

100 YEARS SINCE DEBUSSY'S DEATH: CENTENARY IMPRESSIONS

Robin Hancock BYU piano faculty

Debussy is the fourth piano deity –Paul Pollei

Bach gave us tools

Beethoven linked music to life and the journey to eternity

Chopin gave us the pedal

Debussy took away the keys and left us only with pure sound.

Claude Monet's painting entitled *Impression: Sunrise, 1872* led to him and other painters being called impressionists.

Innovative concepts of the functions of light and color, science of optics and breakdown of color spectrum

Artist must capture a fleeting impression, and its unique atmosphere caused by an unusual combination of light and shade. Depict nature with fine gradations

A true impressionist painting presents nature as a composite of colored patches, minute brush strokes of pure color that blend when seen from a distance.

Dabs and dots

Scenes of mist, fog, haze, and snow and water

--"Masters of Impressionism: A guide to style and interpretation." Alfred Series. Edited by Maurice Hinson

There is a spiritual nature of water that Impressionist composers are able to depict and evoke: one can look down on water from a boat and see it swirl and roll; or one can look out at water from the seashore, and see the light diffused through a spray or splash of water. Capturing in sound this combination of light being deflected through a watery prism is the work of the painter and the composer.

Deep intuitions and buried memories of dreams

Melting one form into another and feeling of instability

Music was the ideal vehicle through which to explore these theories

Rhythm cannot be contained within barlines. There is no theory. Only ability to listen.

Music is sum total of scattered forces.

Features in Debussy's piano music:

Freely used dissonance; 7ths 9ths 11ths, neither prepared or resolved

Use of sustained chords with superimposed harmonies

Parallel series of 5ths, 4ths, octaves

Melodies on modal scales

Pentatonic scale

Whole-tone scale

Static rhythms

Sparkly animated rhythms

Spanish element of single note plucking, guitar strumming and open 5ths in parallel

Water music

Exploitation of the evocative atmospheric potential of the pedals

Debussy's legacy was not recognized in his time. Because at same time we had Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Prokofiev, After World War II Debussy became known as the true revolutionary. New sonorities inside the piano all stem from him. Exploration of new ideas, influences, sounds, effects, the macrocosms of sound. All come from him. The new romanticism, the new eclecticism, music relating to life.