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Elements of *Impressionism* evoked in Debussy and Ravel's *Reflets dans l'eau* and *Jeux d'eau* : The theme of water

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Abstract

**Elements of *Impressionism* evoked in Debussy and Ravel's *Reflets dans l'eau* and *Jeux d'eau* : The theme of water**

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Claude Debussy (1862-1918) and Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) were leading figures of the innovative musical language in the late nineteenth century that is known as French *Impressionism*. They developed revolutionary compositional style that departed from classical *Romanticism* and was greatly influenced by Symbolist poets and Asian arts. The piano works on the motive of water, *Reflets dans l'eau* from *Images I* by Debussy and *Jeux d'eau* by Ravel, are selected to analyze their impressionistic components. This dissertation discusses the similarities and differences between the two works and the composers' compositional techniques.

In both works, many of technical applications such as *arpeggio*, pedal-point, staccato, *tremolo* and *glissando* are widely used to describe the variable movements of water from small ripples to raising surges or giant cascade. Dissonances (sevenths, ninths and elevenths), *pentatonic* scale and whole-tone scale are also freely used, as well as parallel movements of perfect intervals (fourths, fifths and octaves) and polytonality. All of these new compositional techniques, which were not commonly used in the previous periods, effectively evoke impressionistic images through various sonorities.

Nevertheless, the two works are different from each other in several aspects. Debussy's idea on form, structure, melodies and rhythms are more peculiar and vague.

Also, abrupt changes of rhythms occur in many places. On the other hand, Ravel's melodies and rhythms in general are traditional and clearly shaped. His idea on form, although not following the classic tonal scheme, is still more classically oriented compared to Debussy's.

As used in both works of Ravel and Debussy, water is often chosen as a descriptive theme among the many natural phenomena. Water has optimal possibilities to carry out various imageries due to its fluidity and amorphousness. Debussy and Ravel accomplished the picturesque expressions of variable movements of water in *Reflets dans l'eau* and *Jeux d'eau* through many impressionistic elements and compositional skills.

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## Introduction

In the late nineteenth century in Europe, innovative changes of style began to take place in many fields of art such as painting, music, and literature.<sup>1</sup> In music, particularly, many new ways of compositional techniques, quite different from the ones from the common-practice period based upon functional harmony,<sup>2</sup> were developed. These techniques include the use of non-functional harmonies, church modes, parallel chord movement and non-metric rhythms.<sup>3</sup> Impressionistic music was first introduced by Claude Debussy (1862-1918) as a new trend in the various musical styles of twentieth century. Influenced by Symbolist poets such as Paul Verlaine (1844-1896) and painters such as James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) and Odilon Redon (1840-1916), Debussy applied these Symbolists' aspects in his music, which focused on exploring writers' psychological states rather than emphasizing objective description or reaching for technical perfection.<sup>4</sup>

Although *Impressionism* is a term more readily applicable to painting rather than music,<sup>5</sup> Debussy and Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) are widely known as the two most representative composers of French *Impressionism*. The term "Impressionism" has been applied to Debussy's music since a newspaper critic linked his music with the works of a group of late nineteenth-century French painters<sup>6</sup> who also showed a similar impressionistic vagueness in their artistic works, such as Édouard Manet (1832-83), Claude Monet (1840-1926) and Pierre Auguste Renoir (1841-1919).

Both Debussy and Ravel chose subjects from the natural environment such as landscapes, water, wind, moon, forest and light. Particularly, Debussy and Ravel both composed remarkable works inspired by water. *Reflets dans l'eau* from *Image I* by Debussy and *Jeux d'eau* by Ravel are two representative works of water that clearly show how *Impressionism* plays a role in their compositional techniques. This thesis will be focused on the influences of Symbolism and Asian arts, which served as the basis of impressionistic compositions of the two composers, and will explore the impressionistic components in these two pieces. Their similarities and differences in the usage of technical applications (*arpeggio*, pedal-point, staccato, pedals and other) and compositional skills (forms, modes, harmonies and other) are shown to illustrate how impressionistic qualities and sonorities were applied.

## Chapter I: Concept of *Impressionism* in Music

### [1] Appearance and definition of *Impressionism*

Around 1870 in France, a group of young poets abandoned Romanticism, conventional artistic and intellectual realism and embraced a new movement that used “free verse techniques.” The aesthetic purpose was to achieve fluidity, especially in poetry. With the advent of this movement, called *Symbolism*, Poetry’s new function was to suggest and to evoke certain feelings and meanings, but not to describe<sup>1</sup> them directly or fully. Gifted poets such as Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) and Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891) were much influenced by the Symbolist movement. They ignored the use of syntax and arranged words for their emotional and aesthetic values.<sup>2</sup>

This movement, however, did not pertain only to the literary field; a similar transition was made in music and art as well, but in a translated form of *Impressionism*. Symbolism is characterized by indirect expression of ideas such as religion or magical mysteries. These indefinite ideas, however, were not easy to capture in visual arts, which entails a specific mean of expression requiring clarity and comprehensibility. Symbolism, therefore, was not well established in the field of visual arts. Rather, the Symbolist movement translated into *Impressionism*. Whereas Symbolism focused on uncovered meanings or mystical ideas, *Impressionism* rather focused on the use of

technical skills different from conventional rules of painting. Impressionist painters such as Manet and his followers of the 1870s sought to express subjects in their paintings “at the visible level and not at the mysterious level of thoughts,” as painter Paul Gauguin (1848-1903) said.<sup>3</sup> This means that they rather focused on the use of unconventional techniques in order to capture an impression of a subject at the visual level.

The term *Impressionism* was appropriated by French art critic Louis Leroy from a painting by Claude Monet (1840-1926) titled *Impression: Soleil Levant (Rising Sun)*. The critics were confused about the vague images of the paintings and did not accept the style. The term was a derisive term for Monet’s painting and other paintings exhibited at the Paris salon in 1874. Soon the term *Impressionism* was applied to the entire group of artists that included Monet, Manet, Renoir and Edgar Degas (1834-1917). They deliberately blurred details of the subject in their paintings. The impressionists attempted to capture an impression: the general impression and feelings of the subject, together with emotional overtones. Furthermore, these young painters displayed the iridescent color and atmospheric moods of the outdoor world characterized by constantly changing interplay of light and shade, which was preferred to the sterile, controlled, environment of the studio.<sup>4</sup> They took their easels and canvases outside to paint, and transformed the conventions of painting!

## [2] Influences that led to birth of *Impressionism* in Music

### (1) Symbolist Literature

A root of the Impressionist movement was Symbolism, originally a literary movement supported by writers such as Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), Mallarme, and Rimbaud. American writer Edgar Allan Poe's (1809-1849) tales of mystery and suspense had been translated into French by Baudelaire, and they strongly influenced French artists including Debussy and Ravel.<sup>5</sup> Debussy frequently visited the literary and artistic cafes where the Symbolists gathered and formed friendships. The acquaintances made during his youth influenced greatly in the formation of Debussy's aesthetic and musical style.

Symbolism captured meanings that were beyond what was apparent, focusing on what was intangible and "inexpressible."<sup>6</sup> Symbolists agreed that the ideal medium for expressing Symbolism was through music. One of the most influential theorists of the period, Charles Morice, had written in *La littérature*: "Music knows everything, even how to paint."<sup>7</sup> He was echoing Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1712-1778) earlier argument a hundred years before in the *Dictionnaire de musique*: "Music portrays everything, even those objects that are purely visible."<sup>8</sup> For Rousseau, music was far superior to the painter's art, able to transcend its own medium and reach all the senses, whereas painting could appeal to sight alone.<sup>9</sup> Debussy was there at the time when the idea of Symbolism through music was beginning to be acknowledged and accepted.

For over a century Debussy was called an Impressionist composer. Yet, it seems that any categorization of Debussy's music is not simple or clear-cut. Debussy even called both musical Symbolism and *Impressionism* "useful terms to abuse."<sup>10</sup> Debussy claimed that terming his music in such ways was not proper since he viewed his music and himself "different."<sup>11</sup> René Peter, one of Debussy's closest friends of the 1890s, spoke of his music in these terms: To judge by his works, and by their titles, he is a painter and that is what he wants to be; he calls his compositions pictures, sketches, prints, arabesques, studies in black and white. Plainly it is his delight to paint in music.<sup>12</sup>

Debussy's music, in fact, shows well the connection between music and painting through the use of sonority, reflecting color, light and texture. A key technique of Impressionist painting was new awareness of color relationships and juxtapositions of light and color<sup>13</sup>; diverse color and light were used in painting to express Impressionistic feelings. On the other hand, music had a greater advantage in the expression of impressionistic feelings through the diversity of musical techniques such as sonority, harmony, and texture and mood. Whereas painting captured one moment of the scenery, music could portray changing qualities and mood using these musical skills throughout the course of performance. Debussy's output, for example, contains many sonorous expressions which are commonly found as well as in Ravel's.

## (2) Asian Influences

In addition to the influence from Symbolist literatures, Impressionists were greatly influenced by other social environments. This chapter will demonstrate other artistic influences which were active in those days.

The age of *Impressionism* coincided with political upheavals in France: the overthrow of royalty (1830), the creation of the Third Republic (1870), and the downfall of Napoleon III's Second Empire (1870). Paris had recovered rapidly from this period of political chaos. Modern Paris, mixing with old tradition, became a place of free living for numerous bohemian artists. Paris began to flood with cultural influences from abroad. Many different arts were introduced from the East. Roy Howat notes that many artists of the time were attracted to oriental art, but Debussy especially was attached to the field and even "made much of it his own language, even identity."<sup>14</sup>

### i Javanese Gamelan: Indonesian music

Debussy first heard the percussion-based ensemble performances of a north Javanese gamelan at the Universal Exposition of 1889 held in Paris. He became fascinated by the music and the impression haunted him for years.<sup>15</sup> Debussy's frequent uses of *pentatony* are close to Asian "flavor," concentrating melodically on its fourths and minor thirds (rather than fifths and major thirds).<sup>16</sup> This use of *pentatony*

also occurs in *Asie* from *Shéhérazade* and *Laideronnette* from *Ma mère L'Oye* by Ravel.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, Debussy's use of the whole-tone scale makes for many different colors. Moreover, Debussy's use of rhythm, timbre and structure textures is especially gamelan-like.<sup>18</sup> This analogy is best presented in *Pagodas*, the first piece from Debussy's *Estampes* composed in 1903.

