



Debussy's Resonance. Edited by François de Médicis and Steven Huebner. Eastman Studies in Music. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2018. 640 pp. ISBN 9781580465250.

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Like the seemingly endless stream of new audio recordings, the body of Claude Debussy scholarship continues unabated, with no sign of slowing down. This latest important collection of essays stems from a bilingual conference held at the Université de Montréal in 2012 to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Debussy's birth. By a stroke of fortune, there is a nice symmetry to this book, as its publication corresponds with the 100th anniversary of the composer's death. *Debussy's Resonance* celebrates the multifarious influence of Debussy upon twentieth-century music as well as the extensive range of analytical methodologies that have developed—especially within the past thirty years. To this point, the editors note that James Briscoe's seminal *Claude Debussy: A Guide to Research* (1990) lists approximately 900 secondary sources. Remarkably, in the introduction de Médicis and Huebner identify that a recent RILM search shows this number had risen by an astounding 150% since 1990, to nearly 2,300. Such a surge of research naturally leads one to ask if there was anything more to be unearthed or said about this seminal modern composer. Yet given the breadth of inquiry in *Debussy's Resonance*, I am left with the sense that we have only scratched the surface of this endlessly fascinating composer and the impact that his body of work has had during the past hundred years.

Following the editors' introduction, the book contains twenty chapters placed within five parts. Part One, "Historiographical and Editorial Issues," contains four chapters. Richard Langham Smith's opening essay "Debussy Fifty Years Later: Has the Barrel Run Dry?" offers a high-level view of how our perspective of the composer has changed since his centenary celebration in



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1962. In his thoughtful text Langham Smith considers how the changes in musicological approaches, the greater availability of early twentieth-century performances, and even the changes in the staging of Debussy's opera during the intervening fifty years have deepened our understanding of the composer and the cultural context in which he created his enduring music. In the second chapter, Roy Howat discusses the thirty-year journey of the *Oeuvres complètes de Claude Debussy*. Intriguingly, Howat provides several illustrations of how Debussy's Welte-Mignon recordings have played a vital role in the editorial work of some of the volumes (on p. 42 Howat suggests that this critical edition may be the first to use a composer's recording in such a manner). In "The Kunkelmann Manuscripts," Denis Herlin discusses the nine autographs of early Debussy songs from a collection dedicated to the composer's friend Henry Kunkelmann. The collection is valuable on two counts. First, there are four songs previously unknown to Debussy scholars. Second, the remaining songs are revisions or modifications to several of the early Marie Vasnier songs, giving us an important window into Debussy's compositional methods from this point in his career. In his "'Paysage sentimental': Si doux, si triste, si dormant ...," David Grayson uncovers the convoluted history of the three versions of one of Debussy's early songs. Concomitantly, Grayson outlines how the three versions provide a window into the composer's stylistic evolution over two decades.

Part Two encompasses the book's largest number of chapters—five. David Code, in "The 'Song Triptych'," studies how the song triptych dominated Debussy's approach to song writing beginning around 1890. Rather than study these post-1890 songs in isolation, what has been traditionally the norm thus far, Code uses interdisciplinary tools to suggest influences and a rationale for the grouping of these songs. In his fascinating "Composing after Wagner," François de Médicis places into context Debussy's operas *Rodrigue et Chimène* and, in particular, *Pelléas et Mélisande* with Alfred Bruneau, considered the leading figure of a fringe group of late nineteenth-century French composers who looked to forge an alternative compositional path to that of Wagner. The influence of another important nineteenth-century French composer, Jules Massenet, on Debussy's stylistic development is explored in Steven Huebner's absorbing "Between Massenet and Wagner." Robert Orledge outlines the latent orchestral sounds in Debussy's piano music in "Debussy's Concept of Orchestration." More intriguingly, Orledge suggests that his orchestral music was conceived in instrumental terms to a much greater degree than the manuscripts indicate. Although Orledge details the role two important Debussy collaborators, André Caplet and Charles Koechlin, played in completing many of his orchestral scores, I hope that a future study investigates the reciprocal relationship—that is, how Debussy's music influenced the orchestral writing of these two vital, early twentieth-century composers. Rounding out Part Two is Marie Rolf's exploration of non-French influences on Debussy's formative years in "Oriental and Iberian Resonances in Early Debussy Songs," by focusing upon two early, unpublished songs "Rondel chinois" and "Séguidille" (in fact, the two songs only became publicly available in 2013 and 2014, respectively).

