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Debussy and Schoenberg: Two musical reactions to late romanticism

Priscila Ott Falcao Oliveira
James Madison University

Debussy and Schoenberg: Two Musical Reactions to Late Romanticism

Priscila Oliveira

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Abstract

Debussy and Schoenberg were arguably the most important composers at the turn of the twentieth century. Their musical and theoretical innovations influenced many generations of composers, and opened doors for new possibilities in music. Debussy and Schoenberg represent two different musical directions born of two different artistic conceptions and traditions. In comparing the two composers one can see the opposition between France and Germany, between impressionism and expressionism, between tradition and revolution. They both wrote significant piano pieces that illustrate the evolution of their compositional techniques and styles. Debussy and Schoenberg left letters and essays with their opinions about music, and also about each other, which provide another interesting point of comparison.

This paper will investigate the development of Debussy's and Schoenberg's styles based on an examination of their scores and their own writings. With the aim of better understanding the early influences on both composers, this study will first discuss late romantic musical trends at the close of the nineteenth century. It will briefly relate the composers' biographies and philosophies, and analyze what influenced their lives, their music and their ideology. Finally, this paper will examine how their music was received by the public and how each composer influenced contemporary and future composers. Schoenberg's Three Piano Pieces, op. 11 and selected preludes of Debussy will be used as the primary examples.

I. Introduction

The stage for twentieth century modernism was already being prepared by nineteenth century society, economics, politics, culture, and arts. The romantic period, which had its heyday in the nineteenth century, encouraged the philosophies of individualism, humanism, and freedom from classical conventions, all of which paved the way for crucial changes in the new century.

Claude-Achille Debussy (1862-1918) and Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951) were both influenced by the Romantic period. However, they represent two different musical directions born of two different artistic conceptions and traditions. In comparing the two composers one can see the opposition between France and Germany, between impressionism and expressionism, between tradition and revolution. Both composers expanded the harmonic language and moved away from the traditional use of tonality.

Although their works sound considerably different, the composers had the same goal: to innovate and lead music onto a new path, and to uplift their national heritages. Both embarked on new directions on music and became leading composers of the twentieth century, influencing contemporary and subsequent composers. The piano works of Debussy and Schoenberg reflect the development of each composer's compositional style and have an important place not only within their oeuvre, but also within the history of piano music.

Both composers left letters and essays with their opinions about music, and also about each other, which makes the study of the evolution of their styles fascinating. Debussy wrote articles as a music critic, and signed some of them "Monsieur Croche," an imaginary character created by him. Schoenberg wrote not only about music, but also

about philosophy, politics, economics, and aesthetics.[1] His essays on music and composers were compiled into the book *Style and Idea*.[2] Additionally, Schoenberg's books on harmony and counterpoint, such as *Theory of Harmony*, *Structural Functions of Harmony* and *Preliminary Exercises in Counterpoint*, are still used in theory and composition courses today.

In order to better understand the musical and stylistic inheritance of Debussy and Schoenberg, this paper includes a first chapter that discusses late romantic musical trends at the close of the nineteenth century. A separate chapter is reserved for each composer, covering their succinct biographies, the influence of their nationalities on their lives, the forces that influenced their music (composers, ideologies, artistic movements, musical elements), and finally, an analysis of some of their pieces with regard to compositional style, harmonic material and form. Since Schoenberg's Three Piano Pieces, op. 11 and Debussy's Preludes were written during the same period, these pieces will be used as the main examples in this paper.

To conclude, there is a final chapter comparing Debussy and Schoenberg in terms of their philosophies, musical styles, piano writing, and the acceptance of their music by the public. Additionally, their influence on future composers is examined.

The ultimate purpose of this study is to look at both composers, Debussy and Schoenberg, consulting their scores and their own writings, in order to find out their thoughts on music, what influenced their style and how they and their oeuvre fit into the history of music.

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[1] Egbert M. Ennulat ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Correspondence: a Collection of Translated and Annotated Letters Exchanged with Guido Adler, Pablo Casals, Emanuel Feuermann and Olin Downes* (Metuches, N.J., & London: The Scarecow Press, Inc., 1991), 4.
[2] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950).

II. From Romanticism to the Twentieth Century

In the Romantic period, ideas of humanism and individualism spread out through Europe, and were directly reflected in culture and arts. Artists tried to release themselves from classical conventions, common practices, and aesthetic values. They followed their own imagination, creating art characterized by fantasy, ambiguity, obscurity, and the expression of inner feelings. The increase of individualism consequently led to greater variety in artistic styles and techniques.

The connection between different forms of art became stronger, and composers tried to express extra-musical elements such as nature, paintings, literature, and feelings in their music. New genres that enabled the association with extra-musical elements gained importance, such as the character pieces, nocturnes, and symphonic poems. We also find extremes in length: short improvisation-like pieces, such as Frédéric Chopin's (1810-1849) preludes, contrasted with long pieces, such as Franz Schubert's (1797-1828) late sonatas.

New scales and modes, as well as augmented and altered chords enriched the harmonic language of this period. Late-romantic composers delayed the resolution of dissonant chords and extended the use of chromaticism to a point that functional harmony lost its central role, and by the end of the nineteenth century the supremacy of tonality was over.

The role of the composer became more respected. Performers were expected to execute with more accuracy what was written and no longer add their own embellishments and ornaments to a piece. Concerto cadenzas, formerly improvised by the performer, were now written out by the composer.

Romantic ideologies, such as artistic individuality and freedom from classical traditions were even more developed in the music of the twentieth century. Composers were more specific with their expressive indications in the score, and stylistic differences between composers increased. In the twentieth century there was no longer one dominant stylistic path, but many different branches. The rupture with tonality caused a permanent crisis in musical language, which is also known as the "loss of a mother-tongue"[3] – a "mother-tongue" that had been used for roughly two centuries. There was no substitution for this "mother-tongue" that pleased unanimously. This also led composers to fight for their individuality and search for new paths.

Thus, it is possible to affirm that the extreme of Romantic ideologies culminated in the crisis of the twentieth century. Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) talks about the beginning of the twentieth century and what was happening in art, society, and politics. In the next two passages one can find words that define characteristics of Romantic aesthetics, such as the avoidance of traditions, or "fantasies," "ambiguities of dreams," "images," "symbols" – all of them present in the "air" of the new century:

> … there is something else in the air; a disturbance, a prescient feeling that all this smug optimism can't last – neither tonality, nor figurative painting, nor syntactical poetry, nor, indeed, the seemingly endless growth of the bourgeoisie, or of colonial wealth, or of imperial power. Sensitive minds are hinting at a social collapse, a monstrous World War. A premature flicker of fascism is already perceptible: Marinetti's famous Manifesto of Futurism is about to appear, glorifying war, the machine, speed, danger, and calling for the destruction of the past with all its traditions, including music.[4]

In another passage, he states:

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[3] *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 4th ed., s.v. "Twentieth century, Western art music of the."
[4] Leonard Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 265.

> The tugs and strains that were wrenching at figurative painting had already produced Impressionism; the representational object was fast disappearing into washes of color, suggestive formations, chromatic pointillistic fantasies . . . Poetry has begun to show a remarkable disintegration of syntax, a diffusion of meaning or of logical continuity that intoxicates the mind . . . And everywhere hovers a delicious vagueness, a highly charged ambiguousness of dreams, images and symbols.[5]

Some composers were particularly essential in the transition from Romantic to twentieth century music, and used in their works elements that led to the "new music." Richard Wagner (1813-1883) was considered, arguably, the main figure in this respect. His bold chromaticism and long passages of unresolved dominant chords (such as seen in the famous prelude of *Tristan and Isolde*) had an important influence on his contemporaries and on future composers. His use of the *leitmotif* (leading motif) as the germ of construction in his music and the combination of different art forms (what he called the *Gesamstkunstwerk* – total work of art) helped to create an endless continuity and an organic structure in music. He influenced not only musicians, but also artists such as the poets of the symbolist movement.[6] As stated by author Barry Millington, "no composer of the post-Wagnerian period can be said to be untouched by his influence, even if only in a negative sense."[7]

Johannes Brahms (1833-1887) was another composer who influenced the subsequent generation, and played an important role in the development of piano music. Although he was called a "classicist" during his time, his compositional techniques show many progressive aspects. Brahms' ability to create an entire piece out of small motifs

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[5] Leonard Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 240.
[6] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Wagner," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/29769pg1#S29769.1.15 (accessed May 30, 2014).
[7] Ibid.

was recognized and imitated by many composers.[8] Schoenberg was a major advocate for Brahms' music, defending him as a progressive composer not only regarding motivic development, but also regarding harmonic and rhythmic elements.

Franz Liszt's (1811-1886) influence on the music of the twentieth century also cannot be overestimated. His last piano pieces reveal a bold change from his previous works. They show an economy of material, and characterize a laconic Liszt, who influenced both Schoenberg and Debussy. *Nuages Gris* (1881) is considered to be "a gateway to modern music."[9] Here Liszt uses a non-western scale as the basic material. He also uses parallel unresolved chords. The title of his last piece for piano solo also reveals his intentions – *Bagatelle ohne Tonart* (Bagatelle Without Tonality, 1885). This piece has no key signature, and tonality is obscured through bold chromaticism. Finally, the last chord of the piece is an unresolved diminished chord ($G\#dim^7$).

Liszt's endings in his late piano works often feel unsettled and show ambiguity and the weakening of tonality. In *La Lugubre Gondola* II (1882) he ends the piece without a cadence, but with a single note that is preceded by a recitative line using chromatic and whole-tone scales (see example 1), obscuring the tonal center. *Nuages Gris* ends with an ambiguous chord. Liszt creates the idea of resolution through the duration of the chords, and through the movement from F# to G in the top line. However, at the end the harmony remains ambiguous (see example 2).

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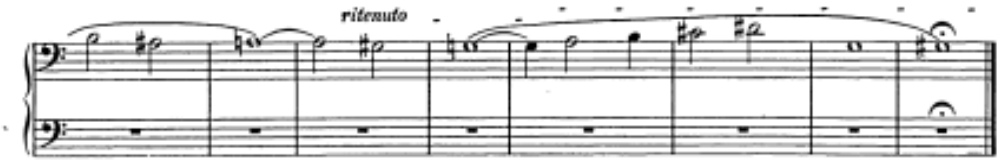
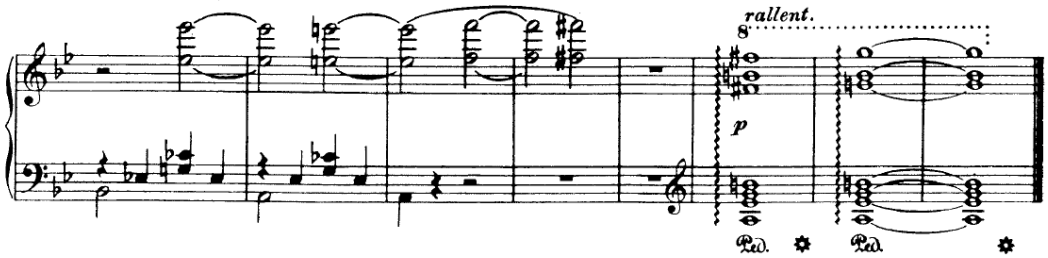
[8] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Brahms, Johannes," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/51879pg6#S51879.6 (accessed April 2 2015).

[9] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Liszt, Franz," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/48265pg25#S48265.25 (accessed May 21, 2014).



Example 1 – Liszt, *La Lugubre Gondola* II, mm. 161-168



Example 2 – Liszt, *Nuages Gris,* mm. 41-48

The technique of "thematic transformation" used by Liszt to unify his pieces also influenced the next generation of composers. As opposed to the "developing variation," which characterizes music built out of small germs, "thematic transformation" deals with the repetition of themes throughout a musical work. However, themes are disguised by the use of different colors, harmonies, textures, registers, modes, etc.

This was the musical scenario during the second half of the nineteenth century. Both Debussy and Schoenberg witnessed these changes in music, and tried – successfully – to find their own voice within the music of the twentieth century.

Debussy was one of the most prominent French composers of the early twentieth century, while Schoenberg was arguably the most influential Austrian composer at the turn of the twentieth century, and was the leader of the Second Viennese School.[10] The musical languages and harmonic innovations of Debussy and Schoenberg influenced

[10] The Classical Viennese School (or First Viennese School) was formed by the major composers of the Classical period – Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, since most of their activities was in Vienna.

many generations of composers. Their works contributed significant to the piano repertoire, and illustrate important aspects and changes in their compositional techniques and styles.

III. Debussy

"there is no theory. . . . Pleasure is the law."[11]
"I love music passionately, and because I love it I try to free it from barren traditions that stifle it. . . It must never be shut in and become an academic art."[12]

- Claude Debussy

Although he never attended ordinary school, Debussy started his music studies at the Paris Conservatory at the age of ten, and studied there for twelve years.[13] He had studied piano previously with Madame Antoinette-Flore Mauté de Fleurville, a pupil of Chopin, and the mother-in-law of the poet Paul Verlaine (1844-1896).[14] The young composer did well in piano at the conservatory. Although he did not win the *premiere prix* (first prize) in piano, he did earn it in his accompanying class. However, Debussy was not successful in his harmony classes, because he did not want to follow the rules.[15] Later on, he explained what he thought of those classes:

> I can assure you I did nothing remarkable in the harmony class. It was the custom of my time for the professors to teach their students by a useless little game that consisted of trying to discover the secrets of a particular composer's harmony. I humbly must confess that I could never discover them and it wasn't hard to console myself.[16]

Debussy once wrote that the study of harmony should be abolished from French conservatories because the composers ended up writing the same way. He also downplayed the value of studying at the conservatory by saying that "the truth is that one

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[11] Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, collect. and introd. François Lesure, trans. and ed. Richard Langham Smith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 85.
[12] Nat Shapiro, *An Encyclopedia of Quotations About Music* (USA: Da Capo Press, 1978), 268.
[13] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Debussy, (Achille-) Claude," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/07353?q=debussy&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (accessed May 22, 2014).
[14] Sachi Patricia Hirakouji, "The 'Piano without Hammers': Considering Debussy's Pianism," (DMA diss., University of Washington, 2008), 7.
[15] He studied with Émile Durand and César Franck. Piet Ketting, *Claude-Achille Debussy* (Stockholm: The Continental Book Company A.B.), 9.
[16] Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, collect. and introd. François Lesure, trans. and ed. Richard Langham Smith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 237.

must escape the Conservatoire as soon as possible in order to find one's individuality."[17] In another occasion he told his harmony teacher that his (Debussy's) rules were according to his own pleasure.[18] Clearly, he was not concerned with succeeding at the conservatoire, as his colleagues were,[19] and believed that following strict academic rules would restrain him from achieving the renewal he wanted in music.[20] He was a rebel. Debussy was even called an anarchist for his unusual harmonies.[21] In an interview, he said:

> For a long time I did not want to study what I considered foolishness. Then I realized that I must at least pretend to study in order to get through the Conservatoire. So I studied, but all that time I worked out my own little schemes, and whenever we were taught anything I made a note in my mind as to whether I considered it right or wrong.[22]

Debussy loved poetry and art. During his childhood he used to spend his money buying new "books or watercolors,"[23] and when he was older, as Paul Roberts states, "his tiny flat in Paris . . . was a shrine to *objects d'art*."[24] He was also fascinated by Eastern music, instruments, paintings, and decorative objects.

Debussy was an active writer. He became a critic for magazine *La Revue blanche*, where he had freedom to write his opinions about specific concerts and music in general. He wrote about many composers, including Robert Schumann (1810-1856), Wagner,

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[17] Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, collect. and introd. François Lesure, trans. and ed. Richard Langham Smith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 238.
[18] Ibid, 85.
[19] François Lesure and Roger Nichols, eds., *Debussy Letters*, trans. Roger Nichols (Cambrige, Massaschussets: Harvard University Press, 1987), xv.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid, 9.
[22] David Grayson, "Claude Debussy Addresses the English Speaking World: Two Interviews, and Article, and The Blessed Damozel," *Cahiers Debussy* 16 (1992): 27 in Naomi Shibatani, "Contrasting Debussy and Ravel: A Stylistic Analysis of Selected Piano Works and *Ondine*" (DMA diss., Rice University, 2008), 8.
[23] François Lesure and Roger Nichols, eds., *Debussy Letters*, trans. Roger Nichols (Cambrige, Massaschussets: Harvard University Press, 1987), xiv.
[24] Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), 58.

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-1881), and Paul Dukas (1865-1935). As Schumann had done with his personalities Eusebius, Florestan and Raro, Debussy created an "alter ego" called "Monsieur Croche," with whom he had imaginary conversations ("Conversation with M. Croche"[25]), encompassing subjects in music, painting, poetry and life. "M. Croche" gave Debussy advice, such as: "Listen to no one's advice except that of the wind in the trees. That can recount the whole history of mankind,"[26] which again shows his disdain for following rules and traditions. Other advice was to "remain unique! . . . unblemished! Being too influenced by one's milieu spoils an artist: in the end he becomes nothing but the expression of his milieu."[27]

Debussy expressed his opinions about music, arts and life in his letters. He declared his love for French music and art, and his desire to revive French music. His patriotism increased during his finals years – during the First World War.[28] One can even say that his strong desire to defend French music was also a reaction against Germany, which had dominated the musical scene for centuries.

Debussy's antipathy towards Germany was not only in the musical sense, but also in the political and social matter. In the middle of the First World War (1915), the composer showed his indignation against German artists and troops in many letters. As he wrote to his friend Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971): "How could we not have foreseen that these men were plotting the destruction of our art, just as they had planned the destruction of our country? Worst of all is this racial hatred which will end only with the

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[25] Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, collect. and introd. François Lesure, trans. and ed. Richard Langham Smith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977).
[26] Ibid, 48.
[27] Ibid.
[28] François Lesure and Roger Nichols, eds., *Debussy Letters*, trans. Roger Nichols (Cambrige, Massaschussets: Harvard University Press, 1987), 290.

last of the Germans! Will there ever be a last German?"[29] He also stated in a letter to his student Nicolas Coronio that "French art needs to take revenge quite as seriously as the French army does!"[30]

With his second wife Emma (1862-1934), Debussy had his only daughter Claude-Emma Debussy, whom he called Chouchou, which means "darling."[31] He liked to have her around while he was teaching, and enjoyed demonstrating things to her on the piano.[32] Chouchou was an inspiration for him and brightened his days. He dedicated his piano suite *Children's Corner* to her, with the following inscription: "For my dear little Chouchou, with her Father's tender apologies for what is about to follow."[33]

III. 1 Extra-musical Influences

Debussy sought inspiration in different forms of art – literature, paintings, sculptures, dance – and even in nature when he composed his music. He once stated that "there is nothing more musical than a sunset."[34] He benefited from the contact with other artists, and his first French biographer, Louis Laloy (1874-1944), even stated that the composer "received his most profitable lessons from poets and painters, not from musicians."[35]

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[29] François Lesure and Roger Nichols, eds., *Debussy Letters*, trans. Roger Nichols (Cambrige, Massaschussets: Harvard University Press, 1987), 308.
[30] Ibid, 292-293.
[31] Ibid, 167.
[32] Ibid, 283.
[33] Kyung-Ae Lee, "A Comparative Study of Debussy's Piano Music Scores and His Own Piano Playing of Selections from His Welte-Mignon Piano Roll Recordings of 1912" (DMA diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2001), 27.
[34] Nat Shapiro, *An Encyclopedia of Quotations About Music* (USA: Da Capo Press, 1978), 268.
[35] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Debussy, (Achille-) Claude," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/07353?q=debussy&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (accessed May 22, 2014).

A lot has been said about Debussy's connection with the artistic movements impressionism and symbolism. Nevertheless, there are discrepancies concerning whether he belonged to one of the movements, both, or neither. It is important to keep in mind that Debussy personally disliked being associated with either movement. In his own words: "*de symbolistes ou d'impressionistes*: useful terms of abuse."[36]

There are even divergences concerning the exact conceptions of both movements. Some consider that the movements had similar ideas, but dealt with different means (painting as opposed to poetry). On the other hand, Roberts states that the impressionists "were essentially Realists, for they sought for things 'at the visible level'" while the symbolists sought for the "mysterious level of thought," and the art of suggestion.[37] In any case, the understanding of impressionist and symbolist ideas are enlightening for the study of Debussy, and help in understanding his musical conceptions and preferences.

The impressionist movement was created by independent painters at the end of the nineteenth century, such as Claude Monet (1840-1926), Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919), Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), Edgar Degas (1834-1917), Édouard Manet (1832-1883) and Paul Cézanne (1839-1906). Instead of painting a landscape, they painted the "impression of a certain hour of the day in a landscape."[38] Impressionist painters explored colors in a different way; they did not mix colors ahead of time on their palette, but combined them directly on the canvas. They avoided black colors and painted

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[36] Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, collect. and introd. François Lesure, trans. and ed. Richard Langham Smith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 489.
[37] Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), 18.
[38] Courthion et Cailler: *Manet raconté par lui-même et par ses amis* (Geneva, 1945) in Stephan Jarocinski, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*, trans. Rollo Myers (London: Yale University Press, 2009), 5.

with free and short brush strokes. Line and form became "secondary to juxtapositions of color and light."[39]

The term "impressionism" was later applied to music. According to Richard Hamann in his book "Impressionism in Life and Art" (*Impressionismus in Leben und Kunst*), parallel dissonant chords (which are one of the features of impressionist music) find their equivalent in the technique of color juxtaposition in painting. In the same way, the lack of tonality can be associated with the "lack of perspective" in painting.[40]

The first time that Debussy's compositional style was described as "impressionist" was in 1887. Similarly to what happened with paintings, the term was used in a pejorative way. In a report of the Secretary by the *Académie des Beaux-Arts* there was this statement about Debussy: "He clearly has a strong feeling for color in music which, when exaggerated, causes him to forget the importance of clarity in design and form. It is very much to be hoped that he will be on his guard against that vague 'Impressionism' which is one of the most dangerous enemies of truth in any work of art.[41]

Interestingly, Debussy used the word "impressions" a few times in one of his articles. He did not mean to relate to the artistic movement, but was referring to his opinions about music. He wrote: "What you will be finding here are my own sincere impressions, exactly as I felt them – more that than 'criticism' . . ."[42] In the same article he wrote: "Finally, let me add that I prefer to keep to 'impressions,' for only these can

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[39] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Impressionism," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/50026?q=impressionism&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (accessed December 18).
[40] Stefan Jarocinski, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*, trans. Rollo Myers (London: Ernst Eulenburg Ltd, 1976), 17.
[41] Ibid, 11.
[42] Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, collect. and introd. François Lesure, trans. and ed. Richard Langham Smith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 13.

give me the freedom to keep my feelings immune from parasitic aesthetics."[43] He wanted to make clear that he was going to write his own pure opinions about music, and not be influenced by any aesthetic convention, rule, or tradition. The famous impressionist painter Monet presented the same conception of "impressions" when he said: "I have always worked better alone, guided solely by my own impressions."[44] Moreover, Debussy's pseudonym "M. Croche" has been associated with Paul Valéry's (1871-1945) character "Monsieur Teste," who tried to keep his impressions pure by burning all his books.[45] Therefore, although Debussy did not like to be associated with impressionism, he composed and wrote about music according to his own "impressions."

Symbolism, on the other hand, was a movement that started at the end of the nineteenth century, and was related to literature and poetry. Symbolism craved for the "inexpressible," for the mysterious and the invisible;[46] it was the art of suggestion. Debussy frequented symbolist literary and artistic gatherings when he was between 25 and 30 years old.[47] The movement included the poets Paul Verlaine and Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898), who were influenced by the romantic poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), a forerunner of the movement, and Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849); all of them influenced Debussy somehow. We find Verlaine's influence in *Clair de lune*, Mallarmé's influence in *Prélude à l'aprés-midi d'un faune*, Baudelaire's influence in the prelude *"Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir"* (The

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[43] Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, collect. and introd. François Lesure, trans. and ed. Richard Langham Smith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 14.
[44] Ibid, 17
[45] Ibid.
[46] Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), 18-19.
[47] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Debussy, (Achille-) Claude," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/07353?q=debussy&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (accessed May 22, 2014).

Sounds and Fragrances Swirl Through the Evening Air), and Poe's influence in the unfinished opera *The Fall of the House of Usher*.

The symbolists admired Wagner for his creation of the *Gesamstkunstwerk*.[48] According to Lesure, the time that Debussy spent frequenting the symbolists gatherings is considered "the most Wagnerian period of his life." One example of a work from this period is his *Fantasie* for piano and orchestra.[49]

Debussy had many friends among impressionist painters and symbolist writers, and both artistic movements influenced the composer to a certain degree. However, one should be careful about labeling his works either as "impressionist" or "symbolist." First of all, his dislike for being associated with both movements should be respected. Moreover, these terms limit Debussy's music, since they do not encompass all of the characteristics of his style.

