

**UCLA**

**UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations**

**Title**

Piano Performance in Musical Symbolism: Interpretive Freedom through Understanding Symbolist Aesthetics

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5cq463h0>

**Author**

Wong, Wan

**Publication Date**

2017

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Piano Performance in Musical Symbolism:

Interpretive Freedom through Understanding Symbolist Aesthetics

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree

Doctor of Musical Arts in Music

by

Wan Wong

2017



ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Piano Performance in Musical Symbolism:

Interpretive Freedom through Understanding Symbolist Aesthetics

by

Wan Wong

Doctor of Musical Arts in Music Performance

University of California, Los Angeles, 2017

Professor Inna Faliks, Chair

Studies in musical symbolism are often interdisciplinary, with collaboration with areas to do with the literary and visual arts. My dissertation re-orientes the focus to the non-representative function of symbols and engages with symbolist thought and the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer in an effort to justify musical analysis of Symbolist music through identifying effects and atmospheres. In part one, I present a general overview of Symbolist aesthetics, drawing largely from Claude Debussy's writing *Monsieur Croche: the Dilettante Hater*. In part two, I liken the total experience of piano performance to Gadamer's concept of play and festival in order to explicate the mechanisms of symbols in musical symbolism. Part three features Symbolist piano pieces based on its effects—fluidity and stasis—and provides a closer look into interpretation and performance.



This dissertation of Wan Wong is approved.

Laure Murat

Roger W.H. Savage

Guillaume Bruno Sutre

Inna Faliks, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2017

Dedicated to Lai Kit Lam,  
who led her life by beauty and strength,  
taught me how to be myself,  
showed me the incredible meaning of infinite love,  
and lived wholly as a true artist,  
and Chi Wai Wong,  
whose honor, ethics, and good nature  
will forever remind me of the bountiful truth  
and integrity in simplicity.

Piano Performance in Musical Symbolism:  
Interpretative Freedom through Understanding  
Symbolist Aesthetics

## Part I

1.1 Themes of symbolism	1
1.2 Symbolism and Interpretation	9
1.3 <i>Fin-de-Siècle</i> and <i>l'esprit d'époque</i>	20
1.4 Piano Approach	26

## Part II

2.1 Symbols	37
2.2 Historical Symbolism	43
2.3 Musical Symbolism	52

## Part III

3.1 Musical Lines	57
3.2 Fluidity	66
3.3 Stasis	87

## Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my wonderful committee chair, Inna Faliks, who helped hone my musical instinct and conviction. I would also like to thank Roger W.H. Savage, for his utmost guidance throughout my writing process. Also thank you to my sister Gwendolyn who supported me in my symbolist endeavors and unique outlook. Last but not least, thank you to my teachers and advisors Guillaume Sutre, Laure Murat, and Walter Ponce. My education journey has been full of laughter and joy because of you.

*Curriculum Vitae*

**Wan Wong**

- 2015 to 2017      University of California, Los Angeles - D.M.A. candidate  
                         Teaching Fellow in Piano Instruction
- 2013 to 2015      University of California, Los Angeles - Master of Music  
                         Teaching Associate in Piano Instruction  
                         Teaching Assistant in Arts and Architecture 10
- 2009 to 2013      University of California, Los Angeles - Triple Bachelor in Music,  
                         English, & Communications Studies, *Cum Laude*
- 2005 to 2009      Orange County School of the Arts - Instrumental Music Conservatory  
                         Valedictorian, Pianist of the Year 2013

## 1.1 Themes of Symbolism



### **Introduction to Symbolism and its Conception**

Artists from the fin-du-siècle era who carried with them the historical consciousness of the traditions that came before—including Romantic virtuosity and Classical formalism—sought to convey a new understanding of the beautiful and the exemplary in art. The original poets of literary symbolism developed their sense of the beautiful in the domains of sound in spoken word. Painters soon followed by showcasing mythological beings, wallowing in inaction, and presenting subject matters that emphasized the dream, like that of Pierre Cécile Puvis de Cha-

vannes's *The Dream*. Musicians took from "poetry what was theirs"<sup>1</sup> and developed new priorities that reflected the inner truth of sound symbols rather than narrative rhetoric and allegory.

The total aura of the work becomes the meaning of the work; the "atmosphere"<sup>2</sup> evoked by a musical composition generates its own identity. This evocation of mood at the "summit of the structure of harmony and breathing [is responsible for producing the] perfect beauty."<sup>3</sup> In symbolist music, the totality of the work consists in the "imaginative development"<sup>4</sup> of figurations

Since I hope to establish symbolist aesthetics as not only a pivotal moment of change in aesthetics, but also in the realm of performance, this logic implies that there is a link to, traditional conventions. Symbolist composers harken back to romanticism's harmonies, but treat them with new grounds in aesthetics as this dissertation later discusses. Romantic composers sought poetic ways to present traditional forms such as symphony and sonata through the use of grand narrative, akin to epic poetry. The elimination of musical movements inspired their extended musical works such as the fantasies, the one-movement sonatas, and symphonic poems. Liszt's innovations lead the way for improvisatory writing within large forms, in works such as *Piano Sonata in b minor*, S.178 completed in 1853, Symphonic Poem *Die Ideale*, S.106 completed in 1856, and works that deal with transcendence, like Symphonic Poem, *Von der Wiege bis zum Grabe*, S.107 completed in 1882. Both Wagner's and Debussy's basic approach to harmony came from the tradition of Romantic composers such as Frédéric Chopin and Liszt. Debussy was also

---

<sup>1</sup> Francis Claudon, "Music," in *The Concise Encyclopedia of symbolism*, ed. Jean Cassou (Secaucus, NJ: Chartwell Books, 1979), 227.

<sup>2</sup> Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche: the Dilettante Hater* (The Viking Press, 1928), 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 56.

an ardent admirer of Chopin's music, which he undoubtedly studied in the *Conservatoire*. Debussy also rejoices his own “Romanesque soul [which] is like a Chopin ballade.” Chopin's "entrancing spirit"<sup>5</sup> rests in Debussy's mind as a manifestation of the "swirl and passion"<sup>6</sup> of music; Debussy imagines Chopin as the embodiment of such inspiration even when the music described is by Wagner!

In addition to the rich heritage of Romanticism, the themes of *fin-de-siècle* (end-of-the-century) symbolism are guided by the symbolists' obsession to divest their work of any relation to banal reality and in search for the unreal world of magical transformations. This lost mythical land would provide hope for worldly inhabitants with an alternate form of unity or "peace with all the world"<sup>7</sup>—art—which they so yearn for as the escape from an increasingly chaotic, individual, and mechanical world. In the opening of Debussy's writing as the intelligent and shrewd *Monsieur Croche*, the reader interrupts dear *Croche* as he was “dreaming,”<sup>8</sup> which seems to be the *status quo* state-of-being for this character, in all non-grandeur, nonchalant nature. Along the enchanted road to finding paradise, the symbolists discovered the unreal through dream, fantasy, meditative timelessness, decadence, and languid eroticism. These discoveries became a part of the free-developing tenets of symbolism, and can be found in many works of this movement.

The symbolists took to heart that “all Art that is not mere storytelling, or mere portraiture, [but] is symbolic...; for it entangles, in complex colours and forms, a part of the Divine Essence.

---

<sup>5</sup> Claude Debussy through his letters, translation by Jacqueline M. Charente, (New York: Vantage Press), 1990, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche: the Dilettante Hater*, 62.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



<sup>9</sup> At Stéphane Mallarmé’s weekly artist meetings, the two monumental figures—Charles Baudelaire and Richard Wagner—were often the topic of conversation. Nietzsche and Debussy both appreciated Wagner for his ability to fit “an infinity of meaning and sweetness into the smallest space,”<sup>10</sup> all the while criticizing Wagner’s massive operas as too grandiloquent, too lavish in orchestration to appreciate the true characters of sound. Composers influenced by Wagner’s symbolism extended the boundaries of symbolist music beyond the inventions of *Parsifal* in response to honing the concept of symbols, prizing the abundance of meaning in unrepresentative sound. The result is a preference for the expressed interiority as an end in itself. The musical works of symbolism do not seek to tell a story, or even to paint a picture. Instead, the symbolist aesthetic values qualities found in the aforementioned dream, fantasy, and memory. Debussy highly praises Beethoven in a number of occasions; in a section on ‘Symphony’, *Monsieur Croche* applauds Beethoven’s stunning Ninth Symphony for capturing “the flood of human feeling which overflows the ordinary bounds of the symphony sprang from a soul drunk with liberty.”<sup>11</sup> Debussy’s taste and understanding of this interior quality in any music is precisely the essence of musical symbolism. The singularity of any given musical work, even in pre-symbolist-movement-Beethoven, relates to interiority and identity. Symbolist music accords this unique feature of all art with explicit call for music compositional style that calls for “magical blossoming.”<sup>12</sup> This

---

<sup>9</sup> W. B. Yeats, “Symbolism in Painting,” *Ideas of Good and Evil*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/32884/32884-h/32884-h.htm> (accessed April 02, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Both Nietzsche and Debussy saw value in Wagner as a miniaturist, someone who condensed, rather than someone who mastered large-scale forms such as opera. Robin Holloway, *Debussy and Wagner* (London: E. Eulenburg, 1979), 17.

<sup>11</sup> Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche: the Dilettante Hater*, 34-35.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

growth or evolution of musical figurations brings both the work's identity as well as the work's atmosphere to presentation. Because of this kinship between symbolist aesthetics and phenomenology, this dissertation will reference Hans-Georg Gadamer, who contribute in both our discussion of symbols, as well as our discussion on performance.

### **General Themes and Aesthetics**

The founders of French symbolism sought to experience liberation from representation through tracing the divide between the “infinite spirit of nature to the finite spirit of the individual,”<sup>13</sup> in methods of construction that favor the improvisatory and fantasia-like effects such as sharp juxtapositions, repetition, and modal-melodies emerging from silence. These effects serve a greater purpose, which I intend to make the focus in part III. Composers adept in symbolist aesthetics rightly appropriated the aims originally set-forth by poets such as Mallarmé and Verlaine. As *M. Croche* so elegantly puts it, “music, and music alone, has the power of evoking at will imaginary scenes—that real yet elusive world which gives birth in secret to the mystic poetry of the night and the thousand nameless sounds of the leaves caressed by the moonlight.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, only music has the ability to create an atmospheric mood through wordless figuration of sound. Through shimmers and playful figurations of sound, music evoke shadows, colors, and iridescence of the human soul. Transitional states of being, feelings, which we often experience more than one aspect at a time, become the palette of the symbolists' imagination. Their compositional methods engender dialogue with and harkening back to the past traditions' established atmospheres. Drawn from bygone eras—the modal from Medieval, improvisatory from

---

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 92.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Baroque, melodies from Classical and Romantic—these exemplary traits of the past masters laid the groundwork for revolutionary construction that is both grounded in the familiar, yet fresh in its configuration. Though it exists across different artistic mediums, the symbolist movement is united in thematic and aesthetic preferences. The imagination intermingled with a vague recollection of the real; the beautiful rendered diffuse rather than stern and crushing; combinations of sounds granted agency and freedom from the motive of tension and release, unconstrained by principles, systems, and regimented lexicons.

### **Impressionism and Nationalism**

While these fantastic sentiments, which originated from 1880s to the end of World War I 1918, garnered distinguished acknowledgement in the history of poetry, literature, and paintings, the same cannot be said in the realm of music history. Although the term symbolist emerged in 1886<sup>15</sup> to describe the movement of Stéphane Mallarmé and Paul Verlaine, this term, along with its ground-breaking ideas which “soon applied to the visual arts where a realistic depiction of the natural world gave way to imaginary dream scenes of psychological, sexual, and mystical content,”<sup>16</sup> did not establish an immediate foothold as defined musical movement.

Literature and resources written in English on this topic are limited, especially ones that are wholly dedicated to this movement’s instrumental music or absolute music—that is, without confounding multiple art worlds, such as opera and art songs. References to this movement are mostly attached to major composers such as Richard Wagner, Claude Debussy, Bartók, for ex-

---

<sup>15</sup> Symbolist Manifesto, published in *Le Figaro* by Jean Moréas on 18 September 1886.

<sup>16</sup> Norbert Wolf, *Symbolism* (Taschen, 2015), dust jacket.

ample,<sup>17</sup> but only as an afterthought. In ‘symbolism’'s place is the term ‘impressionism’. Many works depend on the term *impressionism* to discuss symbolist aesthetics. The distinction between impressionism and symbolism in painting was for all to see; Claude Monet’s light experiments on landscape is a far cry from Gustav Klimt’s figures of dread, death, and opulence. However, efforts to divert scholarship from musical impressionism to musical symbolism has not been very successful at the early stages of the music education stage, and perhaps is only beginning to spread among the circles of higher education. This indicates the pervasiveness of such a misnomer. Little has changed since Francis Claudon posited a poignant question at the beginning of his chapter for music in the 1979 Encyclopedia of symbolism, “did symbolism really exist only for the aestheticians, the literary historians, and the art critics?” (219).

The more relevant questions that concern music performers are as follows: Did symbolism challenge or alter not only the aesthetics of its predecessors, namely Romanticism and Enlightenment, but also revolutionize practice and performance? How can performers incorporate the symbolist vantage point, or perspective, into practice? Is it possible to accentuate in practice the symbolist realm of expression, music as the ultimate poetry— a realm which has offended critics over its luxurious harmonies, enigmatic ambivalence, and decadent chronicity? In other words, can musicians bring to the fore symbolism aesthetics through performance?

The overarching theme of my thesis is to clarify the aesthetics of symbolism, which was polished by Claude Debussy. The revolutionary symbolist compositions are a result of aesthetics

---

<sup>17</sup> Elliot Antokoletz establishes the concept of symbolism in relation to interiority in the form of psychoanalysis in music. His book is based on the premise that Bartók’s opera, *The Blue-Bearded Duke’s Castle*, along with Johann Strauss’s *Salomé*, are seen as major works of symbolist opera after the premier symbolist opera, Debussy’s *Pelleas et Melisande*.

primed by sound-symbols and moods that depart from the expected and the defined. Instead, the mysterious and enigmatic symbolist compass demand improvisatory development of ideas. The subtext thesis of this dissertation is that the aesthetics of symbolism are not only important to those performing works by composers who are aware of symbolism, but that the symbolist consciousness can provide performers with freedom and introspection, creating an aperture between differing interpretations. The performer Symbolist aims can be achieved in countless ways within a performance—all of which are untethered to schemas of physicality and procedure in performance such as fingerings, timing, traditional voice-leading, and all to do with emphasis of play and movement in sound, atmospheric evocations in relation to evaporations of the instrument's resonance, and the *extasie* of the musical experience.

While the major themes and topics of symbolism have been heavily featured across scholarly works on the movement, the subtle nuances in the music of the symbolist movement has yet to be traversed in terms of performance. Instead of rationalist explications of individual works, this dissertation offers a view into the aura-centric collective effort of symbolist composers, such as Claude Debussy, Karol Szymanowski, Maurice Ravel, Alexander Scriabin, and Béla Bartók. This dissertation gives recognition and celebrates the conceptual importance of aesthetics in interpretation and performance.

While no one composer can unequivocally be established as *purely* symbolist, this movement had a great reach in the artistic field during fin-du-siècle and beyond. The pulsation of this movement's aesthetics ripple far beyond the geographical locale of France, and the chronological period of fin-du-siècle. Some examples of movements that carry symbolist overtones are German expressionism of Arnold Schoenberg, dadaism of Erik Satie, and spectralism of Tristan

Murail.

Part I of this dissertation details the spirit of the fin-du-siècle era, specifically pertaining to symbolism as a central movement of this time. Part II puts forward a definition of symbols in relation to the historical symbolist movement. Part III is my research on interpreting the piano music of Claude Debussy (1862-1918), as well as those of Cyril Scott (1879-1970), Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937), Maurice Ravel (1875- 1937), Béla Bartók (1881-1945), Lili Boulanger (1893-1918) and Alexander Scriabin (1872- 1915). This performance guide consists of my research on identifying sound-centric aesthetics, represented in works across composers, thereby unifying the musical movement. Musical examples in Part III are selected for their symbolist gestures and method of construction, rather than for the composer's supposed movement. The categories of importance are *fluidity*, akin to memory and dreams, and *stasis*, akin to eternity and expansion. The intent in presenting these musical examples is to observe the ubiquitous aura of blossoming and development among symbolist works' musical configuration. Through a clear understanding of the music's progress, a performer can posture her interpretation in accordance to musical meaning. I will also offer advice on how a performer can convey these notation indications in practice, with an emphasis on participation from the interpreter's own sense of sound. It is my hope that this guide, at least in part, rectify an academic dearth for symbolist music, especially in core reference to instrumental music and performance.

## 1.2 Symbolism and Interpretation

### **Orienting Symbolism in Relation to Performance**

Having a historically-attuned sensibility enables musicians to ponder the question: what

makes symbolist music fundamentally different from Romanticism, or even impressionism? Debussy himself despised the term impressionism, though this distinction could be bypassed by simply using ‘*Debussyan*’ or ‘*Debussystes*’. But adding -an or -ist after the composer’s name does nothing to encourage audiences into a foray of philosophy and aesthetics that clarify Debussy’s influences and inspirations. In the words of Hans-Georg Gadamer, “we should never underestimate what a word can tell us, for language represents the previous accomplishment of thought.”<sup>18</sup> Reducing Debussy’s ideas into simply *Debussyan* would imply that he is alone in this movement. While he is the head innovator, Debussy is in no way the only composer to speak that language.

The only obvious consensus amongst contemporary musicians is that he is one of the major composers responsible for changing the course of modern music (the other commonly cited composers being Schoenberg and Stravinsky from the generation after Debussy), so his position in the narrative of music history is difficult to put into words other than simply, revolutionary. Some scholars refer to him in relation to nationalism—French, which was diametrically opposed to German at the time. Wagner’s music was banned after the 1870 Franco-Prussian War, but this only fueled the many pilgrimages to Bayreuth (Debussy himself went in 1888 and 1889)<sup>19</sup>, creating a festival there akin to religious holidays. While one could easily view the two composers as opposites in relation to their nationality, there are many problems with viewing Debussy’s music as nationalist, because his music is not particularly patriotic, if we discount the music written in

---

<sup>18</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, “The Relevance of the beautiful,” *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Nicholas Walker, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 12.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Kemp, “Debussy and Mallarme: Symbolism and Les Mardistes,” *Chamber Domains Lectures* (Gresham University, 2009), <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/debussy-and-mallarme-symbolism-and-les-mardistes>. (Accessed April 7, 2017).

support of the war effort. His nationality is not greater than the sum of his other interests such as his obsession with English and Asian influences.