## ii Indian music

Another Asian tradition that affected Impressionist music is Indian music, which constitutes a compendium of cultures such as those of Hindu and Muslim. A spiritual philosophy of the different colors, moods and 'affects' of different scales or modes are all characterized by the technique of Indian classical music, Rāga.<sup>19</sup> It is not clear when Debussy was first introduced to Indian music and learned of its theory. At one point, Debussy had almost daily conversations with Edmond Bailly who was a specialist on the topic of "Indian spiritual philosophy relative to music."<sup>20</sup> Around 1890 he was expressing interest about 'the esoteric aspects of oriental and occidental music. An example of Debussy's use of Asian sonority, that of Indian style, appears in his piano work *Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut* (*And the Moon Sets Over the Temple That Was*; 1907) from *Images II* in measures twelve to fourteen (Ex. 1). The octave ornamentations are likened to effects from Asian string instruments.<sup>21</sup>

(Ex. 1: Debussy *Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut*, mm. 12-14)

The musical score for Debussy's *Et la lune descend sur le temple qui fut*, measures 12-14, is presented in a three-staff format. The top staff is in treble clef, the middle in alto clef, and the bottom in bass clef. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 8/8. The piece begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. In measure 12, the bass line features a triplet of eighth notes marked *m.g.* (mezzo-giochiato). The treble line has three downward-pointing arrows above it. In measure 13, the bass line continues with a triplet of eighth notes marked *m.d.* (mezzo-dolce). The treble line has a triplet of eighth notes marked *m.d.*. In measure 14, the bass line has a triplet of eighth notes marked *m.d.*. The treble line has a triplet of eighth notes marked *m.d.*. The score includes a performance instruction "(a little brought out) un peu en dehors" with a double-headed arrow above the final measure. The score also includes a "capp" marking and an "8" with a bracket in the bass line.

### iii Asian art: Japanese Prints

In Paris, the specific interest for Japanese art started with the sudden opening up of Japan to western trade in the 1850s. The fashion for *le japonisme* in France after 1850 grew from the earlier Romantic fascination for the Orient.<sup>22</sup> Japan took on special importance in the wake of the 1868 Meiji restoration when its paintings and artifacts found their way to the west.<sup>23</sup> Among those, the greatest, most influential, and most obsessively collected prints of all were the Japanese art of *ukiyo-e*.<sup>24</sup> *Ukiyo-e*, translates into “*Pictures of the floating world*”, which is a genre in Japanese art that uses colored woodblock prints and paintings, produced between the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries. In the 1860s, when *Impressionism* in art was growing, the popular Japanese art of *ukiyo-e* also inspired and greatly influenced French visual art. Not only artists from the Impressionist generation, but also many artists in the eighties and nineties and

in the new century were influenced. To the group of painters around Manet, later to be called the Impressionists, the clear-cut art of the Japanese color print was an example which offered them the opportunity to break with academic conventions and to represent a new approach to visualization.<sup>25</sup> From 1856, impressionist artists including the twenty-six-year-old Manet started purchasing Japanese prints.

After the 1867 Universal Exposition in Paris, where Japanese art was widely exhibited, the vogue for Japanese culture became overwhelmingly prevalent in Paris. A club in Paris served entirely Japanese food, eaten with chopsticks from tableware imprinted with Japanese designs. Diners dressed in *kimonos*, holding Japanese fans, and took pictures even in Japanese costumes.<sup>26</sup> The French painter, Henri Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901), many of whose portraits included night-lives of Parisians, was also influenced by the Japanese prints. He once took himself photographed in samurai costume in an unusual and comical pose (1892).

Debussy became acquainted with Japanese arts in the 1880s. Later, one acquaintance of Debussy recalled that Debussy' house was full of Japanese prints and tiny Japanese objects known as *Netsuke*. *Netsukes* are small containers of miniature sculptures made from ivory, boxwood, or metal, first invented in the seventeenth century in Japan. They were worn by dangling from the sashes in the waist to store people's belongings like money, medicines or tobacco, since the Japanese garment *Kimono* did not have pockets. They were beautifully crafted and individually made. Thus no *Netsukes* were alike.

Debussy as well as Monet was fascinated by finding delicacy and precision of the visual image which resided in the Japanese prints and objects. Without ignoring attention to color and line, everything unnecessary for presenting a distinct picture was eliminated. The Japanese print creates the picturesque without sentimentality, a stylized impression without cliché.<sup>27</sup> A historian David Bromfield, in a chapter entitled “Japanese art, Monet and the formation of *Impressionism*” from his research book, explores Monet’s avowals that Japanese prints and etching were the mainspring of his mature art, and that they changed Monet’s brush technique from the late 1860s<sup>28</sup> onwards. Just as Japanese prints influenced French visual art, they affected Debussy’s vision of composing as well.

The influence of Japanese prints is best presented in *Estampes* (1903). His ceaseless interest in visual art led the three pieces, *Pagodas*, *Evening in Granada*, *Gardens in the rain*, from *Estampes* to be conceived as highly focused pictures from an album, or a print on a wall, or a precise descriptive scene.<sup>29</sup> These three pieces are his earliest and most clearly defined exercise in the musical picturesque.<sup>30</sup> Debussy’s intention in these pieces is to transpose pictures into music. Clarity was the essence of picture-making for Japanese artists such as Hokusai (1760-1849) and Hiroshige (1797-1858).<sup>31</sup> Debussy also characterizes his music using minimal means to make the subjects understood, depicting objects and scenes by easily distinguishable conventions.<sup>32</sup> In the first movement, *Pagodas*, the composer’s reflections on the harmonic style of the Javanese gamelan is heard. The second movement, *Evening in*

*Granada*, shows the singular rhythms of habanera of Spain folk music (Flamenco). Referring to Debussy's sense of sonority and power of evocation, one of the greatest composers of Spain, Manuel de Falla (1876-1946) was to exclaim that the greatest composer of Spanish music was a French man who had never visited Spain!<sup>33</sup> In the third movement *Gardens in the rain* Debussy disperses two French folk songs among his fluid harmonies.<sup>34</sup>

The movement arisen in the mid-1800's as a reaction to the Romanticism spread out to all fields of art throughout Europe. In this period of time, the influences of imported cultures from abroad occurred simultaneously. It delivered new visions of aesthetic value to the artists and accelerated the formation of new movement. Debussy believed he had learned much more from poets and artists than from musicians at the conservatoire. It was this synthesis of cultural background that led to the birth of *Impressionism* in music.

## Chapter II: Characteristics and Composers of *Impressionism* in Music

### [1] Characteristics of *Impressionism* in music

*Impressionism* has been from time to time reassessed and refined, for instance by Oscar Thompson in 1937, as follows: “In literature, in painting, in music, the aim of these kindred artists was to suggest rather than to depict; to mirror not the object but the emotional reaction to the object; to interpret a fugitive impression rather than to seize upon and fix the permanent reality.”<sup>1</sup>

The basic theories of *Impressionism* are most ideally presented in the art of music. The impressionist composers had two favorite mediums: the orchestra because of its multi-hued tonal palette, and the piano because its damper pedal permitted vibrating harmonies to suspend in mid-air.<sup>2</sup> In orchestral works, the delicate and distinct sound of each instrument is able to produce maximum effects of various timbres. Also in piano the works, the use of various pedals along with *legato* technique make it possible to produce mysterious, indistinct sound effects.

The compositional skills impressionist composers used can be summarized through the following aspects:

First, dissonances are freely used; sevenths, ninths, and elevenths appear on the dominant or other degrees of the scale, neither prepared nor resolved, often in series,

used consecutively. In many cases, parallel movements of perfect intervals (fourths, fifths, and octaves) are used to give sonorities to the melodic lines.

Second, the modal scales such as church modes, *pentatonic* scale, and whole-tone scale are widely used. *Pentatonic* scales (a five –note sequence corresponding to the black notes on the piano keyboard<sup>3</sup>) are used as Eastern cultural references.

Third, regular movements of rhythmic patterns are absent. Rhythmic patterns that blur accurate rhythmic pulse such as suspended tones, syncopations, Habanëra, triplets, quintuplets, and nonolets are often used to create a certain atmosphere of suspended animation.

Fourth, in Impressionistic music, tonality is never totally abandoned. Various means of compositional techniques that weaken the original key are applied. For instance, one sees this in the use of enharmonic chord, modulation, *chromaticism*, *pentatonic* scale, and whole-tone scale. Yet, at the end, the original key always returns. Sometimes, a sustained chord with superimposed foreign harmonies is used to represent a whiff of polytonality.

[2] Composers of *Impressionism* and their successors

Debussy himself never found the term *Impressionism* appropriate to his music. In a letter of March, 1908, to his publishers, Debussy mentions this term ruefully<sup>4</sup>: “I am trying to do ‘something different’ -in a way, realities-what the imbeciles call ‘impressionism,’ a term which is as poorly used as possible, particularly by art critics.”<sup>5</sup>

However, what Debussy had achieved in his works, ‘something different,’ is considered as the most distinguished characteristic of impressionist music. Ravel’s early style derived from that of Debussy, but in some cases Ravel’s development seems to parallel or even advance Debussy’s achievement. In general, Ravel’s writing is virtuosic in the sense of Liszt and his orchestration more brilliant. Ravel’s great orchestration, such as *La Valse* (1919-20) and *Tzigane* (1924), is based on his thorough way of writing. He first notates string parts and ensures that the string family sounds perfect in and of itself.<sup>6</sup> Paying attention to each instrumental family’s timbre, Ravel adds a dazzling array of instrumental color and distinctive rhythmic vitality.<sup>7</sup> especially in the percussion section.

*Impressionism* lasted for only a few decades into the twentieth century (ca. 1870-1930).<sup>8</sup> There has never been any real Debussy “school” of composition. Paul Dukas (1865-1935), an elegant and fastidious composer with very limited output,<sup>9</sup> was influenced by Debussy. Jacques Ibert’s (1890-1962) early orchestral works, such as *Escales*, are in a lush Impressionist style,<sup>10</sup> though the elements of his music maintain

eclectic.<sup>11</sup> His biographer, Alexandra Laederich, writes, “His music can be festive and gay... lyrical and inspired, or descriptive and evocative... often with gentle humour...” Albert Roussel’s (1869-1937) early works were strongly influenced by Impressionistic elements. But, he eventually found a personal style leaning toward *Classicism* with formal design, strong rhythmic drive and functional tonality. His mature style is characterized by contrapuntal textures on the rigorous model such as Giovanni Palestrina (1526-1594) and J. S. Bach (1685-1750).

Though *Impressionism* is predominantly linked to Debussy, its effects were reflected in the works of numbers of composers during the opening decades of the twentieth century.<sup>12</sup> The composers who are reflected in Impressionistic tendencies in both France and other countries are illustrated below in Table 1.

