventh chord achieves a thirteenth chord, which is always a combination of two chords. From then on, Ravel's compositions are filled with this double tonality.

The motif of Jeux d'eau, built on the Chinese pentatonic scale, provides an Oriental atmosphere for the whole composition. In the Concerto, Ravel achieves one of his heights in poly-tonality. By using a quasi pentatonic scale in the lower treble clef, and a G major triad in the upper treble clef, he creates a most unusual atmosphere. Figure 101 shows an example of bi-tonality.

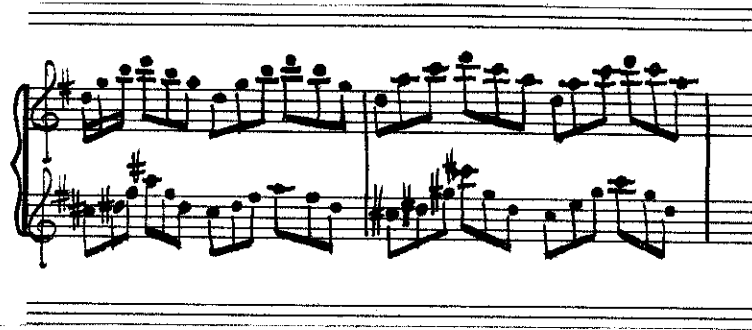


Fig. 101.--An example of bi-tonality found in Concerto, page one, brace one, measures one and two.

The whole-tone scale, as was previously stated, has no gravitation to one tone. Therefore, wherever this scale is used, there is an atmosphere of an uncertain, obscure tonality. Examples are: Sonatine, page ten, brace three,

measures one and two; Jeux d'eau, page three, brace three, measure two; Concerto, page twenty-six, brace three, measures four, five and six.

Neo modality is found very often in Ravel's music, due to his use of modal devices: open chords, lowered seventh degree of scale, and the Aeolian mode.

It is said that the sharp keys tend to produce a brighter coloured tonality than the flat keys. In view of that fact, it is interesting to note that in a comparison made of the different keys used by Ravel, twenty-two compositions out of twenty-five were in sharp keys.

Cadences

The cadence is a significant element as a determinant in modality and a musical punctuation in form. And modern though Ravel is, he uses the cadence at the end of the phrase, period or section. However, these cadences are not always conventional. Ravel uses many different types of cadential treatment, and frequently the chords of the cadences are modified by the use of accidentals, sevenths, or ninths. Such a type is illustrated in Figure 102, which is an excerpt from Valses Nobles et Sentimentales.



Fig. 102.--An example of a cadence modified by the use of seconds found in Valses Nobles et Sentimentales, page four, brace two, measures four and five.

This excerpt uses the cadence IV_9-I with the ninth of the chord in the bass. This ninth, which is the dominant of the tonic, G, gives a simulated effect of V. The chord, which may be spelled as V_{13} , was spelled IV_9 because the third and fifth are missing in the V_{13} spelling, and a thirteenth chord is always the superimposition of one chord upon another. If, however, the V_{13} spelling is preferred, the cadence is a modified V-I.

The use of the eleventh chord in a cadence is found in Sonatine, page seven, brace six, measures four, five, six and seven. In this case the tonic and fifth are used as a pedal point for the II_7 .

Figure 103 is an illustration of the eleventh chord in a cadence.

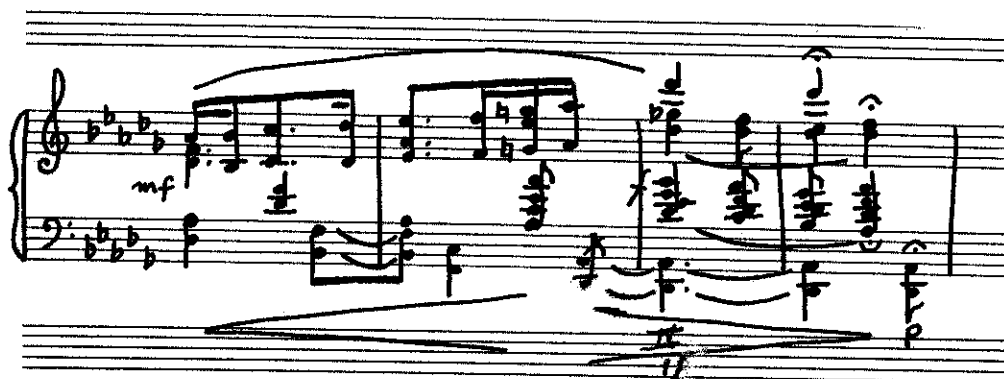


Fig. 103.--An illustration of the eleventh chord in a cadence, taken from Sonatine, page seven, brace six, measures four, five, six and seven.