Robin Holloway dispels the idea that Wagner and Debussy are opposites in his book, and instead advocates for the idea that Debussy extends the traditions of Wagner in the opera *Pelléas et Melisande*. Debussy called Wagner the "great master symbolist."<sup>20</sup> The baton of symbolism is passed onto Debussy the generation after.

Despite all this, there exists confusion, especially in the realm of performance and practice. In the chapter *L'impressionnisme comme forme de vie: écoutes allemandes de Debussy dans les années 1920*, Martin Kaltenecker writes about the famous Debussy interpreter Walter Gieseking as the ideal French musician,

*Seul Walter Gieseking était considéré depuis la guerre comme un passeur idéal de la musique 'impressionniste'... Le Français est le musicien de la mesure, du sûr instinct et de l'économie, mais aussi de la dissolution.*

Kaltenecker also presents a quote by Sigmund Pilsing that further praises Gieseking as a performer without "*la sentimentalité allemande*."<sup>21</sup> These conclusions of nationality and judgements in the merits of performance are guilty of the false cause fallacy. Kaltenecker then discusses the difficult reality in defining Debussy. While Debussy might have been an impressionist in his early works, his more demonstrative and signature compositions are rather akin to the compositions of Rimbaud and Verlaine<sup>22</sup> whose methods and style are symbolist. This distinction is not just a case of political correctness, or identity correctness. These terms of categorization evaluate De-

---

<sup>20</sup> Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche: the Dilettante Hater*, 94.

<sup>21</sup> Martin Kaltenecker, "L'impressionnisme comme forme de vie: écoutes allemandes de Debussy dans les années 1920," *Debussy: la musique et les arts*, (Paris: Skira Flammarion), 2012, 137.

<sup>22</sup> Paraphrased from original french text in Kaltenecker 139.



bussy's method of composing, which informs a performer's conceptualization and interpretation of these musical works. A meaningful dialogue with the work can only begin when the performer meditates on the style and inflection of the music's contour and collective gestures in order to bring the work to full expression.

Since symbolists incited a revolution in the construction of music, this dissertation aims to identify these 'new' intentions of construction, born of the symbolist aesthetics, so that the performer can facilitate the work's communicability. My methodology is based on the aforementioned affective resonances of musical figures in terms fluidity and stasis.

### **Performance Style and Notation**

From the outset, the symbolist notation are similar to that of the Romanticists, but only if we view them retrospectively. The many-tiered notations of piano works by Debussy, like '*Feuilles mortes*' from *Les Preludes Livre II*, or '*Le Gibet*' from *Gaspard de la Nuit* by Maurice Ravel, speaks volumes about the symbolists' spatial priority, placing, and hierarchy on sounds. The question therefore arises: what traits distinguishes symbolism? How do we describe the atmospheric sensation of a symbolist work, which we identify not as grandiloquent, yet so full of feeling?

Part of the symbolist's aims, as aforementioned, is to metaphorically explore dreams, fantasies, and inventions of color for the evocation of feelings. Like Mallarmé's poetry, which "draw[s] sustenance from abstraction,"<sup>23</sup> the symbolist musical works are at once created from an transitory medium, sound, as well as "grounded in and constituted by imagery and word-

---

<sup>23</sup> Heather Williams, "Mallarmé and the Language of Ideas," *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 29, no. 3/4 (2001): 302, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23537698>. Copy

play,”<sup>24</sup> which in music would be atmosphere and note-play/ ornamentation. Without taking away spontaneity and originality, Debussy and other symbolist composers construct the compositions with reference to the past Classical and Romantic traditions, and fuse them with Mallarméan *idée* of “a type of writing where the thinking is contained as a dynamic force within the textuality.”<sup>25</sup>

Interpreters of symbolist works may find dynamic textuality an appealing challenge because, while the notation is standard, symbolist works' creativity and imagination necessitates encapsulating the dynamism of an entire work in a way that fuels the music's spontaneity. By dynamism, I mean that the musical drama of symbolism is not of tension and release, which is inherited from chord progressions belonging to music before even romanticism, but of movement to and fro, born of spontaneity and experimentation. In order to attain the symbolist style, performers need not adhere to a set of stylistic maxims, but instead respond to the works call for a personal and “open”<sup>26</sup> intellectual position that “demands an empathetic response and wishes the viewer to experience its mysterious profundity in the manner of an inner vision.”<sup>27</sup> This vision brings together the participants of the musical work, performers and listeners alike.

As in any translation or transcription, written musical notation may never convey meaning entirely. Translation across mediums is sure to create room for miscommunication. Interpreting gestures require much more than just being able to play all the written notes; it requires per-

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 302

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Norbert Wolf, *Symbolism*, 9.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

sonality, intelligence, heart, understanding, conviction—all of which is absent if the performer knows nothing of the sound palette invoked by the work. This is especially true for the symbolist movement because a grammatical revolution calls for a sound revolution as well. The performer's role is to interpret sound from the two dimensional page into sensuous space. Simply playing the notes may seem sufficient enough, but that would be missing the mark.

### **Virtuosity**

*Monsieur Croche* abhorred the culture of virtuosity, because the public focuses on the highly-skilled act of performance, rather than the work itself. Even though virtuosic violinist *Ysaye*<sup>28</sup> performs without seeming like an "interloper; for he has that freedom of expression, that unaffected beauty of tone, which are essential for its interpretation,"<sup>29</sup> the "circus"<sup>30</sup>-like nature of the rest of the performance "moves painfully and heavily. It might be said that this rigid method of interpretation compels the works of Bach to carry the weight of all the ages. Yet the beauty of this concerto stands out... [because] it contains, almost intact, that musical arabesque, or rather that principle of ornament, which is the basis of all forms of art."<sup>31</sup> The rigidity he refers to, or *manière empesée*, is rather ambiguous, but I believe it to mean the interpretation of a virtuoso who feels restricted by the public's hope that "something dangerous may happen."<sup>32</sup> The critique of Debussy is a reaction against the obsession with physical prowess on instruments, especially solo violin and solo piano, as made popular by the romantics such as Paganini,

---

<sup>28</sup> For some reason, the current print obscures the name using 'X', but the original article read *M. Ysaye*.

<sup>29</sup> Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche: the Dilettante Hater*, 55.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid 54.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid 55.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid 54.

Mendelssohn, and Liszt. The precision involved in performing Debussy and other symbolists composers is undeniable, but for them, the physical precision is only a means to an end; the obsession of technical difficulty is what Debussy reacted against. Only in performance do we understand how “poetic utterance proved to be a special case of a meaning that has passed entirely into what was said and has become embodied in it.”<sup>33</sup> The performance as an experience itself is the content of the performance; this is all encompassing, and does not reduce the performance to a display of pyrotechnics.

So, what would be the mark of a good performance, in any music? I agree with Debussy, that it is bringing forth the what "conception of ornament the music"<sup>34</sup> requires, which is to present the culmination of the whole piece as it moves in transition from one micro-gesture to the next, the organic tracing of the musical formation both vertically and horizontally as the gesture indicates. Then, from a grand vantage point, the paradoxically planned "mechanical precision of appeal"<sup>35</sup> into transient transmutation of musical materials, reflecting flux within the musical note-play. He deliberately used the word ‘mechanical’ in order to emphasize an idea that is contrary—emotion. He believes a precise emotional appeal-oriented interpretation to be more true than "wailings of lyric drama,"<sup>36</sup> which one can only deduce as a reference to Wagner.

Discipline must be sought in freedom, and not within the formulas of an outworn philosophy only fit for the feeble-minded. Give ear to no man’s counsel; but listen to the

---

<sup>33</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroad), 1989, 445.

<sup>34</sup> Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche: the Dilettante Hater*, 56.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

wind which tells in passing the history of the world.<sup>37</sup>

Respect and dignity for the original ornamentation of the music, unabated deference to the arabesque, rather than "truckling to the desire for sentimentality of those of whom it is said that they do so love music."<sup>38</sup> Debussy adds that this kind of interpretation has "vanished completely;"<sup>39</sup> traditions and schools of teaching dampened such internal creativity.

Ferruccio Busoni (1866 - 1924), in his own take on interpretation, further writes that "it is for the interpreter to *resolve the rigidity of the signs [notation]* into primitive emotion. But the lawgivers require the interpreter to reproduce the rigidity of the signs; they consider his reproduction the nearer to perfection, the more closely it clings to the signs. — [Instead] what the composer's inspiration necessarily loses through notation, his interpreter should restore by his own."<sup>40</sup> Busoni vilifies the ambiguous 'lawgivers', who might as well be the same public opinion Debussy also vilifies. While approached from different sides, both Busoni's and Debussy's argument have the same aim. Both argue that interpretation is not complete without understanding the meaning behind notation. Busoni advocates for non-stifling interpretations, unhindered by visual notation, where the performer's inspirations are simpatico to the composer's own; Gadamer also discusses this full understanding and distinguishes it from the "technical virtuosity of" understanding' everything written. Rather, it is a genuine experience, i.e. an encounter with something that asserts itself as truths."<sup>41</sup> Both Debussy and Busoni do not blame the performer, because the

---

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. 12.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 56.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid 57.

<sup>40</sup> Ferruccio Busoni, *A New Esthetic of Music*, (New York: Schirmer, 1911), 4.

<sup>41</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 445.

music is able to express nonetheless, through the truth that “lies in what is said in” the performance. In Gadamer’s words, the works’ meaning is not limited, or “locked in the impotence of subjective particularity.”<sup>42</sup> In Debussy’s critique of the Bach Violin performance by *Eugène Ysaÿe*, Debussy broaches the understanding that a performance is only complete with cooperation or participation. The entire experience is the work, rather than just a performer’s performance. In other words, this “totality of meaning... is not something that pertains to the speaker, but to what is spoken.”<sup>43</sup> With an emphasis on the sounding ornament as the performer’s definitive compass, the performer should sense (see and hear) beyond false perfection of fulfilling mere duty, which is the public’s need for virtuosic note-perfection akin to the acrobatics *du cirque*. Natural virtuosity, then, is not the flashy show of physicality, nor is it simply “technical virtuosity of ‘understanding’ everything written. Rather, it is a genuine experience, i.e. an encounter with something that asserts itself as truth.”<sup>44</sup>

Pianist Glenn Gould also critiqued the virtuosity-seeking public. As he puts it, the modern public associates performance with sounds that did not exist “two generations ago”<sup>45</sup> if not for the “influence of recording.”<sup>46</sup> Precision and mechanical perfection became the desired qualities of a live performance, instead of its former place as a respected occasion of “an almost reli-

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 445.

<sup>45</sup> Glenn Gould, *The Glenn Gould Reader*, ed. Tim Page (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 333.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

gious devotion.”<sup>47</sup> This preference for “analytic clarity”<sup>48</sup> lowered the listening public’s sense of “reverence”<sup>49</sup> for music, in part because the pervasive quotidian presence of music in our lives has demeaned its mystical standing. In a way, Gould’s complaint about this modern predilection is related to the public’s lack of understanding crucial qualities of symbolist aesthetics, such as evocation of moods that contributes to the work’s total shadowy suggestion. Gould’s diction for describing the mystery of a music performance is akin to the aura of symbolism, who raise sound and experience to an almost ecstasy. It is increasingly less acceptable to interpret pieces that routes partiality to the essential phenomenon of music—sound and its “acoustic splendor, cavernously reverberant if possible... [and] cathedrallike.”<sup>50</sup> Gould furthers his discussion by blaming the sound technicians and the concert halls, rather than the artist (Richter) and interpretation. This is a trend in both Debussy and Gould—that the performers themselves are not to blame for these atrocities. Nevertheless, the fad of virtuosity and recording-like clarity continues to negatively impact future generations of performers and their notion of perfection.

In a display of criticism for the culture of virtuosity, Gould’s performance of the Brahms Piano Concerto No.1 under the baton of Leonard Bernstein “downplays all contrasts generally emphasized in the romantic concertos by changing tempos, bypassing dramatic emphasis and avoiding certain traditional accents”<sup>51</sup> in order to experiment against virtuosity with an integra-

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Cynthia Lins Hamlin, ‘An Exchange between Gadamer and Glenn Gould on Hermeneutics and Music’, *Theory, Culture, and Society* 33(3), 2016, 109.

tive interpretation of a romantic piano concerto. His aims are not to uphold authenticity, but rather bring to surface the “revelation of what was obscured by previous interpretations.”<sup>52</sup> The symbolist composers sought to integrate the soloist with the orchestra through compositions that are instrumented as such. One would not be able to find a symbolist concerto of entirely solo-tendencies like that of Chopin’s or Liszt’s. The most notable works of this genre of piano and orchestra partnership are Debussy’s *Fantasie* for piano and orchestra, L.73, Manuel de Falla’s *Noches en los Jardines de España*, and Karol Szymanowski’s Symphony No.4 *Symphonie Concertante*, Op.60. These pieces feature the piano, without distancing pianistic virtuosity from that of the orchestra’s.

### **Obstacles and Difficulties in Writing about Performance in Music**

While by virtue of the transient medium, style and interpretational choices of performances are more difficult to pinpoint in music than it is in a painting (since the musical experience requires temporal processing), an active dialogue with the tenets of symbolism can nevertheless alter the participant's conceptualization of music. I hope that this dissertation will not only help provide ideas for interpreting symbolist music, but also show how a study of symbolist aesthetics, compositional methods, and logic (if you will, despite their preference for the irrational) can advance a performer’s imagination and freedom in any performance. Symbolist ideas are *exemplar* to interpreting music beyond the symbolist movement because its aesthetics embraces music’s qualities *par excellence*. Therefore, these ideas have a greater scope than interpreting only symbolist music. A performer can harness the ideas of this movement and emerge with a greater ability to do what performers should do best— listen.

---

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



I will not attempt to reduce the pieces, as well as the entire *zeitgeist* of the symbolist movement, into a compendium of gestures and definitions. If the Enlightenment meant reason and rationalization, then symbolism favored intimations not reached through reason, but rather from fanciful experimentation. Each performer should use their ear as their guide, and experiment with the sounds available to them through the piece. Therefore, though this guide is my interpretation of the imagination in symbolist music, my research is not meant to justify the gestures of the music. The point of my chosen topics on fluidity and stasis is to offer insight into a symbolist point of creation, from which a whole new world arises, and translate dream into performance.

### 1.3 *Fin-de-siècle and L'esprit d'époque*

#### **Symbolist Poetry**

I have mentioned that the first symbolists were not musicians, but writers and poets. Though they were obsessed with Wagner's revelations regarding to the melding of arts, the symbolist artists were in agreement that pure music can best lead one "away from the world."<sup>53</sup> "Never before had music found so many fervent supporters among painters and men of letters. It was something more than a passing taste: it was a religion."<sup>54</sup>

Stéphane Mallarmé's idea of transposition consists of moving away from facts and "toward an ideal medium in which the construction of sense is a game whose rules appear derived

---

<sup>53</sup> Peter Dayan, "On Nature, Music, and Meaning in Debussy's Writing," *19th-Century Music* 28(3), 2005, 218. DOI: 10.1525/nem.2005.28.

<sup>54</sup> Stefan Jarociński, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*, trans. Rollo Myers (Eulenberg Books, 1976), 71.

from the medium itself... Music, therefore, like poetry, tells no tales of real life."<sup>55</sup> Though symbolists placed music on a pedestal, it is within the literary field that the details of such aesthetic preferences gained clarity. Mallarmé spoke on this topic in an interview with Jules Huret; such obscurity and abstraction of the movement's aesthetics might cause the "average intelligence and an insufficient literary preparation" to "pretend to enjoy it," but the "enigma" of the undefined symbol must live on always, even if it causes such "misunderstandings"<sup>56</sup> as believing that the title of a piece is in fact the referent, or the object of depiction in the music.

In order to address this confusion, my dissertation categorizes the gestures by emphasizing the desired sound effect and feeling, rather than analyzing structure and harmonies. We can see that the very point of enchantment is nondeterministic; any magical transformation "defy strict causal determinism, thereby invoking thoughts and manners of being that are truly spontaneous."<sup>57</sup> For these reasons, we examine the specific instances of such magical moments, and not detach them from the grand scheme of the piece.

### **New Cultural Tastes**

The romantic theme of "the poet who is prisoner of the contingencies of life, exiled from his natal purity"<sup>58</sup> is considered trite by symbolists, as this theme of the struggling individual artist has been written vigorously on by past poets. Instead, the state of mind during this "obses-

---

<sup>55</sup> Peter Dayan, "On Nature, Music, and Meaning in Debussy's Writing," 218.

<sup>56</sup> Henri Dorra, *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology* (University of California Press, 1994), 142.

<sup>57</sup> Daniel O'Shiel, "Sartre's Magical Being: An Introduction by way of an Example," *Sartre Studies International* 17:2 (2011) 28-31.

<sup>58</sup> Pierre Brunel, "Literature," in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Symbolism* ed. Jean Cassou (Hertfordshire: Omega Books Ltd., 1984), 197.

sion”<sup>59</sup> and other interior feelings are what literary symbolists aim to evoke in poetry. This is true in music: the waltz has been done many-a-times by Chopin, Strauss Jr. . . . Instead, Debussy incorporates into his waltzes’ (in a loose sense of the word, since none of them are titled as such) peculiar time changes that capture the disorienting and nebulous aura. For example, *Les Sons et les Parfums Tournent Dans l’Air du Soir*<sup>60</sup> not only uses three-four time, but more accurately is in five-four time, to offer an even more sensuous and languid mood than three-four could afford. In essence, *Les Sons* appropriates latent qualities of the waltz while giving it a poetic turn to heighten the sensuous feeling. Alternatively, in Debussy’s joyous and exciting waltz *Étude No.4 Pour les Octaves*, we find that this waltz is fashioned differently than *Les Sons*, heightening, instead, the ecstatic feeling of dance. The disorientation comes not from the sliding slowness of the extended meter, but from the fast-paced modularization of tonality—the dropping of material down a step as if taking a false step in the middle of a dream. I will discuss these pieces in more detail in part III.