Another feature of Debussy's music is his fascination for children's subjects. Fairies, mermaids and clowns are all part of Debussy's piano music. As stated by the composer Alfredo Casella (1883-1947),

> To the end [Debussy] remained what the French call *grand enfant*. That same wonderful innocence and limpidity of feeling which is the fundamental characteristic of his art transpired in all his deed and words. At fifty he amused himself more than did his daughter Chouchou with the toys brought for her by her mother.[50]

One example of Debussy's interest in children's subjects is the title of the prelude *"Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses,"* which is a quotation from an illustration by Arthur

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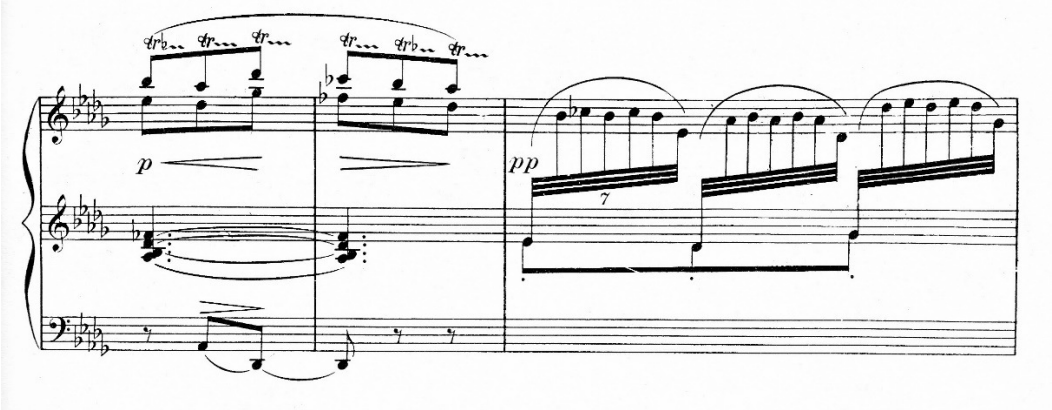
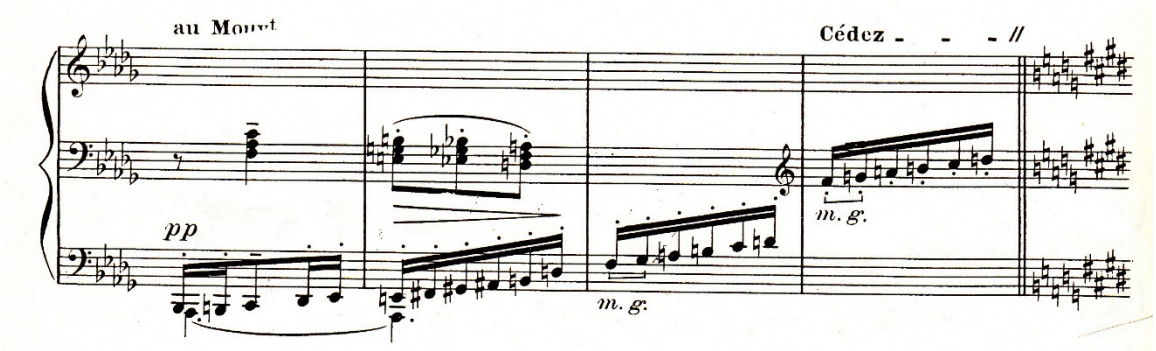
[48] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Debussy, (Achille-) Claude," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/07353?q=debussy&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (accessed May 22, 2014).
[49] Ibid.
[50] Alfred Casella, "Claude Debussy," *The Monthly Musical Record* (January 1933) in Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), 201.

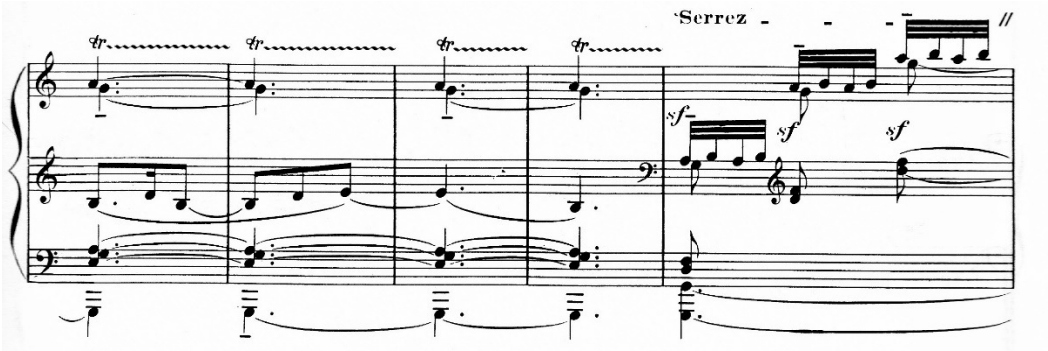
Rackam (1867-1939) in the book *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, by J. M. Barrie (1860-1937). The book belonged to Debussy's daughter Chouchou. In the picture, a fairy is dancing on a thread of a cobweb, while a spider plays the cello and a grasshopper plays the clarinet. Debussy portrays the playfulness and flow of the fairy's dance through light and soft passages of repetitive gestures, trills, rapid scales, and staccato figures, as can be seen in examples 3 through 5.



Example 3 – Debussy, *"Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses,"* mm. 11-13



Example 4 – Debussy, *"Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses,"* mm. 28-31



Example 5 – Debussy, *"Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses"*, mm. 84-88

Another obvious presentation of childish and innocent subjects is the suite *Children's Corner* (1906-1908), which includes the pieces *Jimbo's Lullaby*, *Serenade of the Doll*, *The Snow is Dancing*, *The Little Shepherd*, and *Golliwogg's Cake-Walk*. Debussy's inspiration for the suite came from some of Chouchou's toys; Jimbo, the elephant toy, and the Golliwogg doll appear on the cover of the first edition of the work.

Finally, along with other forms of art, Debussy was inspired by nature and specific places. The orchestral work *La Mer*, and the piano preludes Les *collines d'Anacapri* (The Hills of Anacapri), *Feuilles mortes* (Dead Leaves), *Le vent dans la plaine* (The Wind in the Plain), *Des pas sur la neige* (Footsteps in the Snow), and *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest* (What the West Wind Saw) are just a few examples.

III. 2 Musical Influences

Debussy's musical language was influenced by a variety of elements and composers. His admiration for the composers of the Baroque period (especially François Couperin, 1668-1733; Jean-Philippe Rameau, 1683-1764; and Johann Sebastian Bach, 1685-1750) can be seen in his suites of Baroque dances for piano: *Suite Bergamasque* (1890, revised in 1905) – Prelude, Minuet, *Clair de lune*, Passepied – and

suite *Pour le piano* (1894-1901) – Prelude, Sarabande and Toccata. He adapted each dance to his own musical language. In the prelude from *Pour le piano*, for example, he wrote an improvisatory cadenza in the coda, resembling the cadenzas from Baroque preludes. However, he incorporated a new language, alternating between diatonic and whole-tone scales, and using parallel augmented chords. In the Sarabande, he explored modes (phrygian, aeolian, mixolydian) and parallelism. This movement has all characteristics of a Baroque sarabande, in slow ternary meter, with stresses on second or third beats. However, it is in ternary form (ABA), whereas the traditional Baroque sarabande (and most Baroque dances) is in binary form (AB). Debussy's perpetual motion Toccata follows the original definition of the toccata as "a virtuoso composition for keyboard or plucked string instrument featuring sections of brilliant passage work, with or without imitative or fugal interludes."[51] According to Roy Howat (b. 1951), "*Pour le piano* played a serious role in re-establishing the French classical suite as a modern genre."[52]

Debussy's admiration for his countrymen, Couperin and Rameau, is evident in many of his letters and works. He once stated that the French Baroque harpsichord composers were the ones "who produced real music in abundance."[53] Debussy wrote a sarabande in honor of Rameau (*Hommage à Rameu*, from *Images* I, 1904-1905), and when composing his etudes, he was first indecisive about whether to dedicate them to Chopin or to Couperin, but ended up dedicating them to Chopin.[54]

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[51] *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 4th ed., s.v. "Toccata."
[52] Roy Howat, foreword to *Pour le piano*, by Claude Debussy (Paris: Durand, 2004).
[53] François Lesure and Roger Nichols, eds., *Debussy Letters*, trans. Roger Nichols (Cambrige, Massaschussets: Harvard University Press, 1987), 305-306.
[54] Ibid, 300.

Debussy also referred to other keyboard composers in his piano works. The title of the first piece in the *Children's Corner* suite – *Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum* (Steps to Parnassus) – is an expression that refers to "a mountain sacred to Apollo and the Muses."[55] It signifies the steps to perfection and "suggests a step-by-step approach which will take the novice pianist towards the fountainhead of art."[56] The expression was used by Johann Joseph Fux (c.1660-1741) in his treatise on counterpoint and by Muzio Clementi (1752-1832) in his volumes of piano etudes, op. 44. Debussy's piece is an etude for piano, influenced by Clementi's piano writing, with fast sixteenth-notes. The word "Doctor" at the beginning refers to Clementi himself.[57] Another homage to a classical composer is his first etude, *Pour ler "cinq doigts" d'après Monsieur Czerny* (For Five Fingers, After Mr. Czerny), which shows Carl Czerny's (1791-1857) characteristic five-finger-pattern exercises combined with Debussy's sense of humor, represented by his dissonances.

In spite of his disdain for German music, Debussy admired J. S. Bach. In reviewing a concert, he wrote about the superiority of Bach's music, while demeaning the figure of Wagner in comparison:

> Above all, such music preserves a sense of nobility: it never lowers itself to the taste of those affected listeners who want only 'sensibility' – the ones who say, 'We like music so much.' Still more to its favor, it forces one to respect if not to adore.
>
> I expect you have noticed how you never hear Bach being whistled . . . an honor that is not denied Wagner.[58]

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[55] *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 4th ed., s.v. "Gradus ad Parnassum."
[56] Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), 207.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, collect. and introd. François Lesure, trans. and ed. Richard Langham Smith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 27.

Debussy admired Bach for following his own harmonic rules. As he wrote in a letter: "We can be sure that old Bach, the essence of all music, scorned harmonic formulae. He preferred the free play of sonorities whose curves, whether flowing in parallel or contrary motion, would result in an undreamed of flowering, so that even the least of his countless manuscripts bears an indelible stamp of beauty."[59]

Along with these Baroque and Classical composers, Debussy also revered Chopin. He once said that "Chopin is the greatest of all, for with the piano alone he discovered everything."[60] Kyung-Ae Lee states that besides his own works, Debussy also used to play piano pieces by Chopin.[61] The influence of Chopin can be found in the choice of specific genres for his compositions. Some examples are his early pieces for piano, written before the turn of the century: Mazurka (c. 1890), *Valse romantique* (1890), and Nocturne (1892). The books of Preludes (1909-1911) and Etudes (1915) should also be included in that list.

Debussy revised Chopin's Etudes for Durand in 1915. This was the inspiration for him to compose his own etudes,[62] which he dedicated to Chopin.[63] Debussy considered his works an important achievement in the development of the piano etudes. In a letter to Durand, he wrote: "I've invested a lot of passion and faith in the future of the *Etudes*. I hope you'll like them, both for the music they contain and for what they denote."[64] In

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[59] Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, collect. and introd. François Lesure, trans. and ed. Richard Langham Smith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 84.
[60] Marguerite Long, *At the Piano with Debussy*, trans. Olive Senior-Ellis (London: J.M. Dent, 1972), 19 in Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), 181.
[61] Kyung-Ae Lee, "A Comparative Study of Debussy's Piano Music Scores and His Own Piano Playing of Selections from His Welte-Mignon Piano Roll Recordings of 1912" (DMA diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2001), 34.
[62] François Lesure, preface to *Douze Études*, by Claude Debussy (München: G. Henle Verlag, 1994).
[63] Besides the etudes, he also edited other Chopin works for Durand.
[64] François Lesure and Roger Nichols, eds., *Debussy Letters*, trans. Roger Nichols (Cambrige, Massaschussets: Harvard University Press, 1987), 300.

another occasion Debussy wrote: "I confess that I am pleased to have created a work which – false vanity aside – will occupy a special niche. In point of technique these *Études* will usefully prepare pianists for a better understanding of the fact that the portals of music can only be opened with formidable hands."[65]

Liszt was also an important composer who influenced Debussy. They met in Rome three times in 1886, the year that Liszt died.[66] According to Roberts, Debussy heard Liszt play and was impressed.[67] He also admired and played piano arrangements of Liszt's symphonic poems, and of the Faust Symphony.[68] Although it characterizes the minority of Debussy's piano music, one can find "Lisztian" virtuosity in some of his works, such as in the preludes *Feux d'artifice* and *Ce qu'a vu le Vent d'Ouest*. These two preludes are technically demanding for the pianist. *Ce qu'a vu le Vent d'Ouest*, particularly, shows an aggressive and energetic side of Debussy, with dynamics extending up to *ff*. It has a tumultuous character, full of pianistic effects (such as the tremolos and arpeggios) that one easily finds in Liszt's piano works. Additionally, Liszt's *Les jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este* was considered to be influential on the French water music for piano of both Ravel (*Jeux d'eaux*) and Debussy (*L'isle joyeuse*, *Reflets dans l'eau*).

Liszt's harmonic experimentation in his late piano pieces encompasses bold chromaticism, exotic scales, and augmented chords, all resulting in the weakening of tonality. He used the whole-tone scale, which became a prominent characteristic of

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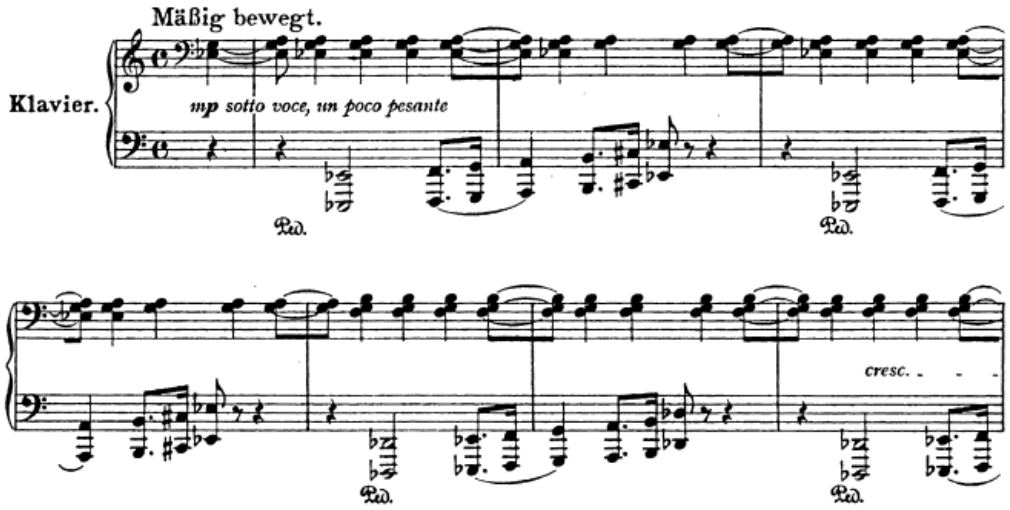
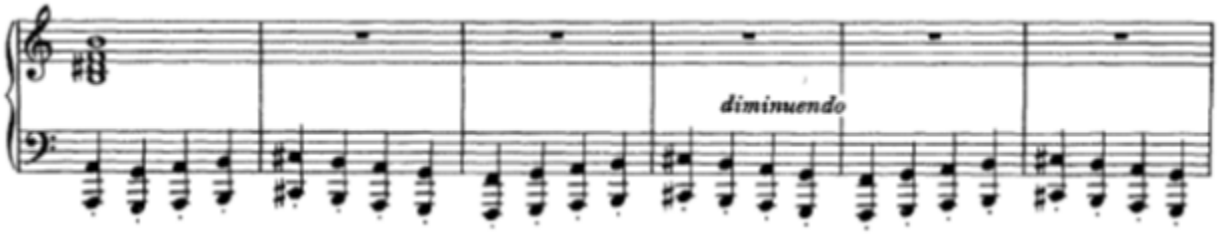
[65] Claude Debussy, *Douze Études* (München: G. Henle Verlag).
[66] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Liszt, Franz," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/48265pg25#S48265.25 (accessed May 21, 2014).
[67] Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), 181.
[68] Ibid.

Debussy's music. In this scale, along with the chromatic scale, the feeling for a tonal center is lost, since the distance between each note is the same. There is no leading tone, and the thirds produced by the whole-tone scale are always major, forming augmented chords. Liszt used the whole-tone scale already in 1860, in the bass line of the melodrama *Der traurige Mönk* (The Sad Monk), as can be seen in example 6. Another use of the whole-tone scale is *Unstern: Sinistre, Disastro*, written after 1880 (example 7).



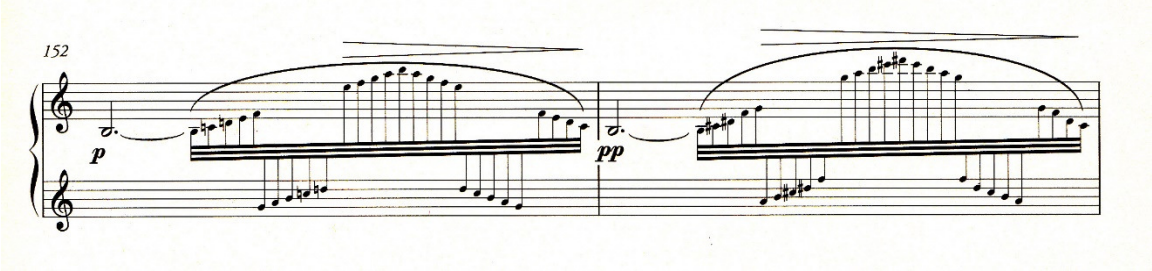
Example 6 – Liszt, *Der traurige Mönk*, mm. 1-7



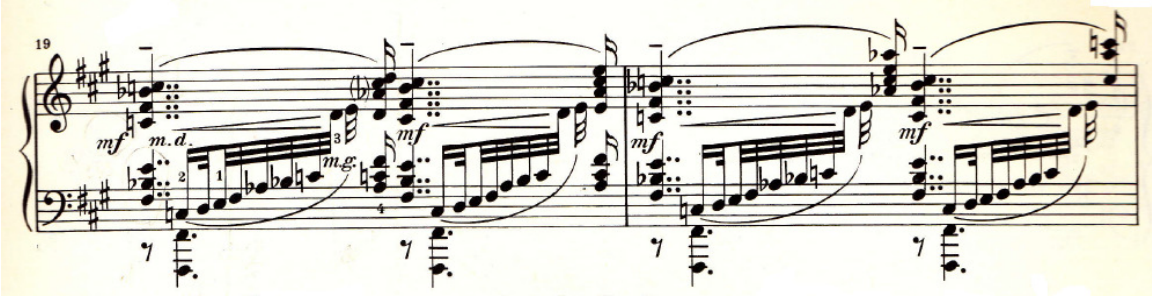
Example 7 – Liszt, *Unstern: Sinistre, Disastro*, mm. 52-57 (whole-tone scale)

Debussy builds entire sections using the whole-tone scale. Sometimes he uses it for effect in cadenza-like passages, such as in the coda of the prelude from *Pour le piano*

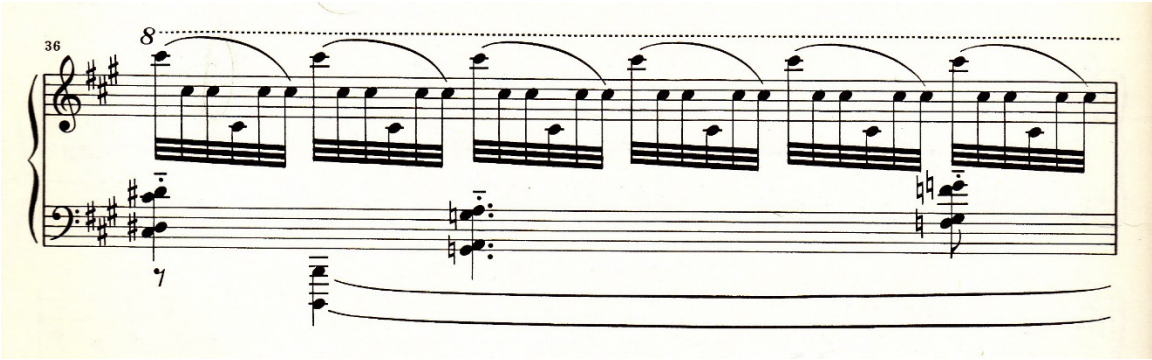
(example 8). Yet, he also uses the whole-tone scale as harmonic material, such as in passages of the prelude *Ce qu'a vu le Vent d'Ouest* (examples 9 and 10).



Example 8 – Debussy, Prelude from *Pour le piano*, mm. 152-153



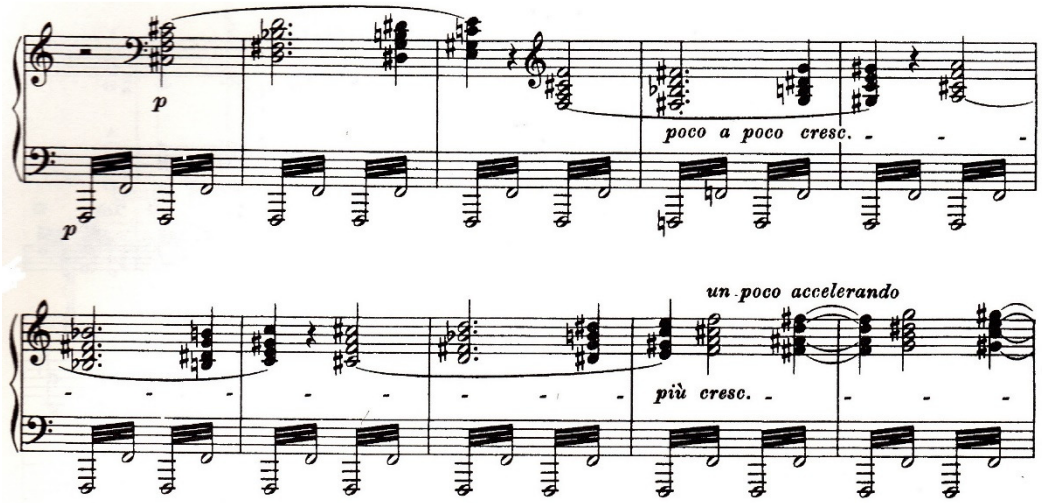
Example 9 – Debussy, *Ce qu'a vu le Vent d'Ouest*, mm. 19-20



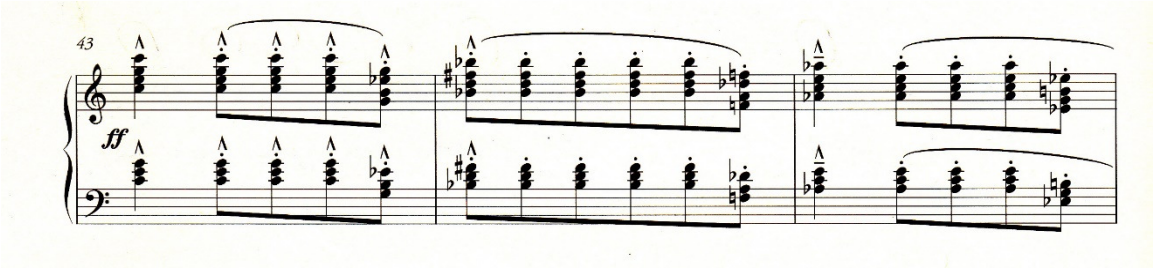
Example 10 – Debussy, *Ce qu'a vu le Vent d'Ouest*, m. 36

Another aspect of Liszt's *Unstern: Sinistre, Disastro* is the use of parallel augmented chords, without resolution, which obscure the idea of a tonal center (see

example 11). Debussy also includes parallel augmented chords in many of his works, and one example is the Prelude from *Pour le piano* (example 12).

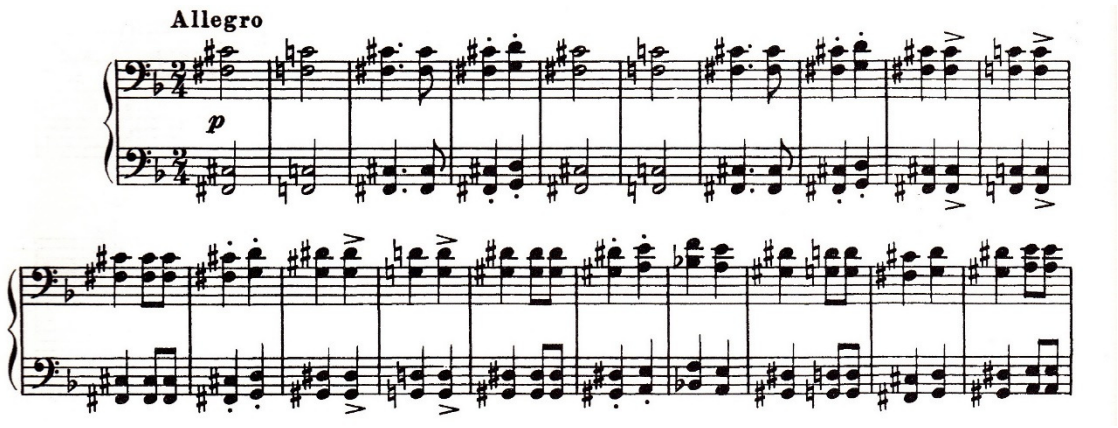


Example 11 – Liszt, *Unstern: Sinistre, Disastro*, mm.58-67 (parallel augmented chords)

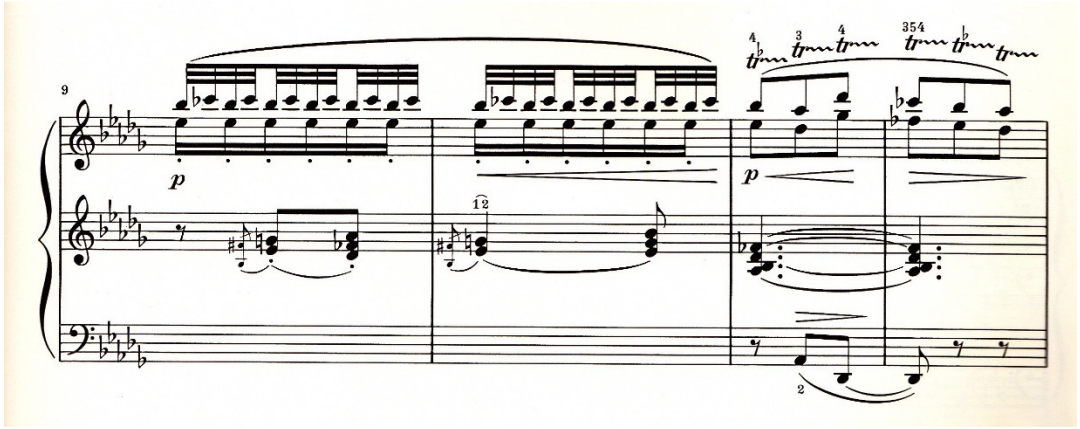


Example 12 – Debussy, Prelude from *Pour le piano*, mm. 43-45

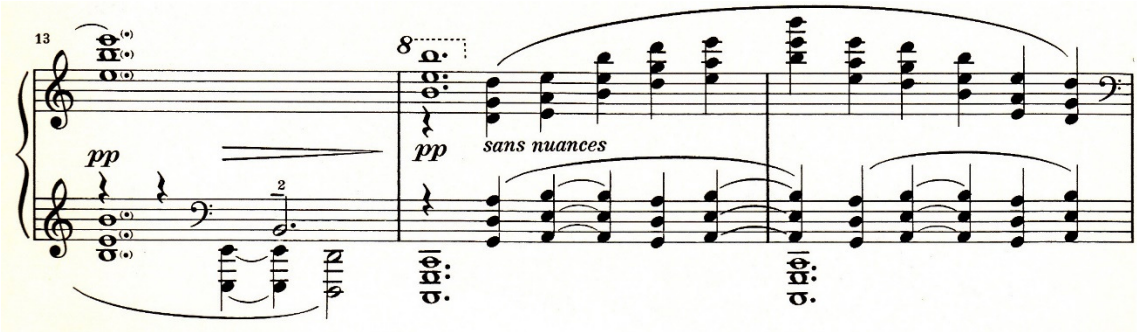
In late Liszt one can find the use of parallel fifths. They were a prominent characteristic of Renaissance music, but were "forbidden" in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tonal harmony. Example 13 shows Liszt's extensive use of chromatic parallel fifths in *Czárdás Macabre* (1881-1882). Example 14 shows Debussy's use of parallel fifths and example 15 shows parallel fifths, fourths and octaves.