An unusual cadence of V-I, with a lowered third which is also the lowered seventh degree of the scale, is shown in Figure 104.



Fig. 104.--An example of the cadence $V-I_{7-3}$, found in Sonatine, page six, brace two, measures six and seven.

The cadences illustrated have all been unconventional. Figure 105 shows a most conventional V_7-I cadence found in Jeux d'eau. Other true cadences are found in Ondine, page three, brace five, measure two, and in the Valses Nobles et Sentimentales, page four, brace two, measure four.

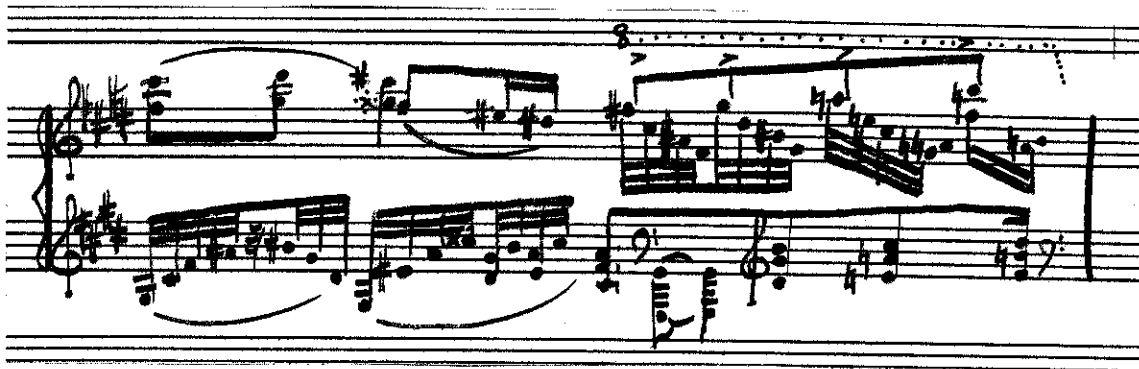


Fig. 105.--An illustration of Ravel's use of the conventional cadence found in Jeux d'eau, page eleven, brace four, measure one.

Table 6 shows the range of dynamics found in Ravel's compositions.

TABLE 6
RANGE OF DYNAMICS FOUND IN RAVEL'S COMPOSITIONS

Compositions	Dynamic	Panel
	Number of measures marked pianissimo	Number of measures marked forte
Habanera	49	11
Pavane	53	18
Sonatine	50	31
Menuet	72	12
Anime	90	73
Le Gibet	49	3
Jeux d'eau	60	25
Ondine	79	14

It is interesting to see from the above table that there is a decided preference for pianissimo in Ravel's

piano music. Although each composition has a wide range of dynamics (except, of course, Le Gibet) the number of measures which are played softly is overpowering.

Texture

Throughout the music of Ravel there is characteristic hollowness. Part of this quality is due to the voicing of his chords; part to the register of the keyboard which he employs.

Jeux d'eau is perhaps the best example of his music which illustrates both these traits. As has been pointed out in the previous sections, Ravel makes great use of open chords. These empty chords, when placed in the upper register of the piano, as Ravel likes to do, give an impression of delicacy which is offset by his sudden sforzandi and sweeping glissandi.

CHAPTER VI

A COMPARISON OF DEBUSSY AND RAVEL

General Comparison

There are a number of ways in which Debussy and Reval are alike; there are many ways in which they differ. As men, they could not have been more dissimilar. Whereas Debussy was amorous and hedonistic, Ravel was quiet, his greatest affections being those which he had for his work and his family.

Debussy and Ravel were both so-called atheists, but profound lovers of nature; they both loved children, they both craved "night-life"; they both preferred the miniature forms of objects, a characteristic which was carried over into their piano works; they both had a main idea which they felt must be expressed. With Debussy, it was the pianissimo which he felt was essential to the delineation of his compositions; with Ravel, it was the correct tempo which he designated for his music, and which he wished observed by the performers of his music.