Dreams and the meaning of these dreams became a scientific pursuit during fin-du-siècle in a movement helmed by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Psychoanalytic theory dissects the concerns of the unconscious by studying the paradoxical theories of desire as force and desire as wish.<sup>61</sup> This double nature of desire and its "radical ambivalence"<sup>62</sup> further reveals the *l’esprit d’époque* and its non-rational centrality. In the network of people belonging to this *zeitgeist*, con-

---

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> From Debussy’s *Les Preludes* book one; the piece is said to be inspired by Charles Baudelaire’s *Harmonie du soir*. (Alfred Masterwork Edition, edited by Maurice Hinson)

<sup>61</sup> Graham Jones, *Lyotard Reframed: interpreting key thinkers for the arts* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 40.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

stant communications of ideas were made between the mediums. Claude Debussy was not exempt from this dialogue. In his own words, “I dislike specialists. Specialization is for me the narrowing of my universe.”<sup>63</sup> Every Tuesday, or so they claimed, *Les Mardistes* gather to discuss philosophy, art and literature.<sup>64</sup> These artists included Paul Verlaine, Oscar Wilde, Stéphane Mallarmé, W.B. Yeats, Rainer Rilke, Henri de Régnier, Marcel Proust, Paul Valéry, and of course, Debussy.

It is easy to see why this massive exchange and collectivity across disciplines were especially unyoked during fin-du-siècle; the turmoils of the political sphere<sup>65</sup>, religious unbelief<sup>66</sup>, social *ennui*, crisis in unity—which are all characteristics of fin-du-siècle—were building towards the eruption of World War I. Social awareness in the whole of Europe was centered on the search for utopia, arcadia, paradise, *l’isle joyeuse*. Artists, who do not “function in a social vacuum”<sup>67</sup>, unintentionally formed a collective “consciousness rupture[, which] has rarely been accompanied...by so firm a determination to re-establish unity.”<sup>68</sup> The seemingly Epicurean symbolism provided the antithesis to the pessimism of impending war. And within symbolism, music

---

<sup>63</sup> Monsieur Croche, Claude Debussy, 7

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/debussy-and-mallarme-symbolism-and-les-mardistes>. Thomas Kemp. December 16, 2009.

<sup>65</sup> A reference to Franco-Prussian War of 1870 between the French and the German States. The following year, Debussy’s father was condemned by a tribunal for treason to four years’ imprisonment, and was nearly executed. His father spent one year in prison before being released into a four-year suspension of his civil rights. In a letter written in 1914, Debussy wrote ‘As you know, I’m quite devoid of sang-froid and even more so of the military mentality, never having had occasion to handle a gun. Then there are my memories of 1870 which prevent me reaching a pitch of enthusiasm, as well as the anxiety of my wife who has a son and a son-in-law both in the army!’ (*Debussy Letters*, ed. François Lesure and Roger Nichols, Harvard University Press, 1987, 291).

<sup>66</sup> Charles Darwin’s publication on The Theory of Evolution in 1859

<sup>67</sup> Stefan Jarociński, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*, 41

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* 31-32

is the best antidote; “De la musique avant toute chose”<sup>69</sup>. This leads us to the topic of a much-misguided notion of a popular slogan from this era, ‘Art for Art’s Sake’.

The misconception of this doctrine was commented heavily on by Stéphane Jarociński.

The doctrine of ‘art for art’s sake’ only seems absurd or reactionary when detached from its historical context. Even if it sometimes suited the policies of the ruling classes this aspect of the question did not alter their general attitude. Formulated in slightly different terms by the first generations of French romantics, the slogan reappears during the second empire.... The majority of its supporters had difficulties with the censorship and were prosecuted in the law courts for ‘offending public morality’. The symbolists adopted the slogan together with the ideological and artistic heritage of the Romantics, Baudelaire, Poe, and the Parnassiens. But in the eyes of these new supporters of autonomy in the arts, it would be used to impede the progress of Naturalism rather than as a way of showing their scorn of the ‘bourgeois Philistine’.<sup>70</sup>

Artists from even before the fin-du-siècle insisted on art’s autonomy; the idea was not new. The Philistine<sup>71</sup> public oftentimes scrutinized artistic choices, subjecting art to moral considerations. Symbolist artists such as Oscar Wilde and James Abbott McNeill Whistler felt that public opinion, along with officious expectations, should have nothing to do with processes of artistic creations. Debussy concurs: “to be unique, faultless! The enthusiasm of society spoils an artist for me, such is my fear that, as a result, he will become merely an expression of society.”<sup>72</sup>

### **Disarrangement in Mallarmé**

Mallarmé’s revolutionary poem, *Un Coup de Dés*, uses the empty space and disarrangement of words on the page to convey silence and bring forth the “sensuous travails of space” to

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. 37. Originally by Paul Verlaine.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. 30-31.

<sup>71</sup> Robert Schumann composed musical works centered on this idea, such as *Davidsbündlertänze* Op. 6 and ‘Marche des Davidsbündler contre les Philistins’ from *Carnaval*, Op.9.

<sup>72</sup> Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche: the Dilettante Hater*, 12.

emphasize the “referential dimension of language—that words serve to hold things at a fixed distance.”<sup>73</sup> This highlights the difference between reading and seeing in order to show that “art’s supposed autonomy from social expectation does not involve a simple retreat from our elimination of the world or objects”—which is to say, rather than complete abstraction—“but instead highlights the ‘distancing’<sup>74</sup> effect that the figure [or symbol] as visual referentiality usually introduces into discourse and which the latter then elides or subordinates.”<sup>75</sup> Art’s autonomy enables the transformation of expectations into unexpected turns, because it is precisely the autonomy that defeats expectations. In effect, the art’s process, iridescence, or evolution if you will, functions as the primary performance, thereby granting freedom to the work as the only object of aesthetic inquiry and judgement.

While this notion against expectations is prevalent in the fin-du-siècle period, symbolism as a movement is but one of many solutions. After the First World War, other cultural movements such as Surrealism and Dadaism<sup>76</sup> tackled the problem and left their own legacy.

### **Critique of Past Analysis on Symbolism**

The confusion between impressionism and symbolism would not be such a prevalent misnomer if one sought to understand the whole *l’esprit* of the time period. In fact, symbolism and its place in music history is but one of many misunderstandings across disciplines of this

---

<sup>73</sup> Graham Jones, *Leotard Reframed*, 28-29.

<sup>74</sup> The Distancing Effect renders the audience separate from the artistic object, *sans* empathy associated with putting one’s feet in another’s shoes which is typical in fiction art, works, performances. Therefore, any reactions from the audience towards the art object are made at a conscious level. See Bertolt Brecht’s concept of *Verfremdungseffekt* in his essay "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting" published in 1936.

<sup>75</sup> David Caroll, *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida*, (London: Methuen, 1987), 35. As quoted from Graham Jones, *Leotard Reframed*, 2014.

<sup>76</sup> "Art for art's sake," New World Encyclopedia, 15 Apr 2016, 16:03 UTC. 21 May 2017, 03:55 <[http://www.new-worldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Art\\_for\\_art%27s\\_sake&oldid=995328](http://www.new-worldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Art_for_art%27s_sake&oldid=995328)>.

time period; other ideas of this time period were also misunderstood, including psychoanalysis. In the 1930s, music researchers and “their attitude regarding the psychological significance of expression was either based on metaphysical principles, or still conditioned by the ‘associationist atomism’ theories of Helmholtz, Stumpf and Ebbinghaus, while ignoring both the Gestalt theorie and psycho-analytical approach.”<sup>77</sup> In accepting the spirit of the era as a clue to interpreting its products, we can infer that the artists themselves also prized the spirit of the total, and viewed the whole as greater than the parts. Again, we see from this era many disciplines that emerge with a penchant for unity. In the case of psychoanalysis, the unity lies in the collective unconscious.

The early seminal works on Debussy, which involved analyzing form and harmony, could not properly encapsulate the style through which Debussy uprooted traditions. Pedagogy in interpreting symbolist works often attempt to inspire students through image-building and pictorial-depictions. But, this movement highlights not the visual, but the aural. Though imagery can be beneficial for grasping sound concepts, a better understanding and specific emphasis on tracing sound is required for interpretation.

## 1.4 Piano Approach

### **Wagner’s Absence**

While Richard Wagner is considered a giant figure in musical symbolism, my dissertation will only reference him for his role in the historic movement. The reason is that he did not write for the piano, except for small pieces that are not significant musically. Since his true interest was the melding of the Apollonian and Dionysian in opera, a discussion of his operas would be beyond the scope of this dissertation, which focuses on text-less instrumental music, specifically

---

<sup>77</sup> Stefan Jarociński, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*, 50.

piano compositions.

Furthermore, Wagner is from the generation before the apex of symbolist poets and composers. His influence is undeniable, but his music is only the beginning of the movement. Much changed after his death. A young composer of the fin-du-siècle must find his own voice from within the echo-chamber of Appolinian-Dionysian operas. If we peer into the grand trends of Debussy's output, we can chart a change in the works' method and construction, as well as affective character. In the compositional years of 1903-1905, both *La Mer* and *L'isle joyeuse* saw effervescence and joyful triumph, replacing his earlier works' contemplative mood such as the two *Arabesques* and *La Damoiselle élue*, both dated before 1891. Like any other movement, the years that span musical symbolism saw changes and further experimentations. Wagner is at the start of the movement, Debussy the apex, Scriabin in Russia around the same time. Ripples extended to the English world a few decades later with Charles Martin Loeffler and Englishmen Cyril Scott and Frederic Delius. However the symbolist music evolved, the aesthetic intentions remain rooted in atmosphere, sound, and note-play.

One could say that Wagner's innovations presented a problem for the younger composers, especially those in countries where his music was banned. How does one find one's own voice, when such a monumental figure looms ahead as the definitive master musician? In the chapter named 'Wagner', *Monsieur Croche* praises Wagner's last opera, *Parsifal*, for its being, first of all, evolved away from Tristan's "distraught breathlessness" or the music's "grandiloquent commentary"<sup>78</sup> on Wotan's inhuman qualities. Second, for giving the music "looser rein and let[ting]

---

<sup>78</sup> Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche: the Dilettante Hater*, 130.



it breathes more freely [and presenting in contrast, the] serene beauty”<sup>79</sup> in parts of the opera. While *Parsifal* is in Debussy's good graces, he deeply abhorred Wagner's aesthetic in sound found in previous works (*Parsifal* is his last opera). In the beginning of *Monsieur Croche: the Dilettante Hater*, he compares Beethoven's orchestration “black-and-white...resulting in an exquisite gradation of greys,” to that of Wagner's “many-colored make-up[or putty,] spread almost uniformly” in such a mass of sound that one could “no longer distinguish the tone of a violin from that of a trombone.”<sup>80</sup> For Debussy, the sound is pure, clear, diffuse in character and not “crushing.”<sup>81</sup> This shows the aesthetic variations present within the movement. Although Debussy's early works have residuals of Wagner's harmonies, the “potency of dissonant combinations, of chromatic relations, of structural flexibility,”<sup>82</sup> the symbolist aesthetic tradition after Debussy radically differ from Wagner's in part because Debussy has taken a step further than Wagner to achieve what he exclusively wanted without the grandiloquence—the portrayals of mystery, inner obstacle, austerity, revelation, and renewal.

### **Sources in Instrumental Music**

There are many sources that deal with non-instrumental symbolist music such as art songs and operas. However, there is a lack of resources in regards to performances informed by the symbolist aesthetics. Virginia Raad's book, *The Piano Sonority of Claude Debussy*, contains an overview of Claude Debussy's works in relation to pianistic technique. Each chapter is titled

---

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche: the Dilettante Hater*, 5.

<sup>81</sup> Francis Claudon, "Music," *The Concise Encyclopedia of Symbolism*, 227.

<sup>82</sup> Lawrence Gilman, *The Music of To-Morrow and Other Studies* (New York: John Lane Company, 1907), 33.

after a specific technique, followed by an account of the pieces that contain such a technique.

While the book title, *Piano Sonority*, implies the importance of sound in the book, the bulk of the interpretational advice does not. For example, in the section titled ‘The Use of Piano Sonority to Evoke Other Instruments’, Raad refers to the “poetic sound”<sup>83</sup> and yet in the same paragraph gives instructions for acquiring “perfect control of the finger and hand”<sup>84</sup> and describes the action of the keys and fingers rather than the mood of the sound. Contemporary attitudes about performance often circle virtuosity, in a very physical and scientific-anatomical way. While these tools are useful, direct performance instructions cannot fully envelope the problems a performer may encounter in pieces. It is too specific to point to a certain passage and say, bring out the tritone, voice it as such with fingers. And it is certainly too little to point to a passage and say, this is *Debussyan*, play it like it is a painting. The beauty in interpreting symbolist music is the freedom, with sound as our compass.

While attaining the desired mood which most fits the musical work should be every performer’s goal regardless of the piece’s time-period, approach to attaining these goals can be quite personal in Symbolist music. Debussy himself never indicated fingerings. Unlike previous *études* of Czerny and Chopin<sup>85</sup> (with precise and indicated fingerings), Debussy’s exercises are not for the finger, as his published preface indicates: “the absence of fingering... suppresses the spirit of perversity [and] compels us to abandon the fingering of the composer and vindicates those words

---

<sup>83</sup> Virginia Raad, *The Piano Sonority of Claude Debussy* (E. Mellon Press, 1994), 27.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> For whom the set is dedicated for. Debussy remained a lover of Chopin’s works throughout his life, and did not turn his nose up to the great masters such as Liszt, Beethoven, Rameau, Bach, despite his revolutionary instincts.

of eternal wisdom, ‘If you want something done well, do it yourself.’<sup>86</sup> An additional point about the futility of fingerings—our modern piano is very different from the pianos of Chopin and even Debussy. The size of the keys are now larger, so we are at a disadvantage because human hands have not grown any larger. Given this increase of dissonance between the hand size to key size ratio, one cannot assume that specific fingerings are to pass onto posterity.

Debussy dares topple the *à priori* mechanics of an exercise with the sound’s explicit call to poetry. Each exercise features an interval, not for the easy formula it creates in commanding difficult hand-motions, but for experimenting with the intervals’ specific qualities of sound—an exploration into the flexibility with their identities. Alfred Cortot calls these studies an “impression of a free translation of an inspiration which could find no more natural way of expression.”<sup>87</sup> He references the expression of these exercises, rather than its ability to improve a pianist’s virtuosity. At its core, symbolist music, regardless of the title or genre, is an “analysis of the inner feeling which must dictate its interpretation.”<sup>88</sup>

Not that he repudiates or disdains musical emotions, but by a sort of aristocratic reserve, he intends rather to suggest it to us by rebound than to make us feel it directly. And rather than act sentimentally on our organism by the pathetic solicitation of a personal emotion, rather than create that sonorous architecture, beautiful in line and form, whose pure discipline knows how to content our spirit, it is almost without our cognisance, by the secret voluptuousness of two linked chords, the vibrating nervousity of a rhythm or the mystery of a silence, that he releases full into our sensibility that arrow whose insinuating and delicious poison will procure us, as intensely as reality, the sensation he had intended. An art with a mechanism so delicate, which supposes such harmony between the gift and the business must naturally lend itself to the translation of the rarest sentiments. We shall see

---

<sup>86</sup> Dominik Rammer, “Debussy: to finger or not to finger...? Why we are adding fingering in the “Études,” (Blog, G. Henle Verlag, 2012), <http://www.henle.de/blog/en/2012/05/14/debussy-to-finger-or-not-to-finger%E2%80%A6-why-we-are-adding-fingering-in-the-%E2%80%9Cetudes%E2%80%9D/>

<sup>87</sup> Alfred Cortot, *The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (London: J. & W. Chester, Ltd., 1922), 23.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

indeed that the interpretation of Debussy's work exacts an imaginative collaboration more literary and more subtly shaded than any music hitherto had required.<sup>89</sup>

It is in this vein that I intend to explicate the themes of symbolism in this dissertation. What I hope to contribute in this dissertation is an interpretation of moods, rather than mechanics. I wish for this performance guide to go beyond pinpointing similarities in staccato touch, legato touch, evocation of other instruments and the like; instead, guidance in shaping sound according to the atmosphere is more encompassing of the spirit of Symbolism.

An interesting question to ask is: How does a performance realize the atmosphere through evoking it? One could liken *L'isle Joyeuse* to the opening of *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un Faune*; both begin on a speculative C# (3rd of scale for *L'isle joyeuse*; 6th of scale for *Prelude*). I venture to guess that because piano cannot sustain sound, *L'isle Joyeuse* conveniently opens on a trill that, through re-sounding, enables crescendo. Both pieces are characterized as an exploration of that single-note opening. Yet despite this similar point of departure in a formulaic opening, the precise appeal to feelings of “dreamy idleness, good humour and speculative lust...”<sup>90</sup> differ in each work; the atmosphere weaved throughout the respective pieces are drastically different and lead to their own moods. A performance guide that is organized by physical aspects of piano performance would falsely connect passages that aim to achieve different moods. The oscillating C# of *L'isle Joyeuse* is not one that contributes to languid eroticism, but foreshadows the energetic, bubbling, and uncontainable joy which bursts into the habanera dance.

### **Wordless**

---

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. 7.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

While symbolist poets “provided the opportunity”<sup>91</sup> for music to lean on the art of words to stir the imagination, text is not a prerequisite or a prerogative. Music does not depend on symbolist poetry/stories in order for it to be considered symbolist. This goes against Francis Claudon’s conclusion at the end of his chapter in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Symbolism*. For him, the true criterions for a work to be symbolist are “its more or less explicit, more or less conscious, link with literature (that is to say with the authors who became known between 1870 and 1910), and its ability to draw inspiration, even by adapting them, from the harmonic innovations brought about by the reaction to Wagnerism. In this respect opera saw the triumph of musical symbolism.”<sup>92</sup> Though Claudon’s section on musical symbolism is very thorough, his efforts in unifying the movement did not come to fruition, half a century later.

Such a broad definition might have served his purpose in creating an encyclopedia for the movement, though that definition of symbolism gives ultimate triumph to the genre of the opera, and neglecting the role word-less music plays. In fact, the definition places too much hope on the most obvious and direct link—word—which goes against the shadowy suggestions of the symbolist aesthetic. A “link with literature” precludes music from fully embracing its ineffability. Perhaps this is one weakness upon which the band of 1970s scholars failed to solder, resulting in

---

<sup>91</sup> Francis Claudon, “Music,” *The Concise Encyclopedia of Symbolism*, 223.