Example 13 – Liszt, *Czárdás Macabre,* mm. 1-20



Example 14 – Debussy, *Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses*, mm. 9-12 (parallel fifths)



Example 15 – Debussy, *La cathédrale engloutie*, mm. 13-15

Along with Liszt's, Wagner's music was influential on twentieth century composers, particularly on the young Debussy. However, later on Debussy thought that it was important to move away from his influence.[69] For him, imitating Wagner – as many composers were doing at the time – would not lead him any further. He even announced an article he was going to write, "The Futility of Wagnerism," but ended up not writing it. In any case, Debussy also found it difficult to let go of Wagner's influence. In a letter, referring to *Pelléas et Mélisande*, he said ". . . Wagner kept appearing in the corner of a bar, so I've torn the whole thing up. I've started again . . ."[70]

In *The Golliwog's Cake-Walk*, the last piece of his suite *Children's Corner*, Debussy quotes the beginning of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*'s Prelude, as can be seen in examples 16 and 17. The staccato and grace notes that follow the lyricism of Wagner's quote represent a contrast in character, and, according to Roberts, they were intended to make fun of Wagner.[71]

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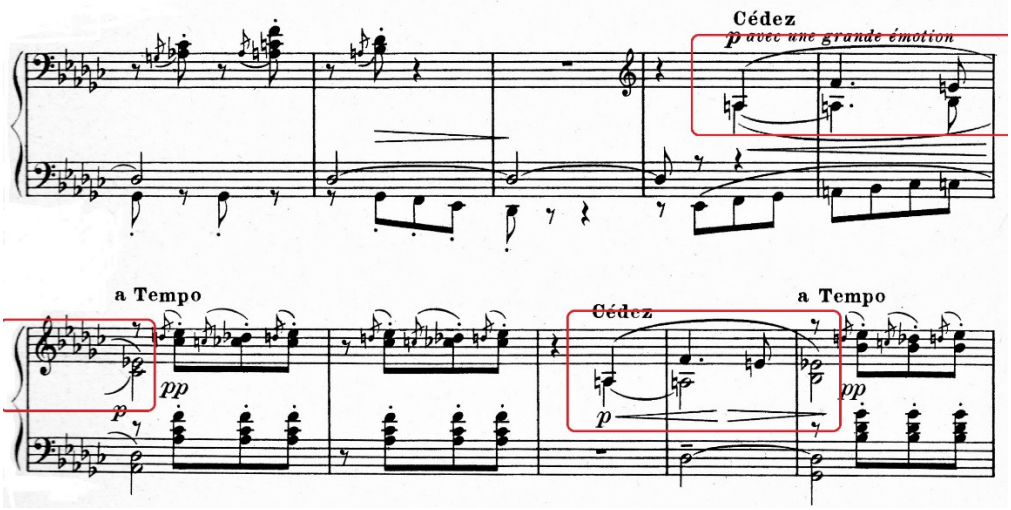
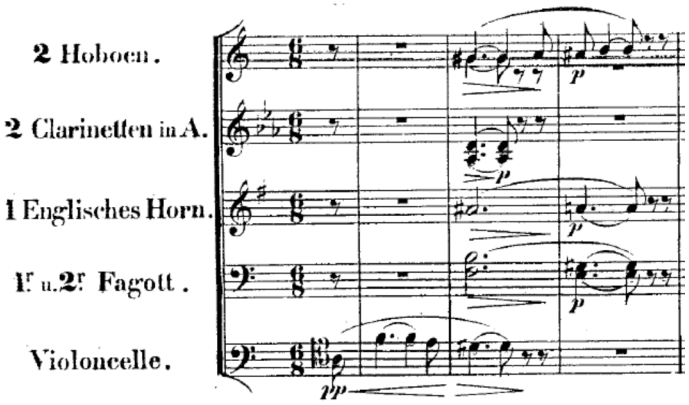
[69] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Wagner," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/29769pg1#S29769.1.15 (accessed May 30, 2014).
[70] François Lesure and Roger Nichols, eds., *Debussy Letters*, trans. Roger Nichols (Cambrige, Massaschussets: Harvard University Press, 1987), 54.
[71] Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), 207.



Example 16 – Debussy, "The Golliwog's Cake-Walk," mm. 58-67



Example 17 – Wagner, *Tristan and Isolde*, Prelude, mm. 1-3

Debussy also revered the Russian composers. He visited Russia with Madame von Meck (who also had financially supported Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, 1840-1893). She paid for Debussy to play for some of her house gatherings, and sponsored trips through Europe.[72] Debussy admired Tchaikovsky, Mily Balakirev (1837-1910), Nikolai Rimsky-

[72] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Debussy, (Achille-) Claude," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/07353?q=debussy&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (accessed May 22, 2014).

Korsakov (1844-1908), Alexander Borodin (1833-1887), and Mussorgsky.[73] Another Russian composer that Debussy admired, and who was a dear friend to him, was Stravinsky. In contrast to the developing variation and thematic transformation of the Western composers (Brahms, Liszt, Wagner), Russian composers added nationalistic elements and a different motivic treatment:

> In Russia, modal and symmetrical chromaticisms supported a uniquely colourful, often exotic and pictorial blend of national Romanticism, distinctly at odds with Austro-German introspection. The harmonic practice of 19th-century Russian composers, together with a thematic process favouring melodic repetition and variation over motivic working, and a tendency to give unprecedented structural status to timbre, texture and rhythm, would later prove of special importance to early 20th-century modernists working outside Austria and Germany, notably Debussy, Janáček and Stravinsky.[74]

Debussy most likely considered the Russian composers strong allies against German music, since they had developed their own musical voice and their own nationalistic ideas. He clearly showed his disappointment in a letter from 1915, when he claimed that "Stravinsky himself . . . [was] leaning dangerously towards Schoenberg."[75]

The idea of nationalism spread out in the late Romantic period not only in Russia, but also among other countries such as France and Spain. Composers strived to find their own voice in spite of the supremacy of German music (which had dominated the classical and romantic periods).

All of these composers – and many others – had an impact in Debussy's music. However, besides his strong western heritage, Debussy was also interested in Oriental art

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[73] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Debussy, (Achille-) Claude," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/07353?q=debussy&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (accessed May 22, 2014).
[74] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Romanticism," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/23751?q=romanticism&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#S23751.3 (accessed May 26, 2014).
[75] François Lesure and Roger Nichols, eds., *Debussy Letters*, trans. Roger Nichols (Cambrige, Massaschussets: Harvard University Press, 1987), 305-306.

and culture, which pervaded Paris in the nineteenth-century. Instruments, music, paintings, prints and food from the East interested the people of France. Artists were looking for different, innovative and exotic ways of enriching their art, which they found in oriental elements from Japan, China, India, Russia, and even Spain (because of the "long history of Moorish occupation").[76] In 1889, Paris hosted the "Paris Universal Exposition," which was a celebration of the 100th year of the French Revolution (1789), and exhibited art from around the world. The Eiffel Tower was built as part of this event. Debussy returned many times to the exposition and spent hours there.[77] Roberts affirms that this was an "unforgettable experience" for the composer.[78] Debussy was particularly fascinated by the gamelan – musical ensemble that includes mostly percussion instruments, such as "gongs, gong-chimes, metallophones, and drums." The gamelan originated in Indonesia, Malaysia and Surinam.[79]

We can see the influence of the Javanese gamelan performances in many of Debussy's piano pieces. According to Sylvia Parker, during the gamelan performances, the dancers "turned themselves into nymphs, mermaids, fairies and sorceresses." These characters came to life in some of Debussy's pieces, such as the fairies in *"Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses"* (The Fairies Are Exquisite Dancers), or the mermaid in *Ondine*.

The gamelan's instruments were "slightly out of tune with each other, to produce a shimmering timbre when they are played together,"[80] and played melodies using the pentatonic scale where the five notes were disposed within roughly an octave (the

[76] Michael David Schmitz, "Oriental Influences in the Piano Music of Claude Achille Debussy" (DMA diss., University of Arizona, 1995), 23.
[77] The exposition lasted for six months.
[78] Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), 156.
[79] *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 4th ed., s.v. "Gamelan."
[80] Sylvia Parker, "Claude Debussy's Gamelan," *College Music Symposium* (August 2012): 4.

distance between each note is between a major second and a minor third). In 1913, more than ten years after the exposition, Debussy stated his opinion about the gamelan, in one of his musical critiques entitled "Taste:"

> There used to be—indeed, despite the troubles that civilization has brought, there still are—some wonderful peoples who learn music as easily as one learns to breathe. Their school consists of the eternal rhythm of the sea, the wind in the leaves, and a thousand other tiny noises, which they listen to with great care, without ever having consulted any . . . dubious treatises. Their traditions are preserved only in ancient songs, sometimes involving dance, to which each individual adds his own contribution century by century. Thus Javanese music obeys laws of counterpoint that make Palestrina seem like child's play. And if one listens to it without being prejudiced by one's European ears, one will find a percussive charm that forces one to admit that our own music is not much more than a barbarous kind of noise more fit for a traveling circus.[81]

The gamelan influenced Debussy's subsequent works in many aspects, the most famous example being *Pagodes*, from the suite *Estampes* (1903). The word *pagodes* refers to "temples, usually of the Buddhist or Hindu religion,"[82] which are common in Japanese and Indonesian cultures. According to Parker, Debussy's *Pagodes* is "the most famous and effective gamelan in the Western repertoire."[83] Since the gamelan has a highly coloristic effect, with different timbres and polyrhythms, it is interesting that Debussy chose the piano to portray this music, instead of writing it for a western orchestra. This shows how the composer believed that the piano was capable of unprecedented colors and timbres.

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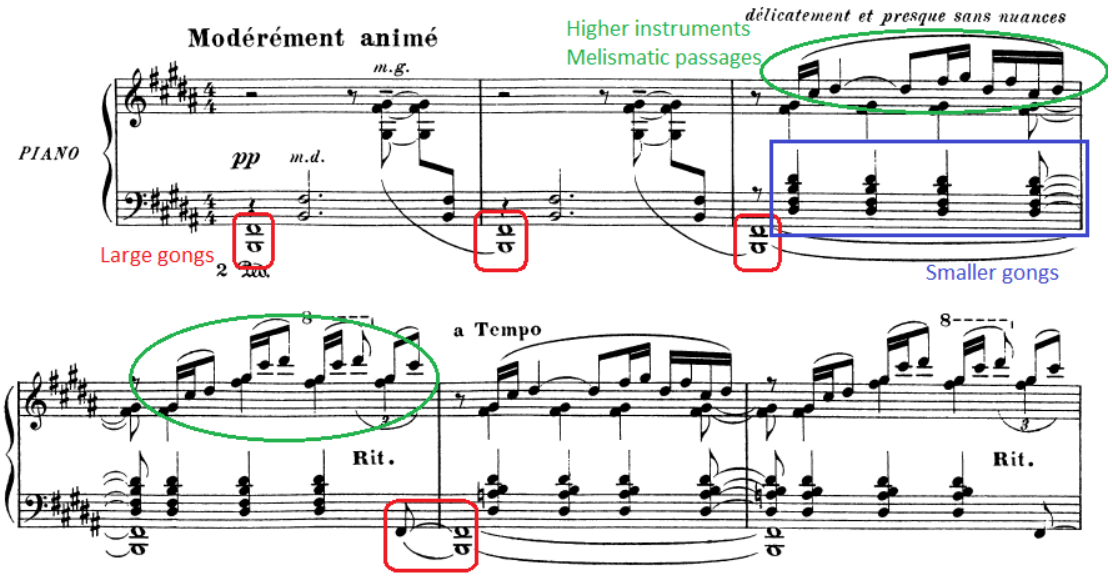
[81] Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, collect. and introd. François Lesure, trans. and ed. Richard Langham Smith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 278.
[82] Michael David Schmitz, "Oriental Influences in the Piano Music of Claude Achille Debussy" (DMA diss., University of Arizona, 1995), 63.
[83] Sylvia Parker, "Claude Debussy's Gamelan," *College Music Symposium* (August 2012): 3.

Michael David Schmitz gives a description of the gamelan instruments, which can be directly associated with *Pagodes* just by looking at the first page of the piece (see example 18):

> The primary instruments are similar to xylophones and metallophones, varying greatly in size, pitch and dynamic range. The higher instruments play more melismatic passages than the lower pitched instruments. Gongs of various sizes punctuate the meter, the small gongs beating regularly while the largest gongs play only at the end of phrase periods.[84]

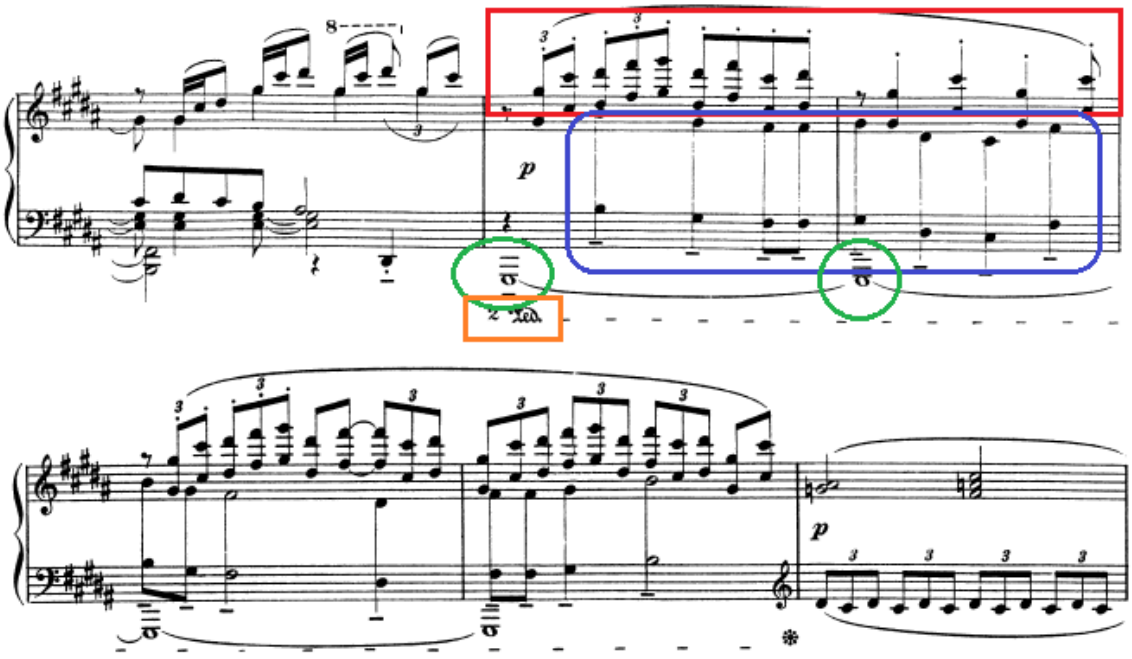


Example 18 – Debussy, *Pagodes*, mm. 1-6

In this work Debussy uses stratified layers and builds polyrhythms. The different articulations of each layer create the idea of different instruments playing as an ensemble. He also uses syncopation to weaken the perception of downbeats, producing the sensation of rhythmic freedom. Harmonically, Debussy uses the pentatonic scale, representing Javanese music, and explores the resonance of the piano by using long pedal markings

[84] Sylvia Parker, "Claude Debussy's Gamelan," *College Music Symposium* (August 2012): 45.

and long bass notes that cannot be held except by holding the pedal over the bar lines. These characteristics can be seen in example 19.



Example 19 – Debussy, *Pagodes*, mm. 10-15

The gamelan is also depicted in *Cloches à travers les feuilles* (Bells Through the Leaves),[85] the first piece of *Images* II. Layers of sound are superimposed producing the effect of an ensemble.

This eclectic composer was also interested in genres associated with American music, such as jazz and ragtime, as seen in *Minstrels* from Book I of the preludes[86], and in *Golliwogg's Cake-walk* from *Children's Corner*. Another portrayal of the cakewalk appears in "*General Lavine"– excentric*, which is based on the American clown Edward

[85] Michael David Schmitz, "Oriental Influences in the Piano Music of Claude Achille Debussy" (DMA diss., University of Arizona, 1995), 66.
[86] Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), 218.

Lavine.[87] The score provides the indication *Dans le style et le Mouvement d'un Cake-Walk* (in the style and tempo of a cakewalk[88]).

III. 3 Writing Style and Compositional Techniques

Perhaps one of the most striking and unique characteristics of Debussy's compositional style is the avoidance of the "developing variation," which characterize the music of Brahms and Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), as defended by Schoenberg. Debussy criticized these composers, and once complained about Beethoven's development of a theme, as narrated by Harold Bauer (1873-1951): "Once, in my hearing, he mentioned that he [Debussy] had 'escaped' the previous evening from a concert where a Beethoven quartet was being played, just at the moment when the 'old deaf one' ('le vieux sourd') started to 'develop a theme.'"[89] In another of his critiques, Debussy mentioned Beethoven's lack of taste: "Geniuses can evidently do without taste: take the case of Beethoven, for example."[90]

Instead of building musical tension by developing themes, Debussy preferred to present the same theme with different textures, harmonies, characters, dynamic plans – which is more related to the technique of "thematic transformation." His recurring themes and short motivic gestures serve as a unifying device in his pieces. Debussy expressed his musical goals as a composer in one of his own statements:

> I should like to see the creation – I, myself, shall achieve it – of a kind of music free from themes and motives, or formed on a single continuous theme, which

[87] Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), 222.
[88] The cakewalk is an American dance that was originated in the nineteenth century among plantation slaves. The cakewalk music is characterized by a march with syncopation, and is considered a subgenre of ragtime.
[89] Harold Bauer, *Harold Bauer: His Book* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1948), 82.
[90] Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, collect. and introd. François Lesure, trans. and ed. Richard Langham Smith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 277.

> nothing interrupts and which returns upon itself. Then there will be a logical, compact, deductive development. There will not be, between two restatements of the same characteristic theme, a hasty and superfluous 'filling in'! The development will no longer be that amplification of material, that professional rhetoric which is the badge of excellent training, but it will be given a more universal and essential psychic conception.[91]

Debussy also had a particular opinion about form in music. In 1907, while working on *Images*, he wrote in a letter to Jacques Durand: ". . . I feel more and more that music, by its very essence, is not something that can flow inside a rigorous, traditional form. It consists of colours and of rhythmicized time . . ."[92] In another letter, writing about Mussorgsky, Debussy praised the Russian composer for releasing himself from traditional rules and forms: ". . . There is no question of any such thing as 'form,' or, at least any forms there are have such complexity that they are impossible to relate to the accepted forms – the 'official' ones. He composes in a series of bold strokes, but his incredible gift of foresight means that each stroke is bound to the next by a mysterious thread."[93]

Debussy's early piano works were written in conventional forms. For example, the First Arabesque and the *Sarabande* from *Pour le piano* are in a straightforward ternary (ABA) form, as is *Clair de lune* (with the addition of a coda) and many others. However, his later works were organized in a more complex way. Some are through-composed, with small motives and themes that are repeated and alternated throughout. His twentieth century works are generally multi-sectional; therefore, many of his pieces allow different interpretations regarding form and structure.

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[91] Oscar Thompson, *Debussy: Man and Artist* (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1940), 103.
[92] François Lesure and Roger Nichols, eds., *Debussy Letters*, trans. Roger Nichols (Cambrige, Massaschussets: Harvard University Press, 1987), 184.
[93] Claude Debussy, *Debussy on Music*, collect. and introd. François Lesure, trans. and ed. Richard Langham Smith (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 20.

Roy Howat, in "Debussy in Proportion," makes a case regarding Debussy's use of proportion in his mature works.[94] He argues that it makes much more sense to analyze Debussy's pieces through proportion than merely by thematic areas. *Reflets dans l'eau* (Reflections in the Water), one of his examples, can be analyzed as a rondo form (ABABABA) if considering its thematic materials. However, the tonal plan and dynamic shape reveal another structural plan, based on the Golden Section, which is missed if one only looks at the thematic material.[95]

In *Voiles*, for example, Debussy achieves the climax of the piece not by developing the motives, but by changing the harmonic material. The entire piece is based on the whole-tone scale, with the exception of six measures (mm. 42-47), where he employs the pentatonic scale.

Exact symmetry (or "bisection"[96]) can also be found in some of his pieces. In *Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum,* the bisection presents a remarkable change in tempo and keys. It is a short transitional passage (mm. 37-44) that represents the middle of the piece.

Debussy did not try to "fit" his musical ideas to standard forms, such as ternary or rondo. Moreover, although it appears sometimes that his music was a fruit of natural inspiration, his pieces were thoroughly constructed, organized and well planned beforehand.

Ondine has an unconventional and complex structure. It is a multi-sectional work, where themes and motives reappear throughout the piece and interrupt one another constantly. The sections of this piece are not separated by clear thematic changes, but by

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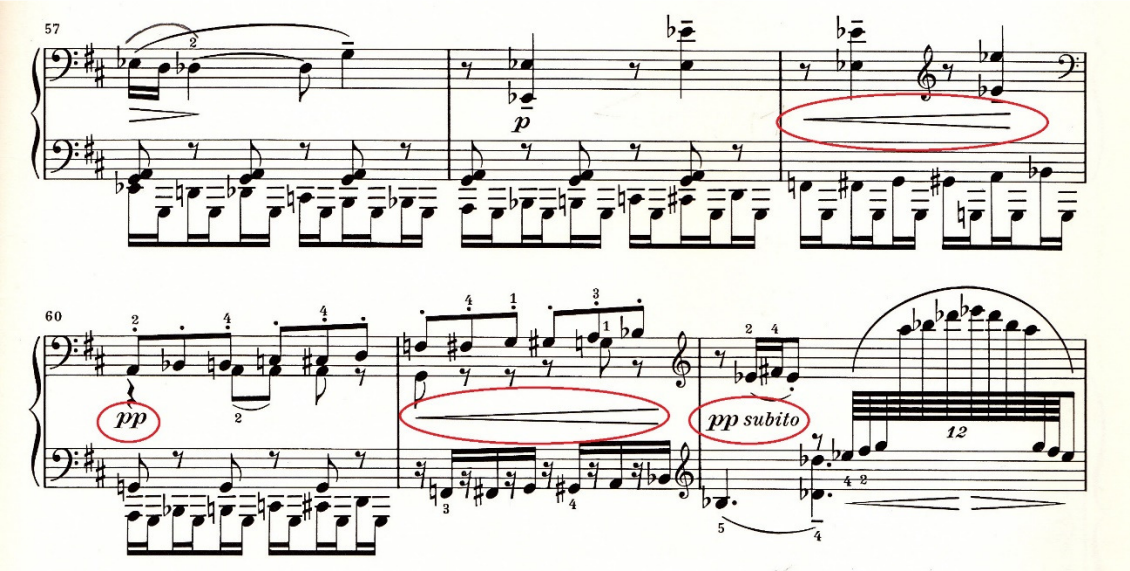
[94] Roy Howat, *Debussy in Proportion: a Musical Analysis* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
[95] Ibid, 24.
[96] Terms applied in art and science to describe the division of a whole into two halves.

changes in character, harmony, texture, rhythm, or key. Themes are presented and repeated in different contexts and there is little development. This piece does not present a clear climax and the dynamics range from ***pp*** to ***p***, with the exception of ***mf*** in the introduction. At the top of climaxes, there is a sudden and surprising dynamic interruption, breaking the flow (see example 20).



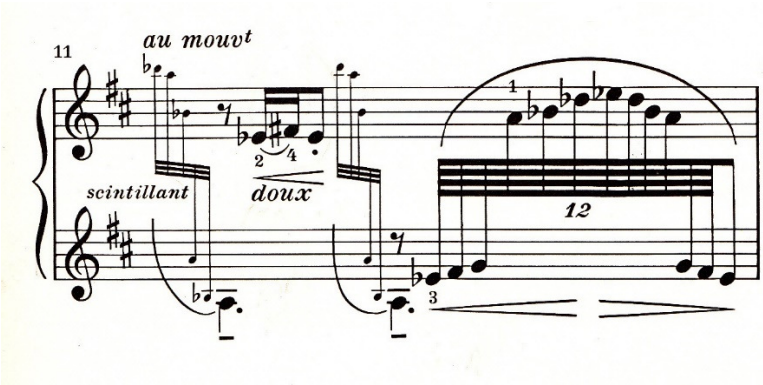
Example 20 – Debussy, *Ondine*, mm. 57-62

The following figure gives a visual perspective of the principal themes and motives, key areas and different sections of the piece.

