Fleeting

St. Mary's Project Recital

Rie Naito Moore

Saturday, April 27, 2019
4:00 pm
Auerbach Auditorium, St. Mary's Hall
St. Mary's College of Maryland

About the Program

Nothing Gold Can Stay

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

--- Robert Frost (1874 - 1963)

As Robert Frost captures in his *Nothing Gold Can Stay*, what is precious to us eludes us. And yet, we are drawn to what is fleeting; we try to grasp and hold on to it despite our awareness of its impermanence. This program is an attempt to capture what attracts us to fleetingness through exploring different aspects of fleeting qualities (fleeting sounds, fleeting landscapes, fleeting visions, and fleeting moments) through the eyes of various composers from different periods.

Fleeting

Fleeting Sounds

Images, 2e série — Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

I. Cloches à travers les feuilles (Bells through the leaves)

Préludes, 1er livre

IV. Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir
(The sounds and fragrances swirl through the evening air)

Six Ings — Henry Cowell (1897-1965)

I. Floating

III. Fleeting

Fleeting Landscapes

Fantasiestücke, op. 12 — Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

I. Des Abends (Evening)

V mlhách (In the mists) — Leoš Janáček (1854-1928)

I. Andante

Préludes, 2e livre — Claude Debussy

I. Brouillards (Fog)

II. Feuilles mortes (Dead leaves)

---Intermission---

Fleeting Visions

Visions Fugitives, op. 22 — Sergei Prokofiev (1891-1953)

I. Lentamente
VII. Pittoresco
VIII. Comodo
X. Ridicolosamente
XVI. Dolente
XVII. Poetico
XVIII. Con una dolce lentezza

Makrokosmos Volume I: — George Crumb (b. 1929)

Twelve Fantasy-Pieces after the Zodiac for Amplified Piano

XI. Dream Images (Love-Death Music) (Gemini)

Fleeting Moments

Volkslied (Folksong) — Clara Schumann (1819-1896)

Myrthen, Op. 25 — Robert Schumann

VII. Die Lotosblume (The Lotus Flower)

Fantasie in C Major, op. 17

III. Langsam getragen (ursprüngliche Fassung)

Fleeting Sounds

Claude Debussy, I. Cloches à travers les feuilles, *Images, 2e série* (1907)

At the end of the nineteenth century, Romanticism was still prominent in Europe. Richard Wagner (1813-1883) undoubtedly played a significant role in the late Romantic period, and his legacy (e.g. complex textures, rhetorical intensity, rich harmonies) was carried over and extended by Austro-German composers such as Richard Strauss (1864-1949) and Gustav Mahler (1860-1911).[1] Meanwhile, Claude Debussy, a French composer born in 1862 as a son of a china shop owner, took music in a different direction by focusing on "what he regarded as the traditionally French values of decoration, beauty, and pleasure".[2] Unlike Romantic works, his music is characterized by "rhetorical understatement and emotional reserve".[3] His tone poem *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun), composed in 1894, was a defining piece that served as a dawn of modern music.[4]

Debussy is also frequently referred to as an Impressionist composer by analogy to the Impressionist painters.[5] It was 1887 when the members of the Institut de France first called Debussy's music "Impressionist" for his symphonic suite *Printemps* (Spring) (1887), and this label was established especially after the orchestral composition *La mer, trois esquisses symphoniques pour orchestra* (The sea, three symphonic sketches for orchestra) (1905), due to the following description of the work in one of the program notes:[6]

> It is, in a word, musical impressionism, following an exotic and refined art, the formula for which is the exclusive property of its composer.[7]

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1 Barbara Russano Hanning, *Concise History of Western Music* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2014), 518.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Harvey Lee Snyder, *Afternoon of a Faun: How Debussy Created a New Music for the Modern World* (Milwaukee: Amadeus Press, 2015), 145.
5 Hanning, *Concise History of Western Music*, 518.
6 François Lesure, "Debussy, (Achille-)Claude," on *Grove Music Online* (accessed June 3 2018), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.
7 Ibid.