It has been said that the composition of both is the counterpart of their native tongue. That is, it combines

subtlety of meaning with clearness of statement, a characteristic of the French language.

They both wrote programme music; they both loved Paris and Spain, and they both endeavored to portray in their music the essential characteristics of these two countries.

They were alike in their aversion to Wagner and the German school. Although each of them was interested in Wagner at some period of his life, Debussy when he was young, Ravel when he was mature - both were apathetic toward the German school.

Both of them are said to have been influenced by symbolism and impressionism. This statement is borne out by the kind of titles which they used. A list of a few of these titles is shown here. Note the comparison between the two lists.

Debussy	Ravel
Images	Miroirs
Reflets dans l'eau	Jeux d'eau
Iberia	Rhapsodie Espagnole
The Children's Corner	Ma Mere l'Oye
Hommage a Rameau	Le Tombeau de Couperin
Hommage a Haydn	Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn

After looking at these titles and comparing them, it is obvious that Debussy's title Reflets dans l'eau and Ravel's Jeux d'eau have a similarity to each other. The Iberia and Rhapsodie Espagnole show their interest

in Spain, and the compositions dedicated to the composers of former days indicates a respect for the classics, while their affection for children is evidenced in the two suites, The Children's Corner and Ma Mere l'Oye.

Here, however, much of the similarity of the two composers is ended. For where Debussy is vague and imaginative, Ravel is the classicist, a musical descendant of Couperin with his clear-cut, carefully planned treatment. Debussy seeks to be freed from all form, whereas to Ravel, form and rhythm are almost a passion. Debussy strives to present an emotional state, Ravel to paint a picture. Debussy's music is so highly individualized (typified by the prelude) that it is limited and his art finally is exhausted. Ravel writes in no one style, but insists upon colour and atmosphere within form.

Comparison of rhythm

There is probably more contrast in the rhythms of Debussy and Ravel than in any other element of music which is used by them.

Debussy's rhythms are wavering and spasmodic, determined entirely by the mood and the effect which is to be achieved, and there is rarely a continuous flow of rhythm from one thought to another. This unique form of rhythm is achieved by Debussy's new treatment of old rhythmic models rather than by any rhythmic innovations. Some of

these old patterns are: rhythmic pause, principle of elongation, suspensions, diverse metric scheme, and uneven groupings of notes.

Ravel, on the contrary, uses a steady uninterrupted flow of expressed rhythmic beats which result in a compact, positive rhythm.

The principle of elongation is not found in Ravel's music. His fermatos are not achieved by lengthening the note values, but by placing a fermato above the note to be held. Although his metric patterns follow the phrase line, as do Debussy's, there is never the impression of unsure rhythmic background which is found in Debussy.

Therefore, it is apparent that even when the same type of rhythmic treatment is used by both the composers, the a different result is achieved. Ravel has as his objective the accomplishment of a definite rhythm at all times, whereas Debussy strives to express a series of unconnected rhythmic thoughts.

Figure 106 shows an excerpt from Reflets dans l'eau, illustrating the type of ritard employed by Debussy.

Figure 107 is an excerpt from Sonatine, illustrating Ravel's use of ritard. Note how the subject matter and the rhythm blend together in the excerpt from Ravel, and how the change of subject matter, in the example from Debussy, causes a corresponding change in the rhythm.

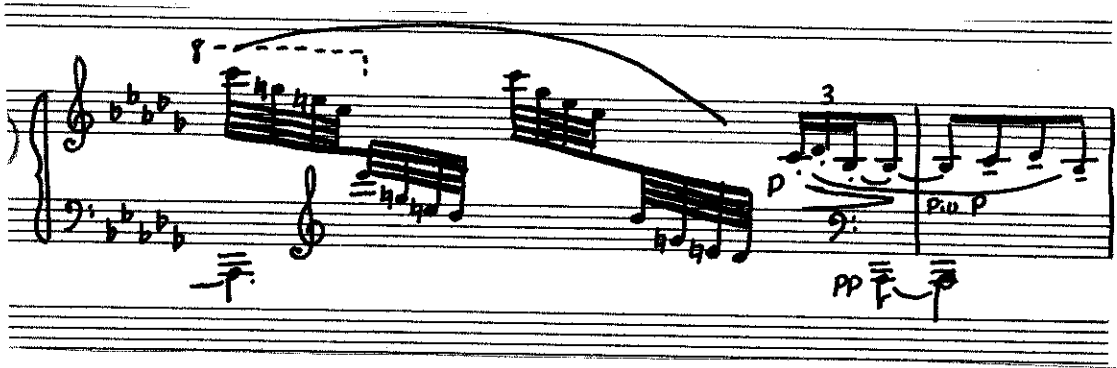


Fig. 106.--An excerpt from Reflets dans l'eau, page three, brace four, measures two and three, illustrating Debussy's use of ritard.