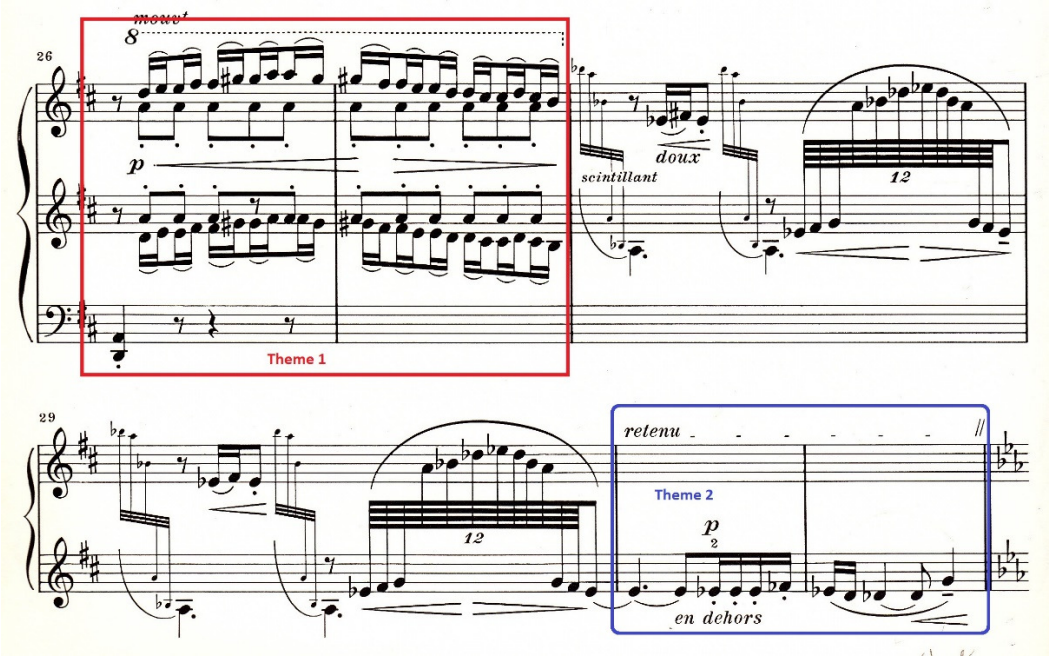
Motive/Theme	a	b	a	b	c	d	e	T1	T1	d	T2	T2	T1	d	T2	T2	T2	d	f
Measure	1	4	5	6	8	11	14	16	26	28	30	32	38	40	42	44	54	62	65
Section	Intro (m. 1-10)					A (m. 11-31)						B (m. 32-64)							Coda (m. 65-74)
Key Area	D (I)											Eb (bII)				B (VI)		D (I)	

Figure 1 – Debussy, *Ondine*

The motives from the introduction (m. 1-10) are not restated again in the music. However, motive "d" serves as a unifying element, and is transitional. The following examples show the main motive and themes from the piece (motive "d," Theme 1 and Theme 2). As can be seen, the first theme is in Lydian mode. This is a common trait in Debussy's music; although it has clear tonal centers, it is not entirely based on major or minor scales. Debussy freely explores different modes and scales.



Example 21 – Debussy, *Ondine*, Motive "d"



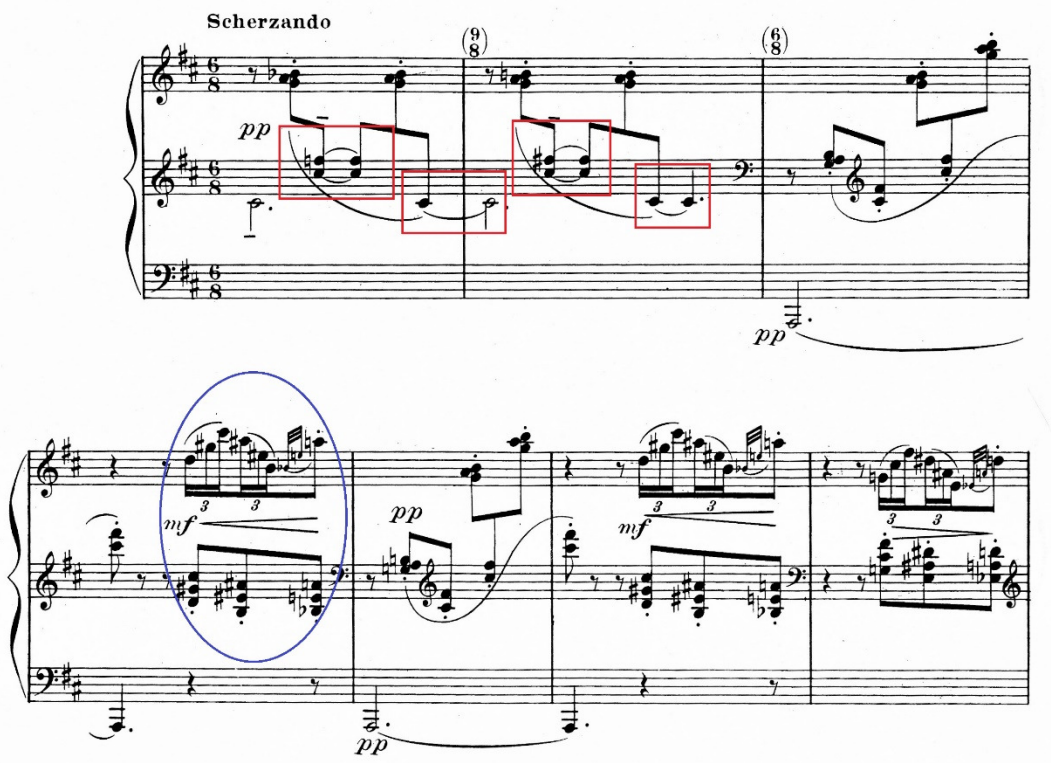
Example 22 – Debussy, *Ondine*, Theme 1 and Theme 2

Theme 2 is varied throughout the piece. It is used as transitional material and in longer sections, and each time with a different tempo and character. It is more chromatic and concludes with a tritone leap.

In the coda, Debussy used bitonality, mixing the D major and F# major chords in rapid arpeggios. The piece ends in a pure D major chord.

The introduction of *Ondine* also exemplifies a common feature in Debussy's music. Ties and constant interruptions of motives by the entrance of other motives (with considerably different rhythms) obscure the sense of rhythmic pulse, as can be seen in example 23. As he once stated, "rhythms cannot be contained within bars. It is nonsense to speak of 'simple' or 'compound' time. There should be an interminable flow of them both without seeking to bury the rhythmic patterns."[97]

[97] Lockspeiser, Debussy: His Life and Mind Vol. I, 206 in Naomi Shibatani, "Contrasting Debussy and Ravel: A Stylistic Analysis of Selected Piano Works and *Ondine*" (DMA diss., Rice University, 2008), 66.



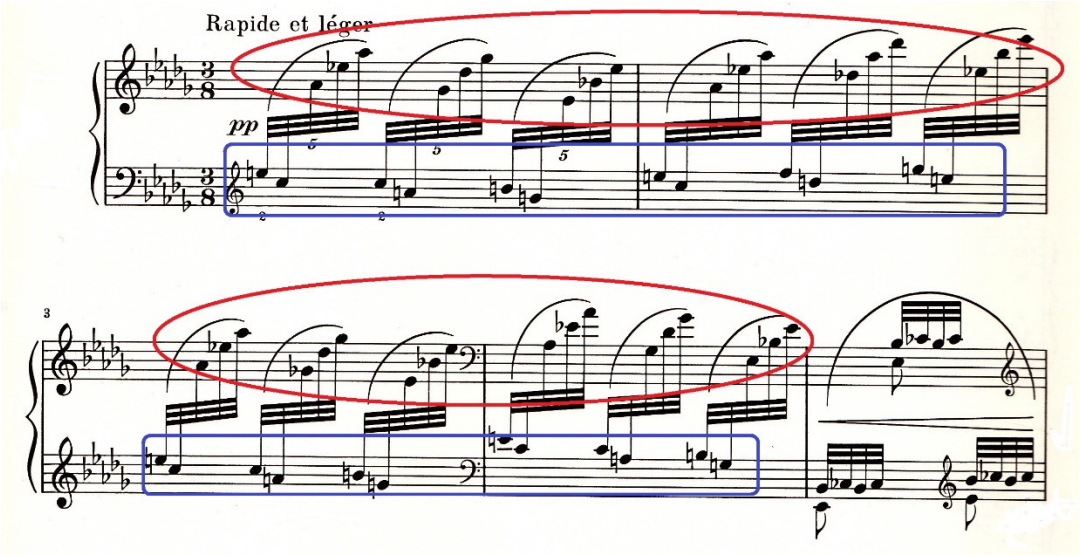
Example 23 – Debussy, *Ondine*, mm. 1-7

In *"Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses"* (fourth prelude from the second book) we can find many different motives throughout the piece. Figure 2 shows how the motives alternate through the different sections and keys. In contrast with *Ondine*, there is not a motive that reappears throughout the work, and the themes actually define the different sections of the piece. Additionally, motives from the introduction are restated in the coda.

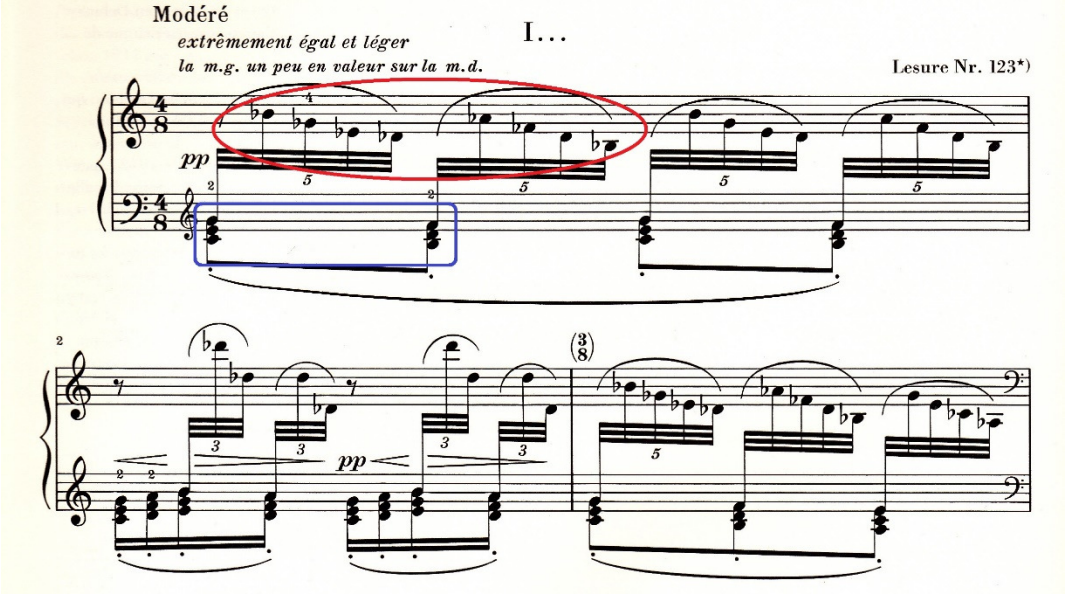
Motive/Theme	a	b	b	a	b	a	T1	c	d	e	T2	T2	f	T3	f	T3	a	b	a	b	a	T2
Measure	1	5	17	18	19	20	24	40	45	52	57	67	73	80	88	95	101	105	106	107	108	117
Section	Intro						A				B		C				Coda					
Key area	Db (I)						C#m (i)	Db (I)					C (VII)				Db (I)					

Figure 2 – Debussy, *"Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses"*

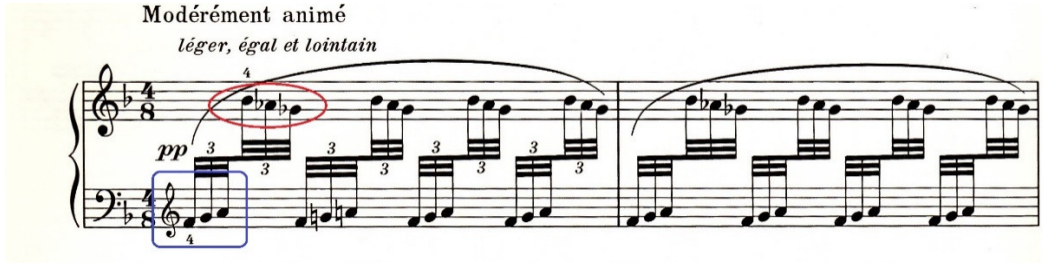
The way Debussy works with motives and themes – alternating them constantly and not developing them – is also reflected in the harmony; although *"Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses"* is in Db major, Debussy uses nebulous harmonic progressions, and avoids establishing a definite key for too long. Debussy also experiments with juxtaposition of black and white keys, creating unusual sonorities. In the figures from the introduction and coda, the right hand plays black keys while the left hand plays white keys (see example 24). The same thing happens in other pieces, such as *Brouillards* and *Feux d'artifice* (see examples 25 and 26).



Example 24 – Debussy, *"Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses,"* mm. 1-5



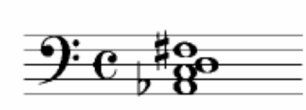
Example 25 – Debussy, *Brouillard*, mm. 1-3



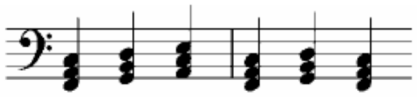
Example 26 – Debussy, *Feux d'artifice*, mm. 1-2

One of the most important features of Debussy's harmonies is the use of parallelism. Kyung-Ae Lee cites Debussy's conversation with his colleague Ernest Guiraud (1837-1892) about his harmonic ideas, which is enlightening to the understanding of his music:

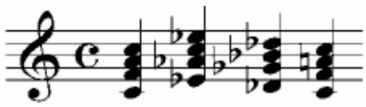
> Guirard: What on earth is that?
> Debussy: Unresolved, floating chords. The tone must be made to sink. Then one finishes where one wishes; one goes out by whatever door one will. Thenceforth the terrain is enlarged. And the nuances.
> G: But when I do THIS it must resolve:



D: Why? What the hell does it matter?
G: Then you find this pleasing?



D: Yes, yes, I most certainly do.
(Nevertheless Debussy, still at the piano, plumps down other chords.)

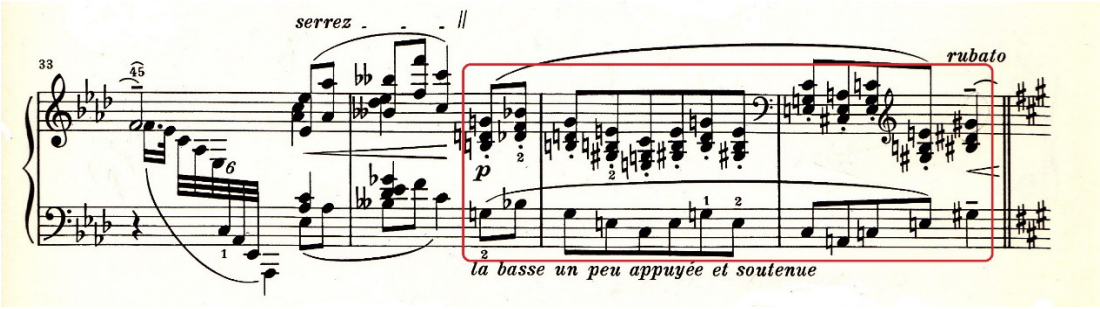


G: But how do you get out of that? I don't deny that what you do there is pleasing. But it is theoretically absurd.
D: There is no such thing as theory. If something pleases the ear then that's all that matters.
G: With an exceptional talent that may pass, I grant you. But how will you teach music to others?
D: Music can't be taught.
G: Oh come! You forget, my friend, that you spent ten years at the Conservatoire.
D: I know that what I say is absurd. (How one does reconcile that?) Certainly I can feel free because I attended classes—and I only left the fugue class because I knew it all.[98]

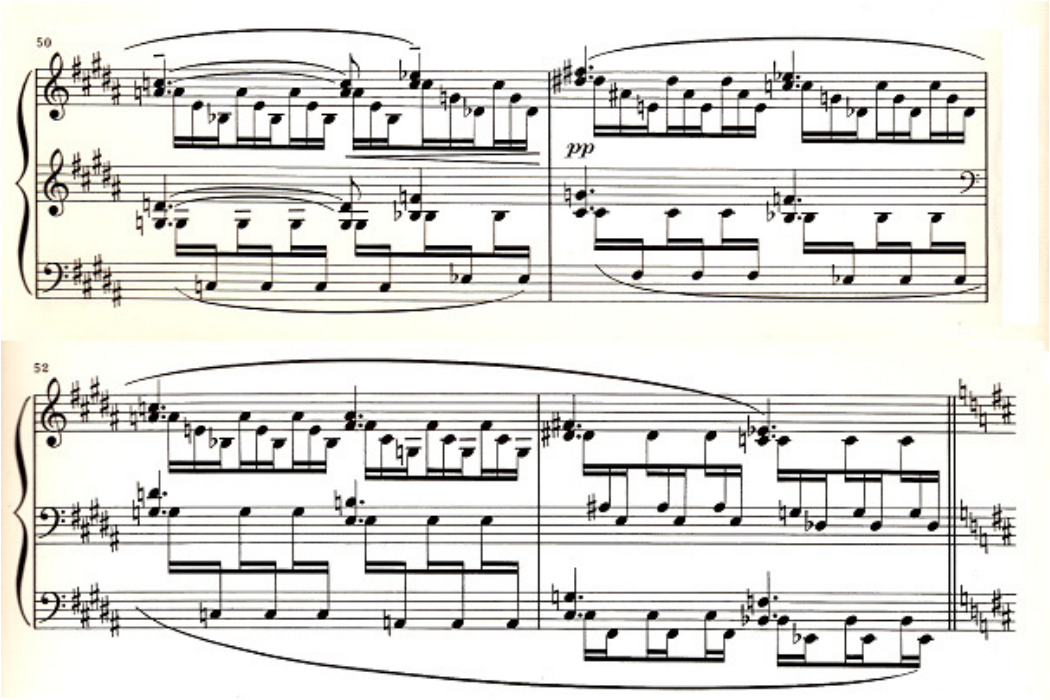
It is clear that Debussy was not concerned about following traditional harmonic rules. He used parallel chords lavishly, which reduced the sense of harmonic direction and establishment of tonality in his pieces. The next three examples, from his books of Preludes, show passages of parallel chords. In the first example (example 27) the relation between the major chords is of a third (Bb major, G major, E major, C major, A major). He wanders throughout these keys without any modulation, which creates the sensation of static harmony, without function. Example 28 shows a passage from the second theme

[98] Long, "At the Piano with Debussy," 17-18 (note: Transcription littérale des notes au crayin du carnet 1889-90, in Inédits sur Cl. Debussy, Paris, 1942, Collection Comoedia Charpentier) in Kyung-Ae Lee, "A Comparative Study of Debussy's Piano Music Scores and His Own Piano Playing of Selections from His Welte-Mignon Piano Roll Recordings of 1912" (DMA diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2001), 13-14.

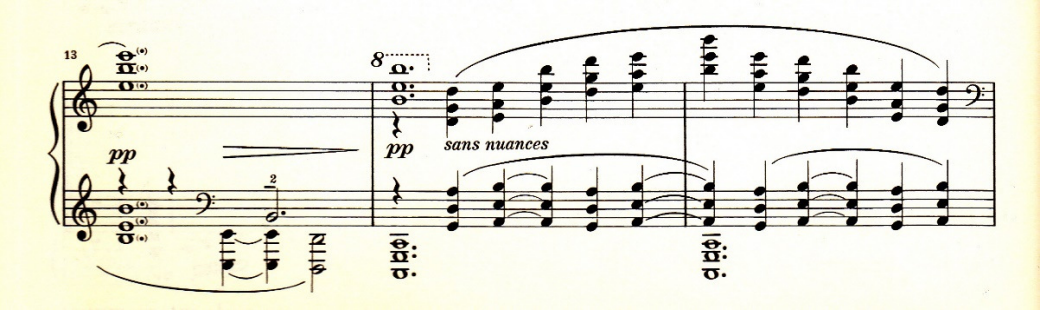
of *Ondine*. The right hand has strict parallel chords, while the left hand plays fifths. The last example (example 29) shows a passage from the prelude *La Cathédrale engloutie*, which is entirely built on pedal tones and parallel chords.



Example 27 – Debussy, *"Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir,"* mm. 33-36

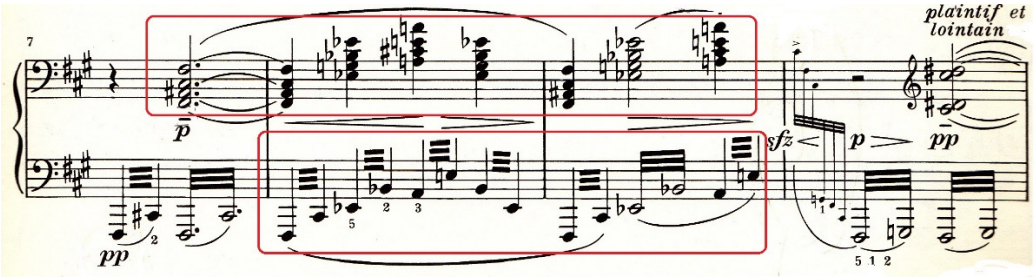


Example 28 – Debussy, *Ondine*, mm. 50-53

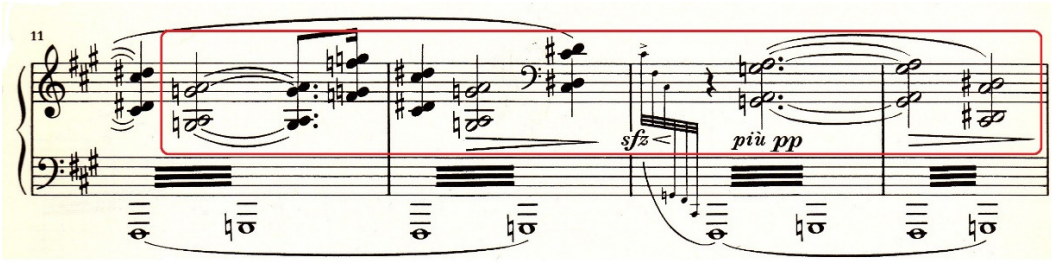


Example 29 – Debussy, *La Cathédrale engloutie*, mm. 13-15

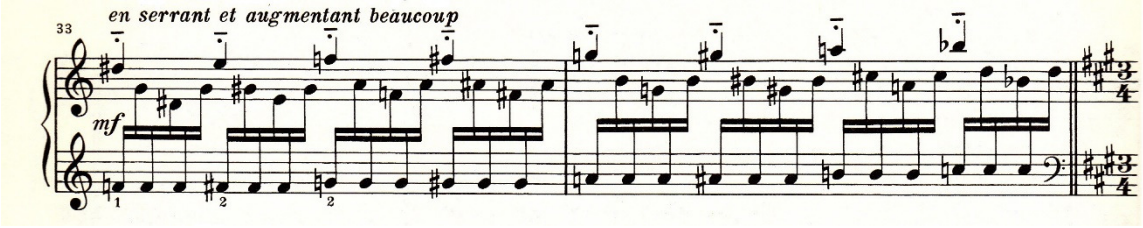
Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest (from Book I of Preludes) is also full parallelism, as shown in the next examples.



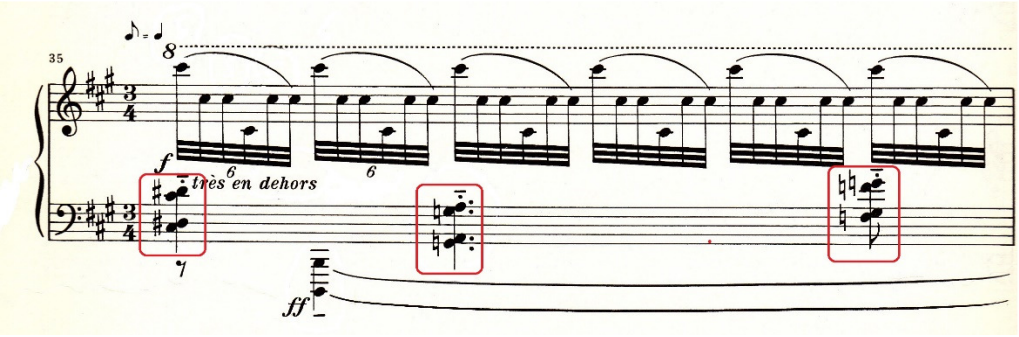
Example 30 – Debussy, *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest*, mm. 7-10 (parallel major chords)



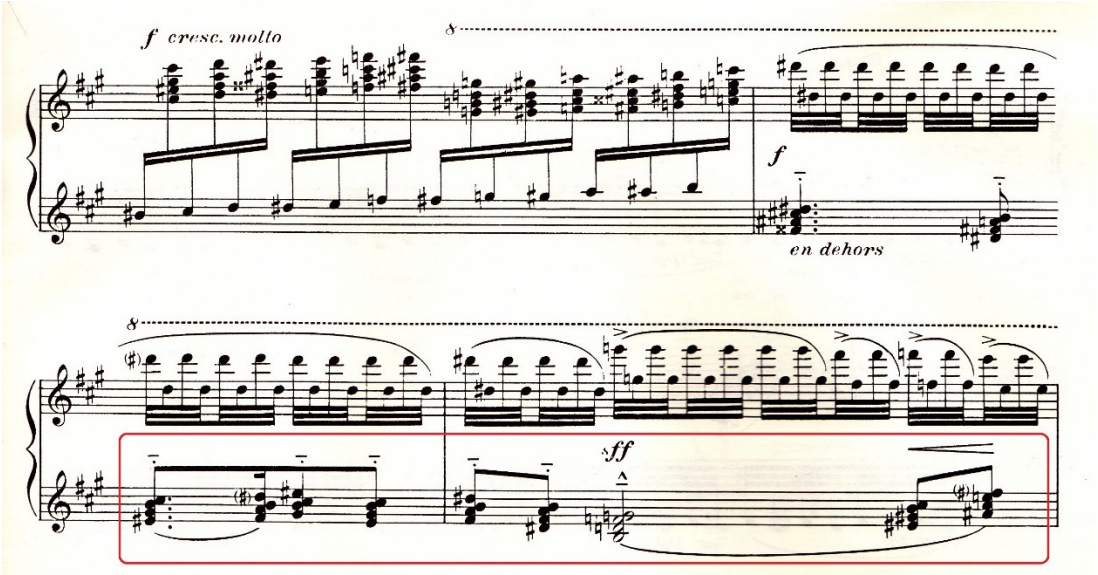
Example 31 – Debussy, *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest*, mm. 10-13 (parallel seconds)



Example 32 – Debussy, *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest*, mm. 33-34 (parallel major chords)



Example 33 – Debussy, *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest*, mm. 35 (parallel seconds)



Example 34 – Debussy, *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest*, mm. 46-48 (parallel seventh chords)

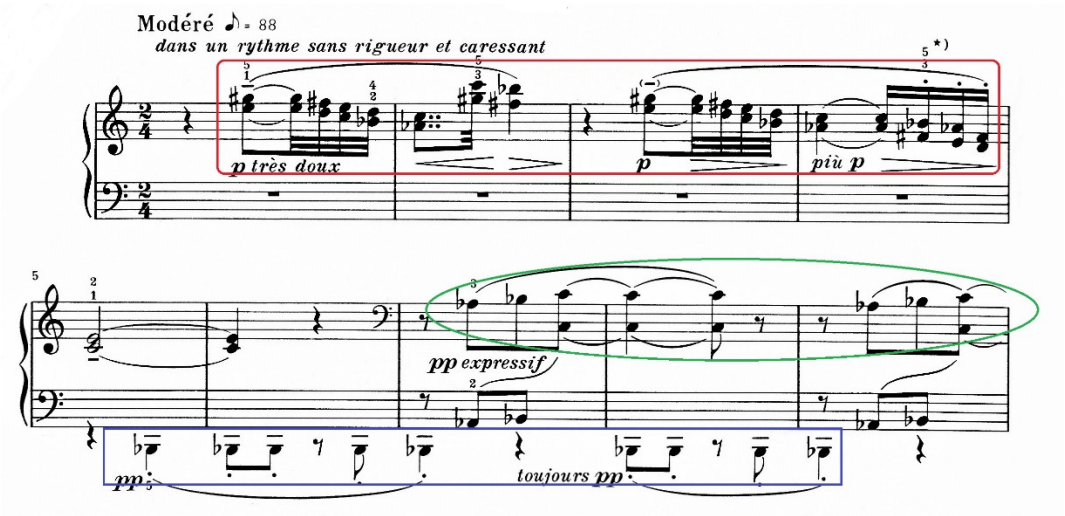
Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest is an important example of Debussy's interesting use of harmonic materials and long pedal tones. Figure 3 outlines the piece's structure,

harmonic materials and pedal tones. Once again we see a variety of motives that alternate. The piece starts with the D^7 chord, followed by parallel major chords (indicated as "PC"). Both main themes are based on whole-tone scale passages ("WTS"). Debussy used the chromatic scale ("CS") in transitional passages, generally with *crescendo* in the dynamics, leading to a ***ff*** section. In the coda, one can see the combination of the D^7 chord and the whole-tone scale. The fourth line of figure 3 shows the pedal tones that Debussy used in the whole piece. The notes B and C# are both pedal tones in the third section (the left hand has a pedal tone over B, while the right hand has another pedal tone over C#). If we consider the areas defined by pedal tones, we can actually analyze the piece in ternary form (ABA) – as shown in the last line of the chart. In fact, these three major sections (ABA) coincide with clear changes in texture, and are almost equal in length (A: mm. 1-24, B: mm. 25-53, C: mm. 54-71).