"An exotic and refined art" in the statement comes from the cover of the 1905 first edition of the work, which was obviously inspired by the woodblock print by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) known as the *Great Wave*.[8] Given the popularity of Japanese art throughout Europe at that time, as evident in the *japonisme*, and the fact that notable Impressionist painters such as Monet owned copies of Hokusai's prints, it was easy (and probably convenient from a marketing standpoint) to connect Debussy and Impressionism.[9]

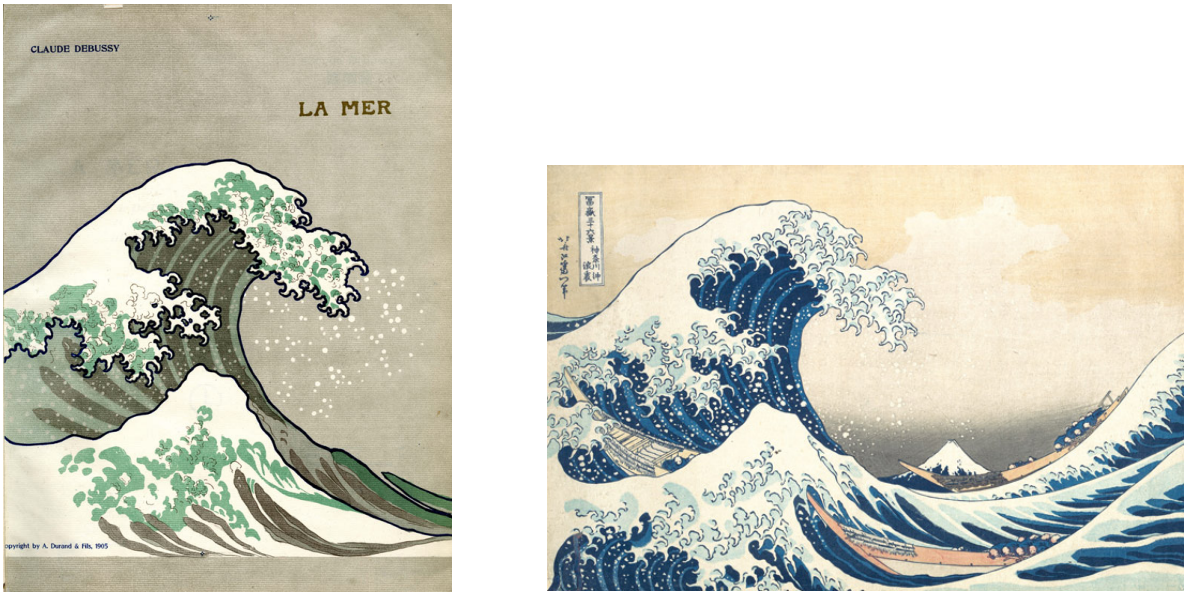

Figure 1. (Left) Cover of the 1905 first edition of Debussy's *La Mer* published by A. Durand & Fils.; (Right) Katsushika Hokusai (Japanese, 1760–1849), *Kanagawa oki nami ura* (Under the Wave off Kanagawa, also known as "the Great Wave"), from *Fugaku sanjūrokkei* (Thirty-six Views of Mount Fuji).

However, here is a question that is occasionally presented in an effort to understand what lies at the heart of Debussy's art: was he a Symbolist or Impressionist? It is absolutely not my intention to settle the argument to frame the composer into a certain category, but it is worth pondering over the question as it partly explains why Debussy was chosen to open this program.

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[8] Michael Cirigliano II, "Hokusai and Debussy's Evocations of the Sea," on *The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (accessed June 20 2018), <https://www.metmuseum.org>.
[9] Ibid.