Fig. 107.--An illustration of the type of ritard employed by Ravel, found in Sonatine, page two, brace four, measure three and page four, brace five, measure one.

Figure 108 illustrates the use of the tie as employed by Ravel.



Fig.108 --An example of Ravel's use of the tie, taken from Sonatine, page three, brace three, measures two and three.

Figure 109 shows Debussy's employment of the tie.

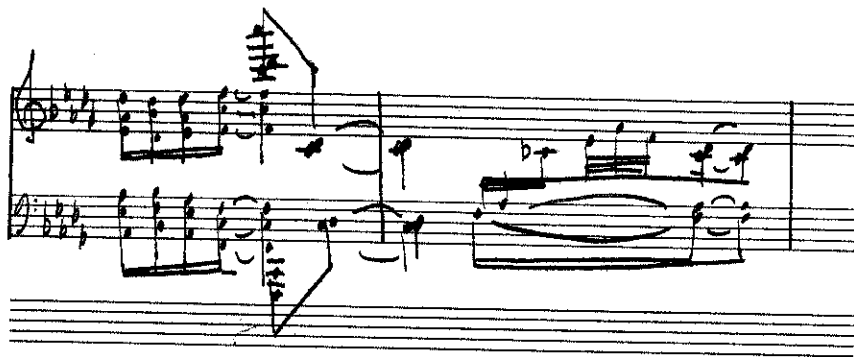


Fig. 109.--An example of Debussy's use of the tie, found in Reflets dans l'eau, page two, brace one, measures two and three.

It should also be noted that in the Ravel example, there is a marked accent to create the new rhythmic pattern; in the example from Debussy, there is no accent, and the type of subject matter which he has used following the tie creates an effect of a blur. As has been stated previously, however, this unusual rhythm which is found in Debussy's music can in no way be considered an oversight on his part; it is clearly evident that these rhythmic patterns have been worked out with great care, and have as their objective the idea of producing a particular impression.

Melody

It was found in this study that the type of melody employed by Debussy and Ravel differed in several ways. The Debussy melody is a series of variations and developments upon one motif, which may be either a figure-like or flowing line contour. However, the motif usually tends to be of a figure-type. It is usually quite short, and is of such a smooth line that it does not stand out from the harmonic background with any degree of clarity.

The melody, as found in Ravel's music, is patterned after the classic style, and uses a different type of development than that employed by Debussy. Debussy changes his melody in various ways, rhythmically and otherwise;

Ravel's melodies retain the same rhythmic pattern throughout the composition. Likewise the original form of Ravel's melodies remains the same with the development being obtained by repeating the melody on a different scale step. This last practice usually brings about a change of key which adds variety and interest to the composition.

Ravel's melodies are like those of Debussy in that they use only a small range. However, all of Ravel's melodies are clearly outlined, and there is no overlapping of two or more melodies, as is found in Debussy. The small phrases of Ravel's melodies are joined together in such a way that an effect of long, flowing melodic line is given.

Figure 110 shows the melody found in the first measure of Debussy's Reflets dans l'eau, page one, brace one.

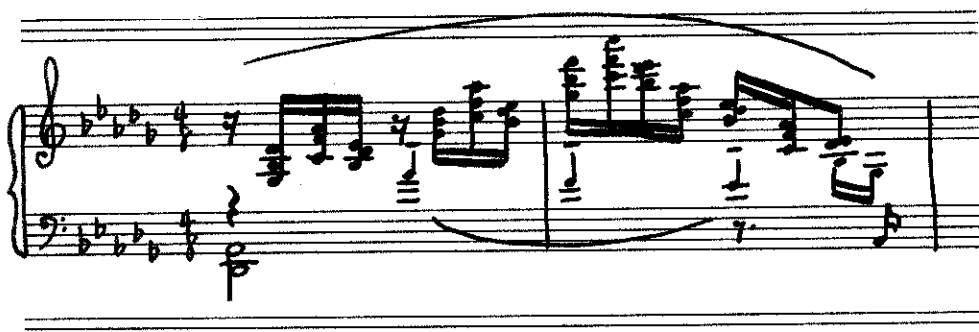


Fig.110 .--An example of a motif from Debussy's Reflets dans l'eau, page one, brace one, measures one and two.