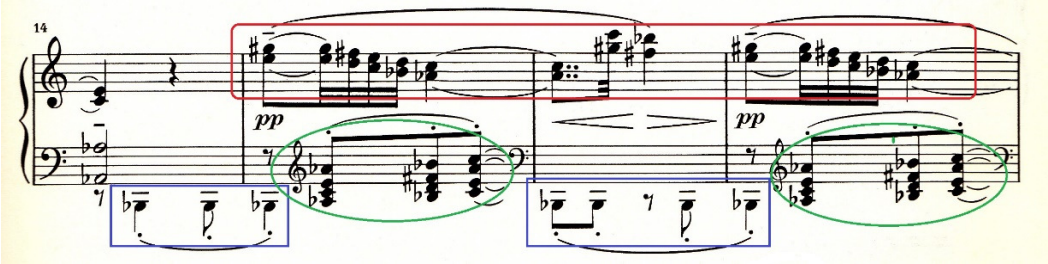
Motive/Theme	a	b	T1	c	T2	d	T1	e	T2	a'	b	f	T1
Measure	1	7	10	15	19	25	35	43	47	54	59	63	69
Harmonic material	D7	PC	WTS	CS	WTS	CS	WTS	D#m	WTS	D7	PC	D7+WTS	
Pedal points	F#					Trills	B&C#	D#		F#			
Section	A					B				A			

Figure 3 – Debussy, *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest*

Some of Debussy's pieces are built entirely out of layers that are superimposed, which can be associated with the influence of gamelan in his music, as already seen in *Pagodes*. New voices are added to ostinatos, and the result is a polyphonic texture. The prelude *Voiles* is one example of his stratified works. The bass ostinato Bb supports the whole piece, while different layers are added on top of it. The pedal tone of Bb combined with the repetition and superimposition of different rhythmic and motivic materials, as well as the use of the whole-tone scale, create the impression of static harmonies. This can be seen in examples 35 and 36. The adventurous harmonic language of this prelude – based entirely on whole-tone and pentatonic scales – as well as its form and textural variety makes it one of Debussy's most innovative works.



Example 35 – Debussy, *Voiles*, mm. 1-9



Example 36 – Debussy, *Voiles*, mm. 14-17 (superimposition of layers)

Debussy's important innovations and experimentations in harmony, melody, rhythm, form, and texture, are the reasons why he was called the "forefather of musical Modernism," and his music has an important place in the twentieth-century repertoire.

III. 4 Pianistic Considerations

As demonstrated before, one can observe the evolution of Debussy's style through his piano pieces, which he wrote throughout his life. He left specific and detailed indications of articulation, dynamics and tempo changes in his piano music, and always insisted that performers follow them strictly.[99] However, he did not provide fingerings, and wrote very few pedal and metronome markings.[100] He actually explained why he did not provide fingering stating that "the absence of fingering is an excellent exercise, removes the temptation to change the composer's fingering merely for the sake of contradiction, and confirms the old saying anew, 'Your own best servant is yourself.'"[101] In the same way, regarding pedal, he affirmed: "Pedaling cannot be written down, it

[99] Elie Robert Schmitz, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, Inc., 1950), 35.
[100] Kyung-Ae Lee, "A Comparative Study of Debussy's Piano Music Scores and His Own Piano Playing of Selections from His Welte-Mignon Piano Roll Recordings of 1912" (DMA diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2001), 31.
[101] Claude Debussy, *Oeuvres Completes de Claude Debussy*, Serie 1, Volume 6, 2, ed. Roy Howat (Paris: Durant-Costallat, 1985) in Kyung-Ae Lee, "A Comparative Study of Debussy's Piano Music Scores and His Own Piano Playing of Selections from His Welte-Mignon Piano Roll Recordings of 1912" (DMA diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2001), 32.

varies from one instrument to another, from one room, or one hall, to another . . . Trust your ears."[102] In a letter to Durand he also wrote what he felt about metronome markings: "they're right for a single bar."[103] As a result, there have been never-ending discussions about the correct way to play his music. It is important, then, to understand Debussy's own thoughts about his music and about the instrument in order to make a decision.

Although Debussy did not provide extensive pedal marks, he often showed his intentions indirectly. The composer is known for creating long passages with sustained notes (generally in the bass), which are impossible to play unless the performer uses pedal. One example of a passage like this is the prelude from *Pour le piano* (see example 37). However, Debussy was clearly against the abusive use of pedal, as he stated: "The quiet truth is, perhaps that the abuse of the pedal is only a means of hiding a lack of technique, and then, too, one must make a lot of noise so that no one can hear the music which one is butchering!"[104] Therefore, the interpreter has to assess the characteristics of the piano and the hall before making a decision, and be careful not to confuse Debussy's desire for a resonant sonority as an excuse for using too much pedal.

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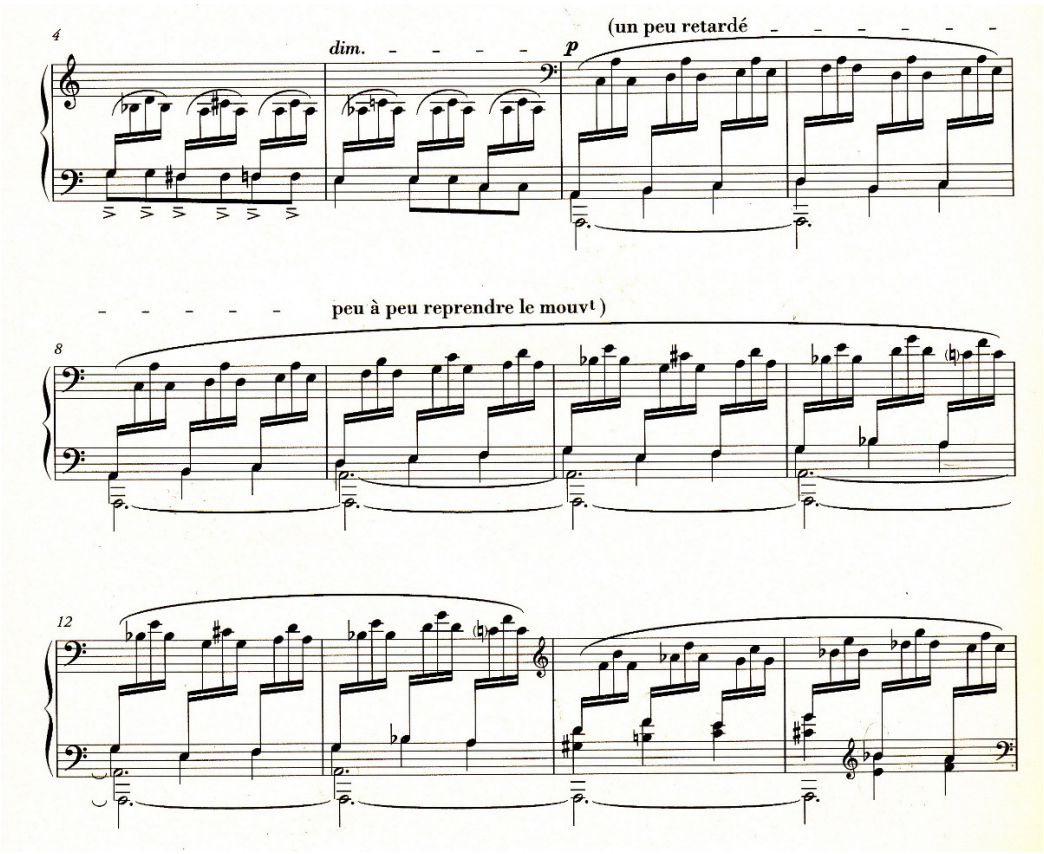
[102] Dumesil, "Coaching with Debussy," *The Piano Teacher* 5 (September/October 1962): 13 in Kyung-Ae Lee, "A Comparative Study of Debussy's Piano Music Scores and His Own Piano Playing of Selections from His Welte-Mignon Piano Roll Recordings of 1912" (DMA diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2001), 32.

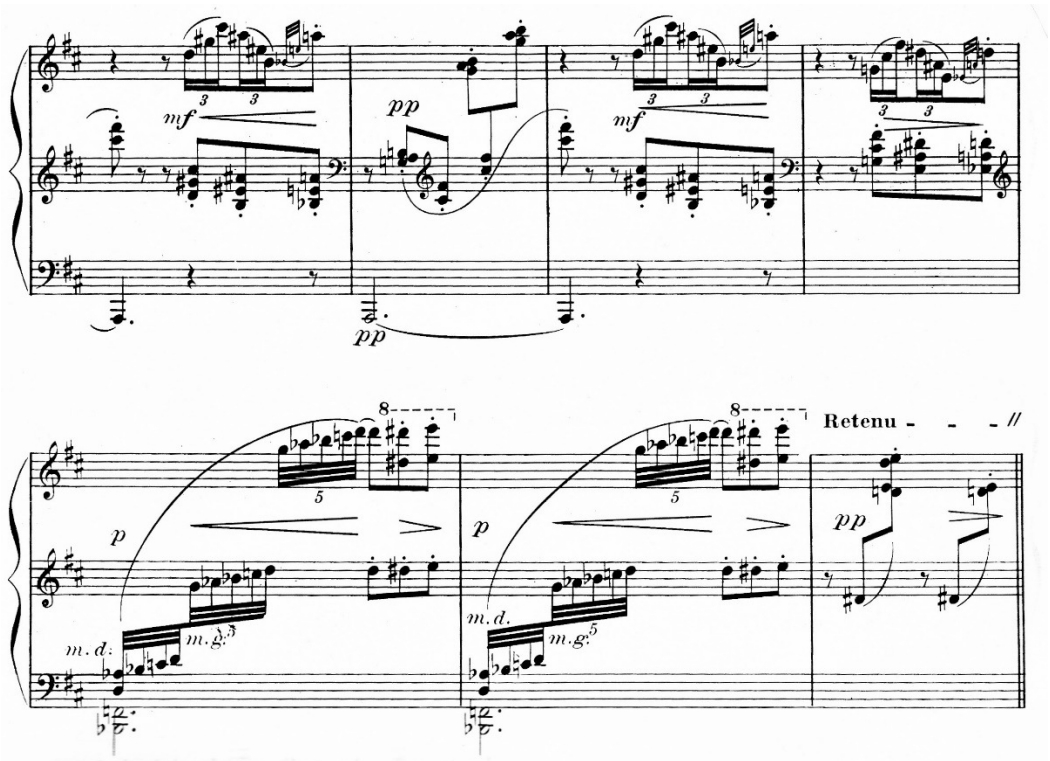
[103] François Lesure and Roger Nichols, eds., *Debussy Letters*, trans. Roger Nichols (Cambrige, Massaschussets: Harvard University Press, 1987), 305.

[104] Elie Robert Schmitz, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, Inc., 1950), 38.



Example 37 – Debussy, Prelude from *Pour le piano*, mm. 7-15

One visual characteristic of Debussy's piano writing is the use of three staves, which can be seen in all preludes from the second book, and in some other works. This shows Debussy's practical concerns with the presentation of his music, making clear the different levels of sound and the different voices. Additionally, it also clarifies which hand is supposed to play a specific section. One example of Debussy's writing with three staves can be found in *Ondine* (see example 38).



Example 38 – Debussy, *Ondine*, mm. 4-10

According to Casella, Debussy's piano playing "gave the impression of playing directly on the strings of the instrument with no intermediate mechanism; the effect was a miracle of poetry."[105] In addition, the French pianist Yvonne Lefébure (1898-1986) stated that Debussy told one of his students that "hands are not made to be in the air above the piano, but to enter inside."[106] Therefore, he aimed for a resonant sound that avoided the "click" of attack of the hammers on the strings. In order to obtain this kind of sonority, the pianist has to keep the fingers continuously close to the keyboard and release the weight towards the keys, instead of hitting the keys. As stated by his student Marguerite

[105] Alfredo Casella, "Claude Debussy," *Monthly Musical Record* 63 (1933): 2 in Kyung-Ae Lee, "A Comparative Study of Debussy's Piano Music Scores and His Own Piano Playing of Selections from His Welte-Mignon Piano Roll Recordings of 1912" (DMA diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2001), 34.
[106] Charles Timbrell, "Debussy as Pianist," *Piano & Keyboard* (January 1999): 38.

Long (1874-1966), the ghost of Chopin could be identified in Debussy's own piano playing:

> While floating over the keys with a curiously penetrating gentleness, he could achieve an extraordinary power of expression. There lay his secret, the pianistic enigma of his music. There lay Debussy's individual technique: gentleness in a continuous pressure gave the color that only he could get from his piano. He played mostly in a half tint but, like Chopin, without any hardness of attack.[107]

Debussy developed a particular way of writing for the piano. He experimented with the instrument's capabilities and created unprecedented sonorities. He also attempted to imitate other instruments in his pieces, such as horn, guitar, gamelan, and bells. The way he explored the resonance of the piano through wide-ranging dynamics, pedal tones, superimposition of layers, and textures, combined with his harmonic language (built on parallelism, unresolved dissonances and new scales) makes his piano music unique.

[107] Marguerite Long, *At the Piano with Debussy*, trans. Olive Senior-Ellis (London: J.M. Dent, 1972), 19 in Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), 178-179.

IV. Schoenberg

". . . no artist, no poet, no philosopher and no musicians whose thinking occurs in the highest sphere would degenerate into vulgarity in order to comply with a slogan such as 'Art of All.' Because if it is art, it is not for all, and if it is for all, it is not art."[108]

- Arnold Schoenberg

Although Schoenberg was not born into a musical family, he and his siblings showed musical talent, and he started violin lessons at the age of eight.[109] Unlike Debussy, Schoenberg was practically self-taught in music (and was proud of that). He started composing early in life, and adopted a post-Romantic style. However, his desire to go beyond the constraints of tonality led him to his atonal compositions, which reflect his involvement with the expressionist movement, and culminated in his invention of the twelve-tone system[110] in the 1920s. After 1936 his style became more eclectic and he explored tonal sonorities again.[111]

Schoenberg faced many conflicts in his life – personally, politically and religiously. He lived in Germany and Austria through both World Wars, and was a Jew. Schoenberg's father died on New Year's Eve when the composer was seventeen years old (1891), and this was the first of his personal crises. He then had to leave school and start working. However, Schoenberg continued his musical studies. He played in an

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[108] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 50.
[109] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Schoenberg [Schönberg] Arnold (Franz Walter)," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25024?q=schoenberg&search=quick&pos=2&_start=1#firsthit (accessed June 3, 2014).
[110] Also called "dodecaphonic system."
[111] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Schoenberg [Schönberg] Arnold (Franz Walter)," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25024?q=schoenberg&search=quick&pos=2&_start=1#firsthit (accessed June 3, 2014).

amateur orchestra, taught himself the cello and also took lessons from Alexander von Zemlinsky (1871-1942),[112] whom he admired, as seen through their correspondence.

Schoenberg also developed a profound admiration for Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) and his music. When Mahler left Vienna in 1907, Schoenberg felt embittered and alienated.[113] During this time he engaged himself in painting, and met expressionist painters. One of them, Richard Gerstl (1883-1908), gave lessons to both he and his wife Mathilde (1877-1923), who was Zemlinsky's sister. Schoenberg later found out that Mathilde was having an affair with Gerstl, and she left him to live with the painter.[114] After Mathilde reconciled with Schoenberg, Gerlst committed suicide.[115] Schoenberg himself had suicidal thoughts. Crawford states that these personal crises were influential in leading Schoenberg to expressionism, and they pushed him towards atonality.[116]

Schoenberg made a living as a private teacher and had many students. However, he mentioned his financial difficulties in some of his letters, sometimes asking to borrow money (from Mahler, for example),[117] or asking for work opportunities, which included writing arrangements and instrumentation for Universal Edition, or even painting portraits[118]. Schoenberg did what he could to help his students, which might be one of the reasons why he had financial problems. According to O. W. Neighbour (1923-2015), "he

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[112] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Schoenberg [Schönberg] Arnold (Franz Walter)," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25024?q=schoenberg&search=quick&pos=2&_start=1#firsthit (accessed June 3, 2014).
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] John C. Crawford and Dorothy L. Crawford, *Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 69.
[116] Ibid, 70
[117] Erwin Stein, ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 297.
[118] Ibid, 25.

taught Berg free for the first year because his family was not in a position to pay fees."[119] He also began a program of composition teaching, where each student would pay what they could afford.[120] Schoenberg even submitted the names of some of his students, which included Alban Berg (1885-1935) and Anton Webern (1883-1945), to be helped by the "American Relief Fund for German and Austrian Musicians,"[121] and wrote for support on their behalf.

Like Debussy, Schoenberg was strongly affected by World War I. He stopped teaching and even volunteered to the Vienna Infantry Division (*Hausregiment der Hoch – und Deutschmeister*), serving for a year. He was discharged for his asthma issues.[122] Although he did not compose much right after the war, in 1918 Schoenberg created an organization in Vienna that presented performances of modern works to an interested public: the "Society for Private Musical Performances."[123] He and other friends would play and conduct modern music in these events. This not only provided opportunities for the composers to have their music performed, but also facilitated public access to modern music.

After the war ended, Schoenberg's music attracted more international interest. Between 1920 and 1923 he wrote his first twelve-tone works. During this time (1920)

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[119] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Schoenberg [Schönberg] Arnold (Franz Walter)," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25024?q=schoenberg&search=quick&pos=2&_start=1#firsthit (accessed June 4, 2014).
[120] Ibid.
[121] Erwin Stein, ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 87.
[122] Egbert M. Ennulat ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Correspondence: a Collection of Translated and Annotated Letters Exchanged with Guido Adler, Pablo Casals, Emanuel Feuermann and Olin Downes* (Metuches, N.J., & London: The Scarecow Press, Inc., 1991), 5.
[123] Ibid, 14.

Schoenberg, who was a Protestant during his youth, accepted the Jewish faith, and after World War II, wished to dedicate himself "to the rescue of the Jewish nation."[124]

In 1923 Mathilde died, and in the following year Schoenberg married Gertrud Kolisch (1898-1967), the sister of a pupil, with whom he had three children.[125] He already had two children from his marriage to Mathilde.

Schonberg went back and forth between Berlin and Vienna during his life. Already in 1923 he was sensing the prejudice against Jews in Germany and Austria; and he was not welcome in Salzburg for being a Jew.[126] As he wrote to Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944): "It is that I am not a German, not a European, indeed perhaps scarcely even a human being . . . but I am a Jew."[127] In another letter to Kandinsky he wrote: "Why is an Aryan judged by Goethe, Schopenhauer and so forth? Why don't people say the Jews are like Mahler, Altenberg, Schönberg and many others?"[128]

Therefore, sensing the turmoil preceding the Second World War, Schoenberg decided to leave Berlin and go to the U.S., where he lived for the rest of his life.[129] Unfortunately, according to Neighbour, Schoenberg did not find peace there, because: "few of his pupils were well enough grounded to benefit at all fully from his knowledge and experience; there was no audience for such music as he might write; above all there

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[124] Egbert M. Ennulat ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Correspondence: a Collection of Translated and Annotated Letters Exchanged with Guido Adler, Pablo Casals, Emanuel Feuermann and Olin Downes* (Metuches, N.J., & London: The Scarecow Press, Inc., 1991), 9-10.
[125] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Schoenberg [Schönberg] Arnold (Franz Walter)," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25024?q=schoenberg&search=quick&pos=2&_start=1#firsthit (accessed June 4, 2014).
[126] Erwin Stein, ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 89.
[127] Ibid, 88.
[128] Ibid, 89.
[129] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Schoenberg [Schönberg] Arnold (Franz Walter)," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25024?q=schoenberg&search=quick&pos=2&_start=1#firsthit (accessed June 3, 2014).

was the appalling news from Europe and the growing threat to relatives and friends there."[130]

In 1944 Schoenberg's asthma worsened, as did his diabetes. Therefore, he had to retire, with only a small pension.[131] It was during his last year that the composer compiled his own articles and essays and published them in the book "Style and Idea."[132]

Schoenberg felt that his destiny was to continue the Austro-Germanic musical lineage, which dominated western music during the previous periods. He loved his country and continuously declared that German music was superior to any other. According to Josef Rufer, Schoenberg "carried [his homeland] with him wherever he went in his daily life, in his thoughts and his feelings, this homeland of the German spirit, of German music."[133] His loyalty to his country is evident in the following excerpt from his letters:

> I am gladly prepared to conduct in Germany without a fee, because nowadays Germany cannot pay. And even if I do not happen to be precisely the person who earned particularly high fees as a conductor in Germany before the war, I do think one must never forget what Germany did for art while it was still in a position to do so.[134]

Although Schoenberg predicted the disaster of the Nazi government and was against it, he never turned his back to his motherland.[135] He also strived to contribute to

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[130] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Schoenberg [Schönberg] Arnold (Franz Walter)," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25024?q=schoenberg&search=quick&pos=2&_start=1#firsthit (accessed June 3, 2014).
[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Joseph Rufer, "Hommage à Schoenberg," in *Arnold Schoenberg Correspondence: a Collection of Translated and Annotated Letters Exchanged with Guido Adler, Pablo Casals, Emanuel Feuermann and Olin Downes*, ed. Egbert M. Ennulat (Metuches, N.J., & London: The Scarecow Press, Inc., 1991), 2.
[134] Erwin Stein, ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 86.
[135] Egbert M. Ennulat ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Correspondence: a Collection of Translated and Annotated Letters Exchanged with Guido Adler, Pablo Casals, Emanuel Feuermann and Olin Downes* (Metuches, N.J., & London: The Scarecow Press, Inc., 1991), 6.

the supremacy of German music. As he said: "Today I succeeded in something by which I have assured the dominance of German music for the next century," when referring to the invention of twelve tone composition.[136] In a letter to Edgar Varèse (1883-1965), Schoenberg showed his discontentment because the French composer neglected to include German music in his programs. Schoenberg also felt disrespected because Varèse did not ask permission to play his music, and did not consult him about logistics:

> I: Above all: from your manifesto and the programmes of three concerts I gather you have hitherto attached no importance to German music. No single German among 27 composers performed! So then you have been international to the exclusion of the Germans!
>
> II: What offends me equally, however, is that without asking me whether you *can and may* do so you simply set a definitive date for my 'Pierrot lunaire' . . . What I want to know is: 1. How many rehearsals? 2. Who are the players? If all this is to my satisfaction, I shall give my blessing. But for the rest I am, of course, powerless and you can do as you like. But then kindly refrain from asking me about it.[137]

IV. 1 Extra-musical influences: Expressionism

Schoenberg was considerably influenced by the expressionist painters and writers. He was also a painter, and it was during his expressionist years that he worked on the *Red Gaze* – one of his most famous paintings (1910). According to Bernstein, "he was making the same kinds of experiments on canvas as he was making on music paper."[138]

Expressionism was a movement that started in Germany and represents the period when psychology was developed and when philosophies of important figures such as Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) were established.

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[136] Egbert M. Ennulat ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Correspondence: a Collection of Translated and Annotated Letters Exchanged with Guido Adler, Pablo Casals, Emanuel Feuermann and Olin Downes* (Metuches, N.J., & London: The Scarecow Press, Inc., 1991), 2.
[137] Erwin Stein, ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 78-79.
[138] Leonard Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 271.