<sup>92</sup> Francis Claudon, “Music,” *The Concise Encyclopedia of Symbolism*, 236.

once-again the eclipse of impressionism over symbolism<sup>93</sup> as the term for this musical movement.

As for the connection between music and poetry, Debussy stated that “the musicians who understand nothing about poetry would not put it into music. They can only spoil it.”<sup>94</sup> Debussy meant that certain composers do not understand the essence of poetry, and therefore cannot equally produce the same effect using music, let alone set the poem to music with poetic justice. These two distinct realms of art—music and poetry—are not dependent on one another, but they share resonances which allow the artist to comment on the interior experience. In that capacity, Debussy feels that “truly beautiful poems” are best left alone and not “meddle[d]” with.<sup>95</sup>

Many sources analyze song-settings of Debussy because the nature of matching words with music offers a tempting opportunity to discuss symbolist concepts, and at the same time securing the so-called link to literary symbolism. However, a study of the word-painting is not only impossible in instrumental music, but it also fails to offer full perspective of the music as a whole.

Music lives, and is constructed, in the memories and experiences of those who encounter it. No performance is ever the same twice, and this allows us to discuss what exact qualities of

---

<sup>93</sup> In *Monsieur Croche*, Debussy expels thoughts on terminology in general, and recoils from the thought of being “treated as symbolists or impressionist—convenient terms for pouring scorn on one’s fellows” (12). His discussion here, though, is on “journalists” (12) and their inability to recognize music’s non-representative qualities, rather than a critique on the spirit of these movements. As he was feeling particularly subjugated by those whose perception of music is restricted to hearing the “sun rise” (11) in the *Pastoral Symphony* by Beethoven, it is understandable that he renounced any terminology at all that might taint the purity of music in his design. Also, the term ‘symbolist’ at the time of his writing was designated to Wagner, “the great master symbolist” (94). Debussy’s opinion of Wagner’s compositional methods was not altogether pleasant, though he himself was once a Wagnerian. He felt that *leit-motifs* were “special signposts” that guide the listener step by step (158). It is no wonder that Debussy would not appreciate sharing a movement with Wagner.

<sup>94</sup> Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche et autres écrits*, ed. François Lesure (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 206-207

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

music can license a variety of interpretation between performers who play the same pieces, as well as between different performances by the same performer. But, that would result in a discussion larger than the scale of this paper. One thing is for certain, any performance that is the same as another is nothing but an uncreative reproduction, a result of the mechanical era.

### **Piano and Debussy's Development**

If the goal of symbolism is to evoke in “shadowy terms”<sup>96</sup> and to suggest, how can piano compositions and performances uniquely contribute? Debussy's first instrument was the piano, and his piano teacher Antoine Marmontel “is quoted as saying ‘Debussy isn't very fond of the piano, but he loves music.’”<sup>97</sup> Debussy's piano playing did not garner him the life of a virtuoso, like that of Saint-Saëns. Instead, his piano playing received minor accolades in competitions from the *Conservatoire*, where he performed highly difficult works at the tender age of fourteen, like that of Beethoven's famous last piano sonata, opus 111.

The result of his early relationship with the piano is a highly developed relationship between orchestral and piano sound. While nowadays the piano is consistently used as a substitute for the orchestra, it had not always been that way. Prior to the twentieth century, piano was mainly either a solo virtuosic instrument, or function solo-istically in a chamber setting, or it served in the basso-continuo—but never entirely in place of the orchestra. Perhaps the natural broad range of the instrument, over time, encouraged modern acceptance of the piano as a single orchestra.

---

<sup>96</sup> Stefan Jarociński, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*, 32.

<sup>97</sup> Roger Nichols, “Claude Debussy,” *New Grove twentieth-century French masters* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 84.

Many personal recollections and accounts<sup>98</sup> reveal Debussy's piano playing as orchestral in qualities of extreme juxtapositions, all encompassed in one instrument. More importantly, Debussy's "extremes of boldness and refinement, both display an unwillingness to treat the piano as it had been treated in the past, and a determination to subdue it to his will."<sup>99</sup> With sound as his creed, Debussy treated the piano not simply as a many-stringed percussion, but as a gradated platform to the multivariate orchestral soundscape. In a letter to his friend Robert Godet about his late work for two pianos, *En Blanc et Noir* (1915), Debussy explain the piece's acoustic intent and priority, as well as the choice in instrumentation: "these pieces draw their colour, their emotion, simply from the piano, like the greys of Velàzquez, if I may so suggest? Anyway, all the orchestral musicians are at the front line."<sup>100</sup> You may recall that Debussy described the sublime Beethoven orchestration as "exquisite gradations of grey."<sup>101</sup> So, although grey can be a somber color by itself, gradations of grey can contribute to beautiful black and white sketches. Debussy finds orchestral grey palatable, perhaps because these sounds invoke the shadowy qualities of symbolism.

His predilection to stretch the capabilities of piano sound suggests a composer whose fascination with colors have guided him towards seeking immense varieties of sound akin to the orchestra, all the while experimenting and sketching in compositions written for his original instrument, the piano. The great piano master, Alfred Cortot, writes of Debussy's piano music con-

---

<sup>98</sup> Raymond Bonheur, Debussy's classmate, recalled Debussy at the piano with his own composition scores, "providing not only the illusion of an orchestra but an extraordinary impression of life and movement," Paul Roberts, *Claude Debussy* (Phaidon Press, 2008), 35.

<sup>99</sup> Roger Nichols, "Claude Debussy," 84.

<sup>100</sup> Paul Roberts, *Claude Debussy*, 212.

<sup>101</sup> Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche: the Dilettante Hater*, 130.



taining a

constant poem... moderating or sharpening its inflections, precipitating or slowing down its pace, imposing its silences, inspiring its details, modelling its proportions, and this secret poem is imagination. Not only musical imagination, such as Chopin's or Schumann's or Fauré's, which is sufficient to itself and which translates without explicit formulation human dreams and wishes, but a precise imagination employing the most definite suggestions of the mind and the senses.<sup>102</sup>

This imagination takes place within the performer, suggesting that while the music is open and the language is diffuse, it is through this openness that the performer can then fill-in the rest of the work in precision. The full effect of the symbolist grammatical revolution only happens if the performer can deliver the graceful and unexpected turns and suggestions in reflection of a defined otherworld; imagination is everything.

Admittedly, the piano's versatility in timbre diversity is limited by virtue of it being a single instrument. However, imagination can bend expense into profit. The winning arena: in terms of rhythmic finesse, the singular orchestra is more agile than the many-pieced. In the late period of Debussy's output around 1915, he turns away from the "elastic"<sup>103</sup> suggestive titles, such as *Pagodes* and *Cloches à travers les feuilles*, and pursues more technical terms such as *Sonate* and *Études*. While one could point to the titles and argue that Debussy's priorities themselves took on a more formalistic approach, that would be overlooking the most important element—the music itself. The change in his composition titling is perhaps more indicative of a specialized focus on experimentation. For *Les Études*, the intervals are at play, mutating throughout the piece yet retaining its integral element.

---

<sup>102</sup> Alfred Cortot, *The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, 4.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.* 9.

But when was experimentation not the case with Debussy's music? His late works are an overt manifestation of a common theme in his compositions—to experiment. Moreover, these canvases demanded an ulterior motive: to seek new grounds, new combinatorials, upon which to dance the virtuosic sonorities of disarrangement. The diversity and personal nature of feelings require investment and interest in growing the sound-palette.

For reasons of advantages for the singular-solo instrumental freedom presented to pianists, this dissertation centers on the piano works of Debussy, with supplemental works by composers who underwent a symbolist phase, such as Bartók, Scott, Szymanowski, and Scriabin. Piano works are a genre where the symbolist compositions need not depend on poetic texts in order to affirm their identity, and the singular solo-instrument is also an apt metaphor for inter-iority. While there are already articles written by Debussy scholars, such as Roy Howat and JA Hepokoski, with a focus on Debussy's instrumental compositions, their analyses are often to do with tonality and mathematical constructs, both of which are rationalist and could lead to reducing the feelings of symbolism. I would like to pursue analyzing symbolist aesthetics in texture and effect. This would, in turn, contribute to more than particular insight into one piece, and instead synthesize ideas and themes within the collective works of symbolism.

## 2.1 Symbol

### **Relationship between Symbol and Meaning**

To see the ingenuity of the symbolist aesthetics, we must first have a discussion about the functions of symbols. Historically, the concepts of allegory and symbols were alike and often interchangeable. Such a relationship does not carry a significance or resemblance between the

symbol and the meaning.

In music, the performance of the work is also the suggestion of meaning. Music, in effect, does not point directly at a definition of character or concept, but through its representation garners meaning. This relationship between the symbol and its meaning can be described as “a metaphysical connection of visible and invisible.”<sup>104</sup> Such an intersection between the sensible and the suprasensible merits a playground for the arts to explore interpretation that is seemingly infinite.

In a letter to his friend Friedrich Schiller, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe explicates his nostalgia in Frankfurt into a pondering on the relationship of the many symbols which contribute to the whole mood. These symbols, “which stand, in a characteristic multiplicity, as representatives for many others, [*sic*] embrace a certain totality...”<sup>105</sup> In a stroke of subtle revelation, Goethe teased apart the difference between conflated uses of symbol and allegory through his application of “the concept of the symbol to colors,”<sup>106</sup> because the color’s expression is its own meaning. So, too, do the symbols he experienced in Frankfurt. Each symbol refers to multiple others—all contributing to an atmosphere of sentimentality. His main observation is that the idea is self-sufficient, that the symbol as a concept commands what it symbolizes through an “inner unity”<sup>107</sup> with the suprasensible. Unlike an allegorical understanding, the symbols’ coincidence with their meanings is not artificial, but an original “union of two things that belong to each oth-

---

<sup>104</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, 66.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. 68.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. 69

er.”<sup>108</sup> As a result, the ideas are harmonious with the senses. The sensible suggests the suprasensible without bending or forcing the relationship. Gadamer’s discussion on Goethe and symbols conclude with an account of how this function of symbol rises above allegory to nineteenth century aesthetic taste and highlights the shadowy properties that the symbolist movement later upheld:

However vague the symbol still remains, admitting various interpretations, it can no longer be characterized by its privative relation to the concept. Rather, it has its own positivity as a creation of the human mind. It is the perfect agreement of appearance and idea which is now...emphasized in the concept of symbol, whereas non-agreement is for allegory or mythical consciousness.<sup>109</sup>

### **Enigma and Music**

“Music is of another realm,”<sup>110</sup> as Jankélévitch states. Music paradoxically enables us to escape reality and cost us no expense in our awareness of the world and of our existence. In other words, music does not literally transport us away from the world. Our senses engage in levels of cognition, but the levels are simultaneous. The relationship in music between the sensible and the suprasensible moves us, and the subsequent evoked feelings characterize the experience. The mysterious suprasensible challenges us to participate and implore us to fill-in the secrets with our self-truths.

Music, since the time of the Greeks, has been observed for its “invisible harmony [which]

---

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. 72.

<sup>110</sup> Vladimir Jankelevitch, *Music and the Ineffable*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 10.

is more powerful than the visible.”<sup>111</sup> Symbolism is an aesthetic movement that refers to artists who use this conception of symbols, where meaning is enigmatically dense, to evoke the supra-sensible without explicitly designating. Simply naming the object would “suppress three quarters of the pleasure.”<sup>112</sup> The non-concrete referent also frees the concept of symbols from the shackles of intention in creation. However, while this enchantment gravitates to the metaphysical, which is “clandestine twice over,”<sup>113</sup> music is alas “not above all laws and not exempt from the limitations and servitude inherent in the human condition.”<sup>114</sup> Sound’s own sensuous nature contributes to the evoked moods, and our recognition of this “anchor[s]”<sup>115</sup> us in the world by “through our attunement to the world.”<sup>116</sup>

### **Leitmotifs**

Despite their capacity to carry affective resonances, Wagner’s original function of *leitmotifs* is explicit in its connection with a character of the opera. Many, including Debussy, saw Wagner’s *leitmotifs* as “signposts.”<sup>117</sup> Eventually,

the leitmotifs were to go far beyond their former role as texturally isolated configurations. In his lyric dramas, the leitmotifs now entered into an intimate alliance with

---

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. 10.

<sup>112</sup> While unsourced in pg. 195 of Brunel’s text, it is actually from an interview of Mallarmé with Jules Huret in 1891, first appeared in *L’Echo de Paris*, March 3 - July 5, 1891, but published in *Enquête sur l’évolution littéraire*. Paris: Fasquelle, 1913, 55-65.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>115</sup> Roger W. H. Savage, ‘Is Music Mimetic? Ricoeur and the Limits of Narrative’, *Journal of French Philosophy* 16:1-2 (2006), 128.

<sup>116</sup> Roger W. H. Savage, ‘Is Music Mimetic? Ricoeur and the Limits of Narrative’, 127.

<sup>117</sup> Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche: the Dilettante Hater*, 158.

every step of the dramatic narrative. This new, more pervasive role of the leitmotifs corresponded with the more intense absorption of natural phenomena into the supernatural realm of purely symbolic meaning.<sup>118</sup>

Wagner initiated the symbolist movement through literal symbolism in the form of *leitmotif*, but through that, achieved the realm of multiplicity. Debussy praised Wagner's *Parsifal* for its music, independent of the narrative or the plastic arts. In Debussy's opinion, *Parsifal* is Wagner's best work. The *leitmotifs* in *Parsifal* do not need narrative context to fully express its meaning. The plot and drama are not a prerequisite to the expression of the music. Debussy's negative criticisms are solely for the "poet" of *Parsifal*, and not the "musical beauty of the opera, which is supreme."<sup>119</sup> This is where absolute music has an advantage.

Instrumental pieces already exist in the realm of polyvalence. Therefore, piano pieces can "go far beyond"<sup>120</sup> the role of literal representation without ever having to play that role in the first place. While it is useful for performers to define their imagination of the music, they should also allow open interpretation in certain elements due to the personal nature of the imagination. In the nineteenth century, music's "deficiency with respect to its representational power becomes the symbol of its sublime ineffability."<sup>121</sup> The aural experience becomes replete with meaning rather than limited by definitions.

### **Performance as Festival**

---

<sup>118</sup> Elliott Antokoletz and Juana Canabal Antokoletz, *Musical Symbolism in the Operas of Debussy and Bartók: Trauma, Gender, and the Unfolding of the Unconscious* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 10.

<sup>119</sup> Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche: the Dilettante Hater*, 132.

<sup>120</sup> Elliot Antokoletz and Juana Canabal Antokoletz, *Musical Symbolism in the Operas of Debussy and Bartók: Trauma, Gender, and the Unfolding of the Unconscious*, 10.

<sup>121</sup> Roger Savage, 'Is Music Mimetic: Ricoeur and the Limits of Narrative', 123.

In the spirit of deductive experimentation, musical performances need not have a destination or a goal. According to Gadamer's concept of the festival, to which our discussion would equate a musical concert or a recital, the festival is an intentional activity that does not necessitate an end-product other than the experience itself. Gadamer defines the festival as an experience of the community, and the festival represents that experience.

Musical performances are akin to festivals, where people gather with express intent to experience works of art. The festive time emerges from the enactment of the activity. The temporality of such an experience is independent of the quantifiable time. The performance begins and ends—but throughout that time, the experience stands. It never ceases during its enactment. The performance dictates the festive time, rather than time-dependent. Simply put, one does not end a piece abruptly just because the program states that the recital ends at a certain time. The performance is not over until *it is over*.

This enactment of performance eliminates any influence of a goal; the experience of the performance is the end-product itself. According to Gadamer's notion of play, any movement that is not goal-oriented but instead exhibits the excess of self-movement with no purpose is a form of play. In music's instance of *mimesis*, note-play implies self-representation or expression of that something which is "actually present in sensuous abundance."<sup>122</sup> The movement, the play, the construction—all are examples of the self-sameness in motion.

Gadamer relates Kant's concept of purposiveness without purpose along with autonomous temporality to the notion of non-teleological play through the metaphor of tempo markings. Tempo markings are notated by the composer, but the work's tempo can never be

---

<sup>122</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Relevance of the Beautiful," *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Nicholas Walker, ed. Robert Bernasconi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 36.

quantified. The tyranny of the “correct”<sup>123</sup> tempo is restrictive and does not allow the work to breath its own. Certain types of regulation to an interpreter’s tempo would render the act unartistic and artificial. Since a work of art is the “concentration of the beautiful,”<sup>124</sup> any external changes to it would compromise the integrity and beauty of the work. Determination of the tempo must be organically attained through the interpreter’s hermeneutic grasp of the work’s identity. Therefore, performers often look at tempo in retrospect, and reconsider tempos after gaining the whole aspect of the piece, informed by the passages as they relate to the whole piece. Gadamer writes that “in this respect, the work of art does resemble a living organism with its internally structured unity. In other words, it too displays autonomous temporality.”<sup>125</sup>

## 2.2 Historical Symbolism

### **Themes of Symbolist Poetry**

From Edgar Allen Poe, Walt Whitman, and Charles Baudelaire, innovations on the poetic form emerged as early as the 1850s. Literary symbolism was “a reaction against the naturalistic literature... [which is] the introduction of science into literature, and especially the introduction of scientific proceedings into literature”<sup>126</sup> led by writers such as Émile Zola. For the symbolists, the opposite of scientific injections is to revert to the most primitive form of human imagination, the dream. Along with it, incandescence and the indefinite—all of which contributes to poetic

---

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. 41.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. 43.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Albert Schinz, “Literary Symbolism in France,” *Modern Language Association* 18 (2), 1903, 274.



unity despite spontaneity through language that suggests human interiority. Baudelaire described “*une magie suggestive*” as “*contenant à la fois l’objet et le sujet, le monde extérieur à l’artiste et l’artiste lui-même.*”<sup>127</sup> One might find the features of symbolist poetry familiar, since this dissertation already referenced them, specifically the use of infinite symbols, effects and atmospheres, its connections to the human interior, and ecstasy by excess in the senses.