Figure 111 is a reproduction of the first measure of Ravel's Jeux d'eau, page three, brace one.



Fig. 111.--A reproduction of motival material from Ravel's Jeux d'eau, page three, brace one, measure one.

Reflets dans l'eau and Jeux d'eau have been chosen because they parallel each other; both were written as impressionistic compositions to portray an effect of water. Both the "melodies" are of the motif type.

Figure 112 illustrates a melody from Debussy's La fille aux cheveux de lin.



Fig. 112.--An example of a flowing melody found in Debussy's La fille aux cheveux de lin, page thirty-one, brace three, measures, one, two, and three.

The melody shown in Figure 112 has a much more flowing contour than the melody seen in Figure 110. An illustration of a flowing melodic line found in a Ravel composition as shown in Figure 113.

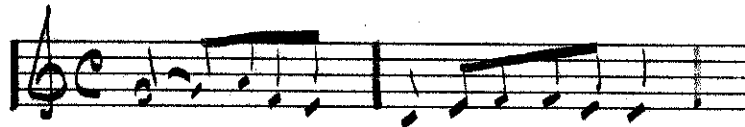


Fig. 113.--This example of a Ravel melody of flowing lines is found in Pavane pour une Infante defunte, page three, brace one, measure two.

Harmony

The pentatonic and whole-tone scales are used by both Debussy and Ravel. Debussy uses the Dorian mode, Ravel the Aeolian. Debussy uses a scale without a leading tone, and both of them use a scale with a flat seventh.

Ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords also are used by both Debussy and Ravel, as well as open fourths, open fifths, octave and fifth, or octave and fourth, augmented chords, tone clusters, and successions of seconds.

Both composers employ parallelism, the modal progression V-IV, and the ninth chord used in a series. The extent of dissonance found in Ravel is greater than that found in Debussy, because of the excessive use of chromaticism, false relationship, and augmented chords by the former.

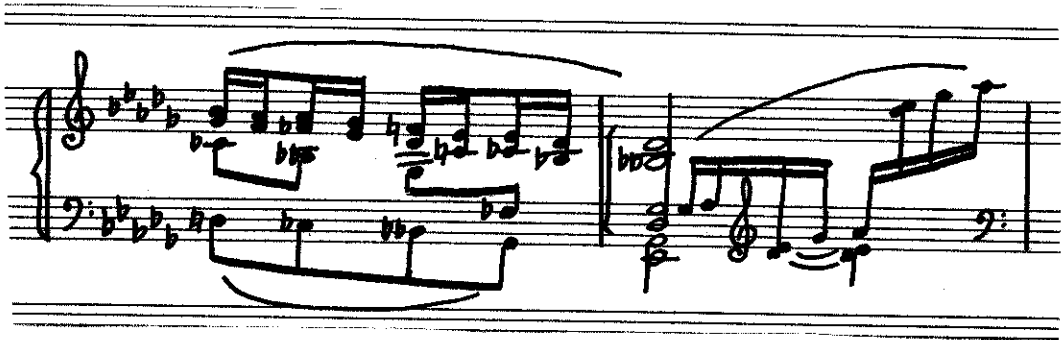


Fig. 116.--An illustration of Debussy's use of the ninth chord as it is found in Reflets dans l'eau, page, one, brace four, measures three and four.

Figure 117 shows the use of the ninth chord by Ravel.

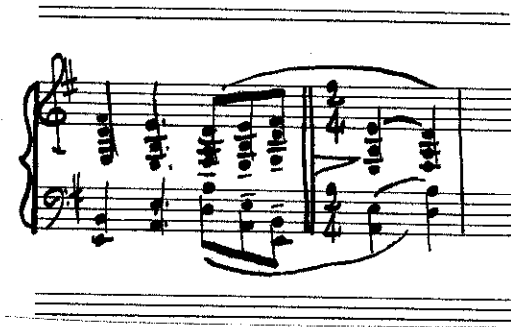


Fig. 117.--An example of ninth chords found in Ravel's Pavane pour une Infante defunte, page four, brace two, measures three and page four, brace three, measure one.