Hermann Bahr (1863-1934), one of the earliest expressionist writers, said: "Man cries for his soul, the whole era becomes a single cry of pain. Art too cries, into the deep darkness, it cries for help, it cries for spirit: that is Expressionism."[139] Rather than depicting facts or the impression of an object, expressionist artists sought to express their inner emotions and their deepest personal feelings. As Holly Watkins states: "collapsing the distinction between the realm of appearance and interior feeling was a common expressionist device for portraying states of psychic distress."[140] The subjects used were generally sordid and represented the unconscious, anxieties and dreams. Expressionist art contains many distortions of scenes and objects, in order to portray the inner feelings of the artist.

Expressionist art was not supposed to be appreciated for its beauty, and the artists opposed the principle of art-for-art's-sake.[141] While impressionism was a call for leisure and pleasure, expressionist ideology represented ugliness, distortions, and exaggerations. Expressionist artists were against impressionism and considered it superficial. Even the name "expressionism" was coined to contrast it with impressionism.[142] In many cases the intention of expressionist art was to shock the audience.

The main expressionist composers in the first half of the twentieth century were Schoenberg and his disciples Berg and Webern.[143] Other composers added to the

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[139] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Expressionism," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/09141?q=expressionism&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (accessed October 2, 2014).
[140] Holly Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought: From E.T.A. Hoffmann to Arnold Schoenberg* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 201.
[141] John C. Crawford and Dorothy L. Crawford, *Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 1.
[142] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Expressionism," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/09141?q=expressionism&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (accessed June 4, 2014).
[143] Ibid.

expressionist movement, such as Stravinsky, Béla Bartók (1881-1945), Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) and Charles Ives (1874-1954).[144]

Schoenberg developed a long friendship with the expressionist painter Wassily Kandinsky. Their friendship started by correspondence, after Kandinsky wrote the first letter, in 1911. The painter had gone to a concert of Schoenberg's Second String Quartet, op. 10 and the Three Piano Pieces, op. 11, both expressionist pieces. Kandinsky was fascinated with the composer's approach to music, for he found correlations with his own painting style.

As the expressionist artists, Schoenberg was not concerned with fitting his unconscious thoughts into pre-established aesthetic models.[145] In a letter to Kandinsky, he stated: "But art belongs to the unconscious! One must express oneself . . . directly! Not one's taste or, or one's upbringing, or one's intelligence knowledge or skill. Not all these acquired characteristics, but that which is inborn, instinctive."[146] Schoenberg also wrote that "it is impossible for a person to have only one sensation at a time. One has *thousands* simultaneously . . . this illogicality which our senses demonstrate . . . I should like to have in my music. It should be an expression of feeling . . ."[147]

Schoenberg's expressionist period encompasses his atonal compositions, including the Three Piano Pieces, op. 11 (1909), *Fünf Orchesterstücke*, op. 16 (1909), as well as the monodrama *Erwartung* (1909), and the melodramatic song cycle *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912). He composed compulsively during his expressionist years. The first five

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[144] John C. Crawford and Dorothy L. Crawford, *Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).
[145] Holly Watkins, *Metaphors of Depth in German Musical Thought: From E.T.A. Hoffmann to Arnold Schoenberg* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 201.
[146] Hahl-Koch, Jelena, ed. *Arnold Schoenberg, Wassily Kandinsky: Letters, Pictures and Documents*, trans. John C. Crawford (London: Faber and Faber, 1984), 23.
[147] Joseph Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader: Documents of a Life* (Yale University Press, 2003), 70-71.

pieces from Six Little Piano Pieces, op. 19, for example, were composed in only one day.[148] According to writer Áine Heneghan, "during this period Schoenberg avoided significant revisions and refrained almost entirely from sketching."[149] His expressionist compositions were not well received initially by the public or the press, and the reactions were maybe more aggressive than to any other composer in history.[150] These works show his preference for spontaneity, freedom and avoidance of traditional cadences. Therefore, they go against the criticism that Schoenberg received for being too rational in his compositions.

IV. 2 Musical influences

Unlike Debussy, Schoenberg did not show interest in non-western music, but chose to follow his German antecedents.[151] He even stated that his teachers "were primarily Bach and Mozart, and secondarily Beethoven, Brahms, and Wagner."[152] Schoenberg considered Bach to be the creator of the "developing variation" technique, which he saw reflected in the works of Beethoven and Brahms. In the next passage, from his essays, Schoenberg defended the originality of Bach's works and how they were still interesting centuries later:[153]

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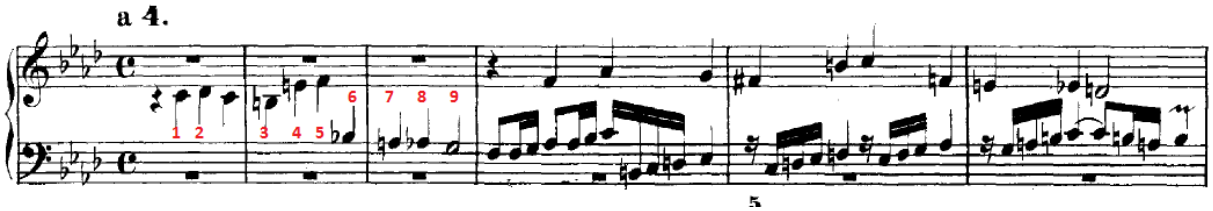
[148] Áine Heneghan, "Schoenberg's Compositional Philosophy, The Three Piano Pieces, Op. 11, and His Subsequent *Volte-Face*" in *Musical Currents From the Left Coast*, ed. Jack Boss and Bruce Quaglia (United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 303.
[149] Ibid, 303.
[150] John C. Crawford and Dorothy L. Crawford, *Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 69.
[151] The influence of non-western music was seen in France, but not much in other places. According to Schmitz, "the favor that the Indonesians found with the French was not necessarily widespread, however." Michael David Schmitz, "Oriental Influences in the Piano Music of Claude Achille Debussy" (DMA diss., University of Arizona, 1995), 30.
[152] Leonard Stein, ed., *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, trans. Leo Black (USA: University of California Press, 1984), 173.
[153] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 41-42.

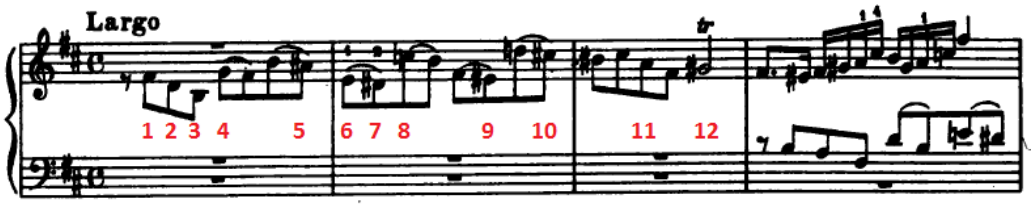
> . . . he is able to write fluent and well balanced melodies of more beauty, richness and expressiveness than can be found in the music of all those Keysers, Telemanns, and Philipp Emanuel Bachs who called him outmoded. They, of course, were not capable of seeing that he was also the first to introduce just that technique so necessary for the progress of their New Music: the technique of 'developing variation,' which made possible the style of the great Viennese Classicists.
> . . . today their New Music is outmoded while Bach's has become eternal.[154]

Schoenberg affirmed that with Bach he learned "contrapuntal thinking" and "disregard for the 'strong' beat of the measure."[155] Additionally, he attributed to Bach the use of the twelve-tone compositions: "Bach sometimes operated with the twelve tones in such a manner that one would be inclined to call him the first twelve-tone composer."[156] Indeed, Bach's music is filled with bold chromaticism, as can be seen in the next two examples, from the *Well-Tempered Clavier I*. In the Fugue in F Minor (BWV 857) Bach employs nine tones in the theme, with only one repetition (example 39), and in the last fugue of the book (BWV 869), in the key of B minor, Bach uses all twelve tones in the theme (example 40).



Example 39 – Bach, Fugue in F Minor, BWV 857, mm. 1-6

[154] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 43.
[155] Leonard Stein, ed., *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, trans. Leo Black (USA: University of California Press, 1984), 173.
[156] Ibid, 42.



Example 40 – Bach, Fugue in B Minor, BWV 869, mm.1-4

Schoenberg included Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) among his main influences, and stated that from him he learned "inequality of phrase length," "co-ordination of heterogeneous characters to form a thematic unity," as well as "the art of introduction and transition."[157]

Unlike Debussy, Schoenberg admired Beethoven, and claimed that he learned from him how to build pieces out of short motives, expanding, developing and varying them. He also attributed to Beethoven the use of rhythmic displacement. [158] When defending himself from the accusation of thinking too rationally, Schoenberg used an episode in Beethoven's life as an example of his own ideas. Beethoven once received a letter signed by "land owner," to which he replied signing "brain owner."[159]

Another influence on the composer was the music of Richard Wagner. Wagner's bold use of chromaticism and unending sequences of unresolved dissonances led almost to the limits of the tonal system. Schoenberg's first works illustrate these characteristics, still within a tonal framework. However, he later achieved what he called the "emancipation of the dissonance:"[160] dissonances did not have to be resolved, and were

[157] Leonard Stein, ed., *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, trans. Leo Black (USA: University of California Press, 1984), 173.
[158] Ibid, 173.
[159] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 48.
[160] Ibid, 105.

not interdependent with consonances to create tension and release, as in the tonal system. Everything was possible.

Schoenberg explained how he viewed the trajectory of music from Wagner to non-tonal compositions in the following passage, and explained how Debussy was also influential in the move towards the "emancipation of dissonance:"

> Richard Wagner's harmony had promoted a change in the logic and constructive power of harmony. One of its consequences was the so-called *impressionistic* use of harmonies, especially practiced by Debussy. His harmonies, without constructive meaning, often served the coloristic purpose of expressing moods and pictures. Moods and pictures, though extra-musical, thus became constructive elements, incorporated in the musical functions; they produced a sort of emotional comprehensibility. In this way, tonality was already dethroned in practice, if not in theory. This alone would perhaps not have caused a radical change in compositional technique. However, such a change became necessary when there occurred simultaneously a development which ended in what I call the *emancipation of the dissonance*.[161]

As mentioned before, another composer that led to the emancipation of dissonance was Liszt. According to Alan Walker (b.1930), "Liszt once defended the dissonances of the 'Music of the Future' by declaring that the 12-note chord . . . would soon become the basis of harmony and that chords of the future would consist of the arbitrary exclusion of certain intervals."[162] Liszt's *Bagatelle sans tonalitè* (Bagatelle Without Tonality) already hints at what was about to come in the music of the twentieth century. In his last pieces, Liszt explores dissonant intervals, such as the tritone, and this interval plays an important role in the opening of *Unstern: Sinistre, Disastro* (see example 41).

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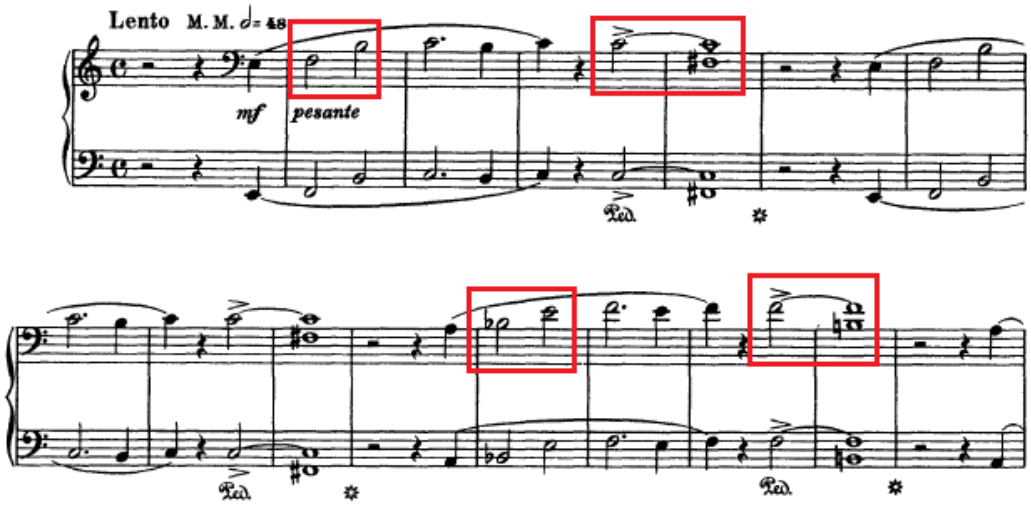
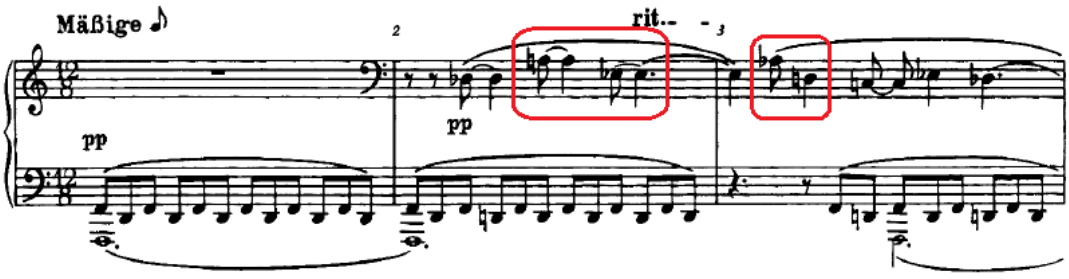
[161] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 104.
[162] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Liszt, Franz," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/48265pg25#S48265.25 (accessed May 21, 2014).



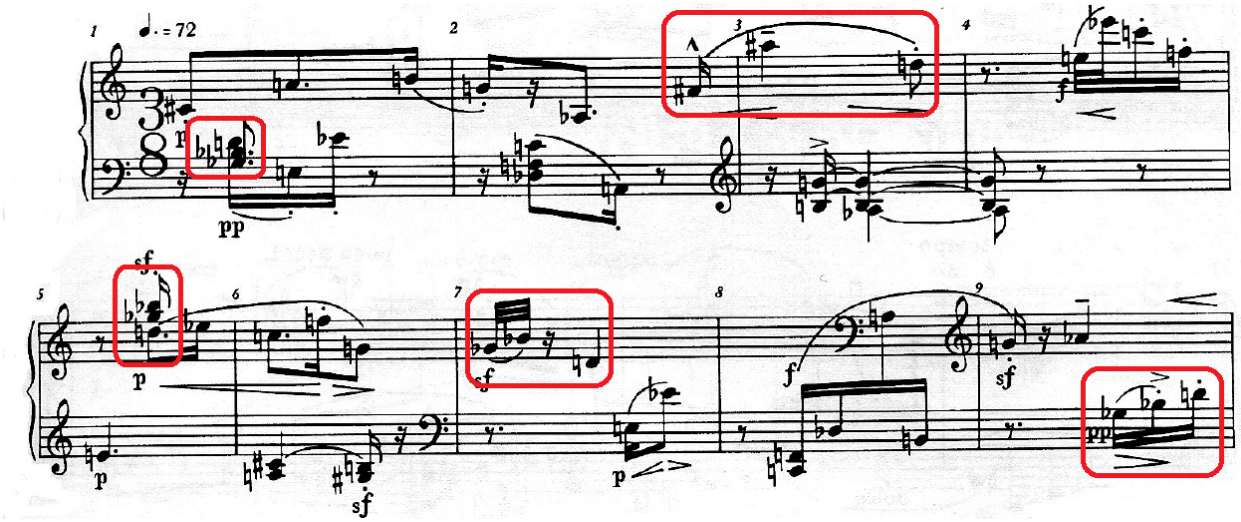
Example 41 – Liszt, *Unstern: Sinistre, Disastro*, mm. 1-15

In order to achieve the "emancipation of dissonance," Schoenberg avoids the usual "consonant" intervals and chords. He frequently employs intervals that were considered dissonant, such as seconds, tritones, sevenths, and ninths. These intervals are used both melodically and harmonically. The next example shows the beginning of the second piece from Three Piano Pieces, op. 11, which contains a "dissonant" melody characterized by chromaticism and "dissonant" intervals.



Example 42 – Schoenberg, Three Piano Pieces, op. 11, no. 2, mm.1-3

Liszt's augmented chords not only influenced Debussy, but also Schonberg. In the Waltz from Schoenberg's Five Piano Pieces, op. 23, augmented chords play an important role, both harmonically and melodically (see example 43).



Example 43 – Schoenberg, Five Piano Pieces, op. 23, no. 5 (Waltz), mm. 1-9

The laconic style of Liszt's late piano works also has a parallel with Schoenberg's piano writing. Schoenberg did not compose virtuosic and brilliant passages for the piano, but used the instrument in order to express his musical ideas. His piano writing also corresponds to Brahms' character pieces. According to Reinhold Brinkmann, "the stylistic affinity with the lyrical piano pieces of Brahms, which became evident very early on, is, with the exception of the 'pre-Classical' Suite Op. 25, a constant for all of Schönberg's piano works. This is especially evident in the instrumental writing, in the pianistic elements."[163] The heightened seriousness and expressivity of Brahms' late piano

[163] Reinhold Brinkmann, preface to *Ausgewählte Klaviermusik*, by Arnold Schönberg (Austria: Wiener Urtext Edition, Schott/Universal Edition, 1995), 14.

sets can be found in Schoenberg's own piano works, as well as his choice of keeping the music "absolute" and not adding any evocative titles.

Schoenberg admired Brahms greatly, and was an advocate of his music. Brahms was called an "academician" and a "classicist" during his time, when he was compared with Wagner ("the progressive").[164] Schoenberg defended Brahms in his article "Brahms the Progressive"[165] and showed how progressive Brahms was in his treatment of motivic development and of harmonies within Classical structures. One of the examples he gives of Brahms' progressive harmonies is the Rhapsody for piano, op. 79, no. 2, since Brahms' avoids the tonic for almost the entire piece. Schoenberg created the term "developing variation" when referring to Brahms' music, and explained that this technique characterizes music based on small fragments (or motives) and their constant variation, as opposed to simple repetition. He stated that "variation of features of a basic unit produces all the thematic formulations which provide for fluency, contrasts, variety, logic and unity, on the one hand, and character, mood, expression and every needed differentiation, of the other hand – thus elaborating the idea of the piece."[166]

In his article "Criteria for the Evaluation of Music," Schoenberg compared Wagner's and Brahms' approaches to thematic material. He considered Brahms' superior and more advanced, since (in Schoenberg's own words) his "repeated phrases, motives and other structural ingredients of themes [occur] only in varied forms."[167] He stated that "Wagner, in order to make his themes suitable for memorability, used sequences and semi-sequences, that is, unvaried or slightly varied repetitions differing in nothing

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[164] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 52.
[165] Included in Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950).
[166] *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Back (USA: University of California Press, 1984), 397.
[167] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 185.

essential from first appearances, except that they are exactly transposed to other degrees."[168]

Schoenberg also considered progressive the "cross rhythms" (generally "two against three") in Brahms' music, which he claimed to be starting point of the abundant polyrhythms of the twentieth century. As he stated in "Criteria for the Evaluation of Music:" "When Brahms demanded that one hand of the pianist played twos or fours while the other played threes, people disliked this and said it made them seasick. But this was probably the start of the polyrhythmic structure of many contemporary scores."[169]

IV. 3 Writing Style and Compositional Techniques

In "New Music, Outmoded Music, Style and Idea," Schoenberg explained what he considered important and relevant in musical compositions. For him, a composer's style was his own signature, but it should always be the consequence of his musical ideas. Hence, he criticized composers who were too concerned with the style and presentation of their music, and little concerned with the musical idea. As he wrote in his essays: "From this came such notions as the attempt to compose in ancient styles, using their mannerisms, limiting oneself to the little that one can thus express and to the insignificance of the musical configurations which can be produced with such equipment."[170]

For Schoenberg, the essence of the musical idea consisted of pitches and rhythms over time, whereas everything else was merely the presentation, and therefore, less important:

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[168] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 185.
[169] Ibid, 88.
[170] Ibid, 50.

> For that which is really thought, the musical idea, the immutable is determined in the relationship of pitch to the division of time. Everything else, on the other hand, dynamics, tempo, tone color and that which results from these elements: character, clarity, effect, etc. – these are really only a means of presentation and serve to make these thoughts comprehensible and thus are subject to change.[171]

According to Schoenberg, his first works in the new style (atonal works) were composed around 1908. Although the composer disliked the term "atonalism," and hated when he was called an "atonalist," this is the most accepted term amongst scholars to refer to freely chromatic pre-twelve-tone music, and will be used in this paper. In a letter to Kandinsky, Schoenberg clearly stated his opinions about this subject: "I find it perfectly disgusting, at least in music: these atonalists! Damn it all, I did my composing without any 'ism' in mind. What has it got to do with me?"[172]

One characteristic of the works from this period is their brevity. He acknowledged this and said that "our sense of form was right when it forced us to counterbalance extreme emotionality with extraordinary shortness."[173] Schoenberg explained that since harmony was previously connected with form, composers could expand their ideas through the combination of tension and relaxation. Thus, the emancipation of dissonance, combined with the search for spontaneity and expression of emotions, made it more difficult to expand ideas, and the result was that the pieces were short (at least the instrumental ones, without the aid of a text). One example is his set of Six Little Piano Pieces, op. 19: the longest piece has only 17 measures, and some of them have only 9

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[171] Reinhold Brinkmann, preface to *Ausgewählte Klaviermusik,* by Claude Debussy (Austria: Wiener Urtext Edition, Schott/Universal Edition, 1995), 15.
[172] Erwin Stein, ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 71.
[173] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 105.

measures. They are examples of twentieth-century bagatelles – which can be considered another connection with Beethoven.

Although Schoenberg had disciples that followed his new compositional system, he did not at any point encourage his own students to compose like him, or to compose "atonal music." Even in his book *Harmonielehre* (Theory of Harmony) he discussed traditional and tonal music. In a letter to a Miss Fuhrmann, who wanted to attend his masterclass and learn "how to composer in an atonal style," he explained:

1. First and foremost, there is a serious misunderstanding here: I do not teach 'atonal music' but just music. The time is certainly not ripe yet for teaching atonal music! It would only be bad if one did so, while, on the other hand, it is essential to teach people how to compose properly!
2. Generally, in my teaching I aim less toward instructing than toward advising them.[174]

Schoenberg's first atonal work was the Three Piano Pieces, op. 11, which can be considered his first important work for piano. Op. 11 was preceded by the Second String Quartet, op. 10, whose last movement already showed signs of atonality. This quartet includes a soprano voice, that sings at the end *Ich fühle Luft von anderem Planeten* (I feel air from another planet), already predicting this "new air" that surrounded his new compositions. According to Bernstein, the atonality of Schoenberg's op. 11 is "not the atonality of Debussy's whole-tone scale, which . . . was always tonally contained. This atonality is not contained, whether diatonically or in any other way; for better or worse, non-tonal music has been born. The history of music has suffered a sea-change."[175]

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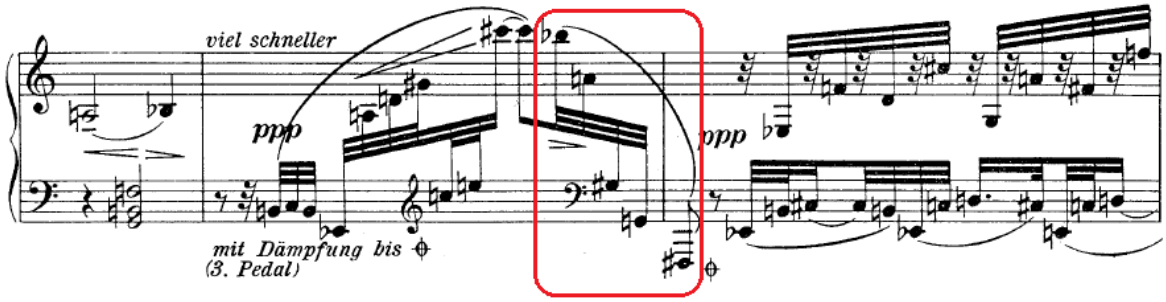
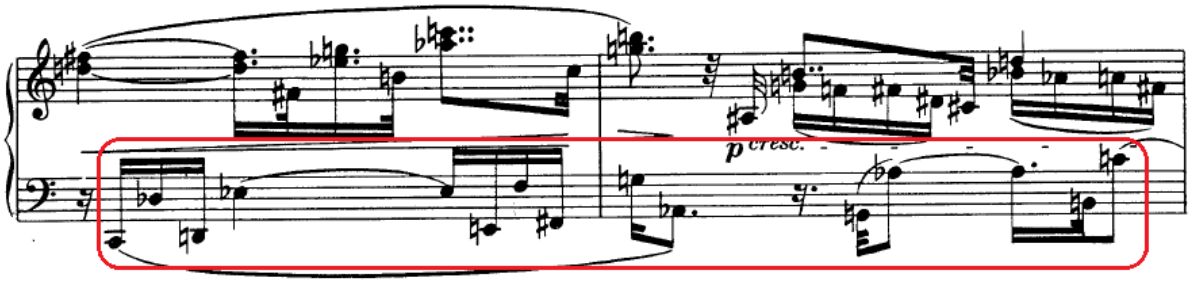
[174] Egbert M. Ennulat ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Correspondence: a Collection of Translated and Annotated Letters Exchanged with Guido Adler, Pablo Casals, Emanuel Feuermann and Olin Downes* (Metuches, N.J., & London: The Scarecow Press, Inc., 1991), 37.
[175] Leonard Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 267.

As stated before, in his atonal pieces, Schoenberg avoids using pure triads. The intervals used more frequently are the ones that are considered extremely dissonant in tonal music (minor seconds, tritones and major sevenths), which he uses both harmonically and melodically. He also explores dissonance and new sonorities such as striking octave displacements (examples 44 and 45 show this technique in the first piece of op. 11).