Table 1

Name	Nationality	Works including Impressionistic elements
Jacques Ibert (1890-1962)	France	Orchestral suite, <i>Escales (Ports of call)</i> ; 1922)
Albert Roussel (1869-1937)	France	Symphony No.1 Op. 7, <i>Poème de la forêt (Poem of the forest)</i> ; 1906)  Ballet Op. 17, <i>Le Festin de l’araignée (The Spider’s feast)</i> ; 1912)
Paul Dukas (1865-1935)	France	Opera, <i>Ariane et Barbe- bleue</i> (1899-1907)
Florent Schmitt (1870-1958)	France	Symphonic poem, <i>La tragédie de Salome and Psaume XLVII</i> (1910)
Frederick Delius (1862-1934)	England (lived in France)	Opera, <i>A Village Romeo and Juliet</i> (1907)

Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936)	Italy	Tone poems, <i>Fontane di Roma (Fountains of Rome)</i> ; 1917) <i>Pini di Roma (Pines of Rome)</i> ; 1925)
Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937)	Poland	Piano solo, <i>Métopes</i> op. 29 (1915): three miniature tone poems
Arnold Bax (1883-1953)	England	Tone poem, <i>Tintagel</i> (1917, orch. 1919)
Cyril Scott (1879-1970)	England	Piano Sonata No. 1(1909) Piano Concerto No. 1 (1913-4)
Manuel de Falla (1886-1946)	Spain	<i>Noches en los Jardines de Espana (Nights in the Gardens of Spain)</i> ;1909-15): set of three impressions for piano and orchestra
John Alden Carpenter (1871-1951)	U.S.A.	Jazz-inflected ballets, <i>Krazy Kat</i> (1921), <i>Skyscrapers</i> (1926)
Charles Marin Loeffler (1861-1935)	U.S.A.	Symphonic poem, <i>La Mort de Tintagiles</i> (after Maeterlinck; 1896-7, rev. 1901)
Charles Tomlinson Griffes (1884-1920)	U.S.A.	<i>Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan</i> (1912, rev. 1916), <i>Poem for Flute and Orchestra</i> (1918)

In the United States, as in France, *Impressionism* evolved as a reaction against the long-reigning domination of German romanticism and pedagogy. Among the American impressionist composers, Charles Marin Loeffler (1861-1935) and Charles Tomlinson Griffes (1884-1920) are most well-known. Loeffler, in his later years, devoted himself entirely to composition. His style is basically impressionistic, although many other influences helped shape his music. Griffes was interested in Oriental music and the music of Mussorgsky. Later he came under the influence of impressionistic elements and the music of Debussy, influences which are evident in his two finest works, the *Pleasure Dome of Kubla Khan* and the *Poem for Flute and Orchestra*.<sup>13</sup>

### Chapter III: Debussy's Piano Music and *Reflets dans l'eau*

#### [1] Debussy's compositional periods and piano music

As a practicing musician, Debussy was himself a pianist. In composing piano works he took advantage of expressing music responsive to his own personal touch at the instrument. The piano, an instrument of harmonic and tonal blending rather than of simple melodic statement<sup>1</sup>, was a natural experimental medium for his personal art. In his piano works, Debussy exploited gradations of color and delicate nuances of accentuation<sup>2</sup> that had not been previously part of composers' vocabularies. He provided his piano music with directions for performance, insisting that his music required no personal interpretation of the pianist<sup>3</sup> but that it should be played exactly as he stipulated.

In this chapter, Debussy's musical life and influences is briefly explored prior to the illustrations of his piano music. Debussy's musical life can be divided into five periods.

#### 1. Childhood and studies (1862-1887)

He was admitted to Paris Conservatoire in 1872, and studied piano and composition. He won the *Prix de Rome* in 1884 with his cantata *Le gladiateur* (1883) at the age of twenty-two.

#### 2. Influences and the formation of his style (1887-1892)

This period is referred to as the ‘bohemian’ and symbolist years.<sup>4</sup> Debussy freed himself from Wagner’s influence and proceeded to approach different concepts of musical compositions. Debussy became fascinated by the Javanese Gamelan at the Universal Exposition of 1889 held in Paris. In addition to the influences of Symbolist literature and Asian arts, his musical concepts also derived inspiration from the Javanese gamelan and scale patterns of Indian music.

### 3. The years of *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1892-1902)

In this period Debussy established his personal style and produced more mature music. The *String Quartet in G minor* (1893) and the orchestral *Nocturnes* (1893-1899) were composed. In 1892 he began to compose the symphonic poem, *L’Après-midi d’un faune* and the opera, *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1893. Debussy devoted ten years to this, his only opera. Though, the premiere of this opera was not well-received by the public and the initial reaction to the opera among critics was mixed, *Pelléas et Mélisande* quickly established itself as a staple in the repertory of the *Opéra-Comique* in Paris. By 1913, there had been over one hundred performances of the opera.

### 4. The years of “Debussyism” (1902-1913)

His characteristic *impressionism* reached to its peak in this period. His mature *impressionism* appeared in many of his compositions. His compositions were frequently played at concerts and the term “Debussyism” came into vogue, used both as in compliment and abuse. *La Mer (The Sea)* was composed and first performed in

1905, receiving a cool response from the critics. Later (1918), his conducting debut with *La Mer* achieved a great success. Debussy was also preoccupied with many large scale projects including *Images* for orchestra (1905-12) and two operas on works by E. A. Poe, *Le diable dan le beffroi* (1902-1912) and *La chute de la maison Usher* (1908-17).

#### 5. The last years (1914-1918)

His compositional activities declined due to World War I, which broke out in August, 1914, and his health deteriorated through disease. The compositions of this period include *En blanc et noir* (1915) for two pianos, the *Twelve Etudes* (1915) for piano, the *Cello Sonata* (1915), the *Sonata for flute, viola and harp* (1916), and the *Violin Sonata* (1917). His last public appearance was to perform his *Violin Sonata* (1917) with violinist Gaston Poulet in September 1917. The last three sonatas were originally planned as part of a cycle of six sonatas for various instruments. These sonatas are notable for their short lengths and leaner, briefer structures, representing a sudden shift in Debussy's style. This shift is regarded as a tendency towards French *Classicism* which parallels *Neo-Classicism* that becomes popular after World War I.

Debussy's *Impressionism* was established with his *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1892-4) and bloomed through *La Mer* (1903-1905). Though his style evolved in the later days, the Impressionistic elements such as non-resolved chords and whole-tone scale were still maintained in much of Debussy's later works.

- The three periods of Debussy's piano works -

Debussy's style in piano music changed very little during the first period of composition. As he grew older, he worked to acquire a more intimate expressive method.<sup>5</sup> Debussy's piano solo compositions can be divided into three chronological periods. (The works for piano and orchestra; *Fantaisie*, four hands and two pianos are not included in following lists).

i First period: 1884-1900

*Danse bohémienne* (1880)

*Deux Arabesques* (1888)

*Ballade* (1890)

*Danse pour piano* (1890)

*Rêverie* (1890)

*Valse Romantique* (1890)

*Mazurka* (1890)

*Nocturne* (1892)

*Images oubliées* (1894)

It would seem that Debussy regarded piano composition as less important before 1896, when he began work on *Pour le piano*. The pieces written before he formulated his style do not faithfully show his aesthetic ideals. For example, in *Deux Arabesques* Debussy attempted to evoke a graceful charm for the first piece and

rhythmic vitality for the second. Yet he was still far from his maturity, and his style would evolve and change.

ii Second period: 1900-1913

*Suite Bergamasque* (1890) rev. (1905)

*Pour le piano* (1894-1901)

*Estampes* (1903)

*D'un cahier d'esquisses* (1904)

*L'isle joyeuse* (1903-4)

*Masques* (1903-4)

*Pièce pour piano* (1904)

*Images I* (1901-5)

*Images II* (1907)

*Douze Préludes I* (1909-10)

*Children's corner* (1906-8)

*Hommage à Haydn* (1909)

*The little Nigar* (1909)

*La plus que lente* (1910)

*Douze Préludes II* (1911-13)

From 1890 to 1900 Debussy wrote very little piano music. During this time he discovered his true style, devoting himself to the opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1892-1902). The greatest numbers of piano pieces were composed in this second period. His

individualism is revealed in his piano compositions starting from *Suite Bergamasque* (1890-1905). Debussy completed many piano pieces in the form of suites. *Suite Bergamasque*, *Pour le piano*, *Estampes*, *Images I*, *Images II* and *Children's Corner* are included in this category.

*L'isle joyeuse (Joyful island)* was inspired by the painting, *L'Embarquement pour Cythère (Departure from the island of Cythera; 1718-9)* of French artist Jean Antoine Watteau (1684-1721). Two collections titled *Images* were completed in 1905 and 1907 respectively; each consists of three pieces. Debussy's *Impressionism* is finally completed in these pieces, and they are good examples of "Debussyism" as expressing natural phenomena. The twenty-four preludes are individual works that do not follow a strict pattern of key signatures, unlike previous collections of preludes by Chopin or Bach. Debussy's purpose for placing the titles at the end of each works was to suggest that the titles were an after-thought<sup>6</sup> and not meant to influence the player before performing them. In twenty-four preludes, Debussy succeeds in revealing countless possibilities of new sonorities. In *Les collines d'Anacapri* from *Prelude Book I*, the imitating sounds of bell and tambourine enliven the atmosphere like vivid dance music. On the other hand, with the indication of "profoundly calm," *La cathedrale engloutie* echoes medieval chordal sounds<sup>7</sup> over the full range of the piano.

iii Third period: 1914-1917

*Berceuse Héroïque* (1914)

*Six Épigrapbes Antiques* (1914)

*Page d'album* (1915)

*Élégie* (1915)

*Douze Etudes* (1915)

*Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon* (1917)

In this period Debussy edited Frédéric Chopin's (1810-1849) Waltzes, Ballades, Impromptus and Polonaises. This perhaps influenced Debussy to compose his own Etudes for piano. These *Twelve Etudes* including his later works show a more austere and concise mode of expression.<sup>8</sup> Less involved with sensuous elements of previous works, these *Twelve Etudes* reveal Debussy's invention and imagination. The first six from Book I are focused on technical matters, while the last six in Book II use musical forms and devices. No. 6, *Pour les huit doigts*, is an ingenious eight-finger exercise, performed without using the thumbs. But, in performance, the directive of no-thumbs is left entirely to the discretion and the honor of the performer!

[2] Background and structure of Debussy's *Reflets dans l'eau*

*Reflets dans l'eau* (*Reflections in the water*) is the first of three independent pieces from Debussy's first volume of *Images*. Composed in 1905, the premiere of *Images I* was given in the third of March, 1906 in Société-National. A lyrical piece from *Images I*, *Reflets dans l'eau* reveals Debussy's embodiment of *Impressionism* in piano. The piece presents the major characteristics of French music of this period, such as vague and fast changing harmonies. It is also an example of the new tone "colors" Debussy had created for the piano at the mid-point of his life.

In *Reflets dans l'eau*, the listener feels that (s)he can almost see the countless flecks of sunlight mirrored in the reflections<sup>9</sup> of a gently rippling pond. Two themes appear alternately, and the overall structure resembles rondo form. The principal theme appears three times, separated by contrasting second themes. The thematic structure, dynamic range, and tempo (*Agogiks* included) of *Reflets dans l'eau* are described in Table 2. The following table shows the degree of Debussy's detailed instruction on performance. This exemplifies Debussy's assertion that his music needs no further interpretation of the performers, for he has already detailed them. Dynamic changes and tempo indication are thoroughly presented within a space of one or two measures.

