

JOURNEYS

Tony Tobin plays Claude Debussy



Tony Tobin grew up in Ithaca NY, USA, where he studied piano with Malcolm Bilson. He graduated from the Eastman School of Music and the University of Southern California, where he was Daniel Pollack's teaching assistant. As part of his great interest in Claude Debussy, he completed a DMA thesis about the form and style of Debussy Preludes at the University of Texas at Austin. Tobin rediscovered his passion for photography in 2005 and started work on a documentary film about Debussy, lecture-demonstrations, and recitals of Debussy's works with video. This CD is in honor of the 150 year anniversary of Debussy's birth, August 22, 1862. Tobin has performed as solo and chamber musician across Brazil, Canada, England, Germany, The Netherlands, Switzerland, and the USA. www.anthonytobin.net / www.debussypiano.com

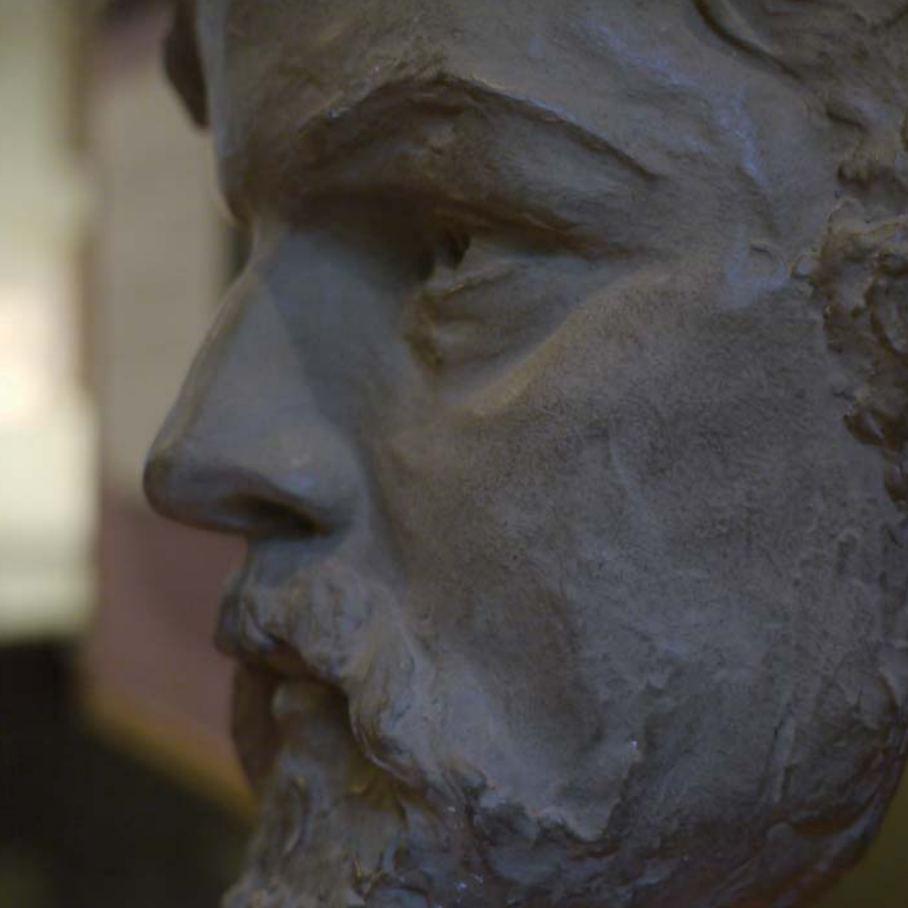


Claude Debussy (1862-1918) is one of the most important composers of the 20th Century. He developed a new means of progression in a natural evolution from tonality and the chromaticism of Richard Wagner. Although Debussy retained references to tonal forms, to triads and harmonic progressions, he used the chromatic collection to derive whole tone, octatonic, modal, and intervals. These forms were overlapped and extracted to create new collections and forms that replaced traditional tonal progressions and melodies.



Clair de Lune
Le vent dans la plaine
Des pas sur la neige
Ondine
Brouillards
Canope
«Général Lavine» – eccentric
La fille aux cheveux de lin
Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses
«Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir»
Les Soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon
Feux d'artifice
La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune
Hommage à S. Pickwick Esg. P.P.M.P.C
La Cathédrale engloutie
Pagodes

The works on this CD include the more traditional «Clair de lune» (1890 & 1905) and «La fille aux cheveux de lin», as well as some of the more abstract preludes, «La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune», «Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses», and «Feux d'artifice», one of his most virtuosic works. The Preludes from Book I were written in 1909-10, while Book II preludes were completed in 1912-13. They are inspired in part by the figuration of the preludes of Chopin and the stark contrasts and varied programmatic content of the 19th Century character pieces of Schumann and Mendelssohn. Debussy put the «title» of each prelude at the end in keeping with the symbolist notion that suggestion is more powerful than statement.



The Preludes highlight several areas that were of lifelong interest to Debussy, nature as in «Brouillards» and «Le vent dans la plaine», the music hall and entertainment industry as in «Pickwick» and «Général Lavine», ancient inspirations as in «Canope» and «La terrasse», the poetry of Baudelaire in «Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir» and «Les Soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon», and psychological conditions and symbolism in «Des pas sur la neige» and «Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir». Baudelaire spoke of synaesthesia, of hearing colors and seeing sounds and Debussy was very interested in the blending and merging of different artistic media. Psychology and existential isolation are implicit in the bleak alienation of «Des pas sur la neige» and reflect the emergence of psychoanalysis and an interest in emotional states.

«Pagodes from Estampes» (1903) is a colorful amalgam of Debussy's interest in Japan and asian art, the Javanese Gamelan and the Annanite Theatre which he experienced at the 1889 and 1900 World Expositions in Paris. It also represents the layers of sound and texture found in nature, as several delicate lines are interwoven throughout the work to imitate the simultaneous sounds of nature.

The last known work for piano, discovered at an auction in 2001, «Les Soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon» (1917), is a charming reference to the earlier «Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir», it even includes the first thematic statement transposed from A to Ab. Debussy plants fleeting references to other preludes in this «thank you» piece to the coal merchant for providing coal during the difficult times of WWI. The piece feels nostalgic, recalls the music hall and Montmartre Theaters he visited as a young man, and symbolizes his impending death to cancer by the extinguishing of the light by the coals at the end of this short work.

Notes by Tony Tobin

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