There should be a word that can properly describe the germane nature of changes in tradition. Change is often marked with *peasante* battle against misunderstanding. The same is true also in literary symbolism, at least in the 1880s when the poets first dipped into symbolist preoccupations. As a result, many writers published writings and manifestos that clarify their aesthetics, and musicians have these to thank for their elucidating language. Maeterlinck in 1887 professed that “the actual symbol is the inverse of the classical symbol: instead of going from the abstract to the concrete, it goes from the concrete to the abstract”<sup>128</sup>—but we have already traced the mechanisms of such symbolism in the previous chapter. Though by friendly association, this group of symbolist writers may seem to undoubtedly belong to the same movement, but in fact at the time, Mallarmé along with Verlaine, Rimbaud among others were all progressing through their artistic journey seemingly quite alone. Their writing styles differ, though a study of that is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

However, it is useful for us to discuss some general ideas that can be found parallel in music, such as the literary movement’s methods of reflecting the “state of soul, or inversely,...

---

<sup>127</sup> Charles Baudelaire, “L’art Philosophique,” *Oeuvres Complètes de Charles Baudelaire III L’art Romantique*, ed. Calmann Lévy (Paris: Ancienne Maison Michel Lévy Frères, 1885), 127.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. 161.

separate a state of soul from it by a series of deciphering”<sup>129</sup> through the language of suggestion, allusion, and evocation. The very mystery, which is “step-by-step”<sup>130</sup> in sequence, is the whole and the point of symbolist music.

### *Effect and the Indefinite*

By harnessing the potency present in the concept of symbols, the poets of symbolism elevate the mysterious, focusing on the seemingly insignificant, and suggesting personal, improvisatory, and “intimate causes [to subvert the matter-of-course attitude of naturalism], impalpable and imperceptible to our senses... [This is what] the symbolists wish to point out.”<sup>131</sup> The mystery at play here does not preclude detailed description—just with the caveat that these descriptions are of the imaginary or of interiority, and offers no concrete locale. This is to say—the isle of the dead of Rachmaninoff and the isle of joy of Debussy are fictitious islands. The work extends the atmosphere through connecting symbols with each other rather than clearly defining the referent. Links between a series of symbols that evoke an aura of emotions serve the symbolists’ aims to conclude their works without a storybook ending, but rather a finale with a flourish of overabundance and sensuousness in the air. As a result, the finale of a work, which in past traditions present the final thrust and cadence or *catharsis*, is not any more important than the overall process. The seamlessly woven steps of the work are each presented in satisfying order. In sum, the conclusions of symbolist works do not relinquish confirmation or resolution of conflict, but rather further leaves its beholder in contemplation.

---

<sup>129</sup> Pierre Brunel, “Literature,” *The Concise Encyclopedia of Symbolism*, ed. Jean Cassou (Hertfordshire: Omega Books Ltd., 1984), 195.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> Albert Schinz, “Literary Symbolism in France,” 277.

According to Edgar Allan Poe's essay "The Philosophy of Composition" (1846), nothing is more important to the poem than its element of effect, and its link to beauty. He writes that when "men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect — they refer in short [sic] to that intense and pure elevation of *soul* — *not* of intellect, or of heart."<sup>132</sup> The emblematic symbols bring forth such an atmosphere to attain "permanence"<sup>133</sup> and "never-ending resemblance"<sup>134</sup> to an otherwise transient interaction with the poem.

### *Vers Libre, or Free Verse*

*Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman was the first to use free verse for its ability to reflect human interiority. Soon after, the early French symbolists such as Charles Baudelaire also began writing poetry with prose rather than strict verse. Within the freeness of this new poetic form, achieved through displacing accents to reorient standard meter, the rhythm and configurations of phrasing preserves the "unity"<sup>135</sup> of the prose-poem. Without invalidating past poetic devices such as rhyme, alliteration, allusion, Whitman found a new method of expression through free verse that nonetheless coheres.

Similarly, French symbolists such as Henri Régnier regarded verse as a function of rhythm, "which alone [verse] should obey,"<sup>136</sup> rather than verse as a strict formula. Verse evolved in accordance to what is expressed or suggested. "Their fondness for their ideas was strong

---

<sup>132</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition," *The Project Gutenberg EBook of Edgar Allan Poe's Complete Poetical Works*, ed. John H. Ingram, prod. Clytie Siddall, Charles Aldarondo, Keren Vergon and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team (Project Gutenberg, 2003), <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/10031/10031-h/10031-h.htm>

<sup>133</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Relevance of the Beautiful," 47.

<sup>134</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, "The Philosophy of Composition."

<sup>135</sup> Mathurin Dondo, "Les Premiers Poètes du Vers Libre Anglais," *The French Review* 8, 1934, 110.

<sup>136</sup> Albert Schinz, "Literary Symbolism in France," *Modern Language Association* 18 (2), 1903, 299.

enough to lead them to the extremes of the free verse.”<sup>137</sup> Despite its name, free verse does uphold two formal elements, rhyme and syllabism, even if they are unhinged (compared to tradition) in the forms of “alliteration and assonance.”<sup>138</sup> Archaic terms are also revived in the symbolist movement, and are selected for “their musical qualities”<sup>139</sup>, as sound is the founding principle.

### *Distance*

Another theme in symbolist poetry is the speaker's penchant to jump from the present into his/her yearning for a distant locale. Pensive thoughts dwell within this aspiration to depart from current reality. This retreat into contemplation highlights the distance between the speaker's 'here' and the ideal, the idyllic, which is always far away. The symbolists value such languid daydreams, because within that space, thoughts overpower actions without resorting to defined desires.

### *Synesthesia*

Another symbolist poetic feature is synesthesia. Symbolism is often confused with decadentism, because of its accentuation of the senses. Of course, symbolism “calls forth Decadentism”<sup>140</sup> but the two are not interchangeable. For the symbolists, invocation of synesthesia is achieved through the mixing of sensory descriptors in their prose-poetry. This method not only comments on the frailty of the senses and the susceptibility of our memory and experience, it also inherently praises that same frail faculty by portraying human transcendence in the imagina-

---

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. 303.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid. 298.

<sup>140</sup> Albert Schinz, “Literary Symbolism in France,” 273.

tion of art.

### **Debussy and Mallarmé**

We have already established that there is a definite network between the poets and musicians of symbolism, and that the literary movement is of the two, since Debussy is two decades younger than Mallarmé. As burgeoning youths, the symbolist composers seized the golden opportunity to explore these relatively new aesthetic tendencies that called attention to and prioritized the very freeing nature of their art. Aside from the historical connection across disciplines, one can easily see the common themes between the poets and the composers of symbolism. They agreed on music's power in relation to symbols and recognition. After the “first contingent apprehension of [the work]...[it is] then raised into ideality.”<sup>141</sup>

The transient nature of music necessitates recognition at every step of the way in order for us to make sense of the thing that is presented to us. The symbolists aimed to use art to highlight this way of navigating the world. “Did not Schopenhauer<sup>142</sup> declare that music alone, the noblest of all the arts, was the direct expression of the Will, that is to say the Essence of the Universal Being, and that music alone could give direct expression to the affective life of the soul?”<sup>143</sup> The French symbolists recognized this unique characteristic of the musical medium (and to a lesser extent, the spoken word) as not only as an exploration of the infinite possibilities in sound, and not only as an outward expression of the individual soul as it did to the many passionate artists before, but—and this is crucial—a way to look inward and contemplate on the universal through the particular piece of art.

---

<sup>141</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, “The Relevance of the beautiful,” 47.

<sup>142</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga und Paralipomena*, 1851.

<sup>143</sup> Stefan Jarociński, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*, 71.

In such a way, the symbolists of France saw music as the most “symbolic art above all others”<sup>144</sup> despite the movement’s beginnings as a poetic movement with Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) and Paul Verlaine (1844-1896). As the forefather of symbolist poetry, “Baudelaire recalled judiciously that the function of music was to express the undefined part of a feeling which the word is too exact to be able to render.”<sup>145</sup> And though it seems that the romantics have already injected the utmost feelings within the music circulating just prior to fin-du-siècle, such as Hector Berlioz, César Franck, Carl Reinecke, Johann Strauss Jr., the symbolists saw that the methods of construction for Romanticism did not reveal “fantasy and freedom” to their desire, for rather than an account of feelings, the symbolists desired a “concentration of feeling.”<sup>146</sup>

Like my discussion on Debussy’s place in history as symbolist and not Impressionist, I would also like to state a similar situation in Mallarmé’s place in the literary world stands with symbolist, and not metaphysical. Even up until the nineteen-sixties, many thought of the parallels between Mallarmé’s lofty fantasias similar to that of John Donne’s, who is a metaphysical poet. In an article by Haskell M. Block, Block shows how a casual reading of these two poet’s signature works, *The Dreame* and *Apparition* shows how these poems are “antithetical renderings of the relation of dream to reality.”<sup>147</sup> Like the difference between that of romanticism, which professes thoughts and exclaims passion, or even impressionism, which observes light and reimagines reality, in contrast with symbolism, which meditates interiority, evokes feelings, and incites

---

<sup>144</sup> Francis Claudon, “Music,” 219.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. 220.

<sup>146</sup> Roger Nichols, “Claude Debussy,” 101.

<sup>147</sup> Haskell M. Block, “The Alleged Parallel of Metaphysical and Symbolist Poetry,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 4 (1/2) 1967, 155.

alternate reality, Donne's dream orients to a "shared, physical experience" whereas Mallarmé's draws "inward, toward private and inner, spiritual experience" using diction that is "indefinite and suggestive"<sup>148</sup>. While his words are purposefully ambiguous, his aesthetic is not. In his many letters and correspondences, we find clear delineations of Mallarmé's artistic intention. Direct from Baudelaire's tradition of 'Correspondances' from *Fleurs du mal*, Mallarmé expressed, "*Peindre, non la chose, mais l'effet qu'elle produit.*"<sup>149</sup>

We get the same emphasis on 'effects' and evocation in Arthur Rimbaud's poetry. Moreover, his poem-prose 'Alchimie du Verbe' [Alchemy of the Word] discusses the subversive nature of the symbolist movement. As the second movement of *Une Saison en Enfer, livre II: Délires* [A Season in Hell, Book II: Delirium], 'Alchimie du Verbe' connects the interior and the sound symbolism of words, that "*je réservais la traduction.*"<sup>150</sup> This poem-prose contains dream-like prosody that is indicative of the symbolist spirit—the freedom from "*la forme et le mouvement,*" invention of colors and "*un verbe poétique accessible, un jour ou l'autre, à tous les sens,*" and uttering the ineffable—"J'écrivais des silences, des nuits, je notais l'inexprimable."<sup>151</sup>

At the end of his recount of this hallucinogenic daze, the speaker is resolute in celebrating beauty today, "*Cela s'est passé. Je sais aujourd'hui saluer la beauté,*"<sup>152</sup> thereby suggesting that the entire poem was a look-back, a remembrance, that the only reason he lives to tell the tale is

---

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé and Henri Mondor, *Correspondance, 1862-1871* (Paris: Gallimard, 1959-1969), 137.

<sup>150</sup> "Je réservais la traduction." As translated by Paul Schmidt, and published in 1976 by Harper Colophon Books, Harper & Row. Accessed through <http://www.mag4.net/Rimbaud/poesies/Alchimie.html>

<sup>151</sup> "I turned silences and nights into words. What was unutterable, I wrote down." Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> "All that is over. Today, I know how to celebrate beauty." Ibid.

because beauty was the antidote to his terror. Philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer considers beauty of central importance to art. At the end of his book, *Truth and Method*, Gadamer upholds beauty has its own “radiance”<sup>153</sup> and connects the self-revealing beauty of art to that which is true. This radiance “constitutes its actual being. The distinguishing mark of the beautiful, namely that it draws directly to itself the desire of the human soul, is founded in its mode of being.”<sup>154</sup> The mode of being to which Gadamer refers to in beauty’s radiance is light. The shine falls “on something”<sup>155</sup> and that something helps make the light visible, in the same way beauty shines on a work of art, thus making beauty perceivable. “By making something else visible, it is visible itself.”<sup>156</sup>

This discussion of beauty is in direct connection with our discussion on the performer. Gadamer exerts that meaning is completed by the indeterminate situation and the context, so through cooperation, the total meaning “pertains not to the speaker but to what is spoken.”<sup>157</sup> Spoken word or sounds make itself “present in what is said—just as the idea of the beautiful is present in what is beautiful.”<sup>158</sup> This does not relieve the performer of their duties in preparing the work, because

where representation does not take place through reproduction (which everyone knows belongs to its own present time) past and present are brought together in a work of

---

<sup>153</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 439.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid. 446.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.



art. That every work of art has its own world does not mean that when its original world is altered it has its reality in an alienated aesthetic consciousness.<sup>159</sup>

This brings us to the next chapter, where the concept of performance will become more pertinent.

## 2.3 Musical symbolism

### **Performance Questions**

Richard Wagner succeeded in melding his creations into a powerful myth, reaching the sublime with music as “means rather than an absolute end”<sup>160</sup> in his comprehensive, intoxicating masterpieces. As I mentioned before, Wagner was not prolific in absolute music, or “naturally pure music, that is to say the exclusive art of sound.”<sup>161</sup> To that end, the younger Claude Debussy took the art of composing absolute music to a new level. By infusing his influences of Wagner with poetic methods, Debussy took what was rightfully music’s claim as the ultimate unrepresentative medium, and opened the door to attaining symbolist’s greatest goals—to disjoint from within, to remove the shackles of arrival, to reinvigorate the interior soul from numbness.

I will not attempt to guess why despite efforts from scores of scholars who make references to musical symbolism and endeavor to secure musical symbolism on the pantheon of ‘-isms’, including consistent embracement of music in almost every art and literature sources for symbolism, there are only a scattering of academic resources written in English which are dedi-

---

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. 139.

<sup>160</sup> Jean Cassou, *The Concise Encyclopedia of Symbolism* (Secaucus, NJ: Chartwell Books), 1979, 19.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

cated to this movement's instrumental music or absolute music—that is, without confounding multiple art worlds, such as opera and art songs.

Scholars of symbolism arrive at discourse armed with textual analysis of art songs, opera libretti and stories, and their subsequent relationship to the music. Alas, symbolism saw music as the most potent medium for symbols, not only for its wordless faculties which carry the suprasensible, but also for demonstrating the work's demand for “an empathetic response” and wish for “the viewer to experience its mysterious profundity in the manner of an inner vision”<sup>162</sup>—all without naming that which is professed. Yet, it is far easier to point to symbolism in a musical work when there are poems to anchor the connection.

This dissertation aims to bridge the gap between theory and practice in the symbolist arena. There are different types of articles and books written on symbolism as it pertains to this dissertation: one, works such as the aforementioned Robin Holloway book which connects Wagner with Debussy, demonstrating the great extension, reach, and intensity of symbolism as a movement. Two, works such as Paul Roberts' *Claude Debussy* and Marianne Wheeldon's *Debussy's Late Style* which contain a blend of Debussy's life with analyzation of his music. Three, compendiums on symbolism of more than one artistic medium such as the Claudon encyclopedia or the Wolf *Taschen Art Series*. There are very few sources belonging to this category. Four, works that relate a different field, such as psychoanalysis or poetry, to the works of Debussy, namely his opera and art songs, such as Arthur Wenk's *Claude Debussy and his Poets* and Elliot Antokoletz's *Musical symbolism in the Operas of Debussy and Bartók: Trauma, Gender, and Unfolding of the Unconscious*. Five, works that sectionalize Debussy's opuses into a specific topic, like

---

<sup>162</sup> Norbert Wolf, *Symbolism* (Taschen, 2015), 9.

Hepokoski's articles on rotational form or formulaic openings or Roy Howat's work on the golden mean.

### **Debussy in *Monsieur Croche* and the Principal of Ornament**

An innovator's diary, almost—*Monsieur Croche* speaks his mind in chapters named after the topic of Debussy's opinion. Much of the writing was published in his life time, but never in the form made available now which is essentially an anthology. In the chapter *Virtuoso*, Debussy presents the concept of the arabesque, referring not to his famous *Deux Arabesques* composed early on in his career, but the concept also known as "the principle of ornament, which is the basis of all forms of art."<sup>163</sup> Ornament, in Debussy's meaning, has nothing to do with trills or turns in notation. Rather, he is referring to the configuration of the lines, or "tracing of the particular line" which "stirs us."<sup>164</sup> Debussy attributes the emotional appeal of the musical character to these configurations. Our soul stirs "through this conception of ornament [whereby] the music acquires an almost mechanical precision of appeal to which the audience reacts."<sup>165</sup> Debussy uses the strength of musical lines differently from Wagner, whose chromaticism resulted in a mass of colliding lines. Instead, Debussy's pieces contain the purity of Gregorian chants, which he loved, and dwelled on the play rather than the thickness of layered lines. Through this, moods emerge from our tracing of the lines. His chapter on virtuoso examines the impressive quality of lines. Even his description of Bach's violin concerto orients toward the process of the work, which highlights the "pliant" and "fluid" qualities of musical lines despite Bach's "stern disci-

---

<sup>163</sup> Debussy, Claude. "Monsieur Croche, the Dilettante Hater," *Three Classics in the Aesthetic of Music* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc.), 1962, 23.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

pline"<sup>166</sup> otherwise.

### **Improvisation**

Symbolist music aspires to achieve the fluidity like that of improvisations, where thoughts come and go spontaneously, but done so skillfully that the lines connect and coheres. Gadamer utilize the example of improvisation to prove the hermeneutic identity of the work. His conclusion on this matter is that even though improvisations are not notated, the performance nonetheless stands before us and brings something to a stand through its configuration. Both the performer and the audience pass judgement onto the work as an entity, and the identity of the improvised work "constitutes the meaning of the work."<sup>167</sup> Debussy, in his own way, presented these ideas in his explanation of the ornament. He understood that the performance of the work requires constant cooperation, where the experience is interactive through the participant's tracing of the musical lines. This implies that our understanding of the piece is useful in filling out the musical work. It would also follow that there is "no radical separation between the work of art and the person who experiences it."<sup>168</sup>

Poe's theory on effect, where atmosphere is the aim of his composition, comes about through the participants' following, or ability to follow, the fanciful figuration of sound. This effect speaks to the soul and delights in autonomous significance, giving "no distinction between the particular way the work is realized and the identity of the work itself."<sup>169</sup> The experience of a

---

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, "The Relevance of the beautiful," *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, trans. Nicholas Walker, ed. Robert Bernasconi. (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 25.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid. 28.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. 29.

musical work is the work itself.

