

Debussy Preludes

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When were the Debussy preludes composed?
Which one is eccentric?
What is the story behind the sunken cathedral?
What is the name of the town where it was located?
Can you find footprints? How are they depicted?
Can you find parallelisms in homophonic chords?
What does P.P.M.P.C. stand for?
How does Debussy suggest moonlight descending in book 2 no. 7?
Where are two instances of the use of pentatonic scale?
What is hidden in the final measures of the final prelude?
How does Debussy put his own name in the final prelude?
Can you name four kinds of fireworks depicted in the final piece?
In “minstrels” can you name four kinds of instruments depicted that one might see at a fair or carnival?
What would be one of the best ways to learn how to perform La Cathedrale engloutie?
How does Debussy suggest the image of water in the prelude “sunken cathedral?”
In book I no. 11, how does Debussy suggest the guitar?
Where is Shakespeare?
Where are the Egyptian urns? Where else in our own religion do we find Egyptian urns?
Where is the British national anthem? Where is the French national anthem?
Which piece has a “luminous” dazzling “bright light” ending? How does Debussy achieve it?

Casella recalled “No words can give an idea of the way in which he played certain of his Preludes. Not that he had actual virtuosity, but his sensibility of touch was incomparable; he gave the impression of playing directly on the strings of the instrument with no intermediate mechanism; the effect was a miracle of poetry.”

The descriptive range of the *Preludes* is remarkably wide combining 24 different images of the world of Debussy into one artistic whole in two parts. “The point of comparison between music and the world lies hidden very deep, but the effect of music is far more powerful and penetrates far more deeply than that of the other arts; for they communicate only shadows, whereas music communicates the essence.” (Schopenhauer, who’s writing Debussy had read avidly in the 1890s.)

One is drawn to the Preludes for their spiritual meaning, their essence, that to which only art can give voice. Just as painters of the era saw what had hitherto been unseen, Debussy heard what had been unheard. The images and allusions of Debussy’s titles were not intended to take the listener outside the music but into it. The titles were an invitation designed to provoke an intensity of listening.

From the book by Paul Roberts. *Claude Debussy*. (New York and London: Phaidon Press, 2008)192
