

Program notes

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Claude Debussy image book 1 Reflets dans l'eau

Claude Debussy was born in 1862 France, he was a French composer who was best known for his impressionistic music style. Throughout his career, Debussy used non-functional harmony and ambiguous key signatures in his work, giving it a sense of modality.

Image book I consists of three movements, “Reflets dans l’eau”, “Hommage à Rameau”, and “Mouvement”. It was created in 1905 and is arguably the most representative piano pieces amongst his works. This period is regarded as the peak period of Debussy's creation and innovation. It becomes apparent that the singular style has been completely formed and mastered during this period of his work. The impressionism tone also becomes obvious and integral to his body of work. Debussy interprets the image expressed in "The Reflection in the Water" with a wide range and continuous voice. His works portrayed hints of happiness from an affirming life, which expressed the composer's feelings for nature through his music.

“*Reflets dans l’eau*”, also known as reflections in the water begins with arpeggios sounds, capturing the melody of flowing water, all the while the left hand remains responsible for the main melody. In this part, the intensity of the sound varies mainly in the weak range, making the contrast of dynamic in the soft range an indispensable basic skill in the performance of impressionist works.

“*Hommage à Rameau*” (“Homage to Rameau”) is a baroque sarabande was a tribute to one of the most acclaimed French baroque composer Jean-Philippe Rameau. This piano piece is the longest within the *Image* and masterfully captures a sense of antiquity and romanticism.

The last piano piece, *Mouvement* is the shortest and probably the most energetic piece. It opens with an energetic and fast 5 intervals. A lively, dance-like theme enters at bar 148 before the sound dies away at the latter part. This last piece tries to capture the sensation of speed and exhilarating feeling of fast movement.

Franz Schubert piano sonata in A minor op.143

Schubert is an Austrian composer of late Classical and early Romantic era and is well-recognized as one of the founders of romantic music. His piano sonatas can be divided into early, middle and late periods according to the time of creation. *Piano Sonata* in A minor is one of Schubert's 12 early piano sonatas.

The A minor sonata is presented in 3 movements and is probably one of Schubert's most frequently played sonatas. The first movement, *Allegro giusto*, opens with A minor and goes on to creating an ominous and somber rhythmic atmosphere. It uses fragmentation of themes and there is an obvious trend of classical to romantic transition in its' music style.

The second movement, *Andante*, demonstrates a slow movement starting in F major. The opening phrase begins muted, before the rhythmic element follows in the later part of the piece.

The third and final movement, *Allegro vivace*, introduces a rapid triplet rhythm, which contrasted the lyrical secondary theme in F major. It will be later played in C major, after the second appearance of the main subject, which on its third entry is taken into remoter keys, before the expected version of the secondary theme in A major, followed by a brief and stormy return of the first subject to reassert the original minor mode.

Allegro Barboro Bartok

Composed by Bartok in 1911, the *Allegro Barboro* is amongst the most frequently performed piano pieces in history. He performed this piece privately many times before he began to notate the music. Despite the piece's premiere in February 1913, *Allegro Barboro* was only performed for the first time in 1921. The reason for this was due to discrepancies between previous printed versions of the composition and recording of Bartok's performance, which did not match the tempo markings. In numerous early printed editions of the piece, the rhythm markings were shown at a much slower speed. Despite the many editions created in that period, the finalized composition was only published in 1918, which has become the final edition.

Breaking the piece down, *Allegro Barboro* displayed a folk element, which was often found in Bartok's music. In the first 22 notes, you will find that the opening melody is largely pentatonic. As with most of Bartok's music, the composition is mostly constant, while the major, minor or modal relations around it changes.

Today, the Allegro Barboro can be found in many college materials, and grown to be a frequent choice for students to orchestrate. Amongst artist, the piece is also found many albums, notably recordings by Jenő Jandó, Andreas Bach and György Sándor.

Augusta Read Thomas Etude #2 "Fire Waltz - Homage to Bela Bartok"

These 6 piano etude were composed in pairs by Augusta Read Thomas. Each etude creates drastically different sonic effects while using musical material identical to both. They are supposed to resemble seeing different sides of a courier looking at both a photo and its negative. These six small pieces were deliberately heard, assembled, and refined, and subsequently took long time to make.

Fire waltz is a variation on etude No. I, in which the notes that were loud were thread together. They were in lower range and transformed into a boogie woogie bass line. The notes that are more delicate in piece No. I create 'Bartók-like' joyful harmonies.

When describing Fire waltz the composer has said that "despite the fact that I think it is not difficult to hear the numerous references to fragrances of jazz in my music, here is a work where the aromas are more explicit".

"All the influences in my music are highly digested and personalized", claims the composer. Augusta hopes that in the first two etudes we can detect Debussy, Ravel, Webern, and Berio, in addition to jazz, however ideally the music is "all Thomas," and not copied from Debussy for example.

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor valse suite for piano "three-fours" No.3 and 4

Samuel Coleridge-Taylor was a mixed-race English composer and conductor who was born in central London in 1875.

The piece first published in 1909. It has six movements in total which are: *Allegro molto*, *Andante*, *Allegro moderato*, *Vivace*, *Andante molto*, *Allegro assai*.

The six numbers of the Three-Fours Suite experiment with different uses of triple meter.

The Mephisto Waltzes by Franz Liszt.

The Mephisto Waltz No. 1 is Liszt's portrayal of a poem from Austrian poet Lenau of the Faust legend - the poem tells the story of Elves playing in the forest.

It was originally written for an orchestra, before Liszt adapted this piece for the piano, which was later known to be the Mephisto Waltz no.1. Subtitled *Der Tanz in der Dorfschenke* (The Dance in the Village Inn)

The waltz has three versions, orchestra, piano duet and piano solo, The piano duet version is a straightforward transcription of the orchestral version, while the solo piano version is an independent composition. Liszt dedicated the piece to Carl Tausig, his favorite pupil.

The introduction stretches for awhile before the theme appears. The composer made the first bar rest and accent the second bar and required the dynamics should be medium strong. The main purpose is to highlight and show the second bar of the "sudden entry" to create an atmosphere.

The piece cannot be played too fast as the beat is triple. For the performer, it is a challenge to the devilish technique. Only when you have a deep understanding of the performance of the music are you able to better interpret the whole song.