Both examples are cadences. Note how the Ravel cadence definitely resolves, while that of Debussy remains blurred.

An illustration of parallelism as used by Debussy is given in Figure 118, while Ravel's use of parallelism is shown in Figure 119.



Fig. 118.--An example of parallelism found in Debussy's Minstrels, page fifty-one, brace two, measures three and four.



Fig. 119.--An illustration of Ravel's use of parallelism, taken from Pavane pour une Infante defunte, page four, brace five, measures two and three.

Figure 120 shows the use of open chords by Debussy.

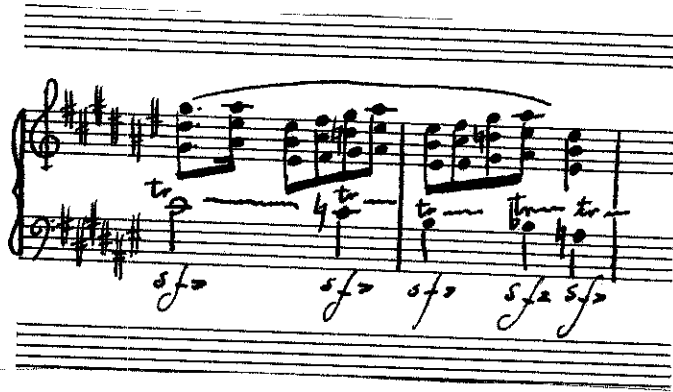


Fig. 120.--An example of Debussy's use of open chords as found in Poissons d'or, page three, brace one, measures one and two.

Figure 121 shows Ravel's employment of open chords.



Fig. 121.--An illustration of the use of open chords as used by Ravel in Jeux d'eau, page three, brace four, measure one.

Figure 122 illustrates the use of tone clusters by Debussy.



Fig. 122.--A reproduction of a measure from Le Vent dans la plaine, page one, brace one, measures one, two and three, illustrating Debussy's use of tone clusters.

Figure 123 shows the manner in which Ravel used tone clusters.

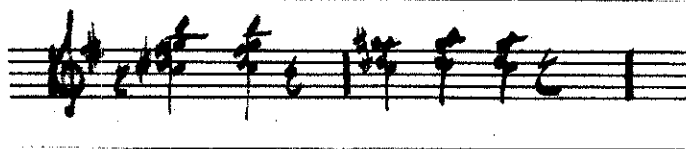


Fig. 123.--An example of tone clusters found in Ravel's Concerto, page one, brace two, measures two and three.

Modulation.--The modulations found in Debussy's early works resemble the modulations found in all of Ravel's piano music. The first works of Debussy contains modulations which are easy to follow; the later works employ almost indefinable modulations. This lack of clarity in his modulations is due partially to his use of ninth, eleventh and thirteenth chords, and to his rare use of cadence.

Ravel, on the other hand, makes great use of cadential treatment, and although his tonalities are blurred by his use of chromaticism, open chords, ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords, the cadence always clearly indicates the key.

Form.--The idea of form as conceived by Debussy differs radically from Ravel's. Debussy used two forms; the cyclical form, in which the development is an outgrowth of one melody, and the thematic material form. In this form, the development is derived from a diversity

of given material. (Examples: Voiles - cyclical form; Reflets dans l'eau, thematic material).

Ravel copied after the classic form (Sonatine-Tombeau) and all of his compositions indicate a strict attention to formal structure.

Tonality.--The use of the whole-tone scale delineates an unusual tonality to the works of Debussy and Ravel; the pentatonic scale gives an impression of Oriental music, while the use of certain old church modes, parallelism, and open chord structures, lends an archaic effect to their music which is offset by the modern use of ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords.

Cadences.--The cadences in Debussy's music are of three types: the authentic cadence, the modal cadence, and the simulated cadence. The latter cadence is really not a cadence at all, but at the end of a phrase, where a cadence would ordinarily fall, Debussy either changes his subject matter or uses suspensions and unresolved chords. An illustration of the use of the unresolved chords is seen in Figure 59.

Ravel's cadences, although more consistently employed, are not necessarily conventional. They are frequently altered by chromaticism, or by the use of the ninth, eleventh, or thirteenth chords. Figure 119 shows an illustration of the treatment Ravel has given

to a plagal cadence by adding ninth chords, chromatics and tone-clusters.