### **Dahlhaus's "Negative" Qualities**

I would like to include this section to explain why the subversive elements in symbolist methods of construction promotes the works' symbolist aims. Carl Dahlhaus describes these subversive and discontinuous qualities as negative, and tradition-affirming qualities as positive.<sup>170</sup> Negative qualities are the "driving momentum in musical progress,"<sup>171</sup> because a work that consists of "positive qualities that are legitimate by themselves" and negative qualities that require justification is a "venerable relic of classicism."<sup>172</sup> For Dahlhaus, "categories like ambivalence, paradox, ambiguity, and irony, which have long been at home in literary criticism,"<sup>173</sup> are not just foils and lesser counterparts to the positive, but must be a crucial part of esthetic criticism for music as well. Dahlhaus's concept of negative qualities compels us to not pass judgement on elements of rhythm, dissonance, tone-color, even if they exhibit their typically un-beautiful qualities and instead recognize that "mannerism is a style, not a lack of technique or of esthetic morality."<sup>174</sup> This relates to the open intellectual position aforementioned in chapter two under style and notation. While negative features are in all revolutionary compositions, the symbolist composers are aware of and incorporates these qualities of ambivalence and ambiguity into their palette. The expressive values of the work are made legitimate "esthetically by an interpretation that

---

<sup>170</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *Esthetics of Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1995, 94.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid. 95.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid. 94.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

renounces the complacent appeal to logic"<sup>175</sup>—one that prioritized atmosphere and effect over logic. If performers are able to make these distinctions and perform accordingly, then "a negative that leads forward is positive."<sup>176</sup> As Gadamer pointed out, the totality of the work and meaning is not determined by the performer, but by what is spoken. Through the determination by situation and context the work achieves meaning.

### 3.1 Musical Lines

*De la musique encore et toujours!*  
*Que ton vers soit la chose envolée*  
*Qu'on sent qui fuit d'une âme en allée*  
*Vers d'autres cieux è d'autres amours.*<sup>177</sup>

The musical line has its own characteristic, one that we hear as an expressive gesture. One of the most important priorities of a performer is to interpret the inflection of the gestures in a way that is stylistically appropriate with respect to the construction of the piece. Style, in my opinion, transcends the borders of time periods. Performers acknowledge each work as an aesthetic experience that reveals its musical prosody, rather than forcing the musical material onto a

---

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid. 94-95.

<sup>177</sup> Paul Verlaine, *Selected Poems*, trans. Carlyle Ferren MacIntyre (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948), 182.

fixed and formulaic prosody. A good performance would bring to life the interpreter's understanding of the work's prosody through a convincing and informed interpretation. In my usage of the word style, I would like to maintain that each piece of music has its own style, never belonging to a style. The understanding of the style of a piece is, in fact, the understanding of the piece itself.

Every interpretive decision is primed by a study of the entire piece, and not necessarily a study of all the music belonging to that piece's genre. Some pedagogues have used the meter of a work to justify style. A piece written in 3/4 is often called a dance, or a waltz, or a minuet. It is important not to reduce the entirety of a work to its genre, because to do so would be to erase the many unique aspects of the musical work. I believe Debussy and other symbolist composers understood this notion, and chose to free the dance from its identifier. I mean that their usage of the dance, while undeniably a part of the composition, pushes against the very surface identity of the work as wholly just a dance. There exists tension in categorizing any of Debussy's pieces. Even the 3/4 meter does not always mean waltz, although "*La Plus Que Lente*" might be an exception because it was written under different artistic aims than his other opuses. One such example of a work that altogether cannot be called a dance definitively is Debussy's "*Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir*."<sup>178</sup> The piece is simultaneously more than a mere quotation of a dance-like figure, and yet not experienced as a full-fledged slow waltz or *valse lent*. The piece precisely evokes, without verbally indicating a waltz. He incorporates lilting gestures, reaching up, then receding, much like motions found in nature. Let us leave the title alone for just a moment, and discuss the suppleteness of the harmonies and the positioning of gestures.

---

<sup>178</sup> the sounds and the perfumes turning in the evening air

Modéré (♩ = 84)  
(harmonieux et souple)

pp  
m.d.

m.d.

En animant un peu

m.d. *expressif*  
p m.d. mf p

8 En retenant // a Tempo égal et doux  
p dim. pp  
en dehors

Serrez un peu // Retenu //  
p p

(‘Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l’air du soir’ from *Les Preludes Livre I*, Claude Debussy, bars 1-23)

At its first utterance, the piece sets the tonality with the bass note A, and the rest of the upper-layer stretches languidly away from the bass before settling back to the position of the bass note A. This is no dance for humans, but a dance of time and space, a dance of enthrallment and



magic. The floating atmosphere is enhanced when the tempos change to reflect time's reverberations of the opening gestures. The aforementioned genre-ambiguity gives interpreters a canvas onto which the work's atmospheres are at once performative and also meditative. Glenn Gould envisions this kind of introspection, or "transcendence of the self through an integral attentiveness to the structure of a piece of music," as a form of ecstasy.<sup>179</sup> This relates to Gadamer's concept of play. Performers are akin to the 'players' in Gadamer's language. And according to him, the "play fulfill its purpose only if the player loses himself in his play,"<sup>180</sup>

The tempo marking for *'Les Sons'* is *Modéré*, though I recommend an even slower interpretation in order to achieve a resonant space. *Modéré* describes the mood of the ever-swirling senses, rather than a strict prescription of the work's overall tempo. The short staccato quarter note at the start sounds like an upbeat, rather than a traditional downbeat, and should be played like a slow *pizzicato* that resonates in the air. Since the piano is not capable of this sound without the pedal, one should use ample pedaling throughout this piece in order to serve the harmonies' suppleness. This *pizz.* propels the rest of the bar into a circular haze with emphasis given to the center of the bar. The second and the third beat, due to its rising gesture, is slightly closer together in grouping than the third to the fourth beat. The decrescendo from third to the fourth beat is achieved by a slight slowing down for the sound to decay. The hemiola at bars 3 to 4 further disrupts any sense of  $\frac{3}{4}$ . Arabesque figures at bars 15 - 24 trace along the more uniform waltz-like chords. As this gesture slows, *serrez un peu* (bars 21-22), a hemiola returns to foreshadow the languid waltz which follows. The performer should take pains to highlight the difference be-

---

<sup>179</sup> Cynthia Lins Hamlin, "An Exchange Between Gadamer and Glenn Gould on Hermeneutics and Music," *Theory, Culture, and Society*, 2016 Vol.33(3) 103-122.

<sup>180</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 92.

tween the evenly-distributed arabesque (*égal et doux*) at bar 18, which disintegrates into *retenu* at bar 23.

14

a Tempo

pp m.d.

Plus lent En animant

pp mf

Cédez // Rubato Serrez // Rubato

pp mf p

Serrez //

p la basse un peu appuyée et soutenu

Rubato Serrez

mf p m.d.

(*‘Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l’air du soir’* from *Les Preludes Livre I*, Claude Debussy, bars 24-39)

Even with markings that indicate slowing and quickening, only one type of figure garners *rubato* (bar 32, 34, 38); a total of nine notes are contained in the *rubato* downward line. It is also the only section to receive the 4/4 treatment. This passage subverts previous gestures' timings and shape. Instead of elongating from the third to fourth beat, these phrases elongate the beginning of the bar. Markings here further distorts strong beats from being the same as before and therefore unpredictable; the entire passage disorients. The performer loses all sense of counts, and the procession of these figures are wholly dependent on the vibrations of the sound, rather than metronomic or metered timing. A performance of this piece in a dry room should experiment with an overall faster tempo to allow continuous and sinuous lines. In a cavernous hall, the work would be able to sustain a slower tempo in order to, again, keep the flowing and meandering atmosphere. As you can see, different interpretations dependent on the sound of the hall can access the same symbolist aesthetic, given their ability to encompass the same artistic intentions. In order to listen accurately during a performance, the performer must become herself objective. As a result, symbolist pieces do not seek the performer's practicing for virtuosity or note-perfection. Rather, the aims of a symbolist practice session is to access deep objectivity in listening, much like meditation to find inner thoughts. This elimination of the ego is especially heightened during the performance, as the performer merges with the unity of listeners and calibrates the vibrations within the entire concert hall, rather than the self's subjective listening.

The meditative and inward-looking moods evoked in many symbolist pieces can be thought of as a play between the fluid and the stasis of musical lines. Oblique notes do not necessarily indicate stability or stasis, like in Debussy's *Masques*; spritely-moving notes do not necessarily indicate fluidity, like Debussy's *Feux d'artifice*. There are no rules. Instead, artistic por-

trayals dealing with time depend on the composer's treatment of the ornaments, with respect to the musical work's architecture.

**Très vif et fantasque** (♩ = 104)

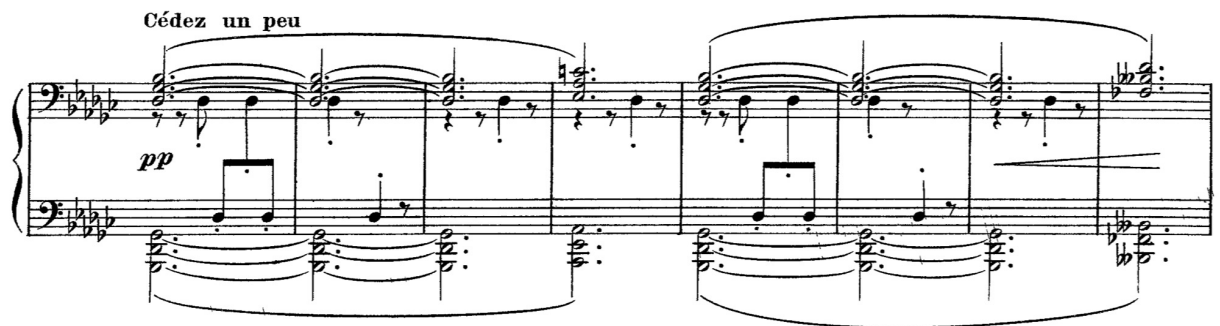
*pp détaché et rythmé*

(*Masques*, Claude Debussy, bars 1-11; '*Feux d'artifice*' from *Les Preludes Livre II*, Claude Debussy, bars 1-4)

**Modérément animé**  
*léger, égal et lointain*

*pp*

I would like to borrow Christopher Palmer’s concept of “fluid sound-shapes,”<sup>181</sup> and define fluidity as the abrupt, unprepared portals of change in our sense of divisions in time. While Palmer describes them to be “mosaic-like conception of form conditioned by pure sensation,”<sup>182</sup> I would like to add that this fluidity is fueled by Debussy’s love of the improvisatory, as well as enlightened by the illusory nature of dreams and memories. In *Masques*, the repeating oblique motion chords are treated with a rhythm that propels. This rhythm is treated as a fanfare of festive proportions, full of ebullience. At *cédez un peu* (bar 148) the piece questions the rhythm’s identity as a fanfare; a different mask colors that same rhythm. I think the performer should evoke a different aura here altogether. This same rhythm should, in essence, merge with the overarching two-bar chords. Despite only receding in tempo a little, the mask rhythm no longer drives forward, but are calmer façades that reflect the expansive arches of the harmonies. In a sense, this is the more intuitive portrayal of oblique motion notes which contributes to *stasis*.



(*Masques*, Claude Debussy, bars 148-155)

*Stasis* is the mood of firm elongation and sustain, or “ever-changing movement, of cease-

<sup>181</sup> Christopher Palmer, *Impressionism in Music* (Hutchinson, 1973), 20.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

less flux.”<sup>183</sup> Since the piano is a decaying instrument, Debussy elongates sound through activity of a note by itself, or a unit of notes, in repetition. While Christopher Palmer relates this quality to Impressionistic paintings, I would like to relate the *stasis* mood to Gadamer’s concept of play. Recall the idea that play is always a kind of self-representation.<sup>184</sup> Symbolist works bring to the forefront our experiences and interiority, without wholly giving in to subjectivity. That is why much of symbolist aesthetics has to do with phenomenology. The *stasis* of symbolist musical lines set the perfect stage for an “increase in being,”<sup>185</sup> or experimentation of the musical work itself, which is a function of the work’s ontological vehemence. The opening of *feux d’artifice* is constant in spite of all its movements. The chromatic repeating motif sounds like it is at a distance, as the *lointain* marking suggests, precisely because of its *stasis* quality. This animated motif moves lightly and quickly, travelling without going, in order to render a unique color of *stasis*—one that elongates our sense of the measure into an atmospheric canvas. The playfulness of the underpinning chromatic motif actually contributes to the general mood of animated stability, a gaseous stillness, like a flame that dances in place on a candle. The motif represents the *status-quo* onto which the staccato character of the dotted sixteenth notes can shift and sublimate our perception of *stasis* for brief moments. The musical work then explores its own identity through a play of these shifting perceptions, through variations of spectacular displays in extremely pianistic arabesques and glissandi. While these qualities of play apply to all music, symbolist works possess a clear aesthetic preference to highlighting the particularity of the musical sym-

---

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, “The Relevance of the beautiful,” 37.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

bols and their experimentation as not only the identity of the work, but its only action. In the words of early symbolist scholar Katherine Heyman, “grandiloquence to the ash heap.”<sup>186</sup> The anti-narrative nature of improvisations and experimentations embodies well the transiency of music.

This dissertation presents this play between fluidity and *stasis* as the overarching qualities of all symbolist music. The following two chapters provide examples of each, interjected with my own interpretation. This dissertation is careful to not provide broad, sweeping rules or formulas. Through understanding the aesthetics of symbolism, along with an informed outlook to seek the deeper intentions of musical figurations in response to fluidity and *stasis*, the symbolist performer may acquire access to universal objectivity through meditative interiority.

## 3.2 Fluidity

Recall from the introduction that symbolism is a movement united by its mindset,<sup>187</sup> which is the open position in thinking, and experienced as the dynamic textuality within the work's configuration. Traditional construction of music, including the sonata, binary, and ternary forms, no longer satisfy the first modern composers. Artistic intents of the symbolists demanded a reevaluation of past traditions; concepts such as dreams and memories demanded a more fluid manner of construction. In the past, critiques of symbolism focused on the irrational characteristics<sup>188</sup> of symbolism as a point of detraction. However, this dissertation attributes credit to this

---

<sup>186</sup> Katherine Ruth Heyman, *The Relation of Ultramodern to Archaic Music* (Boston: Small, Maynard, and Company, 1921), 97.

<sup>187</sup> Peter Palmer, ‘Lost Paradises: Music and the Aesthetics of Symbolism’, *The Musical Times* 148 (1899), 2007, 37.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*

unique perspective as the impetus for change from the status quo. Both dreams and memories are fluid, transitory experiences. Distance between the present self and the alter-self are characteristics of both dreams and memories. In dreams, the self is asleep, and the alternate self is far away from awareness. In memories, the self is present, and the alternate self is in the past. Both instances highlight the phenomenological aspect of time and experience in terms of distance. This distance allows for a blend, perhaps even confusion, of the senses. Many scholars, such as Peter Palmer, defines one of symbolism's criterion as "synesthetic ventures."<sup>189</sup> This synesthetic predilection presupposes identifying the distinctions between the five senses, and instead concentrates on exploring the feeling of this swirling blend. Symbolist composers comment on this phenomenon in music using sharp juxtapositions from one musical idea to the next in order to suggest and correspond. Out of seemingly nowhere, the *léger et lointain* section (bars 109 - 112) from Debussy's *La Soirée dans Grenade* juxtaposes with the sensuous habanera bar 113, which lasts only two bars, before an abrupt stop using a fermata over the double bar line. Holding the sustain pedal at this point can further draw attention to the sharp juxtaposition that follows at bars 115 - 118, with the repetition of the *léger et lointain* material.

---

<sup>189</sup> Ibid. 38.



Léger et lointain  
(la ♩ = ♩ de la mesure précédente)

(‘La Soirée dans Grenade’ from *Estampes*, Claude Debussy, bars 106- 112)

Tempo 1°

Léger et lointain  
(la ♩ = ♩ de la mesure précédente)

Tempo 1°

Mouv<sup>t</sup> du début

(‘La Soirée dans Grenade’ from *Estampes*, Claude Debussy, bars 113-123)

In effect, this improvisatory practice maintains structural integrity through the technique of repetition. In both dreams and memories, repetition reinforces one's mastery of meanings. For example, a dream is meaningful through repetition of themes, motifs, and symbols. Memories are forged and accessed through repetition. Short-term memories become long-term memories through the act of repetition. In both, the aura, or the feeling, is the strongest residual. Such are the artistic aims of the symbolists.

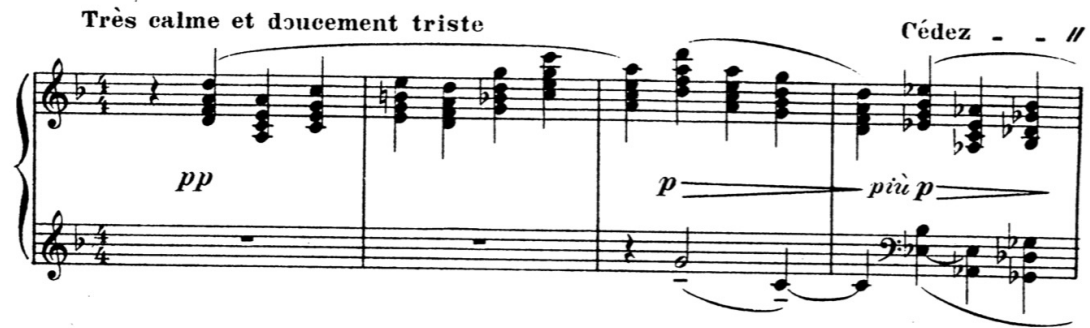
Another revolutionary innovation that memories and dream bestowed on the symbolist composers is the undefined ending. Memories begin and end without exactness; it is as short as it is long, and always faulty. Reminiscences are triggered without warning, and leave their possessors with more questions than answers. Dreams, also, exist outside of our awareness, therefore outside our faculties of control. The spontaneous and fluid qualities of dreams are capable of inciting enigmatic raptures. At the end of *'La Soirée'*, the habanera fades out sonically into the corners of our aural perception. The performer should perform the entire passage from bar 122 to the end in a way where we do not anticipate the fade out, but instead reveling in the sumptuous sound of the overarching *pianississimo*, giving the ending a special undefined unpredictability.

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of two systems of music. The first system contains five measures. The right-hand part (treble clef) features a melodic line with various dynamics: *m.g.* (mezzo-forte), *m.d.* (mezzo-dolce), *m.d.*, *m.g.*, *m.d.*, *m.g.*, and *m.d.*. The left-hand part (bass clef) provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. The second system contains six measures. Below the staff, there are markings for the pedal: *Ped.* followed by an asterisk (\*), *Ped.* followed by an asterisk (\*), *Ped.* followed by an asterisk (\*), *Ped.* followed by an asterisk (\*), and a final asterisk (\*) at the end of the system.