Table 2

Themes	Measures	Dynamics	Tempos
A (1 <sup>st</sup> theme)	mm.1~15	pp - cresc - dim. - pp - cresc - dim - pp - più piano	Andantino molto - rit
Transition	mm.16~23	pp - poco a poco cresc	a Tempo - stringendo
B (2 <sup>nd</sup> theme)	mm.24~34	ppp - cresc - f - pp - f - pp - p - pp - p - più p	Mesuré - rit.
A' (1 <sup>st</sup> theme)	mm.35~42	pp - cresc - dim - pp - cresc - dim	au Mouvt
Transition	mm.43~47	p - poco a poco cresc - f - cresc	En animant
B' (2 <sup>nd</sup> theme)	mm.48~70	f - cresc - dim - p - cresc - mf - cresc molto - f - ff - cresc - dim - pp - ppp - pp - sempre pp	En animant - au Mouvt - rit - Molto rit - au Mouvt (plus lent)
Coda (recalls of both A and B)	mm.71~94	pp - dim - pp - dim - ppp	Tempo1 - rit - Lento

## Chapter IV: Ravel's Piano Music and *Jeux d'eau*

[1] Ravel's stylistic periods and piano music

Ravel's musical life can be divided into three periods.

i First period: 1875-1905 Childhood and Studies

In 1889 Ravel was admitted to preparatory piano class at the Paris Conservatoire at the age of fourteen. Until leaving the Conservatoire in 1903, he studied piano with Charles-Wilfrid Bériot's, counterpoint with Gédalge, and composition with Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924). The 1889 Paris Exhibition had a lasting impact on Ravel, as it had on Debussy. He too was struck by the Javanese gamelan and the performance of Russian music given by Rimsky-Korsakov. Ravel attempted five times to win the *Prix de Rome* between 1900 and 1905. Having reached the age limit, Ravel competed for the last time and was eliminated in the first round. The fugue he submitted for *Prix de Rome* contained parallel fifths and ends with a major seventh chord. Like Debussy, Ravel worked out an original harmonic concept that was considered provocative at the time.<sup>1</sup> Ravel's failure to win the *Prix de Rome* points to his uneasy relationship with the accepted authorities of musical society.

In 1902 the premiere of Debussy's opera, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, had a great impact on Ravel. He attended thirty straight performances of *Pelléas et Mélisande* and was greatly moved! Ravel was also influenced by the literature and poems of

Baudelaire, Poe, and Mallarmé, as well as French composers Alexi Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894) and Erick Satie (1866-1925). Around 1900, Ravel's artistic development was greatly stimulated by his friendship with a group of avant-garde artists known as *Les Apaches* (The Ruffians), which included the critic Calvocoressi, the artist Sordes, the composers Falla, Schmitt and Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971; joined in 1909), the writers Fargue and Tristan Klingsor, the pianist Ricardo Viñes and the conductor Inghelbrecht from 1902. The group met regularly until the beginning of World War I. Through connections with these artists, Ravel's education was very much rooted in French culture.

The piano compositions of this period include:

*Sérénade grotesque* (1893)

*Menuet antique* (1895)

*Sites auriculaires*, 2 pf, (1895-7): Habanera, Entre cloches

*Pavane pour une infante défunte* (1899)

*Jeux d'eau* (1901)

Ravel's earlier piano works - *Pavane pour une Infante défunte* (*Pavane for a Deceased Infant*) and *Jeux d'eau* (*Play of the Water*) are clearly impressionistic in their general aesthetic. Yet, *Jeux d'eau* is a work full of imagination and it is certainly astonishingly<sup>2</sup> masterful. Although Ravel's early style derives from Debussy, the *Impressionism* in piano, especially, is initiated in *Jeux d'eau* prior to Debussy. Hearing *Jeux d'eau* changed Debussy's style and inspired him to write *Images*!

ii Second stylistic period: 1905-1918

Ravel's remarkable period both in quality and quantity lasts from his *Sonatine* (1905) to the last year of World War I (1918). This is also the year of Debussy's death. In this period, his compositional activities reached its peak and his style largely changed. His compositions do not follow the chronological evolution in styles. For instance, *Valses nobles et sentimentales* (1911) and *Chansons, Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé* (1913) already give a hint of the Ravel's post-war style (third period elements of *Neo-Classicism*). These pieces were written before *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (1914-17). Yet, these pieces seem to be more contemporary<sup>3</sup> in style than *Le Tombeau de Couperin*, which is written in an older form.

In 1909, Diaghilev (1872-1929) arrived in Paris and Ravel was commissioned for the *Ballets Russes*: the result was Ravel's longest work, *Daphnis et Chloé* (*Symphonie chorégraphique*; 1909-12). The *Ballets Russes* brought Stravinsky to Paris in 1910, and Ravel was influenced by him, personally and musically. The score of ballet *Rite of Spring* (1913) by Stravinsky had an impact on Ravel as did Debussy's *Pelléas*. For Ravel, it was striking to see Stravinsky's innovative, complex rhythmic structures, timbres, structural asymmetries, use of dissonances and polytonalities, more than anyone ever thought of at that time. Most conventional ballet music in those days was charming, elegant and graceful like Tchaikovsky's (1840-1893) *Swan Lake*, while the sound effect of *Rite of Spring* was forceful, even savage and unstable.

When World War I broke out, Ravel's renewed interest in traditional forms and those in the French past escalated. This is apparent in several of his works written during the war<sup>4</sup>: the piano suite, *Le Tombeau de Couperin* (1914-17), the symphonic poem, renamed *La Valse* (1919-20) and the choral work in the manner of a French Renaissance chanson. Having a desire to serve his country, Ravel became a driver in the motor transport corps in 1916, but soon became frustrated at not being able to compose. Moreover, due to the sudden death of his mother in 1917, he became emotionally desolate. He accomplished very little in the manner of musical activities and wrote only a few compositions during 1917 to 1919.

Piano compositions of this period include:

*Sonatine* (1903-5)

*Miroirs* (1904-5): *Noctuelles*, *Oiseaux tristes*, *Une barque sur l'océan*, *Alborada del gracioso*, *La vallée des cloches*

*Gaspard de la nuit* (1908): *Ondine*, *Le gibet*, *Scarbo*

*Ma mère l'oye*, 4 hands (1908-10): *Pavane de la belle au bois dormant*, *Petit poucet*, *Laideronnette*, *impératrice des pagodes*, *Les entretiens de la belle et de la bête*, *Le jardin féerique*

*Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn* (1909)

*Valses nobles et sentimentales* (1911)

*A la manière de... Borodine* (1913)

*A la manière de... Chabrier* (1913)

*Prélude* (1913)

*Le tombeau de Couperin* (1914-17): *Prélude*, *Fugue*, *Forlane*, *Rigaudon*, *Menuet*, *Toccata*

*Frontispice*, 2 pf 5 hands (1918)

*Miroirs* and *Gaspard de la nuit* are the two works in which Ravel projects the conventional notions of *Impressionism*. They remain close to Debussy's style. Each movement of *Miroirs* is pictorial to some extent.<sup>5</sup> Just as Debussy, Ravel, in his *Miroirs*, preferred to "paint" rather than to "express emotion."<sup>6</sup> *Gaspard de la nuit*, also, can be viewed as an extension of virtuosity. The piece is very difficult to play with countless notes and requires technical dexterity and command. Liszt's *Transcendental Etudes* may be recalled in the third movement, *Scarbo*, which is dramatic with a rich sonority.<sup>7</sup>

The straightforward A-B-A forms in *Ma Mère l'Oye* for four hands and formal structure of *Sonatine* give early evidence of the stylistic path he was to follow in later years, that of *Neo-Classicism*. Also, *Valses nobles et sentimentales* expresses a more rational, objective, "neoclassic" approach<sup>8</sup> to his musical compositions. This suite of eight waltzes was intended to be composed after Schubert's example of *Valses Sentimentales and Nobles*. It takes the listener directly to the nineteenth-century Viennese waltz,<sup>9</sup> with its lilting rhythm, balanced phrases and straight form.<sup>10</sup>

*Le Tombeau de Couperin* utilizes the harpsichord style of the Baroque composer François Couperin (1688-1733). This piece, first written for piano and later transcribed for orchestra (1919) and ballet (1920), consists of a prelude, fugue, three dances and a toccata. The suite is essentially a return to eighteenth-century<sup>11</sup> classic forms.

### iii Third stylistic period: 1918-1937

After World War I and Debussy's death, Ravel was acknowledged to be the foremost French composer and there was much demand for him to conduct his work throughout Europe.<sup>12</sup> In this period, Ravel's fundamental composing style is based on *Neo-Classicism* principles. He often relied on traditional forms, such as the ternary, as well as traditional structures as ways of presenting his new melodies, rhythms and innovative harmonies. However, many different elements are fused into his compositions of this period. In 1919, the premiere of *La Valse (Poème chorégraphique; 1919-20)* for ballet apparently shows his new approach towards *Neo-Romanticism* and this tendency is shown more clearly in his *Sonata for Violin and Cello (1922)* and *Tzigane (1925)*.

Also, Ravel's newly kindled interest in Jazz is shown in his opera *L'enfant et les sortilèges (fantaisie lyrique: 1920-25)*. In contrast to what he did in his previous opera, *L'heure espagnole (1907-9)*, where Spanish elements are evident, Ravel followed the style of Gershwin (1898-1937) and American operetta of the time. In *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, Ravel experimented with range of style from a minuet, polka and round, to an American waltz and a fox trot<sup>13</sup> along with ragtime accents. The adaptation of *Jazz* elements soon reappears in his *Sonata for Violin and Piano (1923-27)*, which includes the rakish second movement entitled "Blues."

In 1928, he was invited to the United States to give concerts, achieving a triumphant success. Ravel's orchestral piece *Boléro (1928)*, originally called

*Fandango* (a sort of Spanish dance), was ironically described as “a master piece... without any music in it” by himself. In *Boléro*, rhythmic patterns of Spanish elements – short, repetitive and often syncopated – are endlessly applied. The work’s fame was resulted in a Hollywood film titled “Bolero” (1934) making major use of the theme.

Piano compositions of this period include:

*La valse* (1920), version for 2 pf (1920) after orch work

*Boléro*, pf 4 hands (1929) after orch work

*Piano Concerto for the left hand* (1929-30)

*Piano Concerto in G* (1929-31)

Ravel’s admiration of jazz, heightened through his American visit, resulted in a number of jazz elements in the two piano concertos. He made extensive use of rollicking jazz tunes in his *Piano Concerto in G major* in the first and third movements.

[2] Background and structure of Ravel’s *Jeux d’eau*

Ravel composed *Jeux d’eau* (Play of the Water<sup>14</sup>) in 1901. At the time of writing *Jeux d’eau*, Ravel was a student of Gabriel Fauré. The piece is dedicated to Fauré and is prefaced by an epigraph from a French symbolist poet, Henri de Régnier (1864-1936): “The river god laughing from the water which is tickling him.” The premiere was given by pianist Ricardo Viñes in 1902, although it was privately

performed for *Les Apaches* the previous year. Ravel was a great admirer of the piano music of Liszt. *Jeux d'eau* is inspired by Liszt's *Jeux d'eau a la ville d'este*. Ravel's technical procedures in *Jeux d'eau* (Ex. 2-1) are similar to those in Liszt's *Jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este* (Ex. 3).