Dynamics.--The dynamic range of both composers is wide, usually varying from pp to ff. However, the number of measures of pianissimo in each composition so heavily overbalance the number of measures of fortissimo that the inevitable conclusion is that there is a decided preference for pianissimo in the works of both composers. (See Tables 4 and 6).

Texture.--The music of both Debussy and Ravel has a noticeably thin texture. The music of Ravel is much more chordal than that of Debussy, and he uses the hands in a much closer position than Debussy does. Nevertheless, by excessive use of open chord structure, Ravel attains a degree of transparent texture in his music which is strikingly similar to that achieved by Debussy.

Idiomatic treatment.--Debussy and Ravel studied carefully the works of two great masters of piano technique, Chopin and Liszt. It is not known in how great a degree their works were influenced by this study. It is true, however, that both Debussy and Ravel created a new type of technique for the piano which revived the interest in the keyboard and gave new inspiration to pianists. As a consequence, the influence of the works of Debussy and

Ravel has been far-reaching, and a large part of the present day piano idiom can be traced to them and to their innovations.

The new type of sonority which they both created by the use of both pedals, the wide-spaced chords of Ravel, the gossamer arpeggi and scales of Debussy, the dynamic glissandi of Ravel - all these features contributed to a novel and unusual form of idiomatic treatment of the piano.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This study has brought to light many unusual and interesting details concerning the piano music of Debussy and Ravel. At the time that the study of this problem was begun, the investigator had little thorough knowledge of the compositions either of Debussy or of Ravel. Nor could any technical information be found which in any way gave a clear or complete picture. The idiom of modern piano music seemed far removed from the classical and romantic piano idiom of Bach, Beethoven, Chopin, and Liszt. There seemed to be a tremendous breach to be crossed before any progress could be made in the study.

Slowly the nature of this gap separating the two idioms gradually became apparent. The territory which had seemed so foreign began to be lighted by small but familiar boundary lines. These infinitesimal and almost invisible lines soon became progenitors of numberless others until finally, that which had been a blank darkness, dense and void of meaning, became iridescent, glowing, and vibrant with significance.

So the stylistic aspects of the piano works of

Debussy and Ravel began to take on form, color, and meaning. Unusual and peculiar methods of the treatment of the musical elements began to stand out above the raw material. Thus each singular trait which came into observation was noted carefully and studied to perceive its effect upon the music as a whole.

No claim is made that the present study is absolutely final in every respect. So long as there is a human element, there will be shortcomings. Several facts, however, have been brought forth in this study which the investigator believes to be reliable information concerning the piano music of Debussy and Ravel.

As was stated in the introduction, a study which does not involve an examination of every work of the respective composer, with due regard for each element of style used in the musical construction, is not definitive. Therefore, it must be kept in mind that any statement made by the investigator is based upon a representative selection of literature rather than upon the entire works of each composer.

In view of these limitations, it may be said with impunity that evidence was found in this study which disproved several theories written about the piano music of Debussy and Ravel.

It has been generally conceded by critical authorities

that the whole-tone scale and ninth chord were strictly devices of musical innovation wrought by Debussy. Evidence proves the theory to be fallacious. So it is with the ninth chord. It is not until the Estampes (1903) that Debussy began his colourful innovation. In 1896, Ravel's Habanera was written. In it occur all the devices later used by Debussy: ninth chords, chromaticism, parallelism, false relationship, and dissonant grace notes.

Thus the facts gained in this study seem to indicate that Debussy, known as the greatest genius in French music,¹ was not an innovator of new forms, but an innovator of new methods of treatment. As such, he has probably never been equalled.

All critics speak of the stress Debussy laid upon the pianissimos in his music, and of the high lights and sharp contours of Ravel's composition. As a consequence, it was especially interesting to find that the amount of pianissimo used in Ravel's piano compositions is overwhelming.

The investigator has benefited greatly and achieved much in this study of the music of Debussy and Ravel.

¹Hill, op. cit., p. 188.

Little more than the bare surface of the study of the stylistic analysis of the piano works of Debussy and Ravel has been touched. The musical styles, characteristics, and methods of writing employed by these forefathers of present-day French music is not to be collected and assimilated in so short a period of time - it might well be the study and interest occupying a lifetime.