Ch. Douin, gr.. Poinçons A. Durand & Fils.

D. & F. 6326(2)

(*'La Soirée dans Grenade'* from *Estampes*, Claude Debussy, bars 124-136)



(‘Canope’ from *Les Preludes Livre II*, Claude Debussy, bars 1-4; bars 23-25)



In one portrayal of fluidity, musical figures ignore traditional voice-leading as chords, like that of 'Canope', from *Les Preludes Livre II* of Debussy. The spontaneous dipping and projectile gestures of bars 24-25 also pliantly jumps from the faux-glissando to C natural, to the same faux-glissando to E flat without any warning. This type of spontaneous decisions relates to the peculiar nature of our interiority, where our attention and concentration jump from one to the next. Lack of focus can also be seen as forest of possibilities. These harmonies are "as free as air, with nothing in it which weighs or pitches."<sup>190</sup> The nonchalant meandering of these harmonies create rather than tell. Symbolist music shows the emotions as they truly are, and acknowledges

<sup>190</sup> Francis Claudon, "Music," 226.

its fleeting nature, rather than tell and profess it through rhetoric and drama.

The image displays three staves of musical notation for 'La Danse de Puck' from Claude Debussy's *Les Preludes Livre I*. The first staff shows a piano introduction with a dynamic marking of *p* and a crescendo leading to a dynamic marking of *f*. The second staff is marked *Pressez* and features a trill in the right hand. The third staff is marked *Retenu - - - // Mouvt* and includes a *dim.* marking and a *pp* dynamic marking.

(*'La Danes de puck'* from *Les Preludes Livre I*, Claude Debussy, bars 10-20)

That airy and mercurial quality is also present in 'La danse de Puck' from *Les Preludes Livre I*. From the catchy tune presented at the beginning, evolution of the interval-plays arrive at a trill that sustains on the high A (bar 13), and surges forward for the following two bars, until a less anxious echo of the trill at a lower octave (bar 15). That similar anxiety in the form of a trill appears in Szymanowski's '*Shéhérazade*' from *Masques*, at *Poco Avvivando (Ansioso)* [Little

Without Warning (Anxious)]. The trembling trills (bar 14) juxtaposed with improvisatory melody evoke a sense of unpreparedness. Rhythms contract and augment as the figure pleases (bars 12-15), *slentando* (Sliding down) and losing steam (*perdendosi*) at a whim. From a valley, the *marcato + tenuto + sforzando + yet piano* musical symbol (bars 16-17) rise up, awakening (*risvegliando*) into the still anxious repeated notes. This rapid turn of events occurs in just a few short bars.

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system (bars 11-12) shows a treble staff with a trill and a bass staff with a descending line, marked 'perdendosi rallent.' and 'pp'. The second system (bars 13-15) shows a treble staff with a trill and a bass staff with a descending line, marked '(trillo) pp' and 'avvivando'. The third system (bars 16-17) shows a treble staff with a trill and a bass staff with a descending line, marked 'slentando ppp', '(perdendosi)', '(marc.) ten.', 'pp dolciss.', 'ten.(sf) ppp', and 'sf ten.'

(‘Scherezade’ from *Masques*, Karol Szymanowski, Bars 11-17)

Again, Szymanowski pairs the anxious trill with *avvivando sempre* [without warning always] in 'L'île des Sirènes' from *Métopes*. The ambiguity in a sustained trill rids of notions of the upper or lower neighbor, into a shimmering color that just *is* (bars 28-33). These figures rarely resolve traditionally. When they do resolve, the harmonies are perceived as new colors, rather than a confirmation of familiar tonality.

(see next page: 'L'île des Sirènes' from *Métopes*, Karol Szymanowski, bars 27-35)

*avvivando sempre (poco accel.)*

*cresc.*

This system shows the beginning of a musical piece in 3/4 time. The right hand features a complex, multi-measure rest followed by a series of chords and moving lines. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment. A dynamic marking of *cresc.* is present in the lower right.

*cresc.*

*cresc.*

This system continues the piece, featuring a multi-measure rest of 8 measures in the right hand. The music is marked with *cresc.* in both staves.

*f*

*poco rit.*

*pp* *quasi poco meno dolce espress.*

*pp dolciss.*

*(molto rubato)*

This system includes a multi-measure rest of 8 measures in the right hand. The dynamics shift from *f* to *pp*, with markings for *poco rit.*, *quasi poco meno dolce espress.*, and *pp dolciss.* (with *(molto rubato)* in parentheses). A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' in the left hand.

*poco accel.*

*cresc.*

*poco f*

This system features a multi-measure rest of 12 measures in the right hand. The dynamics include *poco accel.*, *cresc.*, and *poco f*. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' in the left hand.



The image shows a musical score for 'Jardins d'un clair' from 'Trois Morceaux' by Lili Boulanger, covering bars 37 to 50. The score is written for voice and piano. The key signature is G major (one sharp) and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line begins at bar 39 with a melodic phrase marked '8va.' and 'plus lent (bien chanté)'. The piano accompaniment features parallel chords in both the treble and bass staves, marked with dynamics such as *p*, *pp fluide*, *mp*, and *pp*. The piano part includes performance instructions like '8va.' and '8va.' with arrows indicating octave shifts. The score is divided into three systems, with bar numbers 39, 43, and 47 marked at the beginning of each system.

(‘Jardins d’un clair’ from *Trois Morceaux*, Lili Boulanger, bars 37 - 50)

In Lili Boulanger's *D'un Jardin Clair*, the parallel non-voice-leading chords featured in the passage (bars 40-54), which are layered in both clefs, are marked with *pianissimo* and *fluide*, with *portamento*. This approach heightens the fluidity of the harmonies in the passage, and evokes a mood of nonchalant spontaneity to the matching gestures in bars 43-44, and 47-48. Both these gestures arch in similar ways, but are transposed whole step apart. By inserting the *fluide* parallel lines between these similar gestures, the work subverts expectations of the pattern, and defamiliarizes the otherwise logical treatment of this gesture. In this way, the symbolists invent new tone colors belonging to the piece by eradicating our sense of knowing and understanding. With each step taken, the musical figures does away with preparation to produce an effect of

fluid improvisation.

Juxtapositions are another symbolist method to suggest fluidity. In ‘La Soirée dans Grenade’ of *Estampes* by Debussy, the opening gestures are dictated to ‘*commencer lentement dans un rythme nonchalamment gracieux*’— [begin slowly in a nonchalantly graceful rhythm].

**Mouvement de Habanera**  
*Commencer lentement dans un rythme nonchalamment gracieux*

U. S. A. Copyright by  
A. Durand & Fils 1903

D. & F. 6326 (2)

A. Durand & Fils  
Éditeurs à Paris

(‘La Soirée dans Grenade’ of *Estampes*, Claude Debussy, bars 1 to 22)

Debussy prescribes the deportment of this opening gesture, then interrupts the atmosphere of the gracious dance with a boiling and evaporating idea at *Tempo giusto*. The *giusto* gesture is even more exaggerated than that of the Baroque concertos, such as Vivaldi's 'Summer' from the *Four Seasons*, because of its rather short-lived appearance—two bars, with a sort of echo. The juxtaposition of these two radically different ideas are an example of how interrupted lines playfully evoke improvisatory rhapsodies.

Debussy's *Jardins sous la Pluie* from the same set exhibits a previously popular figure, the perpetual motion of the Baroque era. *Jardins*' musical materials evolve like an experiment, like that of a daydream, foraying into possibilities. In Debussy's own words, *Jardins* would "shrink in terror from the brilliantly illuminated salons regularly frequented by those who do not like music. They are rather conversations between the piano and oneself."<sup>191</sup> What we are left with in *Jardins* are nuances of the musical and poetic medium. This piece is a bold experimentation of our temporal experience, represented overtly as the action of the piece, rather than an eloquent narrative with characters and events.

The rhythmic divisions of the perpetual motion is worth detailed study as an example of how fluidity and motion can resonate with the internal dialogue. The piece begins with special interest in subdivisions of eight notes to a beat, marked by quarter notes that serve less like a declamatory melody, and rather like an utterance to confirm awareness of an idea. After three measures, that idea develops, undergoing contemplation in the form of dynamic swells. The same hesitance continues through to bar 22, until the accents of the bar no longer lies only on the

---

<sup>191</sup> Roger Nichols, "Claude Debussy," *New Grove twentieth-century French masters* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 88.

second half note, but on both the first and second half-notes. The musical idea morphs back to its original eight notes to a beat (bar 25), moving nowhere, like an unbudging thought. The momentum builds over the course of bars 56 to 72, as the pace quickens and increases little by little *animez et augmentez peu à peu*. This quickening creates an atmosphere of desire, passion, and excitement.

(see next page: 'Jardins sous la pluie' from *Estampes*, Claude Debussy, bars 16-30)

First system of musical notation, featuring a piano accompaniment with a steady eighth-note pattern in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

Second system of musical notation, including the instruction *poco cresc.* above the staff.

Third system of musical notation, including the instruction *molto cresc.* and a dynamic marking *f*.

Fourth system of musical notation, including the instruction *dim. - - - molto* and a dynamic marking *pp*.

Fifth system of musical notation, continuing the piano accompaniment.

ff *dim.*

*p dim. pp*

*p*

*p* Animez et augmentez peu à peu

D. &amp; F. 6326 (3)

(bars 46-59)

*p*

*f*

*dim.* *p*

En se calmant

D. & F. 6326 (3)

(bars 60-74)

**1<sup>o</sup> Tempo (moins rigoureux)**

*pp*

*p doucement expressif*

**Retenu**

*mf*

*dim.*

D. &amp; F. 6326 (3)

(bars 75-89)



1<sup>o</sup> Tempo (mystérieux)

The first system of the musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with slurs and fingering numbers (5, 6, 5). The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with slurs and fingering numbers (5, 6, 5). The dynamic marking *pp* is placed between the staves. The system is divided into two measures: the first measure contains bars 99-105, and the second measure contains bars 106-116.

D. & F. 6326 (3)

(bars 99-105; bars 106-116)

22

The second system of the musical score consists of three staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with slurs and fingering numbers (5, 6, 5). The middle staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with slurs and fingering numbers (5, 6, 5). The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with slurs and fingering numbers (5, 6, 5). The dynamic marking *cresc. - - - molto* is placed between the middle and lower staves. The dynamic marking *la m.g. en dehors* is placed between the upper and middle staves. The dynamic marking *f* is placed between the middle and lower staves. The system is divided into two measures: the first measure contains bars 106-116, and the second measure contains bars 117-123.

8

Rapide

Retenu

*p*     *più p*     *pp*

*tr#*     *tr#*     *tr*     *tr*

*dim.*

6     6     6     6

(bars 117-125; 148-157)

*mf*

*cresc.*     *molto cresc.*

*f*     *ff*     *ff*

8va

\*

At bar 71-72, the pulse is felt in one rather than two, as if the previous activities lead up to transmutation into unity—all one tone G#—or an epiphany. After such an awakening, the next section from bars 75 to 99 suggest a calming, *moins rigoureux* explication of introspection. The mysterious gestures reach an undefined conclusion at bars 81, 87, and 98. This section is an example of stasis, where each movement is stalemate, with no motive, no impetus for change despite action; It is inaction, charting through time. At bar 100, the attention shifts from the beats to the notes in between beats. Though the pace is still in original tempo, the quintuplet figures which arabesque up and down in an enigmatic manner propels a mood of dynamic inner growth. This undulating texture proceeds to climb by half-steps— bar 103 introduces the C#, bar 104 D, and so on. Each step of the climb is refreshing, despite the predictability of a chromatic rise. The unstable sextuplet addition to every other bar shakes our expectations (bars 107, 108, 111). This growth is like a calculated appeal, which then bursts into the declarative spurts at bar 116. After the repeated arpeggiated figures evoke this sense of arduous climbing, the kicking bursts at bars 116 to 121 are effervescent and short-lived. The finale of *Jardins* brilliantly convey the activeness of human experience and thinking. This outward showing of an inward conversation ends in a *scherzando* play of the figures, celebrating the whole idea in connection, with legato underpinnings rather than segmented staccati (bars 149 to 154). The piece begins with e minor, and ends in the parallel E major, further supports the piece's explication of an interior resolution.

The fluidity demonstrated in these examples play with the multitude of methods to reflect indefinable interiority. To quote Bergson, “a melody to which we listen with our eyes closed, heeding it alone, comes close to coinciding with this time which is the very fluidity of our inner

life."<sup>192</sup> That very indefinable quality becomes the forest from which these symbols can proliferate. Performers who understand the artistic aims of fluidity can come to their own conclusions in interpretation.

### 3.3 Stasis

A common theme in poetic contemplations is the idea of the infinite. Many composers find inspiration in nature, as piece titles often suggest, but only because nature is the easiest and most accessible portal into the infinite. All creatures are finite. Time, nature, the spiritual—these are infinite. The concept of eternity evokes undefined beginnings and ends. The future is as mysterious as dreams and memories, for it is "concealed from us by a screen... what we called the passing of time was only the steady sliding of the screen and the gradually obtained vision of what lay waiting, globally, in eternity... it is we who are passing when we say time passes; it is the motion before our eyes which, moment by moment, actualizes a complete history given virtually."<sup>193</sup> One day, our sense of time will end, but time triumphs because it is eternal. This suggests that time can be miniaturized, in the sense that each finitude is a portrayal of miniaturized time—time autonomous to that being. In the same vein, a musical work is a miniaturization of time. Music can approach eternity by way of sounds that are round, undefined, edgeless, and sinuous.

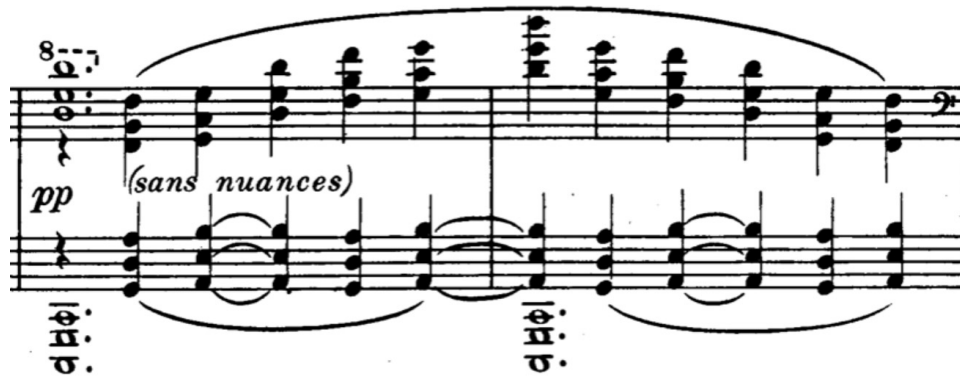
In Debussy's '*Cathédrale engloutie*' from *Les Preludes Livre I*, the *sans nuances* of the motiveless chords extends the reverberations of the overarching chord (bar 14) in open CGBE

---

<sup>192</sup> Henri Bergson, *Duration and Simultaneity*, trans. Leon Jacobson (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc.), 1922, 44.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.* 61.

tone. Such indications to play without nuance remind performers that this chord's only function is pleasure, sound, and not arrival of any voice-leading. Eternity, in this portrayal, is simultaneously forward moving, and static as well. The time moves, but the feeling and atmosphere can still be experienced as *stasis*.



(bars 14-15)

Debussy use the same technique in 'Pagodes' from *Estampes*. The marking *délicatement et presque sans nuances* appears above the third bar of the piece. The entire passage is quite active in figures, but stasis mood pervades on account of the pedal tone-color, the fifth B-F#. Paradoxically, nothing happens, yet time is sectioned off by the off-beat chords (bars 1-10). The magnitude of this static effect is further amplified by the *ritardando* at ends of the phrases. They are, in essence, the opposite of a forward-looking rubato. Instead, they function as elongation of the last beat of the bar (bars 4, 8), similar to 'Les Sons et Les Parfums tournent dans l'air du soir',

(see next page: 'Pagodes' from *Estampes*, Claude Debussy, bars 1-12)

*délicatement et presque sans nuances*

**Modérément animé**

*PIANO* *pp* *m.d.* *m.g.*

2 Red.

8 3

a Tempo Rit.

a Tempo Rit. a Tempo

8 3

p

2 Red.

without explicitly re-metering the bar. The shimmering arabesques of parallel chords (bars 27-30) present a sonic mass made possible by the sustain pedal. Like the water in Arnold Böcklin's painting, *The Surf*, also known as *The Roar of the Sea (The Sound)*, there is no action in figure, only lines. That which moves is actually a color of inaction.

3

Revenez au 1<sup>o</sup> Tempo

2 *Ad.* - - - - - *Ad.*

(bars 27-29)

The placid waves are not roaring in the painting, and neither is this configuration of parallel chords. Instead, these arabesques are simply a return to the familiar, the same sense of active inactivity presented in the opening. It seems, that for all the movement of the piece, it has barely taken a step at all!

More obvious portrayals of stasis can be found in Alexander Scriabin's Sonata No.5. The *languido* passages (bars 13-33; 166-184) exhibit gestures that arabesque in similar motions. Each appearance has slightly altered notes, or different notes altogether, though they are united in colors and mood. Similarly, the *Meno Vivo* passage's (bars 120-139) layered chords contain smoldering chromatic inner voices, whose gestures pendulum from the first chord in the downbeats (bars 120, 124, 128, 134, 138) into expansive chords two measures later. Each instance of this expansion, however, contains different pitches. The unity is in their tone-color; they belong to the same palette. The colors of these passages create a marble texture, swirling in a sea of familiar gestures, different in pitch and yet atmospherically static. This meditative technique reverses the unfamiliar, and render it



familiar. Though nothing overtly repeats in the piece, one finds that these passages sinuously obstinate, immobile even. In the last occurrence of this passage (bars 138-140) the *molto rallentando* transforms the temporally gel-like chromatic line from its dousing line, into an extinguishing fire that suddenly flicker alive once more through the elided last note of bar 139, e-flat, with the top note of the first chord in the *Allegro fantastico* section. Like the *volta*, or the poetic turn, this extreme juxtaposition exaggerates the seeming timelessness of the static passages with the ecstat-

120 *Meno vivo* *pp accarezzevole* *molto rall.* *a tempo*

124 *rall.* *a tempo*

128 *rall.* *a tempo*

131 *rall.*

134 *rall.*

137 *molto rall.*



13 Languido

*pp dolciss.* *con voglia*

*una corda*

*pochiss.* *pochiss.*

19

*poco cresc.* *dim.* *pp* *poco cresc.* *dim.*

25

*pp* *poco cresc.* *dim.* *pp molto languido*

31 Accarezzevole

*poco cresc.* *dim. smorz.* *p dolce*

36

*accel.* *poco cresc.*

137

*MORE TANTO*

Allegro fantastico  
molto accel.