(Ex. 2-1: Ravel *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 1-4)

(Ex. 2-2: tonic ninth chord)

(Ex. 3: Liszt *Jeux d'eau a la ville d'este*, mm. 1-6)



is based on two motives, in the matter of first-movement sonata form without, however, conforming to the classic tonal scheme.”<sup>16</sup>

The thematic structure, dynamic range, and tempo of *Jeux d'eau* are illustrated in Table 3. Table 3 shows the studious detail in dynamic and tempo changes. *Jeux d'eau* challenges the performer to bring out the utmost juxtapositions within the dynamic ranges of piano to illustrate the variable, shifting movement of water.

Table 3

	Themes	Measures	Dynamics	Tempos
Exposit.	A (1 <sup>st</sup> theme)	mm.1~18	pp - pp - cresc - ff - dim - f - dim - mf - dim	Très doux =144
	B (2 <sup>nd</sup> theme)	mm.19~37	pp - cresc - pp subito - cresc - ff - dim. - pp - p	poco accel- rit- a tempo
Develp.	C (3 <sup>rd</sup> theme)	mm.38~50	p - cresc. - mp - cresc - f - cresc - ff - fff - dim	accel- stretto
	B (2 <sup>nd</sup> theme)	mm.51~61	p - pp - cresc - f - p - cresc - mf - cresc - f - dim	1 <sup>er</sup> Mouvt <sup>t</sup> - cédez
Recap.	A (1 <sup>st</sup> theme)	mm.62~72	pp - mf - dim - pp - cresc - dim- ppp - cresc - fff - f - mf - dim - p	1 <sup>er</sup> Mouvt <sup>t</sup> - très rapide -rall
	B (2 <sup>nd</sup> theme)	mm.73~85	p - pp	Un peu plus lent qu'au début - Lent

Although *Jeau d'eau* is in sonata form, with regard to exposition, development, and recapitulation, it is not in traditional sonata-allegro form. In the exposition the first

and second themes appear, but in the development section a third theme appears, rather than the variation of the first theme and second theme. In the recapitulation, the first and second themes appear briefly, followed by the coda. Therefore, this piece is distinguished by two aspects not found in traditional sonata form: first, a third theme exists in the development section. Second, the piece does not follow the traditional tonal pattern of sonata form. *Jeau d'eau* consists of a connection of brief appearances of three themes.

## Chapter V: Technical and Compositional Skills exploited in *Reflets dans l'eau* and *Jeux d'eau*

[1] Technical applications expressed in *Reflets dans l'eau* and *Jeux d'eau*

Debussy and Ravel applied many compositional techniques to evoke the movement of water in their piano works, *Reflets dans l'eau* and *Jeux d'eau*. Rhythmic patterns of syncopation and *ostinato* are applied to express the image of delicate water. More frequently, one melody is modified within various figures – *arpeggio*, *tremolo*, trill, *glissando*, and staccato – to express more active energy. Many changes of tempo and dynamic add to the imagery. This chapter will illustrate several technical applications in both works that strengthen the impressionistic scene.

### (1) *Arpeggio*

*Arpeggio* figures dominate in both *Reflets dans l'eau* and *Jeux d'eau*. The register, dynamic, and tempo of each figure expresses the different images of water – ripples expanding over tranquil surfaces of water, slowly flowing streams, cascades, entwined rocking waves, rolling waves and rising surges as well.

- In *Reflets dans l'eau* -

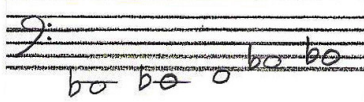
In the first eight measures, the image of successive undulant circles in the peaceful surface is created above a pedal-point (D flat and A flat) through the dropping quarter-notes of the first theme (A flat-F-E flat) in *pianissimo*.<sup>1</sup> The right hand *arpeggio* figures express the spreading out of ripples, revealing the first theme in diminution (Ex. 6).

(Ex. 6: *Reflets dans l'eau* 1<sup>st</sup> theme, mm. 1-3)

The image shows a musical score for the first theme of 'Reflets dans l'eau' (measures 1-3). The score is in 4/8 time, marked 'Andantino molto (Tempo rubato)'. It features a piano (pp) dynamic. The right hand plays a descending quarter-note melody (A-flat, F, E-flat) with arpeggiated accompaniment. The left hand plays a steady bass line with a pedal point on D-flat and A-flat.

In the transition section, starting from measure sixteen, an upward expanding *pentatonic* scale (Ex. 7-1) appears in the left hand while the right hand plays a progression of parallel open fifths and octaves in contrary motion. This picture dissolves when a pebble drops (last two eighth notes at measure seventeen and first two at measure nineteen) into the water, and the reflections become a tiny convulsion before settling down again.<sup>2</sup> Reflections of sunlight on the water are pictured in glistening<sup>3</sup> *arpeggios* and broken-chord patterns (ex. 7-2).

(Ex.7-1: Pentatonic Scale)



(Ex. 7-2: Reflets dans l'eau, mm. 16-19)

A musical score for piano, measures 16-19. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It features arpeggiated figures in both hands. Dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo) and *p* (piano). There are markings for *a Tempo* and *pp* at the beginning of measure 16. The piece ends with a *p* dynamic in measure 19.

The successive progression of ninth chords (Ex. 8-1) in *arpeggio* figures starting from measure twenty allude to the forthcoming flow of water (Ex. 8-2). These passages are directed to be played *Quasi cadenza*, with *poco a poco crescendo e stringendo*.

(Ex. 8-1: successive ninths chord)

A musical staff in treble clef showing four successive ninth chords. The chords are: G major ninth (G, B, D, F#, A), A major ninth (A, C#, E, G, B), B major ninth (B, D#, F#, A, C#), and C major ninth (C, E, G, B, D).

(Ex. 8-2: Reflets dans l'eau, mm. 20-21)

A musical score for piano, measures 20-21. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 3/4 time. It features arpeggiated figures in both hands. Dynamics include *pp* (pianissimo) and *poco a poco cresc. e stringendo*. The piece is marked *Quasi cadenza* at the beginning of measure 20.

The whole-tone second theme at measure twenty-four depicts rhythmically swaying water. Above the moving surface, a superimposed *arpeggio* passage in *ppp* represents the immensely spread and almost intangible<sup>4</sup> ripple on the water's surface (Ex. 9).

(Ex. 9: *Reflets dans l'eau*, mm. 24-25)

The musical score for Ex. 9 shows two measures (24 and 25) in G-flat major. The right hand part is marked 'ppp' and features a complex texture of arpeggiated chords and triplets. The left hand part is marked 'pp doux et expressif' and 'ppp', featuring a melodic line. The tempo is marked 'Mesuré'.

The first theme reappears in a varied pattern in measures thirty-five to forty-two, where the *arpeggios* unfold an embellished melodic impression in *pp*. The emphasis for the *arpeggios* is on translucidity,<sup>5</sup> very light yet *legato* in touch.

From measure forty-three to forty-seven the *arpeggio* passage in the sets of triplets in the right hand delicately expresses rolling waves, while the ascending whole-tone octave scales at the left hand flow in the tempo of *En animant* (Ex. 10).

(Ex. 10: *Reflets dans l'eau*, mm. 43-44)

The musical score for Ex. 10 shows two measures (43 and 44) in G-flat major. The right hand part is marked 'p e poco a poco cresc.' and features a complex texture of arpeggiated chords and triplets. The left hand part is marked 'p e poco a poco cresc.' and features an ascending whole-tone octave scale. The tempo is marked 'En animant'.

At measure fifty the second theme reappears, but in the right hand, seen in *piano* and slower tempo (*au Mouvt*). Along with *arpeggio* passages in the left hand, the second theme is repeated after two measures, until it reaches to the *fortissimo* climax at measure fifty-six. The continuous *arpeggios* in the lower part describe the ascending waves (Ex. 11).

(Ex. 11: *Reflets dans l'eau*, mm. 50-55)

At measure fifty-six both hands appear in *arpeggio* figures, bringing out the climax supposedly expressed as a storm surge (Ex. 12-1). The following melodic line at measure sixty is written in *Mixolydian* mode (Ex. 12-2), describing undulating waves.

(Ex. 12-1: *Reflets dans l'eau*, mm. 56-60)

(Ex. 12-2: E flat *Mixolydian* mode)

- *Jeux d'eau* -

In the beginning, the differences in speed of the *arpeggio* figure of alternating sixteenth and thirty-second notes project the sensation of both relaxation and tension.<sup>6</sup> These alternations allude to the irregular movements of water, while the left hand plays in parallel movements of a perfect fifth (Ex. 2-1, p. 34).

At measure six, the sudden rapid<sup>7</sup> *arpeggio* in whole-tone scale (Ex. 13-1) in the right hand projects the rushing flow (Ex. 13-2).

(Ex. 13-1: whole-tone scale)

(Ex. 13-2: *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 5-7)

At measure nineteen, the second theme of the *pentatonic* scale appears in the left hand (Ex. 14-1). The *arpeggios*, in parallel major seconds with *pianissimo* directed by *una corda*, evoke the landscape of a peaceful lake (Ex. 14-2).

(Ex. 14-1: *pentatonic* scale)

(Ex. 14-2: *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 19-20)

At measure thirty-eight, the third theme appears in the left hand. Integrated with the right hand *arpeggios* in contrary motion, the passage constitutes an ambiguous<sup>8</sup> eleventh chord (Ex. 15-1) representing the mysterious atmosphere (Ex. 15-2).

(Ex. 15-1: eleventh chord)

(Ex. 15-2: *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 38-39)

The varied second theme at measure fifty-one shows parallel movements of perfect fourths in tempo *primo*: The accompanying *arpeggios* consist of the polychord of A# and D,<sup>9</sup> allowing for multi-sonority (Ex. 4, p. 35).

The coda beginning at measure eighty describes the landscape of a tranquil ocean. Both the melodic line in the middle part and the continuous repetitions of treble *arpeggios* consist of *pentatonic* scales, representing mysterious sonority evoking nuances of eastern culture<sup>10</sup> (Ex. 16).

(Ex. 16: *Jeux d'eau*, m. 80)

## (2) Pedal-point

- *Reflets dans l'eau* -

At the first measure, the open fifth of D flat and A flat (as a pedal-point) expresses the peaceful surface of water, preceding the ripples in the upper part<sup>11</sup> and the raindrops in the middle part (Ex. 6, p. 39).

At the end of measure thirty, the A flat pedal-point beginning in measure twenty five in *ppp*) in the lower register rings heavily in the dynamic range of *forte*, as if it describes the dark surface of water reflecting the shade of heavy clouds. The pedal-point is repeated four times, twice with the thicker register (*forte*: mm. 30-31) and later, twice with the lighter reflection (*piano*: mm. 32-33) as time passes (Ex. 17).