APPENDIX

Chronological List of Debussy's Piano Works¹

Danse bohemienne, 1880

Deux arabesques, 1888

Reverie, 1890

Ballade, 1890

Danse, 1890

Valse romantique, 1890

Nocturne, 1892

Suite Bergamasque, 1890-1905

Prelude

Menuet

Clair de lune

Passenpied

Mazurka, 1891

Pour le piano, 1896-1901

Prelude

Sarabande

Toccata

Estampes, 1903

Pagodes

Soiree dans Grenade

Jardins sous la pluie

D'un cahier d'esquisses, 1903

Masques, 1904

L'ile joyeuse, 1904

¹Thompson, op. cit., p. 256.

Images, first series, 1905

Reflets dans l'eau
 Hommage a Rameau
 Mouvement

Images, second series, 1907

Cloches a travers les feuilles
 Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut
 Poissons d'or

Children's Corner, 1906-1908

Doctor Gradus and Parnassum
 Jimbo's Lullaby
 Serenade for the Doll
 Snow is dancing
 The Little Shepherd
 Golliwog's cakewalk

Hommage a Haydn, 1909La plus que lente, 1910Douze Preludes, First Book, 1910

Danseuses de Delphes
 Voiles
 Le vent dans la plaine
 Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir
 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 serenade interrompue
 La Cathedrale engloutie
 La danse de Puck
 Minstrels

Douze Preludes, Second Book, 1910-1913

Brouillards
 Feuilles mortes
 La Puerta del Vino
 Les Fees sont d'exquises danseuses
 Bruyeres
 General Lavine-eccentric
 La Terrasse des audiences au clair de lune
 Ondine
 Hommage a S. Pickwich, Esq. P.P. M. P.C.
 Canope
 Les Tierces alternees
 Feux d'artifice

Berceuse heroique pour rendre hommage a S.M. le Roi

Albert Ier de Belgique et a ses soldats, 1914

Douze Etudes, 1915

Book I

Pour les cinq doigts
 Pour les tierces
 Pour les quartes
 Pour les sixtes
 Pour les octaves
 Pour les huit doigts

Book II

Pour les degres chromatiques
 Pour les agrements
 Pour les notes repetees
 Pour les sonorites opposees
 Pour les arpeges
 Pour les accords

Piano Duets

Symphonie en si, 1880

Triomphe de Bacchus, attributed to early 1880's

Petite Suite, 1889

Marche ecossaise sur un theme populaire, 1891

Six Epigraphes Antiques, 1914

Pour invoquer Pan, dieu du vent d'ete
 Pour un tombeau sans nom
 Pour que la nuit soit propice
 Pour la danseuse aux crotales
 Pour l'egyptienne
 Pour remercier la pluie au matin

For Two Pianos

Lindaraja, 1910

En blanc et noir, 1915

Chronological List of Works of Maurice Ravel¹Serenade grotesque, unpublishedMenuet antique, 1895Habanera, 1896Pavane pour une Infante defunte, 1899Jeux d'eau, 1901Sonatine, 1905Miroirs, 1905

Oiseaux tristes
 Une barque sur l'océan
 Alborada del gracioso
 La vallée des cloches

Ma mère l'oye, 1908Gaspard de la nuit, 1908

Ondine
 Le Gibet
 Scarbo

Menuet sur le nom de Haydn, 1909Valses nobles et sentimentales, 1911Prelude, 1913A la manière de..... 1913

Baradine
 Chabrier

Le Tombeau de Couperin, 1917

Prelude
 Forlane
 Rigaudon
 Toccate

¹ Goss, op. cit., p. 265.

Concerto in G, 1931

Concerto pour le main gauche, 1931

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Poissons d'or, Paris, A. Durand et Fils, 1908.

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Danseuses de Delphes
Voiles
Le Vent dans la plaine
Les Sons et les parfums
Les Collines d'Anacapri
Des pas sur la neige
Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest
La Fille de cheveux de lin
La serenade interrompue
La Cathedrale engloutie
La Danse de Puck
Minstrels

Preludes, Douzieme Livre, Paris, A. Durand, 1910.

Brouillards
Feuilles mortes
La Puerta del Vino
Les Fees sont d'exquises danseuses

Bruyeres
 General Lavine-eccentric
 La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune
 Ondine
 Hommage a S. Pickwich Esq., P.P.M.P.C.
 Canope
 Les tierces alternees
 Feux d'Artifice

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Piece en forme d'Habanera, Paris, Alphonse Leduc, 1926.

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Jeux d'eau, New York, G. Schirmer, 1907.

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