140

*p cresc.* *f*

5 4 5

The image displays three systems of musical notation for piano. The first system is marked *a tempo pochissimo più mosso* and *mf poco marcato*. It features a complex texture with multiple layers of chords and a melodic line in the right hand. The second system is marked *poco rit.* and shows a similar texture with a more pronounced melodic line in the right hand. The third system is also marked *poco rit.* and continues the complex chordal texture with a melodic line in the right hand.

ic *fantastico* section.

( 'The Garden of Soul-Sympathy' from *Five Poems*, Cyril Scott, bars 20-27)

Unlike 'The Garden of Soul-Sympathy' from *Five Poems* by Cyril Scott (bars 20-27), where the parallel 'Canope'-esque multi-layered chords fluidly trace a modal melody, Maurice Ravel's 'Le Gibet' from *Gaspard de la Nuit* uses the roving chords to achieve an ethereal sound (bars 20-24), rather than contour the modal melody. This instance of non-resolving chords are

found in contrary motion between the top and bottom layers, yet moving in parallel motion linearly (bars 20 and 23). These light *trés lié* chords shades the iridescence of the Bb repeated note. These ever-changing chords provide a fresh take on the firm Bb, and questions our remembrance of each Bb tone that came before—are the notes of the motif all identical, in essence? The Bb is obscured in bar 21, followed by a subtle modulation that turns the Bb into A#. This turn of events evokes the feelings of a distant and vague memory; the distortion is slight, and the hypnotic B flats ensures that such a sinewy modulation maintains stasis. Even though the tonal identity of the motif is compromised as it snakes in and out of dimension (bars 28-29 to bar 30) and oscillates the spelling of the repeated note motif, the atmosphere here still connotes eeriness and uncanniness, the familiar yet unfamiliar, like the *déjà vu* of Poe, Rosetti, Dickens, or even Faulkner.

(see next page: bars 19 - 27)

First system of a musical score. It consists of three staves: a single treble clef staff at the top, and a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) below. The music is in a key with two flats and a 4/4 time signature. The top staff contains a melodic line with slurs and ties. The middle staff contains a bass line with a dynamic marking *m.g.* and various rhythmic patterns. The bottom staff contains a bass line with chords and a dynamic marking *mf*.

Second system of the musical score. It consists of three staves: a single treble clef staff at the top, and a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) below. The music continues in the same key and time signature. The top staff features a melodic line with slurs. The middle staff has a dynamic marking *m.d.* and includes a section with a key signature change to three flats. The bottom staff contains a bass line with chords and a dynamic marking *mf*.

Third system of the musical score. It consists of three staves: a single treble clef staff at the top, and a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) below. The music continues in the same key and time signature. The top staff features a melodic line with slurs. The middle staff contains a bass line with chords and a dynamic marking *mf*. The bottom staff contains a bass line with chords and a dynamic marking *mf*.

(‘Le Gibet’ from *Gaspard de la Nuit*, Maurice Ravel, bars 28-30)

Bartók's *Seven Sketches* contains prevalent experimentation of symbolist preferences.

There are portrayals of fluidity in chords with no preparation, 'Portrait of a Girl' at bars 33-36, for example. This particular sketch is reminiscent of *La Fille Aux Cheveux De Lin* from Debussy's *Les Preludes Livre I*. The third sketch, *Lento*, presents subtle moving chords, akin to 'Le Gibet' and *Languido* from Scriabin's Sonata No.5. At the outset, the sparsely layered gestures are modular and aimless. This movement obtains its meditative and brooding atmosphere from the slow-moving tenths of the bass clef. The piece ends with the characteristic symbolist *crescendo decrescendo* hairpin. Like the ending to the first movement of *La Mer*, 'De l'aube à midi sur la mer', this dynamic swell denies the movement of heroic rhetoric, despite its consonant ending.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system, starting at bar 27, features a treble and bass clef. The treble clef part has a melodic line with various intervals and a fermata at the end. The bass clef part provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines. Performance markings include *mf*, *dolce*, *p*, and *espr.*. The second system, starting at bar 35, is marked *Sostenuto molto espr.* and includes a key signature change to two flats. It features a complex texture with overlapping lines and chords. Performance markings include *mf*, *pp ma*, and *l.h.* (left hand).

(‘Portrait of a Girl’ from *Seven Sketches*, Béla Bartók, bars 27 - 41)

( see next page: ‘Lento’ from *Seven Sketches*, Béla Bartók, bars 1 to 16)



## Concluding Remarks

By understanding the symbolist process and love of sound, a performer can instill the inspiration and imagination left un-noted on the score by the composer, recovered by the performer and brought to presentation. Interpreting and shaping gestures are not solely a symbolist activity, but is an undertaking for all music. By tracing the musical configurations of these pieces, the performer can illustrate the total ideas of the work of art.

Debussy called for music to be blended with the “open-air,”<sup>194</sup> to be out in the streets, with concert programs that are not limited to the few rotating masterpieces. Performances in the public are the “best imaginable educator of mediocrity,”<sup>195</sup> and the masses are not at fault for being ignorant when the music has been boxed up in concert halls. To add, Debussy believes in “simpler entertainments in greater harmony with natural scenery,”<sup>196</sup> where the music performed is also composed with that in mind with matching “broad lines, [*sic*] bold vocal and instrumental effects, which would sport and skim among the tree-tops in the sunshine and fresh air. Harmonies which would seem out of place in an enclosed concert room would be in their true environment here.”<sup>197</sup> If we further the logic of that last sentence, music composed with these aims would then evolve to fit the expanse of nature. While it is not entirely possible to perform outdoors for most pianists, we can bring considerations of space and the outdoors into our interpretation.

---

<sup>194</sup> Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche: the dilettante hater*, 83.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.* 85.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.* 85.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.* 86.



The same open-intention in portrayals of fluidity and stasis in the gestures of symbolist music can benefit the breathability of the performance. The fresh air is akin to the vibrations of sound; as they enter our bodies, both invigorate the soul. Music is no more idle entertainment, than fresh open air is frivolous luxury. With these aesthetics in mind, the performer can let inspiration and imagination take over, creating any desired effects. I would like to conclude the dissertation with a few symbolist pass-words and phrases to edify those seeking more practical advice than what I have given here. While contemplation and simulation of possibilities, or dreams, are long during the study of a piece, action is brief, if at all. Playing music need not be about a goal, but rather the practice. Every trained pianist has finger dexterity, but it is the uniqueness of each experience that creates magic in music.

# Bibliography

## Primary Printed Sources - Musical

### Works by Debussy

*En blanc et noir*. Paris: Durand et Cie., 1915.

*Estampes*. Paris: Durand & Fils, 1903.

*Préludes (Book 1)*. Paris: Durand & Cie., 1910.

*Préludes (Book 2)*. Paris: Durand & Cie., 1913.

*Pelleas et Mélisande*. Paris: E. Fromont, 1904.

*Images*. Paris: Durand & Fils, 1907.

*L'Isle Joyeuse*. Paris: Durand & Fils, 1904.

*La Damoiselle Éluë*. Paris: Durand & Fils, 1902.

*Masques*. Paris: Durand & Fils, 1904.

### Works by other Composers

Bartók, Béla. *Seven Sketches*. 1911.

Boulanger, Lili. *Trois Morceaux*. New York: Schirmer, 1979.

Ravel, Maurice. *Gaspard de la nuit: Trois poèmes pour piano d'après Aloysius Bertrand*. Durand & Fils, 1909.

Scriabin, Alexander. *Piano Sonata no.5, Op.53*. *Ausgewählte Klavierwerke, Band 5: Sonaten 1-5* (pp.93-111). Leipzig: Edition Peters, No.9077, 1971

Scott, Cyril. *The Garden of Sympathy*. Mainz: B. Schott's Söhne, 1912.

Szymanowski, Karol. *Métopes, Op.24 No.1-3*. Vienna: Universal Edition, 1922.

Szymanowski, Karol. *Masques, Op.34*. Vienna: Universal Edition, 1919.

### Primary Printed Sources

Block, Haskell M. "The Alleged Parallel of Metaphysical and Symbolist Poetry." *Comparative Literature Studies* 4 (1-2), 1967. 155.

Cassou, Jean. *The Concise Encyclopedia of Symbolism*. Secaucus, NJ: Chartwell Books, 1979.

Claudon, Francis. "Music." *The Concise Encyclopedia of Symbolism*. Edited by Jean Cassou. Secaucus, NJ: Chartwell Books, 1979.

Cortot, Alfred. *The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*. London: J. & W. Chester, Ltd., 1922.

Dayan, Peter. "On Nature, Music, and Meaning in Debussy's Writing." *19th-Century Music* 28, no. 3 (2005): 214-29. doi:10.1525/ncm.2005.28.3.214.

Debussy, Claude. *Monsieur Croche, the Dilettante Hater*. New York: The Viking Press, 1928.

Debussy, Claude. *Monsieur Croche et Autres Écrits*. Edited by François Lesure. Paris: Gallimard, 1987.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. "The Relevance of the beautiful." *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*. Edited by Robert Bernasconi. Translated by Nicholas Walker. Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *In Truth and Method*, New York: Crossroad, 1989.

Heyman, Katherine Ruth Willoughby. *The Relation of Ultramodern to Archaic Music*. Boston: Small, Maynard &, 1921.

Holloway, Robin. *Debussy and Wagner*. London: E. Eulenburg, 1979.

Jarociński, Stefan. *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*. Translated by Rollo Myers. London: Eulenburg, 1976.

Mallarmé, Stéphane and Henri Mondor. *Correspondance, 1862-1871*. Paris: Gallimard, 1959-1969.

Nectoux, Jean-Michel. *New Grove twentieth-century French masters*. London: Macmillan, 1986

Nichols, Roger. "Claude Debussy." *New Grove twentieth-century French masters*. London: Macmillan, 1986

Palmer, Christopher. *Impressionism in Music*. London: Hutchinson, 1973.

Palmer, Peter. "Lost Paradises: Music and the Aesthetics of Symbolism." *The Musical Times* 148, no. 1899 (2007): 37-50. doi:10.2307/25434456.

Roberts, Paul. *Claude Debussy*. Phaidon Press, 2008.

Savage, Roger W.H. "Is Music Mimetic? Ricoeur and the Limits of Narrative." *Journal of French Philosophy* 16, no.1-2 (2006): 121-133.

Wolf, Norbert. *Symbolism*. Taschen, 2015.

### Other Works Consulted

"Art for art's sake." New World Encyclopedia, . 15 Apr 2016, 16:03 UTC. 21 May 2017, 03:55  
<[http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Art\\_for\\_art%27s\\_sake&oldid=995328](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/p/index.php?title=Art_for_art%27s_sake&oldid=995328)>.

Antokoletz, Elliott. *Twentieth-century Music*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992.

Antokoletz, Elliott, and Juana Canabal Antokoletz. *Musical Symbolism in the Operas of Debussy and Bartók: Trauma, Gender, and the Unfolding of the Unconscious*. Oxford: Oxford

- University Press, 2004.
- Antokoletz, Elliott, and Marianne Wheeldon. *Rethinking Debussy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Baudelaire, Charles. "L'art Philosophique." *Oeuvres Complètes de Charles Baudelaire III L'art Romantique*. Edited by Calmann Lévy. Paris: Ancienne Maison Michel Lévy Frères, 1885.
- Bergson, Henri. *Duration and Simultaneity*. Trans. Leon Jacobson. New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc. 1922.
- Byrnside, Ronald L. "Musical Impressionism: The Early History of the Term." *Musical Quarterly* *The Musical Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (October 1980): 522-37. doi:10.1093/mq/lxvi.4.522.
- Caroll, David. *Paraesthetics: Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida*. London: Methuen, 1987.
- Cogeval, Guy. *Debussy: la musique et les arts*. Paris: Skira Flammarion, 2012.
- Debussy, Claude. "Monsieur Croche the Dilettante Hater." *Three Classics in the Aesthetic of Music*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1962.
- Devoto, Mark. "The Debussy Sound: Colour, Texture, Gesture." *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*: 179-96. doi:10.1017/ccol9780521652438.012.
- Dondo, Mathurin. "Les Premiers Poètes du Vers Libre Anglais." *The French Review* 8 (1934): 108-122.
- Garcia, Emanuel E. "Alexander Scriabin's Mysterium and the Transcendence of Music: Psychoanalytic Notes on Genius, Mysticism and Art." *The Psychoanalytic Review* 96, no. 3 (2009): 461-83. doi:10.1521/prev.2009.96.3.461.

- Garcia, Susanna. "Scriabin's Symbolist Plot Archetype in the Late Piano Sonatas." *19th-Century Music* 23, no. 3 (2000): 273-300. doi:10.1525/ncm.2000.23.3.02a00050.
- Lawrence Gilman, *The Music of To-Morrow and Other Studies*. New York: John Lane Company, 1907.
- Gould, Glenn. *The Glenn Gould Reader*. ed. Page T., New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.
- Howat, Roy. *Debussy in Proportion: A Musical Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Hull, A. Eaglefield. "Scriabin's Scientific Derivation of Harmony Versus Empirical Methods." *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 43, no. 1 (1916): 17-28. doi:10.1093/jrma/43.1.17.
- Jankélévitch, Vladimir. *La Vie Et La Mort Dans La Musique De Debussy*. Neuchâtel: La Baconnière, 1968.
- Jankelevitch, Vladimir. *Music and the Ineffable*. Translated by Carolyn Abbate. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Jankélévitch, Vladimir. *Henri Bergson*. Edited by Nils F. Schott, Alexandre Lefebvre. Duke University Press, 2015.
- Jones, Graham. *Lyotard Reframed : Interpreting Key Thinkers For The Arts*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2014.
- Kravitt, Edward F. *The Lied: Mirror of Late Romanticism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996.
- Kaltenecker, Martin. "L'impressionnisme comme forme de vie : écoutes allemandes de Debussy dans les années 1920." *Debussy: la musique et les arts*. Paris: Skira Flammarion, 2012.

- Laloy, Louis. *Louis Laloy (1874-1944) on Debussy, Ravel, and Stravinsky*. Ed. Deborah Priest. Ashgate: University of Michigan, 1999.
- Leitch, Vincent B. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. New York: Norton, 2001.
- Lippman, Edward Arthur. "Symbolism In Music." *Musical Quarterly The Musical Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (1953): 554-75. doi:10.1093/mq/xxxix.4.554.
- Lockspeiser, Edward. "Portrait of Debussy. 11: Debussy in Perspective." *The Musical Times* 109, no. 1508 (1968): 904. doi:10.2307/953555.
- Mallarmé, Stéphane and Henri Mondor. *Correspondance, 1862-1871*. Paris: Gallimard, 1959-1969.
- McCombie, Elizabeth. *Mallarmé and Debussy: Unheard Music, Unseen Text*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003.
- Munro, Thomas. "Suggestion and Symbolism in the Arts." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 15, no. 2 (1956): 152. doi:10.2307/427873.
- Nadeau, Roland. "Debussy and the Crisis of Tonality." *Music Educators Journal* 66, no. 1 (1979): 69. doi:10.2307/3395721.
- Nectoux, Jean-Michel. *Harmonie en bleu et or : Debussy, la musique et les arts*. Paris: Fayards, 2015.
- Nectoux, Jean-Michel. "Je veux écrire mon songe musical ...." *Debussy: la musique et les arts*. Paris: Skira Flammarion, 2012.
- Nonken, Marilyn, and Hugues Dufourt. *The Spectral Piano: From Liszt, Scriabin, and Debussy to the Digital Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- O'Shiel, Daniel. "Satre's Magical Being: An Introduction by way of an Example," *Sartre Studies*

*International*, Vol 17:2 (2011) 28-31.

Palmer, Christopher. "Debussy, Vaughan Williams And Debussy." *Music and Letters* L, no. 4 (1969): 475-80. doi:10.1093/ml/l.4.475

Phillips, C. Henry. "The Symbolists And Debussy." *Music and Letters* XIII, no. 3 (1932): 298-311. doi:10.1093/ml/xiii.3.298.

Poe, Edgar Allen. "The Philosophy of Composition." *The Project Gutenberg EBook of Edgar Allan Poe's Complete Poetical Works*. Edited by John H. Ingram. Produced by Clytie Siddall, Charles Aldarondo, Keren Vernon and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team. Project Gutenberg, 2003. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/10031/10031-h/10031-h.htm>

Pomeroy, Boyd. "Debussy's Tonality: A Formal Perspective." *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*: 153-78. doi:10.1017/ccol9780521652438.011.

Raad, Virginia. *The Piano Sonority of Claude Debussy*. E. Mellon Press, 1994.

Rammer, Dominick. "Debussy: to finger or not to finger...? Why we are adding fingering in the 'Études.'" Blog. G. Henle Verlag, 2012. <http://www.henle.de/blog/en/2012/05/14/debussy-to-finger-or-not-to-finger%E2%80%A6-why-we-are-adding-fingering-in-the-%E2%80%9Cetudes%E2%80%9D/>

Schinz, Albert. "Literary Symbolism in France." *Modern Language Association* 18 (2): 1903.

Smith, Kenneth M. *Skryabin, Philosophy and the Music of Desire*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013.

Smith, Richard Langham. "Debussy and the Pre-Raphaelites." *19th-Century Music* 5, no. 2 (1981): 95-109. doi:10.1525/ncm.1981.5.2.02a00010.

Smith, Richard Langham. *Debussy Studies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.



Taylor, Benedict. *Melody of time : music and temporality in the romantic era*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Verlaine, Paul. *Selected Poems*. Translated by Carlyle Ferren MacIntyre. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948.

Wheeldon, Marianne. *Debussy's Late Style*. Indiana University Press, 2009.

Yeats, W.B. "Symbolism in Painting." *Ideas of Good and Evil*. Project Gutenberg. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/32884/32884-h/32884-h.htm>.