(Ex. 17: *Reflets dans l'eau*, mm. 30-34)

- *Jeux d'eau* -

In the recapitulation at measure sixty-two, the first theme unfolds above the repeated pedal-point of G# (mm. 62-63). The pedal-point expands to the lower octave G# (mm. 64-65) as if the vista of the lake is broadened (Ex. 18).

(Ex. 18: *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 62-65)

At measure eighty the sound of the low pedal-point on open fifth (A and E) represents the image of vacancy and hollowness. The wide register formed with the high registered *arpeggios* evokes the idea of an endlessly enormous ocean (Ex. 16, p. 46).

### (3) Staccato

- *Reflets dans l'eau* -

In the first two measures, the dropping quarter-notes of the first theme (A flat-F-E flat) in the middle part must be brought out through clinging fingers with detached action in order to achieve brilliance.<sup>12</sup> Though *tenuto* is marked for these notes, they

need is for light staccato touch, to be distinguished from the other voice. This three-note-theme alludes to light, falling raindrops (Ex. 6, p. 39).

Debussy opposes these chord progressions with chromatic undertones (mm. 9-10) and descending tonic and dominant sixteenth notes in the upper voice in measures nine to eleven. These descending sixteenth notes are marked “staccato” with slurs, which we call *portando* (*portato*). These staccato notes express the reflection of sunlight on the surface of water,<sup>13</sup> requiring light yet bright finger attacks (Ex. 19).

(Ex. 19: *Reflets dans l'eau*, mm. 9-12)

The image shows a musical score for the first system of 'Reflets dans l'eau' by Debussy, measures 9 through 12. The score is written for piano and consists of two staves. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/8. Measure 9 begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The upper staff features a descending sixteenth-note line in the upper voice, marked with a slur and a staccato-like articulation. The lower staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines. Measure 10 continues the descending sixteenth-note line in the upper voice. Measure 11 shows a change in the harmonic texture. Measure 12 concludes the system with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, staccato markings, and dynamic markings.

- *Jeux d'eau* -

At measure twenty-seven, Ravel once again uses open fifths as a harmonic underpinning, to be played *staccatissimo*. These parallel fifths leap up and down by

intervals of an octave, describing highly bouncing water drops, until they start to fall down at the end of measure twenty-eight with *ritardando* (Ex. 20).

(Ex. 20: *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 27-29)

#### (4) Pedals

The indications of damper pedal are different in various editions. In the Urtext edition of Ravel's *Jeux d'eau*, the damper pedal is indicated to be held fairly long: in many places the damper pedal lasts for two or three measures and sometimes even for eight measures (mm. 77-84), regardless of the harmonic changes. These indications attempt to produce vibrating harmonies, suspending impressionistic images. Uses of *una corda* are clearly marked, along with *tre corde*. *Una corda* is mostly used when the illustration of quietly moving waves is juxtaposed with bigger waves. Muted sounds with *una corda* express limpid water. These uses of various pedals, along with *legato* technique, make it possible to create compelling sound effects.

(5) *Glissando*

At measure forty-eight in Ravel's *Jeux d'eau*, the descending *glissando* in *fortissimo* dynamic evokes the scene of a giant cascade of falling water down to the bottom of a valley (Ex. 21). In Debussy's *Reflets dans-l'eau*, the effects of *glissando* in *arpeggio* patterns to express surges of waves are illustrated in measures forty-eight to forty-nine (Ex. 22) and at measure fifty-six (Ex. 12-1, p.43).

(Ex. 21: *Jeux d'eau*, m. 48)

(Ex. 22: *Reflets dans-l'eau*, mm. 48-49)

(6) *Tremolo*

Performing the *Tremolo* creates different moods, depending upon the dynamic context and ranges. In Ravel's *Jeux d'eau*, the *Tremolo* appears twice: at measure twenty-six (Ex. 23) and measure forty-eight in *fortissimo* (Ex. 21, p. 51). Both places illustrate huge waves that are preceded by long progressions of passages heard in *crescendo* and *accelerando*. However, the outburst scene of (Ex. 21) is more overwhelming beginning in the high register and is emphasized as a powerful climax by a dramatic descending *glissando*. The *glissando* covers almost the entire keyboard!

(Ex. 23: *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 25-26)

The image shows a musical score for two staves, likely piano and left hand. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The time signature is 4/2. Measure 25 is marked with a '4' and a '2' above it, indicating a 4-measure phrase. Measure 26 is marked with an '8' and a dotted line above it, indicating an 8-measure phrase. A downward arrow points to the beginning of the 8-measure phrase. The score is marked with '3 cordes' at the bottom left and 'ff' at the bottom right. The music consists of chords and arpeggiated figures.

[2] Comparison of compositional skills exploited in *Reflets dans l'eau* and *Jeux d'eau*

(1) Expression of objects

Throughout *Jeux d'eau*, Ravel evokes the various forms of water with florid *arpeggio* passages projecting the tranquil ocean and its flooding surge. These endlessly impelling cascades<sup>14</sup> of seventh, ninth and eleventh chords in widespread, rhythmically precise<sup>15</sup> *arpeggios* surely will fascinate the listener. However in *Reflets dans l'eau*, there are many passages without *arpeggios*, as if to let the listener relax and catch a breath. For example, the passages from the beginning (Ex. 6, p. 39) to measure nineteen, measures thirty-three to thirty-four (Ex. 17, p. 47) with *ritardando*, and from the coda at measure seventy-one (Ex. 24) to the end, are mostly associated with longer notes values in slow tempo. The effect on the listener can be hypnotic. These passages portray the image of tranquil water with various reflections, along with the objects that the water reflects. In *Reflets dans l'eau*, Debussy also depicts natural elements connected with the movements of water such as rain (Ex. 6, p. 39), sunlight (Ex. 7-2, p. 40), clouds (Ex. 17, p. 47), trees and a nearby forest.

(Ex. 24: *Reflets dans l'eau*, mm. 71-74)

1<sup>o</sup> Tempo (en retenant jusqu'à la fin)

## (2) Form and Structure

Because of the alternating two-theme repetition, the overall structure of *Reflets dans l'eau* resembles that of a rondo. This rondo alteration is a pattern that still allows for a rich *ricercar* variation technique.<sup>16</sup> The two themes appear in fragments or as a whole, in augmentation (Ex. 24, mm. 73-74, p. 53), diminution (Ex. 25), inversion (Ex. 26: inversion of the second theme at measure twenty-four), or imitation. Debussy's ideas on form and development were considered peculiar and vague by his contemporaries. In many cases, the forms and structures do not follow normal procedures, and the themes or melodic lines are abruptly interrupted by another idea which seems to have no relations to the previous ones. As a whole, Debussy has a particularly narrative idea in presenting his style with structures.

(Ex. 25: Debussy *Reflets dans l'eau*, mm. 35-36)

(Ex. 26: Debussy *Reflets dans l'eau*, mm. 62-63)

Ravel was a musical architect who framed his tonal fabric within a logical, self-analytical structure.<sup>17</sup> The sonata form was his preferred choice. *Jeux d'eau* is based on two themes, in the manner of first-movement sonata form. However, breaking from the classic tonal scheme, in development section Ravel presents a third theme in the place of first theme, which is both unexpected and unorthodox!

### (3) Melodic scales and Modes

Both Debussy and Ravel use *pentatonic* and whole-tone scales to emphasize particular colors and sonorities. The examples of Debussy's use of *pentatonic* and whole-tone scale in *Reflets dans l'eau* appear at (Ex. 7-2, p. 40) and in (Ex. 9, Ex. 10, p. 41) for the latter, same as Ravel's in *Jeux d'eau* are found at (Ex. 14-2, p. 45, Ex. 16, p. 46) and (Ex. 13-2, p. 44). However, while the whole-tone scale is closely associated with Debussy<sup>18</sup>, it is conspicuously absent in Ravel's output.<sup>19</sup>

Debussy's fond use of modality for an ultrasensitive tonal picture<sup>20</sup> is seen in his *Reflets dans l'eau*. The example of E flat *Mixolydian* is found at measure sixty (Ex. 12-1, p. 43), and at measure sixty-five for A *Lydian*. Ravel, on the other hand, more frequently uses the *Dorian* and *Phrygian* mode. Although, modality is not applied in *Jeux d'eau*, his reliance on modality affirmed in many of his compositions<sup>21</sup> from *Pavane* (1899) to the Piano Concerto in G (1931). The following example shows his use of *Phrygian* mode<sup>22</sup> (Ex. 27).

(Ex. 27: Ravel *String Quartet in F major*, 1903, mm. 55-68)

The musical score shows three staves. The top staff (Violin I) begins with a 'Da Tempo' marking and a 'pp très expr.' dynamic. It features a series of sixteenth-note patterns with slurs and accents. The middle staff (Viola) starts with a 'p' dynamic and plays a melodic line with slurs. The bottom staff (Cello/Bass) starts with a 'pp' dynamic and plays a melodic line with slurs. The music is in F major and contains several dissonant chords.

*Phrygian mode*

The notation shows the Phrygian mode on a treble clef staff. The notes are: G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5. This is the natural Phrygian mode starting on G.

#### (4) Harmonies and Use of dissonances

An effective means of presenting impressionistic sonorities lies in the use of dissonances. Acrid but appealing dissonances such as sevenths, ninths, and elevenths are freely used in both works. Yet, the approaches of two composers in using dissonances are different. In *Reflets dans l'eau*, the harmonies and dissonances can stand by themselves as units of effective sounds rather than part of harmonically functional structure.

In contrast, Ravel's harmonies are firmly rooted in tonality and are structurally conceived.<sup>23</sup> His chordal progressions are clearly defined. Ravel uses many

dissonances or non-harmonic tones, yet the basic harmonic structure and original tonality are relatively undisturbed.

The basic chords underlying Ravel's music are common triads, but these chords are sometimes represented by open fifths (without thirds) or simple octaves, and sometimes, obscured by sevenths, ninths, and elevenths.<sup>24</sup> In many places, parallel movements of perfect intervals (fourths, fifths, and octaves) are commonly used. Measure nineteen is one of the examples of doubling the melodies through octaves in order to more clearly emphasize the motives (Ex. 14-2, p. 45).

Poly-tonality is applied to achieve ultra-sensitive effects. The examples are found at measure fifty-one (Ex. 4, p. 35) and seventy-two. Measure seventy-two is an unmeasured and long cadenza with repeated poly-tonality patterns of a significant F sharp major against C major triads.<sup>25</sup> It illustrates a high-rising wave that is followed by rolling waves, which move back and forth repeatedly until they are dispersed at the end of the measure (Ex. 28).

(Ex. 28: *Jeux d'eau*, m. 72)

The musical score for Ex. 28: *Jeux d'eau*, m. 72, is presented in four systems. The first system shows the piano and string parts with markings for 'Très rapide', 'ppp', and 'fff'. The second system includes a '3 cordes' marking. The third system is marked 'mf dim.'. The fourth system is marked 'p' and 'rall.'. The score features complex arpeggiated textures and dynamic contrasts.