Example 44 – Schoenberg, Three Piano Pieces, op. 11, no. 1, mm. 11-13

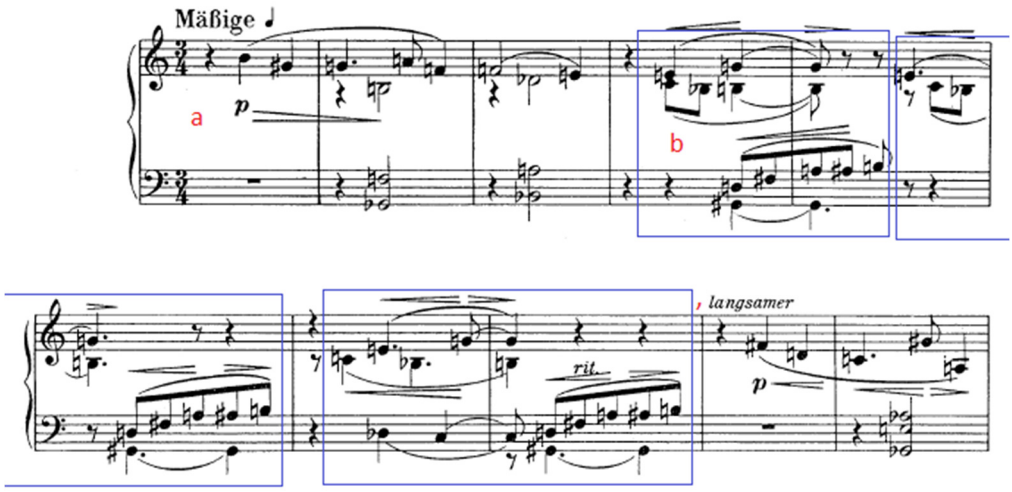


Example 45 – Schoenberg, Three Piano Pieces, op. 11 no. 1, mm. 36-37

Tension, resolution and climaxes are created not through functional harmony, but through melodic and rhythmic gestures, as well as texture. Schoenberg valued horizontal lines and the relationship between them, as seen in the abundance of imitation and

counterpoint in his music. Additionally, motivic development (or "developing variation") rules the entire musical structure.

All of these characteristics can be seen in the set Three Piano Pieces, op. 11. The first piece is monothematic, and example 46 shows the exposition of the theme. After its first appearance, the theme is developed throughout the whole piece. Although Schoenberg does not use functional harmonies and cadences, it is clear through the melodic and rhythmic lines as well as in the articulation and dynamics, that the first phrase has eight measures, divided into two sub-phrases of three and five measures ("a" and "b"). The end of the section is confirmed by the *ritardando*.



Example 46 – Schoenberg, op. 11, no. 1, mm. 1-10

In the recurrences of the theme, only "a" can be easily recognized, while "b" is continually varied. Every time "a" is presented, it is followed by a contrasting section, with the same characteristics as "b" (continuous rhythm and ambiguous pulse). This is

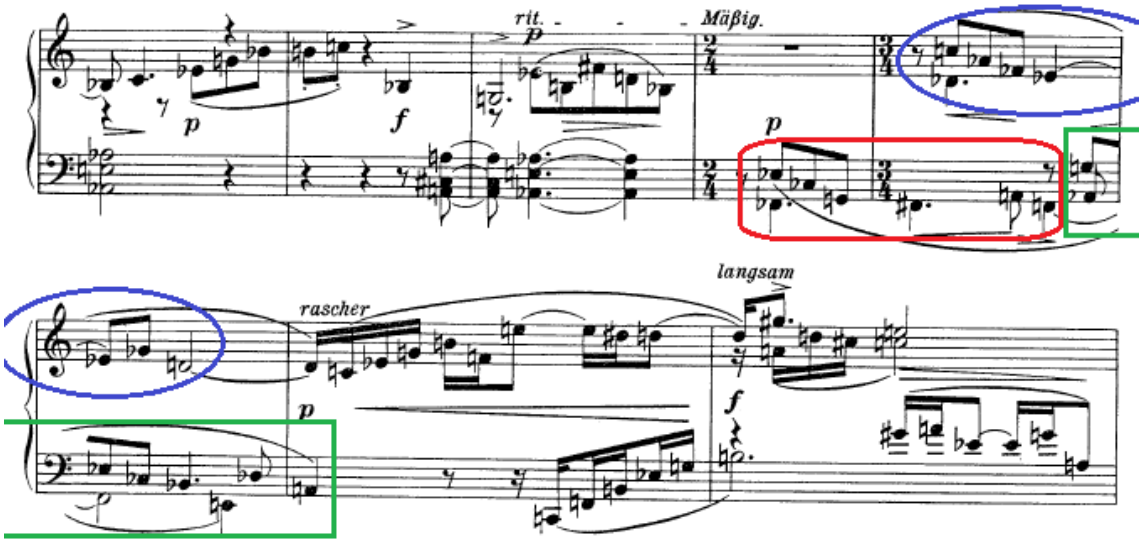
why the figure below only presents “a” and “b” as thematic materials. When there was considerable difference from the original “a” and “b”, numerals were used to distinguish the sections (e.g.: “a1,” “b1”).

Motives	a	b	a	b1	a1	b2	a	b3	a	b4	a2	a	b5	a	a	b6	a
Measures	1	4	9	12	15	19	25	28	34	38	42	46	48	51	53	55	59
Sections	Exposition						Development								Recapitulation		

Figure 4 – Schoenberg, Three Piano Pieces, op. 11, no. 1[176]

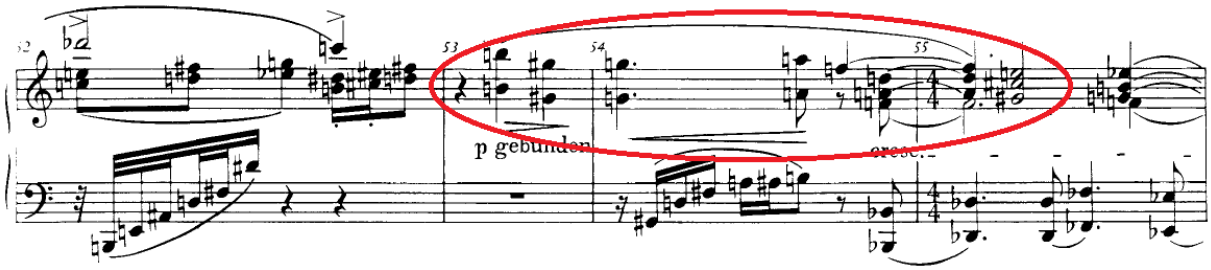
[176] Although the terms “exposition,” “development” and “recapitulation” were chosen to describe the sections of this piece in this analysis, it is not a representation of the classical sonata form.

Example 47 shows “a” in the development section. Schoenberg harmonizes the first note with a major seventh below, changes the original rhythm, and explores imitation among the voices.



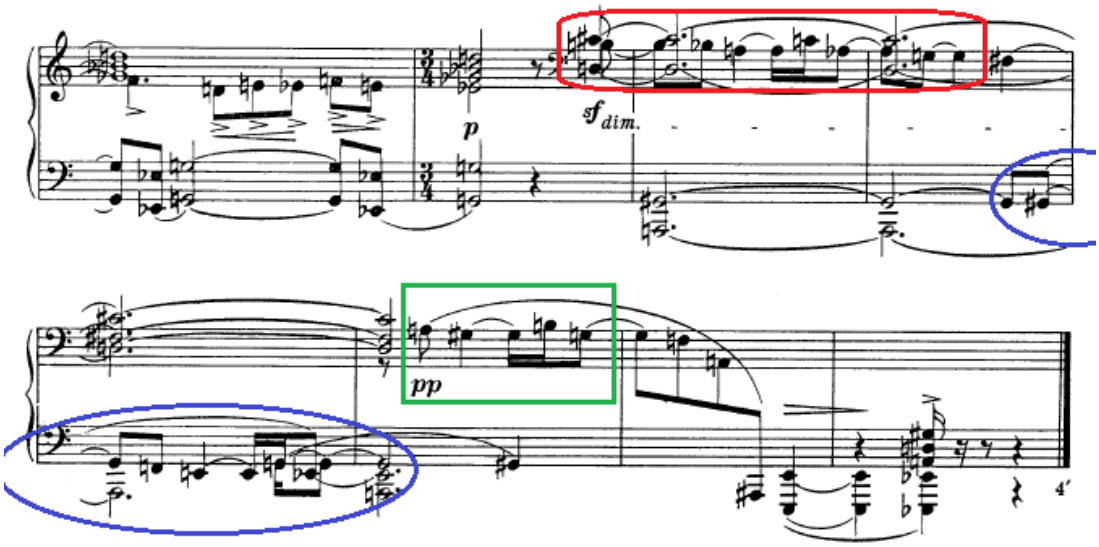
Example 47 – Schoenberg, Three Piano Pieces, op. 11, no. 1, mm. 22-29

In the recapitulation, “a” returns in octaves, with the exact same melody notes of the opening, as can be seen in example 48.



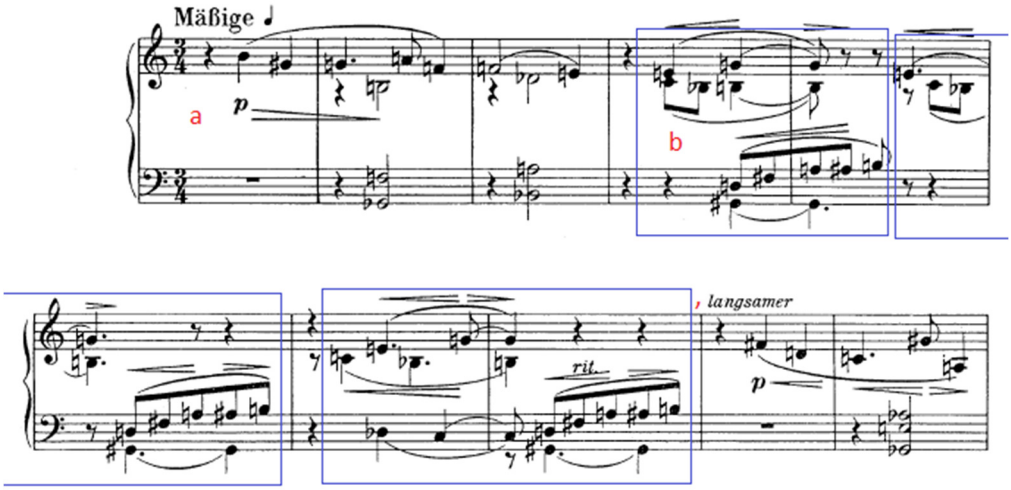
Example 48 – Schoenberg, Three Piano Pieces, op. 11, no.1, mm. 52-55

In the last measures, while the dynamics fade away, “a” is restated three times (see example 49), each time shorter, signaling the end of the piece.

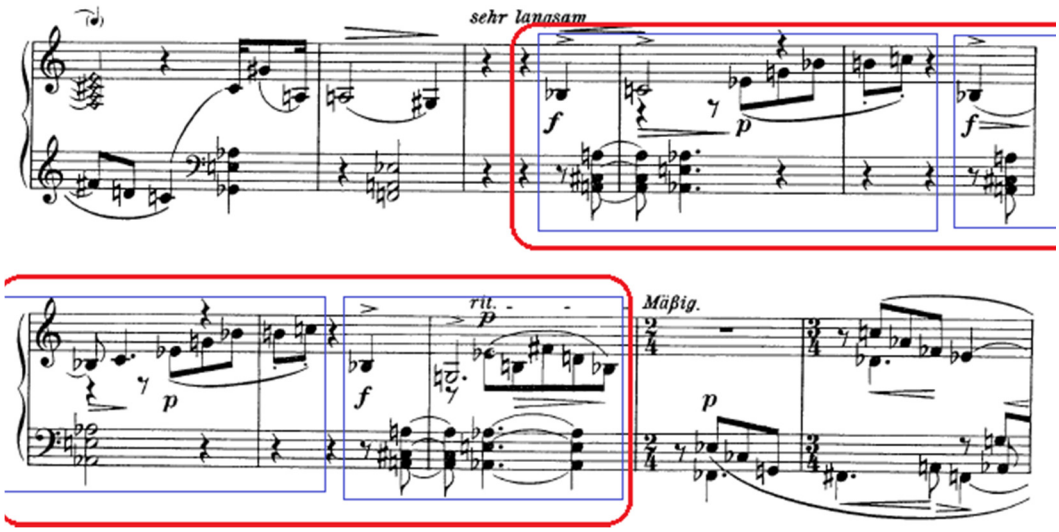


Example 49 – Schoenberg, Three Piano Pieces, op. 11, no. 1, mm. 57-64

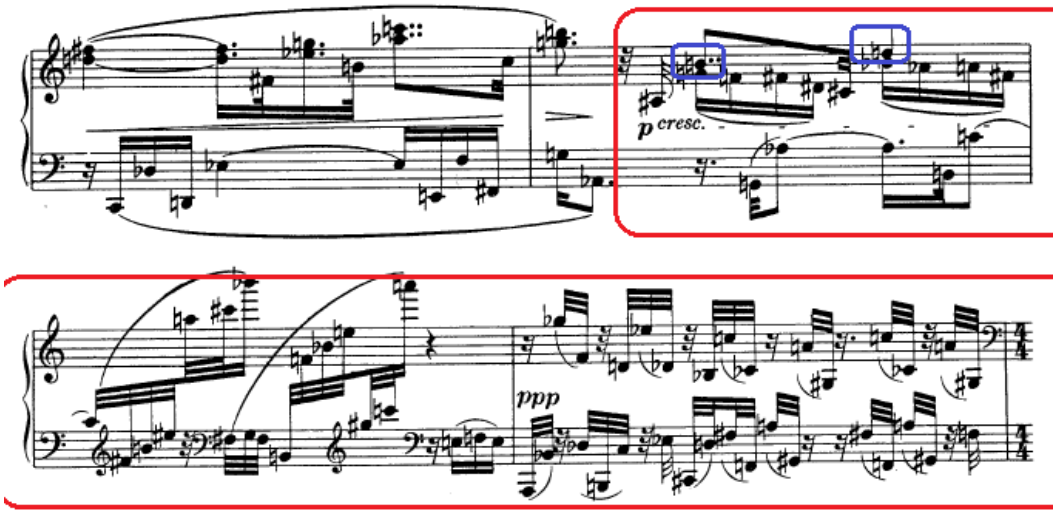
Schoenberg’s technique of developing variation can be seen in this piece especially through the constant modifications of “b”, which is sometimes almost unrecognizable. In order to visualize some of the variants of “b”, see the next three examples (50-52). In example 51 (“b2”), although Schoenberg does not use the same melodic intervals of “b” (minor third), he keeps important elements, such as the phrase in three sections with continuous eighth-notes, and the *ritardando* at the end of the phrase. The resemblance between “b4” and “b” seems even smaller: the elements in common with “b” are the interval of the melody (minor third), the chromatic accompaniment and the rhythmic continuity.



Example 50 – Schoenberg, Three Piano Pieces, op. 11, no. 1, mm.1-9



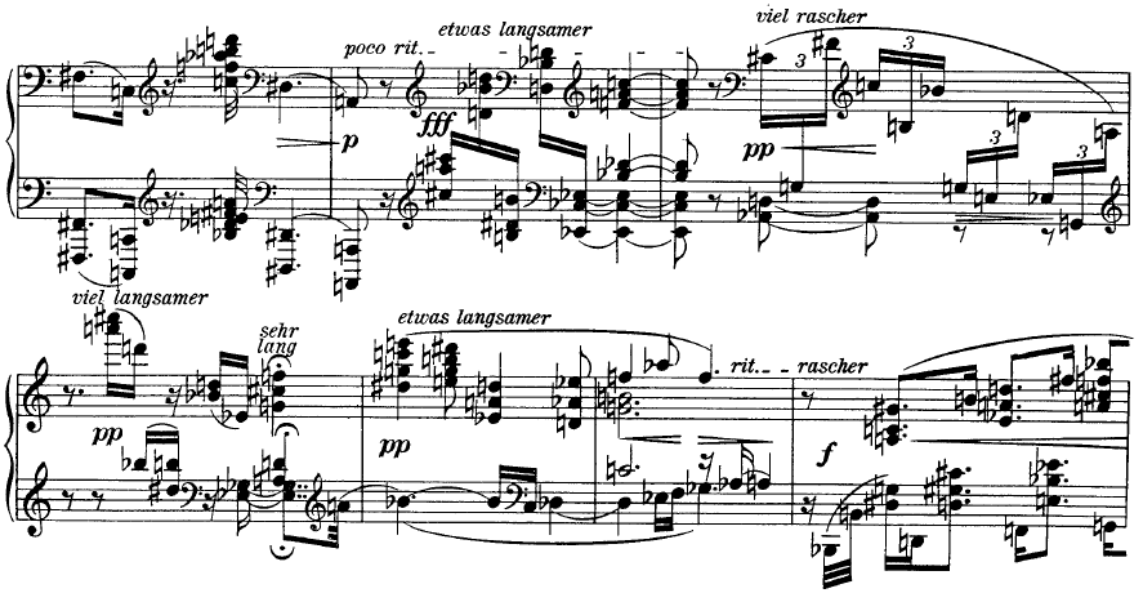
Example 51 – Schoenberg, Three Piano Pieces, op. 11, no. 1, mm. 17-26 (“b2”)



Example 52 – Schoenberg, Three Piano Pieces, op. 11, no. 1, mm. 37-40 ("b4")

In the last piece of this set, Schoenberg explores more striking dissonances, abrupt shifts of texture, and extreme dynamic levels, from ***pppp*** to ***ffff***. Traditional thematic development and melodic repetition are avoided, which makes this piece sound even more modern than the other two. According to David Burge (1930-2013), op. 11, no. 3 can be considered the "the first musical statement of Germanic expressionism undisguised by previous formal conventions."[177] This movement is a perfect example of one challenging aspect of Schoenberg's piano music: tempo. With only 35 measures, this piece includes approximately 25 tempo changes (example 53 shows the tempo changes in two lines of the piece). This makes it difficult for the performer to maintain unity and to achieve a coherent performance.

[177] David Burge, *Twentieth-Century Piano Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 29.



Example 53 – Schoenberg, Three Piano Pieces, op. 11, no. 3 – mm. 4-10

Schoenberg's atonal works led to his invention of the twelve-tone system. Aware of the increasing difficulty of unifying his atonal pieces, he wrote that "the method of composing with twelve tones grew out of a necessity."[178] Webern, his disciple, stated that "People are wrong to regard it as merely a 'substitute for tonality.' Here the element of comprehensibility is important above all to introduce ever more unity! That's been the reason for this kind of composition."[179] The unity of a twelve-tone piece was achieved because harmony, melody, theme and motives, all derive from the original row.

Although the last movement of his Five Piano Pieces, op. 23 was already composed with twelve-tones, Schoenberg's first complete work based on serial twelve tones was the Piano Suite, op. 25. This work is a clear example of Schoenberg's admiration for Bach. It is based on the row E-F-G-Db-Gb-Eb-Ab-D-B-C-A-Bb, of which

[178] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 103.
[179] Anton Webern, *The Path to the New Music*, ed. Willi Reich (Pennsylvania: Theodore Presser Company, 1963), 32.

the last four notes form the retrograde of the name "Bach." The notes B-C-A-Bb in German are written H-C-A-B.[180] Op. 25 is also an important example of neoclassicism. Schoenberg combined the structure of the Baroque suite, with a new language – the twelve-tone series. Except for the intermezzo, each dance from this piece is from the Baroque suite (*präludium, gavotte, musette, intermezzo, menuett, trio, gigue*), although only the *gigue* is part of the four standard dances (allemande, courante, sarabande and gigue). The intermezzo, though not used in the Baroque period, was common in the Romantic period, and is most strongly associated with Brahms. Schoenberg's Intermezzo was clearly an homage to Brahms, since he was one of Schoenberg's "heroes."

Schoenberg believed in tradition, and wanted to keep on with the German music lineage. He once wrote: ". . . anyone who wants to study modern music will learn from me all that can be learnt: based on a solid classical foundation, right up to the latest achievements in our art."[181] For Schoenberg, the path he was taking – by composing atonal music and later the twelve-tone technique – was inevitable in the evolution of music and he believed that soon other composers would be following in his footsteps.[182] His two most prominent disciples, Webern and Alban Berg, followed his dodecaphonic technique and helped disseminate the new music in their own ways. The three of them formed the so called Second Viennese School and were "the first major exponents of twelve-tone music."[183]

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[180] Reinhold Brinkmann, preface to *Ausgewählte Klaviermusik*, by Arnold Schönberg (Austria: Wiener Urtext Edition, Schott/Universal Edition, 1995), 13.
[181] Erwin Stein, ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 27.
[182] Ibid, 28.
[183] *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 4th ed., s.v. "Viennese school, second."

However, the attacks against Schoenberg's twelve-tone compositions were constant, and his idea of the "emancipation of dissonance" often did not please the public. He was once asked if he was the composer who was so persecuted, to which he replied: "Yes, but this is how it happened: somebody had to do it; nobody wanted to; so I just had to resign myself to it."[184] Schoenberg often felt like he had to explain himself and defend his compositions, which he did through letters, books, and essays. He wrote: "I cannot say it often enough: my works are twelve-tone *compositions* and not *twelve-tone* compositions."[185] He was trying to emphasize the creative act of composing over the compositional technique. In another letter he wrote:

> I have never had a theory in my life . . . I do not consciously create tonal, polytonal or polyplane music. I write what I feel in my heart, and what I finally put down on paper has passed through every fiber of my body before. Therefore, I cannot say in which style my next composition will be; this is because it will be determined by what I feel at a given point when I develop and work out my thoughts.[186]

Defending their twelve-tone system from the numerous attacks, Webern said that twelve-tone music was "just as much a gift of nature as what was practiced earlier."[187] Schoenberg said, in an interview, that the interest in his music would "grow through the intellectual curiosity of an idealistic youth which feels itself more attracted by the mysterious than the commonplace."[188] He showed he was aware that his music could be appreciated mostly by an "intellectual" public, but not by all (something that has not changed much today).

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[184]Egbert M. Ennulat ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Correspondence: a Collection of Translated and Annotated Letters Exchanged with Guido Adler, Pablo Casals, Emanuel Feuermann and Olin Downes* (Metuches, N.J., & London: The Scarecow Press, Inc., 1991), 6.
[185]Ibid, 47.
[186] Ibid, 48.
[187] Ibid, 15.
[188] Ibid, 13.

In any case, although Schoenberg appeared to be confident about what he was doing, the harsh reaction that his music received made him cautious with choosing when and where to perform his pieces. He would sometimes flee from uncomfortable situations. As he wrote to the critic Paul Bekker (1882-1937), he avoided contact with critics: "Now, since I in particular cannot tolerate any criticism whatsoever (for I should not like to think I had written anything that would justify adverse criticism . . .) I have up to now as a rule preferred not to become personally acquainted with critics."[189]

Schoenberg wanted to be respected for the composer and musician he was, in spite of which method of composition he was using. As he said "everything depends, as always in art, not on the material but on the genius."[190]

IV. 4 Pianistic Considerations

Although Schoenberg was not a pianist and did not write extensively for the piano, his piano pieces have an important role in his compositional development. As exemplified before, every time Schoenberg explored a new compositional technique, he first applied it in a piano piece. Three Pieces for Piano, op. 11 was his first atonal work and marked the beginning of his second period of composition, also represented by the Six Little Piano Pieces, op. 19. The Piano Suite, op. 25 reveals another change in his compositional system: it was the first work entirely based on the twelve-tone row. Additionally, the last movement of his Five Piano Pieces, op. 23 already shows his first dodecaphonic ideas, and was written at the same time he started the composition of op. 25.

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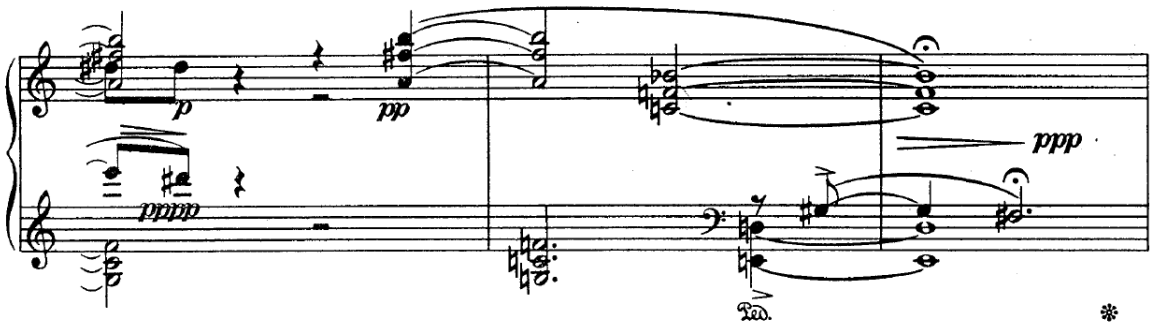
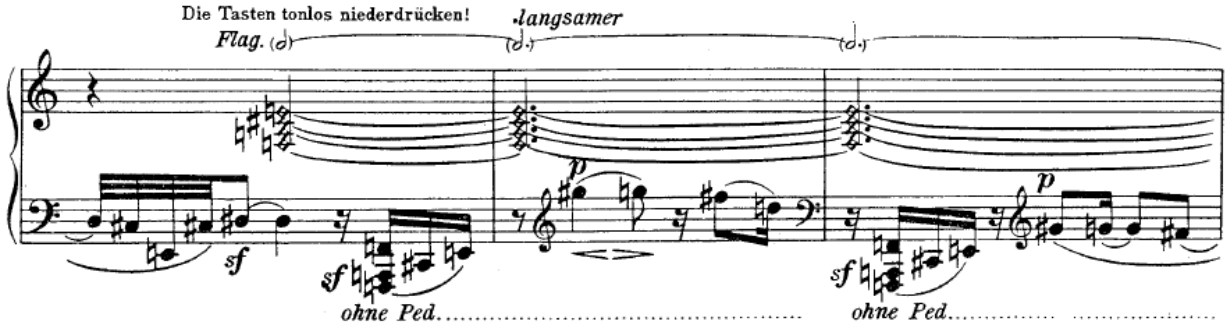
[189] Erwin Stein, ed., *Arnold Schoenberg Letters*, trans. Eithne Wilkins and Ernst Kaiser (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), 109.
[190] Ibid.