Michel Duchesneau's "Debussy and Japanese Prints" opens Part Three, entitled "History and Hermeneutics." Here, Duchesneau explores aspects of this art he believes were attractive and influential to Debussy. Katherine Bergeron in "Secrets and Lies, or the Truth About *Pelléas*" expands upon prior writings by Jane Fulcher and Jann Pasler about "truth" in Debussy's opera, and investigates how truth is found in what she perceives as a concealed space between the relationships of unusual orchestral associations and the failure of dialogue on the stage. Two chapters round out Part Three: Julian Johnson, in "Vertige!: Debussy, Mallarmé, and the Edge of Language," examines how disorientation is achieved between the relationship of word and music in Debussy's late Mallarmé settings; while August Sheehy's "'Les sons ... tournent': Debussy, the Waltz, and Embodied Hermeneutics" uncovers another type of disorientation within the listener's body with his analysis of the piano prelude "Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir."

Part Four is more theoretical in focus. In "Follow the Leader," Matthew Brown explores the means by which Debussy employs contrapuntal textures in four works, using the nursery rhyme "Nous n'irons plus au bois." Brown's study identifies the role of counterpoint in Debussy's music, as well as contextualizes Debussy's statements about the contrapuntal basis of harmony. Mark DeVoto, in "Debussy's Absolute Pitch: Motivic Harmony and Choice of Keys," traces the role certain harmonic sonorities play in various Debussy works. This interesting study also explores the harmonic association DeVoto has called "bifocal relationship" in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, one associating E Major and C-sharp minor, noting the dramatic implications that occur with these particular harmonic moments. Boyd Pomeroy puts forward a different type of harmonic practice in "Debussy's G#/A \flat Complex." In this absorbing study, Pomeroy traces the role of this pitch class in conjunction with a number of bass pedal points in works that span the composer's career. Given Debussy's pervasive use of the complex one hopes that a future study will expand Pomeroy's absorbing work to explore any extra-musical association Debussy may have had with this harmonic element. In "The Games of *Jeux*," Mark McFarland adds to the growing body of scholarly work on Stravinsky's influence on Debussy's post-1910 works. Here, McFarland compellingly demonstrates that Richard Taruskin's principle of "accumulation"—the process of beginning something quietly and building this element to a concluding frenzy—is the governing component of Stravinsky's seminal ballet *Le Sacre du printemps* and, similarly, the primary organizing element of *Jeux*.

Part Five, "Performance and Reception," contains three chapters. Jocelyn Ho's essay "Debussy and Late-Romantic Performing Practices" studies the composer's famous 1912 Welte-Mignon piano rolls to address a fascinating question: how does Debussy the performer, a pianist steeped in late-Romantic style of performance practice, align with our perception of Debussy's music and today's performance aesthetic, with its focus upon fidelity of the score? Carolyn Rae, in "Marius-François Gaillard's Debussy," briefly outlines the importance of this early twentieth-

century pianist, and the unfortunate circumstances that led to Gaillard's decline in popularity, particularly during the Second World War—an unfortunate situation, for Gaillard represents an essential element in the first generation of Debussy interpreters. "Fashioning Early Debussy in Interwar France," is authored by Barbara L. Kelly and examines the challenging narratives towards the value of the pre-1890 works that began to appear in the 1920s.

The book concludes with a list of contributors and an index. The text of *Debussy's Resonance* is clear, extremely readable, and free of fussy problems—not surprising, given the strength of the contributors and talent of the two editors. Overall, the production and editorial work is excellent. One feature of praise is the impressive quality of the musical examples. The text is appropriate enough for the music enthusiast; at the same time, the degree of analytical discourse will appeal to the specialist/scholar. In other words, the level of the prose will appeal to a broad range of individuals interested in a variety of topics associated with this seminal early twentieth-century composer. As a final comment, the hard cover format contains very good quality paper and a solid binding.

To sum, this is an impressive collection of essays, and I courteously predict that *Debussy's Resonance* will be read and referenced for years to come as a vital contribution of Debussy scholarship.