In many cases, Ravel's uses of dissonances or non-harmonic tones create rich, mysterious sounds. Each phrase remains tonal and the original key always is established at the end.

The most dissonant intervals - minor ninths and the major sevenths<sup>-26</sup> are typical structures in Ravel's music. In *Jeux d'eau*, the example of a tonic ninth chord (Ex. 2-2, p. 34) is shown at the beginning (Ex. 2-1, p. 34), and a tonic seventh chord is at the closing measure, eighty-five (Ex. 29). The example below illustrates that *Jeux d'eau* closes with a ravishing arpeggio up and down on the keyboard outlining E major

*pentatonic* scale and the very last chord is provided in diatonic seventh by D sharp on the right hand. Ravel preferred diatonic dissonances to more tonally ambiguous chromatic combinations.<sup>27</sup>

(Ex. 29 *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 84-85)

### (5) Melodies and Rhythms

Debussy's melodic lines are relatively short and irregularly intertwined, while two themes may appear in fragments or as a whole. An example is shown in measures seventy-four to eighty (Ex. 30). Debussy's melodic lines are unbalanced and inconsistent. In measures sixty-seven and sixty-nine, the previous melodic lines are interrupted by sudden appearances of *arpeggio* patterns in foreign keys (Ex. 31). As a result, they are shaped like musical mosaics.

(Ex. 30: *Reflets dans l'eau*, mm. 74-80)

74

78

Rit. - - - - -

*pp*

*p (un peu en dehors)*

(Ex. 31: *Reflets dans l'eau*, mm. 65-70)

65

au Mouv<sup>t</sup>  
(plus lent)

*pp*

67

*ppp*

18

*pp*

69

sempre *pp*

However, Ravel's melodies are relatively longer in phrase-length and more clearly etched. In *Jeux d'eau* the phrasing, articulation and melodic line are straightforwardly written, easily notated and can be easily understood. Ravel's melodies are reminiscent of appealing, accessible nineteenth century melodies of composers from the Romantic era.

The rhythmic patterns of syncopation and *ostinato* are mainly applied in *Reflets dans l'eau* and *Jeux d'eau*. Yet, Debussy's rhythms are vague and irregular.<sup>28</sup> In *Reflets dans l'eau*, a temporary meter change occurs at measure eleven (Ex. 19, p. 49). Irregular and abrupt changes of rhythms within a measure exist in many places. One such example is found in measures eighteen and nineteen (Ex. 7-2, p. 40), and another in measures thirty to thirty-three (Ex. 17, p. 47). Debussy's expressions are more hidden and subjective, and it is up to the audience's imagination to hear what is implied.

Ravel's rhythm in general is traditional and clear-cut. In *Jeux d'eau*, the rhythmic patterns are more evenly presented, yet not lacking in vigor or variety.<sup>29</sup> Ravel evokes a vivid picture of watery movement with straightforward melodies and rhythms. From the very opening phrase of *Jeux d'eau*, one is immediately aware of supple, undulant movement of lines.

## Conclusion

Debussy was influenced by many elements from different areas of arts throughout his life. Among these influences, the most significant is the symbolist movement in literature. Debussy shared its indefinite and esthetic taste in expressing thoughts, and utilized this medium to shape his musical style. Especially, Debussy's free ways of writing in forms, harmonies, melodies and rhythms were developed from the influence of "free verse techniques" of symbolist poets. Many of Debussy's works, as the titles indicate, were involved with descriptions of the external world or contemporary life, not with the musical forms.

Ambiguity is another distinct characteristic of Debussy's music, which is parallel to the vagueness of *Impressionism* in art. The image of seamless borders between objects featured in the landscapes of paintings profoundly influenced Debussy, and creating musical ambiguity became the core of "Debussism." In his piano works, these images are accomplished through broad uses of non-functional harmonies and unresolved dissonances along with blurred and hazy pedaling.

One of Debussy's composing methods is utilizing only the most minimal of materials to deliver the meaning of works without losing delicacy and precision. This came as an influence from the art of Japanese prints where everything unnecessary to presenting distinct picture was eliminated. This tendency to utilize only essential devices, without excesses, separated his work from sheer virtuosity or brilliance.

Debussy admired the art of painting as much as music. He would like to have made his living as a painter! Applying his pictorial imagination into music, Debussy attempted to draw music by painting images, scenes, light and shadow of outdoor life with blending of tone color. Debussy achieved this through the sonorous effects of non-western music: the use of *pentatonic* and whole-tone scales, different modes, Javanese gamelan and more.

Ravel also greatly benefited from many influences of other fields of art and various styles of music. However, Ravel's compositional style is diverse and broadly extended, from *Baroque* to *Jazz*. Thus, one can hardly define any one categorization in his compositional style. As Vladimir Jankélévitch notes, "No influence can claim to have conquered him entirely"<sup>1</sup> All types of past and contemporary composers - *Baroque*, eighteenth century *Classicism*, nineteenth century French *Romanticism*, virtuosity and lyricism of Liszt and Chopin, Impressionistic qualities inherited from Debussy and *Jazz* elements earned from American concert tours were experimented with. Even when writing or imitating in the style of others, however, the innovative characters and distinctive vitality of his own aesthetic were always maintained.

There are two main aspects that Ravel followed continuously through his entire career. The first is the tendency toward *Classicism*. He mainly used traditional forms as well as varied traditional structures, which are the frames for which Ravel expressed new melodic and harmonic content. This is shown in his frequent use of conventional forms such as ternary, sonata-allegro, dance and fugue. In *Jeux d'eau*, Ravel

accomplished *Classicism* with clear melodic lines, regular rhythmic patterns and even lengths of phrases in a varied sonata form.

The second aspect is the development of *New Pianism*. When Ravel created piano works, he equipped them with new and innovative elements. For example, *Gaspard de la nuit* is referred as a work of *Impressionism*. But it is also viewed as adhering to Liszt's virtuosity and technical difficulty, even with added elements of elegance and refinement. In his *Piano Concerto in G major*, Ravel represents rhythmic vitality with the wide use of *Jazz* tunes that is new to his *Pianism*. The *New Pianism* is also shown in *Jeux d'eau*. The wide uses of non-functional harmonies, dissonances, polytonalities and *pentatonic* scales add Impressionistic qualities to the work. Ravel succeeded in incorporating the *Impressionism* into the piano in *Jeux d'eau*.

In *Reflets dans l'eau* and *Jeux d'eau*, both Debussy and Ravel use florid *arpeggio* passages as a metaphor for constantly moving water. Utmost juxtapositions in the dynamic ranges and technical applications -- such as the *tremolo*, trill, staccato and *glissando* -- are commonly employed for the descriptions of active, restless movement of water. Both pieces apply countless uses of dissonances and non-functional scales to bring out sonorous effects which are similar in character.

However, the ways of describing the image of water differ in these two pieces. Debussy's expressions are presented more freely and subjectively through his own interpretation of water and other objects reflected on the water. Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* is

more directly written to let the listener feel the music as if seeing the picture of the variable movements of water.

As used in both works of Ravel and Debussy, water is a captivating theme for impressionistic composers and is often chosen as a descriptive theme among the many natural phenomena of the outdoor world. Water is never still and endlessly changes its shape according to the environment. With its fluidity, water has optimal possibilities in projecting impressionistic imageries and varieties.

In fact, there are many additional compositions of both Debussy and Ravel that are written on the theme of water or related to water. The lists of compositions of two composers are illustrated below. These lists demonstrate the two composers' affection for using water as a theme.

- Debussy -

Songs:

*Flots, palmes, sables* (*Waves, palms, sands*; 1882)

*Fleur des eaux* (*Water flower*; 1883)

*Le jet d'eau* (*A fountain*) from *Cinq poèmes de Charles Baudelaire* (1887-9)

*La mer est plus belle que les cathedrales* (*The sea is more beautiful than cathedrales*)  
from *Trois melodies* (1891)

*De grève* (*Sandy beach*) from *Proses lyriques* (1892-3)

Piano in four hands:

*En bateau* (*In a boat*) from *Petit suite* (1888-9)

Works to accompany reading of poems:

*L'eau pure du bassin* (*Clear water in a basin*) from *Chansons de Bilitis* (1900-1)

*La pluie du matin* (*Morning rain*) from *Chansons de Bilitis*

## Orchestral:

*Sirènes (Mermaids)* from *Nocturnes* (1899)

*La Mer (The Sea; 1903-5)*

1<sup>st</sup> movt. *De l'aube à midi sur la mer (From a dawn to a noon of the sea)*

2<sup>nd</sup> movt. *Jeux de vagues (Play of waves)*

3<sup>rd</sup> movt. *Dialogue du vent et de la mer (Dialogue between winds and the sea)*

## Piano solo:

*Jardins sous la pluie (Gardens in the rain)* from *Estampes* (1894-1903)

*L'isle Joyeuse (Joyful island; 1904)*

*Reflet dans l'eau (Reflections on the water)* from *Images I* (1904-5)

*Poissons d'or (The golden fish)* from *Images II* (1907)

*Voiles (Sails or Veils)* from *Préludes I* (1909-1910)

*La cathédrale engloutie (The submerged cathedral)* from *Préludes I*

*Ondine (Nymph of water)* from *Preludes Book II* (1910-12)

*Pour remercier la pluie au matin (To thank morning rain)* from *Six Épigraphes Antiques* (1914)

- Ravel –

## Piano solo:

*Jeux d'eau (Play of the water; 1901)*

*Une barque sur l'océan (A boat in ocean)* from *Miroirs* (1904-5)

*Ondine (Nymph of water)* from *Gaspard de la nuit* (1908)

## Songs:

*Le cygnet (The swan)* from *Histoires naturelles* (1906)

*Les grands vents venus d'outre-mer (Winds from the sea; 1907)*

## Vocal orchestral:

*Sur l'eau (By the water front)*

As this exploration comes to a conclusion, the beguiling question remains: Why does water, with all its mysterious and ever-changing properties, evoke such a powerful ignition for the creative impulse? Poets, painters, sculptors, writers and

composers - all are drawn with seemingly irresistible force, to express themselves through and around this subject.

Perhaps one means of considering the question lies at the very core of Debussy and Ravel's music. These works do not spell out specific stories, narratives, or offer moral lessons. Rather, they enkindle our personal impressions: sensation, imagination and the acutely personal feelings we experience as we perform, teach, and listen to this music. As quoted from Leonard Bernstein's (1918-1990) words, "Music can name the unnameable and communicate the unknowable."

This speaks to the power of music in awakening impressions and feelings. This, in the end, remains the delectable ambiguity in art.

## Notes

### Introduction

<sup>1</sup> Sun-Ok Lee, “A Study on the Impressionistic Piano Works of Debussy and Ravel,” (M. M. thesis, Sungshin Women’s University, 2001), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Sachi Patricia Hirakouji, “The Piano without Hammers: Reconsidering Debussy’s Pianism,” (D. M. A. diss., University of Washington, 2008), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> David Burge, *Twentieth-Century Piano Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 4.