Schoenberg's pedal indications are scarce. However, he marks specific points where he does or does not want pedal, and often indicates the duration of the pedal (see examples 54 and 55).



Example 54 – Schoenberg, op. 19, no. 6, mm. 4-6



Example 55 – Schoenberg, op. 11, no. 1, mm. 14-16

In the upper voice of example 55, we can also see his use of piano harmonics. The performer is supposed depress the keys of the chord without making any sound, and hold them down. Since the pedal is not sustained, the harmonics can be activated by the left hand and heard clearly during rests.

In Schoenberg's piano music, one should be flexible with tempo variations, and associate them with changes in character. Schoenberg himself was in favor of *rubato*. He

once asked Ferruccio Busoni (1866-1924) about his performance of op. 11, no. 2: "From a purely technical angle, I would like to ask if you have perhaps taken too slow a tempo. That would make a great difference. Or too little *rubato*. I never stay in time! Never in tempo!"[191]

Just as Debussy was not satisfied with the idea of following and ascribing strict metronome marks, Schoenberg wrote in the preface to his op. 23: "The metronome marks are not to be taken literally, they merely give an indication of the tempo."[192] Therefore, one should take elements of dynamics, character and rhythm into consideration in order to avoid a stiff performance of these pieces. As Schoenberg stated:

> Music should be measured – there is no doubt. As an expression of man it is at least subject to such changes of speed as are dictated by our blood. Our pulse beats faster or slower, often without our recognizing it – certainly, however, in accommodation to our emotions...
>
> Change of speed in pulse-beats corresponds exactly with changes of tempo. When a composer has 'warmed up' he may feel the need of harmonic and rhythmic changes. A change of character, a strong contrast, will often require a modification of tempo. But the most important changes are necessary for the distribution of the phrases of which a segment is composed. . .[193]

Peter Roggenkamp states that "Schoenberg's compositional ideas come before the practical application to the instrument; the idea is more important than its playability."[194] In fact, Schoenberg was criticized for his "unidiomatic piano style." His response was that "composition is the dominant factor; one takes the instrument into account. Not the

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[191] Anthony Beaumont, "Busoni and Schoenberg," *Piano Quarterly* 108 (Winter, 1979-80): 38 in Katherine Frances Petree, "Performance Practices in the Piano Music of Arnold Schoenberg" (DMA diss., University of Kansas, 1986), 29.

[192] Arnold Schoenberg, preface to the *Five Piano Pieces Op. 23* (Kopenhagen: Wilhelm Hansen, 1923, renewed 1951).

[193] Arnold Schoenberg, "Today's Manner of Performing Classical Music," in *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, ed. Leonard Stein, trans. Leo Back (USA: University of California Press, 1984), 321.

[194] Arnold Schoenberg, preface to the *Five Piano Pieces, Op. 23* (Kopenhagen: Wilhelm Hansen, 1923, renewed 1951), 87.

contrary."[195] Therefore, he made it clear that his musical ideas and conceptions were more important than the capabilities of the instrument.

[195] Arnold Schoenberg, *Busoni: Letters*, 384, 385, 387 in Áine Heneghan, "Schoenberg's Compositional Philosophy, The Three Piano Pieces, Op. 11, and His Subsequent *Volte-Face*" in *Musical Currents From the Left Coast*, ed. Jack Boss and Bruce Quaglia (United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 304.

V. Conclusion

Both Schoenberg and Debussy were influenced by late romantic music as well as by their own culture and heritage. In this study, we have examined each composer's music and style, as related to late Romanticism.

Debussy and Schoenberg differed considerably in their philosophies. Debussy declared that he composed what sounded beautiful to his ears, based on his own "impressions." He also stated that "there has been too much concern with writing; music has been written for the paper when in fact it is conceived for the ears."[196] Perhaps this is why Debussy composed slowly, many times rewriting an entire work after playing and not liking it.[197] Schoenberg, on the other hand, did not aim for beauty when he composed his music, which is understandable based on his association with the Expressionist movement. When Schoenberg stated "if it is art, it is not for all, and if it is for all, it is not art,"[198] he may have been trying to justify himself and perhaps suggest that the harsh reactions against his music came from non-educated people. In fact, Schoenberg's music has not become "music for all," but has found admirers mostly in a select and educated group. According to Leonard Bernstein, Schoenberg's music was not appreciated by the general public: "How many music lovers do you know who can say, today, in this fiftieth year of Opus 23, that they love to hear it, that they listen with love to it, as they might listen to Mahler or Stravinsky?"[199] (Or Debussy?) Schoenberg also argued that, like many

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[196] Edward Lockspeiser, "Portrait of Debussy. 11: Debussy in Perspective," *The Musical Times* 109, no. 1508 (October, 1968): 905.
[197] Elie Robert Schmitz, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy* (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, Inc., 1950), 6.
[198] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 50.
[199] Leonard Bernstein, *The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 297.

great artists, he was not understood during his own time.[200] Even today, a century later, this scenario remains essentially unchanged. Debussy's music has been embraced by the public, and while much is debated about how to perform Debussy's piano music in terms of pedaling, fingering, touch, and technique, less is discussed about the performance and interpretation of Schoenberg's piano music. Many are interested in studying Schoenberg's works, but his music does not appear often on concert programs. Regardless, one should not forget that there have been and still are important pianists who specialize and play Schoenberg's piano music. Some of the pianists who have recorded his music include Eduard Steuermann (1892-1964), Glenn Gould (1932-1982), Claudio Arrau (1903-1991), Daniel Barenboim (b. 1942), Maurizio Pollini (b. 1942), and Mitsuko Uchida (b. 1948).

Although the music of Schoenberg is not as often performed and listened to as Debussy's music is, Schoenberg has a devoted group of people who strive to keep his music alive. This is evident by the creation of the "Arnold Schoenberg Center" (www.schoenberg.at), an active organization dedicated to facilitate the access to the composer's output through research, events, exhibitions, and archives.

The way the music of both composers was received during their lifetimes affected their attitudes, as can be seen in their writings. Debussy wrote extensively in his letters about his opinions concerning music of the past, music of his time, his own music, events in France, and "every-day" subjects. He was generally cordial and pleasant in his letters (except when criticizing Germany during the war). Schoenberg, on the other hand, was more severe with his words, judging by his letters sent to people who were going to perform his music or editors. His words often show a resentful attitude. The composer

[200] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 103.

was very specific in his letters about the number of rehearsals that each of his works demanded, as well as who should conduct, play and sing, and he showed his discontentment when his opinions were not respected. One can well imagine that his main concern was to present his works in the best way possible.

They not only had different aesthetic philosophies, but also different compositional techniques. Schoenberg valued the principle of "developing variation," which he claimed was derived from the work of Brahms, and considered this to be the superior method of composition. Debussy, however, created textures using motivic repetition, ostinatos, and the superimposition of independent layers. His compositional technique could loosely be associated with "thematic transformation," traditionally used to describe the music of Liszt.

Schoenberg was accused of being a "rationalist," merely following rules that he created. However, the fact that he composed compulsively and without any revisions during his expressionist years, producing works driven by his inner emotions, tells us otherwise. He clearly stated that he wanted his compositions to be an "expression of feeling."[201] The writer and composer George Rochberg (1918-2005) even speculates that Schoenberg considered Mozart his model and was perhaps trying to relate to Mozart's ease of writing.[202] Nevertheless, it seems ironic that the "rationalist" Schoenberg composed rapidly, compelled by his inner feelings, while the "rebel" Debussy, who disregarded rules, composed slowly and meticulously.

Both composers expanded the Romantic harmonic language in their own way. Witold Roman Lutoslawski (1913-1994), a composer and admirer of Debussy,

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[201] Joseph Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader: Documents of a Life* (Yale University Press, 2003), 71.
[202] George Rochberg, "Reflections on Schoenberg," *Perspectives of New Music* 11, no. 2 (Spring-Summer, 1973): 73.

summarized the differences between the composers with respect to their harmonic language:

> An important feature of Debussy's world of music is his sensitivity to vertical aggregations, and also the independence [from] functional thinking in determining the logical sequence of musical events. Schönberg's twelve-tone system was in my opinion a natural consequence of the functional system, and was born to replace it. Debussy's system of organizing sound shows that he was indifferent to functions – that is what I have in common with him.[203]

Webern argued that the twelve-tone system was not supposed to replace the tonal system, although it evolved from it. According to Schoenberg, after the music of Wagner and the late Romantics, the next step towards progress was the "emancipation of dissonance." However, he felt that his "free atonal" works lacked a unifying system – a problem that the dodecaphonic technique was created to solve. For Schoenberg, the twelve-tone system was inevitable to the progression of music history, and according to Webern, it was not an invention, but a discovery. Debussy, however, never completely abandoned tonality, but was not confined by its rules either.

Schoenberg valued tradition, and wrote books on theory, harmony, and analysis. He was an educator who loved to teach, and devoted his time and even his money to helping his students. On the other hand, Debussy despised tradition, and even stated that harmony courses should be abolished from the conservatoire. However, would he have been able to compose as he did if he had not had the training at the conservatoire (including those harmony classes)? Additionally, for someone who said he disliked functional analysis, Debussy's music is well-planned and structured, and he did not compose quickly, but reviewed his works many times. The analysis of his pieces reveals how proportionally and mathematically precisely they were organized. Schoenberg's

[203] Steven Stucky, *Lutoslawski & His Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press: 1981), 113-114.

attitude also seems contradictory, because although he valued traditional harmony and theory, he claimed to compose compulsively, especially during his expressionist years, and even tried to avoid clear form, as can be seen in the last piece of op. 11.

The piano music of both composers comprises an integral part of their oeuvre. Debussy's works present many extra-musical associations in the form of allusions to places, texts or paintings. He evokes the sounds of different instruments in his piano music, such as bells, gamelan, horns, and guitar, and explores the sonority and resonance of the piano. One cannot separate the main ideas of his music from the context, because the musical effects, piano technique, dynamics and color were equally essential and interdependent. Schoenberg, on the other hand, never associated his piano music with any extra-musical meaning. None of his piano pieces have descriptive titles, but are rather described as opus numbers. As discussed in Chapter 3, dynamics, tone color, musical effects and the instrument's technical capabilities were less important to Schoenberg than the musical ideas he wanted to convey. He stated that "composition is the dominant factor; one takes the instrument into account. Not the contrary."[204] Therefore, since the instrument had to fit Schoenberg's musical ideas, and not the opposite, his piano music often presents considerable technical challenges for the performer. Passages such as the one represented in example 56 are not easy to play, and demand a heightened sense of coordination between the hands. This passage in particular is difficult because of its big leaps and accidentals, and because the shapes of the melodic lines are different for each hand: Schoenberg alternates between parallel and contrary motion (as highlighted in blue and green in the example). However, as someone who played some of these pieces, I

[204] Arnold Schoenberg, *Busoni: Letters*, 384, 385, 387 in Áine Heneghan, "Schoenberg's Compositional Philosophy, The Three Piano Pieces, Op. 11, and His Subsequent *Volte-Face*" in *Musical Currents From the Left Coast*, ed. Jack Boss and Bruce Quaglia (United Kingdom: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 304.

believe that Schoenberg's works were well written for the piano, even though he was not a pianist. In passages like the one presented in example 56, the shape of each separate line fits under the hand. These pieces are not less "pianistic" than a Beethoven sonata would be.[205] In any case, playing Schoenberg's piano works is indeed different from playing previous works in the piano repertoire, because one cannot hang on to harmony in the traditional sense, since the harmonic language is considered more complex.

Example 56 – Schoenberg, Three Piano Pieces, op. 11, no. 2, mm. 42-45

The process used in learning and memorizing each composer's piano music can be different. While Debussy's music is more vertically oriented, Schoenberg uses complex counterpoint, exploring horizontal lines. With Debussy's pieces one can apply intuition more easily, since his music contains repetition, ostinatos, parallelism, and coloristic effects. Memorizing Schoenberg, on the other hand, is more painstaking,

[205] Although Beethoven's piano works have also been called "unidiomatic" by some, they are still placed among the most important pieces in the piano repertoire.

because one cannot hang on to intuition in the same way. Schoenberg's avoidance of tonal centers and triads and his atonal counterpoint require an intentional effort from the performer to memorize his pieces. A single wrong interval can disorient the pianist during a performance. It is important that one memorize each line separately, or at least what each hand has to play (which is probably similar to how one would memorize a Bach's fugue). Being able to play the line of one hand, and simply visualize what the other hand should be playing, is also helpful. In fact, the process of memorizing Schoenberg's piano pieces is a lesson on how to memorize any music.

Both Schoenberg and Debussy were extremely precise about what they wanted the interpreter to do, which sometimes makes it difficult to assess what liberties one can take. However, the sound of Debussy's musical language is more familiar to the general public, and with the aid of his evocative titles, it is easier for the performer and listener to relate to his music. Schoenberg's pieces might require greater effort from the performer to understand the music and, consequently, to interpret it. This is probably the reason why Schoenberg was extremely preoccupied with how his music was going to be performed. It is important that one exaggerates his indications in order to better comprehend what he intended.

Debussy and Schoenberg did not appreciate each other's music. Debussy was acquainted with the Three Piano pieces, op.11, and said that Schoenberg's music was "as shocking as the experiments of the Italian Futurists."[206] He disliked the influence Schoenberg exerted on other composers. On the other hand, Schoenberg described the

[206] Robert Henderson, "Portrait of Debussy. 3: Debussy and Schoenberg," *The Musical Times* 108, no. 1489 (March 1967): 222.

music of Debussy as "impressionist" and "devoid of any constructive significance."[207] Schoenberg considered Debussy's music retrograde. In a footnote of his *Harmonielehre* (Theory of Harmony), first published in 1911, Schoenberg wrote:

> And I was right when I instinctively resisted the 'back-to-nature' movement and was puzzled that a Debussy would hope to find nature behind the pathways of art, on the stretches already travelled – in that hinterland that is becoming a place aloof from art by harboring stragglers and marauders; [I was puzzled] that a Debussy would not sense that whoever wants to get to nature must go, not backward, but forward: ahead to nature![208]

Schoenberg also said that "much of the harmony used by [Debussy] was discovered independently in Germany."[209]

Although their differences are interminable, the composers also shared some important characteristics. Schoenberg and Debussy had similar views regarding the use of musical materials to create form, and were influenced by Romantic concepts. Both shared the Romantic composers' belief that they should not fit their musical ideas into preconceived and traditional forms, but let their musical ideas generate form. Debussy stated: "I am more and more convinced that music, by its very nature, is something that cannot be poured into a tight and traditional form. It is made up of colors and rhythms."[210] When referring to the ideal way of composing, he stated:

> . . . there will not be, between two restatements of the same characteristic theme, a hasty and superfluous 'filling in'! The development will no longer be that amplification of material, that professional rhetoric which is the badge of excellent training, but it will be given a more universal and essential psychic conception.[211]

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[207] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 104.
[208] Arnold Schoenberg, *Theory of Harmony*, trans. Roy E. Carter. Berkeley (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), 431-432.
[209] Edward Lockspeiser, "Portrait of Debussy. 11: Debussy in Perspective," *The Musical Times* 109, no. 1508 (October 1968): 904.
[210] Nat Shapiro, *An Encyclopedia of Quotations About Music* (USA: Da Capo Press, 1978), 45.
[211] Oscar Thompson, *Debussy: Man and Artist* (New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1940), 103.

Similarly, Schoenberg wrote:

> No matter what the purpose or meaning of an idea in the aggregate may be, no matter whether its function be introductory, establishing, varying, preparing, elaborating, deviating, developing, concluding, subdividing, subordinate, or basic, it must be an idea which had to take this place even if it were not to serve for this purpose or meaning or function. . . In other words, a transition, a codetta, an elaboration, etc., should not be considered as a thing in its own end.[212]

Both composers also showed Romantic ideals when talking about their inspiration to compose. While Debussy stated: "I'm after the music that is supple and concentrated enough to adapt itself to the lyrical movements of the soul and the whims of reverie,"[213] Schoenberg said: "it is impossible for a person to have only one sensation at a time . . . this illogicality which our senses demonstrate . . . I should like to have in my music. It should be an expression of feeling . . ."[214]

The emancipation of the dissonance can be seen in the works of both composers. They distanced themselves from tonality, and created tension, resolution and cadences through melodic and rhythmic gestures, texture, and dynamic shapes, rather than functional harmony (although both used functional harmony to some extent). Neither composer was concerned with writing according to the public's opinion and expectation. On the contrary, they composed according to their own rules.

Their loyalty to their heritage is shown in the choice of language for tempo and character markings in their pieces. They avoided the traditional Italian language; while Debussy used French terms, Schoenberg employed German.

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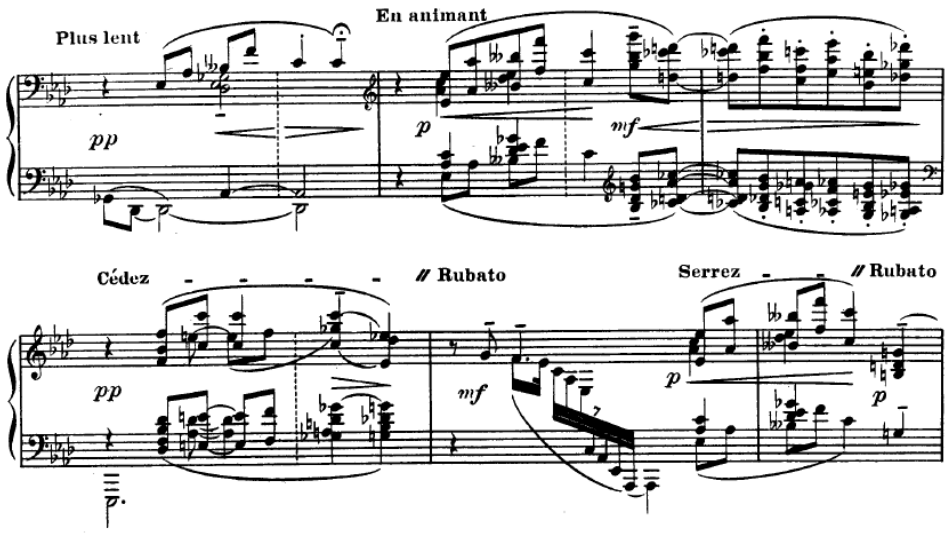
[212] Arnold Schoenberg, *Style and Idea* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 63-64.
[213] François Lesure and Roger Nichols, eds., *Debussy Letters*, trans. Roger Nichols (Cambrige, Massaschussets: Harvard University Press, 1987), 13.
[214] Joseph Auner, *A Schoenberg Reader: Documents of a Life* (Yale University Press, 2003), 70-71.

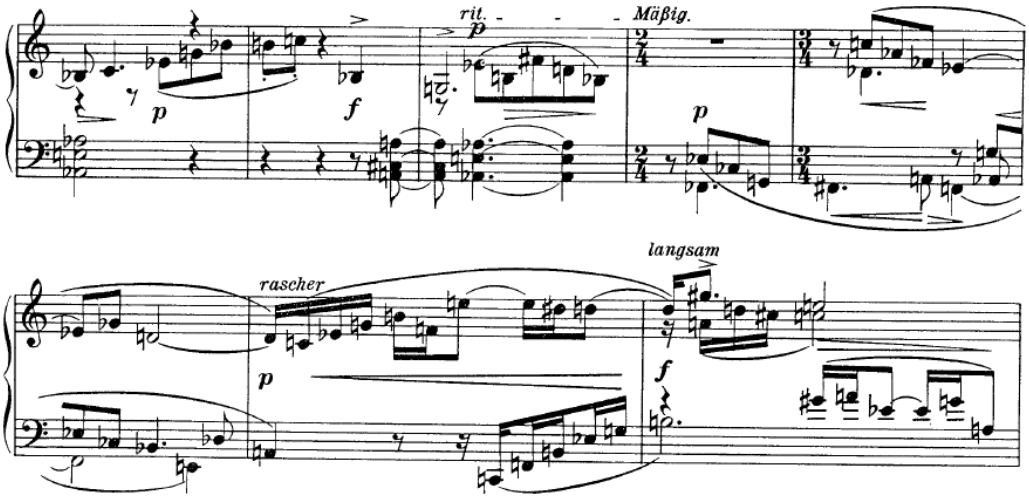
Since they lived in a period when many different methods and styles were arising in all the arts, both composers were associated with specific early twentieth-century movements, although they both disliked being categorized. Schoenberg did not like to be called an "atonalist" and Debussy hated to be associated with either impressionism or symbolism.

Both composers combined elements from the past with new elements, innovating in their own ways. Schoenberg and Debussy used neoclassical ideas when writing suites based on Baroque dances, reviving the dance suite in the twentieth century. Although Debussy looked to the past when using parallel fifths and modes from the Renaissance, he also looked forward by incorporating non-western elements in his music. Schoenberg, on the contrary, created a new harmonic method, but was preoccupied with showing a strong connection with the music of the German classical tradition in order to justify his work.

Debussy's and Schoenberg's works incorporate many tempo changes, *rubati*, and *ritardandi*, in order to clarify ends of phrases and the beginning of new sections. Debussy often marked *cedez* (go slower) and *retenu* (*ritenuto*, holding back) in his scores, and Schoenberg used *ritardandi* at the end of his phrases. They were also specific with regard to the duration of the *ritardando*: both often used dotted lines, and indicated the return to tempo with *a tempo* (Schoenberg) and *mouvement* (Debussy). Adding *ritardando* and *rubato* where they are not indicated would not be acceptable to either composer. Examples 57 and 58 present passages in which each composer uses *ritardando* to show the end of phrases, as well as tempo changes to define new sections.



Example 57 – Debussy, "*Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir*," mm. 27-32



Example 58 – Schoenberg, Three Piano Pieces, op. 11, no. 1, mm. 22-29

In many ways, they were not so different after all. Debussy and Schoenberg each reacted to late romanticism in strikingly original ways, and both composers exerted considerable influence on both their contemporaries and on subsequent composers. Debussy was considered, with Paul Cézanne and Stéphane Mallarmé, as "one of the three

great pillars of French modernism."[215] Composers such as Darius Milhaud (1892-1974), Oliver Messiaen (1908-1992), Stravinsky and Lutoslawski, wrote about their admiration for Debussy. Milhaud stated: "my admiration for him always grew and grew and never stopped."[216] Debussy also influenced many composers in the Americas, including Aaron Copland (1900-1990), Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959), and the "American Impressionist" Charles Griffes (1884-1920). In the music of the Brazilian composer Villa-Lobos, one can find numerous examples of the use of whole-tone and pentatonic scales, as well as parallelism, and other effects on the piano that were used by Debussy.

Schoenberg on the other hand, was the founder of what has become known as the Second Viennese school, and was joined by his close disciples (and students) Berg and Webern. His invention of the dodecaphonic system was so influential that many important composers of the twentieth century felt compelled to compose using the twelve-tone technique at some point in their careers. The high interest in serialism led to the creation of integral serial (also explored by many composers in the twentieth century). Integral serialism consists of composition using a preconceived order of elements (series), which may include not only pitches (such as Schoenberg's twelve-tone system), but also rhythm, dynamics, and other elements. Some important serial works include Pierre Boulez's (b.1925) piano sonatas, and Karlheinz Stockhausen's (1928-2007) *Klavierstücke* in Europe. In the Americas, Schoenberg's dodecaphonic system was used by Samuel Barber (1910-1981) in his Piano Sonata, op. 26, while Milton Babbitt (1916-2011) explored integral serialism in piano works such as the *Three*

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[215] *Grove Music Online*, s.v. "Debussy, (Achille-) Claude," http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/07353?q=debussy&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit (accessed January 16, 2014).

[216] Rollo Meyers, "Portrait of Debussy. 6: Debussy and French Music," *The Musical Times* 108, no. 1496 (October, 1967): 900.

Compositions for Piano. It has been said that "the general trend in recent years has been away from serialism;"[217] nevertheless, the twelve-tone technique is still an integral part of any composition course.

Although some composers are more associated with either Debussy or Schoenberg, many were influenced by both of them. Stravinsky, for example, was influenced by Debussy's new harmonies[218], but also had a "serial period," characterized by works such as Movements for Piano and Orchestra (serialism), and his Septet (integral serialism). Another composer was Messiaen, who explored the resonance of the piano, and was influenced by Debussy's ideas of color. As he explained: "it is a question of foreign notes, with neither preparation nor resolution, without a particular expressive accent, which tranquilly make a part of the chord, changing its color, giving it a spice, a new perfume."[219] Messiaen also composed with preconceived elements (although not using strict serialism) in his music. These are only two among many other composers who were influenced by both Debussy and Schoenberg.

Schoenberg's works not only evolved from the German romantic tradition, but continued to incorporate Romantic gestures, as seen in the way he continued to create points of intensity and relaxation, using the typical musical means of time and dynamics. He evokes emotions and reactions in the listeners. The works from his expressionist period represent the Romantic urge to express one's most deep and inner feelings through art. Even Schoenberg's dodecaphonic pieces create this romantic feeling to some extent. Schoenberg's own statement summarizes his philosophy as a composer and the

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[217] *The Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 4th ed., s.v. "Serial music."
[218] And also influenced Debussy with his music.
[219] Oliver Messiaen, *The Technique of My Musical Language*, trans. John Satterfield (Paris: Alphonse Leduc), 16.

importance of his music: "I venture to credit myself with having written truly new music which, being based on tradition, is destined to become tradition."[220] Although he sought to associate dodecaphonic music with the German tradition, its influence was felt internationally. His new method offered a new direction to those in search of new ways of thinking about and writing music. Debussy distanced himself from Romanticism by experimenting with many techniques outside of the typical Western tradition. He tried to disconnect himself from the German tradition, and in doing so, found his own voice, encouraged by the nationalist ideas that pervaded Europe during the Romantic period. As Stravinsky stated, he and other musicians of his generation "owe the most to Debussy."[221] Debussy found his voice in spite of the strong German tradition, and both he and Schonberg opened the door to infinite possibilities.

[220] Leonard Stein, ed., *Style and Idea: Selected Writings of Arnold Schoenberg*, trans. Leo Black (USA: University of California Press, 1984), 173.
[221] Frank Dawes, *Debussy Piano Music* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1975), 5.

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