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

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

### Chapter I

<sup>1</sup> John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music: An Historical Survey of Music for Harpsichord and Piano* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1972), 328.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 329.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1996), 18.

<sup>4</sup> William R. Martin and Julius Drossin, *Music of the Twentieth Century* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980), 27.

<sup>5</sup> Roberts, *Images*, 18.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>11</sup> David Burge, *Twentieth-Century Piano Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 5.

<sup>12</sup> Roberts, *Images*, 22.

<sup>13</sup> Roy Howat, *The Art of French Piano Music: Debussy, Ravel, Fauré, Chabrier* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2009), 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Roberts, *Images*, 47.

<sup>23</sup> Howat, *The Art of French Piano Music*, 121.

<sup>24</sup> Roberts, *Images*, 46.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>28</sup> Howat. *The Art of French Piano Music*, 122.

<sup>29</sup> Paul Roberts, *Claude Debussy* (London; New York: Phaidon Press Inc., 2008), 161.

<sup>30</sup> Roberts, *Images*, 57.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>33</sup> Burge, *Twentieth-Century Piano Music*, 8.

<sup>34</sup> Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music*, 333.

## Chapter II

<sup>1</sup> Oscar Thompson, *Debussy, Man and Artist* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1937), 21.

<sup>2</sup> John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music: An Historical Survey of Music for Harpsichord and Piano* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1972), 329.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 331.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Schmitz, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, edited and Designed by Merle Armitage (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, Inc., 1950), 13.

<sup>5</sup> Rollo Myers, *Modern French Music, from Fauré to Boulez* (New York: Praeger Publications, 1971), 62.

<sup>6</sup> Arbie Orenstein, *Ravel: Man and Musician* (New York; London: Columbia University Press, 1975), 137.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Griffiths and Roger Nichols, “Ravel, (Joseph) Maurice” *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music online  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/52145> (accessed 21 April, 2012)

<sup>8</sup> Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music*, 328.

<sup>9</sup> Eric Salzman, *Twentieth-Century Music: An Introduction*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2002), 24.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Griffiths and Richard Langham Smith, “Ibert, Jacques (François Antoine Marie)” *The Oxford Companion to Music*, Oxford Music Online  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e3377> (accessed 23 May, 2012)

<sup>11</sup> Richard Langham Smith, “Ibert, Jacques” *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, Oxford Music Online  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/O902302> (accessed 23 May, 2012)

<sup>12</sup> William R. Martin and Julius Drossin, *Music of the Twentieth Century* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980), 39.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

### Chapter III

<sup>1</sup> John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music: An Historical Survey of Music for Harpsichord and Piano* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1972), 332.

<sup>2</sup> Oscar Thompson, *Debussy, Man and Artist* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1937), 247.

<sup>3</sup> Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music*, 332.

<sup>4</sup> François Lesure, "Debussy, Claude" *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music online <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/07353> (accessed 11 Nov., 2011)

<sup>5</sup> Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music*, 332.

<sup>6</sup> Rollo H. Myers, *Debussy* (New York: A. A. Wynn, Inc., 1949. Reprint, Westport, Connecticut: Hyperion Press, Inc., 1979), 90.

<sup>7</sup> Mark DeVoto, "The Debussy Sound: Colour, Texture, Gesture," *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*. Edited by Simon Trezise (Cambridge, U. K.; New York: Cambridge University Press. 2003), 190.

<sup>8</sup> Myers, *Debussy*, 106.

<sup>9</sup> Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music*, 334.

### Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup> John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1972), 338.

<sup>2</sup> Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Ravel* (London; New York: Grove Press Inc., & John Calder Ltd., 1959), 21.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Griffiths and Roger Nichols, “Ravel, Maurice” *Grove Music Online*, Oxford Music online  
<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com:80/subscriber/article/grove/music/52145> (accessed 2 Feb., 2012)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Arbie Orenstein, *Ravel: Man and Musician* (New York; London: Columbia University Press, 1975), 159.

<sup>6</sup> Victor I. Seroff, *Maurice Ravel* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1953), 89.

<sup>7</sup> Orenstein, *Ravel: Man and Musician*, 172.

<sup>8</sup> William R. Martin and Julius Drossin, *Music of the Twentieth Century* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980), 41.

<sup>9</sup> David Burge, *Twentieth-Century Piano Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 46.

<sup>10</sup> Orenstein, *Ravel: Man and Musician*, 175.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Machlis, *The Enjoyment of Music*, 4th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1977), 473.

<sup>13</sup> Orenstein, *Ravel*, 194.

<sup>14</sup> Martin and Drossin, *Music of the Twentieth Century*, 41.

<sup>15</sup> Burge, *Twentieth-Century Piano Music*, 46.

<sup>16</sup> These remarks of Ravel are taken from an autobiographical sketch which first appeared in print in the *Revue Musicale* (December, 1920).

## Chapter V

<sup>1</sup> Robert Schmitz, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, edited and Designed by Merle Armitage (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, Inc., 1950), 102.

<sup>2</sup> Frank Dawes, *Debussy Piano Music* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971), 29.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>4</sup> Schmitz, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, 102.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>6</sup> Eun-Mi Kim, “A Comparative Study on Expressive Technique of Water in *Jeux d’eau a la ville d’este*, *Jeux d’eau* and *Reflets dans l’eau*,” (M. M. thesis, Pusan National University, 2002), 38.

<sup>7</sup> So-Yun Yim, “A Study on the Impressionistic Characters of M. Ravel,” (M. M. thesis, Mokwon University, 1995), 31.

<sup>8</sup> Kim, 40.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>12</sup> Schmitz, 103.

<sup>13</sup> Kim, 49.

<sup>14</sup> David Burge, *Twentieth-Century Piano Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 4.

<sup>15</sup> John Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music: An Historical Survey of Music for Harpsichord and Piano* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1972), 339.

<sup>16</sup> Schmitz, 102.

<sup>17</sup> Gillespie, *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music*, 338.

<sup>18</sup> William W. Austin, *Music in the 20th Century: from Debussy through Stravinsky* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1966), 171.

<sup>19</sup> William R. Martin and Julius Drossin, *Music of the Twentieth Century* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980), 42.

<sup>20</sup> Gillespie, 331.

<sup>21</sup> Peter S Hansen, *An Introduction to Twentieth Century Music*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1978), 42.

<sup>22</sup> Yim, “A Study on the Impressionistic Characters of M. Ravel,” 17.

<sup>23</sup> Martin and Drossin, *Music of the Twentieth Century*, 42.

<sup>24</sup> Austin, *Music in the 20th Century*, 172.

<sup>25</sup> Arbie Orenstein, *Ravel: Man and Musician* (New York; London: Columbia University Press, 1975), 154.

<sup>26</sup> Austin, 172.

<sup>27</sup> Hansen, *An Introduction to Twentieth Century Music*, 39.

<sup>28</sup> Martin and Drossin, 42.

<sup>29</sup> Austin, 173.

## **Conclusion**

<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Ravel* (London; New York: Grove Press Inc., & John Calder Ltd., 1959; reprint, 1995), 7-8.

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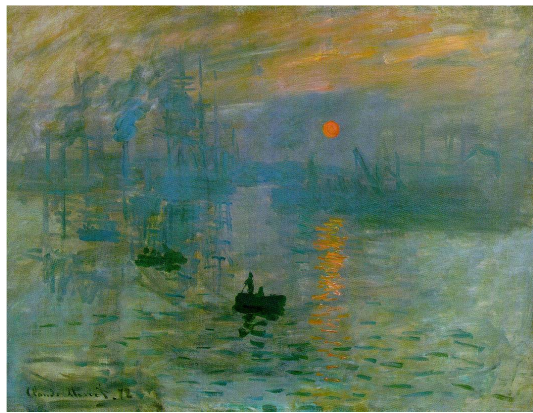
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## Appendix: Paintings, Prints and *Netsukes*

### Monet's paintings in *Impressionism*



Claude Monet, *Impression: Sunrise*, 1873

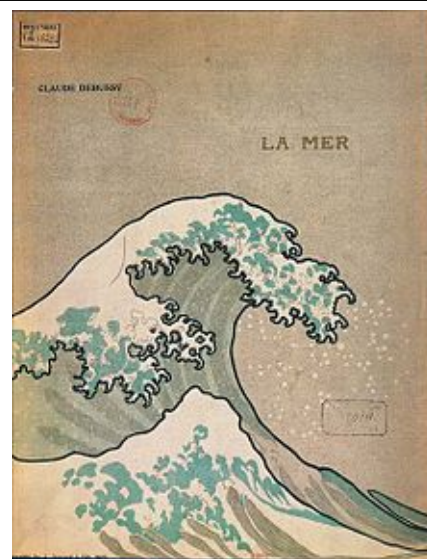


Claude Monet, *Poplars on the Bank of the River Epte*, 1891-92

### Japanese prints that influenced Debussy's music



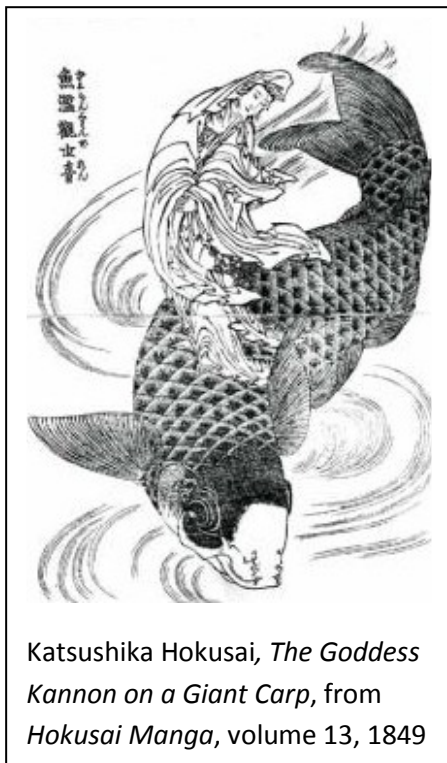
Katsushika Hokusai, *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, 1829-32



Cover of *La Mer*, Claude Debussy, 1905



Katsushika Hokusai, *Sparrow Dancers*, from *Hokusai Manga*, volume 3, 1815.



Katsushika Hokusai, *The Goddess Kannon on a Giant Carp*, from *Hokusai Manga*, volume 13, 1849



Katsushika Hokusai, *Fuji in Clear Weather*, from *Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji*, 1831



Japanese *Netsuke*



Japanese *Netsuke*

### Vita

Sun Hye Park was born in Seoul, Korea. She attended the Music College at Seoul National University but entered Juilliard School of Music and earned a Bachelor of Music degree and a Master of Music degree under Professor Martin Canin in Piano Performance. In 2012 she earned a Doctor of Musical Arts at the University of Washington under Dr. Robin McCabe in Piano Performance. Currently, she is a professor of piano at Dongeui University in Busan, Korea. She has an extensive career as a solo pianist, chamber musician, and accompanist.