In order to appreciate the meaning of this question, we must first digest both terms: Impressionism and Symbolism. The term Impressionism was given by an article in the satirical magazine *Le Charivari* after the famous exhibition in 1874 by the members of the Société Anonyme des Artistes Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs, including Manet, Monet, Cézanne, Renoir, and Pissaro.[10] The term was given based on Monet's *Impression: Soleil levant* (Impression: Sunrise) shown below due to its style lacking in clear definition.[11]

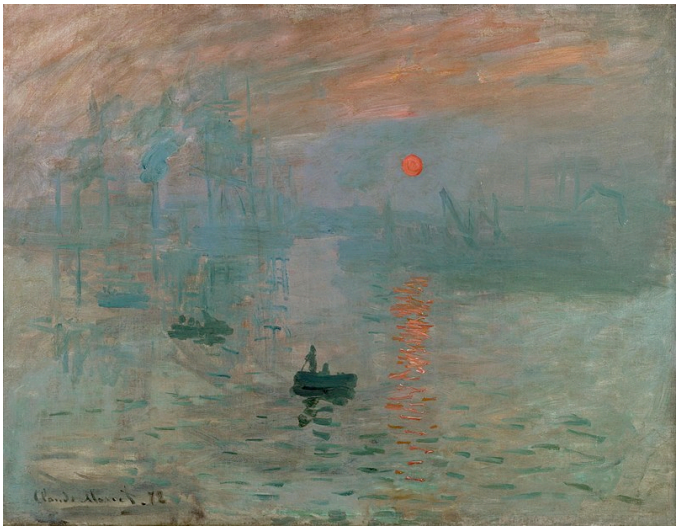

Figure 2. Monet, *Impression: Soleil levant*

What the Impressionist artists sought after was creating "atmosphere and sensuous impressions from nature" through suggestions, leaving them to the viewers to "fill in the missing details".[12] Although Impressionist art attracts many excited visitors to museums around the world today, in the late nineteenth century, being an Impressionist artist was to be "accused of sins ranging from immorality to anarchism, from ignorance to lunacy" due to their opposition to the establishment and non-conformity.[13] Debussy surely shared this rebellious spirit as shown in his own words directed at his composition teacher who described Debussy's music as "theoretically absurd":[14]

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10 Paul Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy* (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1996), 114 and 317.
11 Ibid.
12 Hanning, *Concise History of Western Music*, 509.
13 Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, 115.
14 Ibid., 121.

> There is no theory. You merely have to listen. Pleasure is the law.[15]

We also associate his music with Impressionist paintings because of the evocative titles such as *Images* and *Estampes* (Engravings or Prints) given by the composer. Harold C. Schonberg, a longtime music critic for *New York Times*, referred to the new theories of light and color as the common denominator between the Impressionist artists and Debussy.[16]

Meanwhile there are others who believe labeling Debussy as an Impressionist composer is misleading.[17] François Lesure, a musicologist known for his work on Debussy, emphasizes the importance of Symbolism in the French composer's life:

> Never having been to school, and aware of the gaps in his intellectual training, Debussy was an autodidact (except in music) who was conscious early in life of the values that could enrich his personality. His late but most enduring education came between the ages of twenty-five and thirty from his contacts with the symbolists.[18]

The Symbolist movement in France, which began around 1885 from the literary world, was characterized by "rejection of naturalism, of realism and of overly clearcut forms, hatred of emphasis, indifference to the public, and a taste for the indefinite, the mysterious, even the esoteric".[19] The movement was "concerned with what lay behind external appearances, with the intangible and 'inexpressible'".[20] Debussy's style of "evoking a mood through suggestion, connotation, and indirection" confirms the shared qualities between the Symbolists and the composer.[21] As a matter of fact, the French composer himself described the ideal of all art as "the Inexpressible".[22] Paul

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15 Ibid.
16 Harold C. Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers*, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997), 453.
17 Lesure, "Debussy, (Achille-)Claude," on *Grove Music Online*.; Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, 19.; Hanning, *Concise History of Western Music*, 518.; E. Robert Schmitz, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy* (Mineola: Dover Publications, 1966), 13.
18 Lesure, "Debussy, (Achille-)Claude," on *Grove Music Online*.
19 Ibid.
20 Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, 18.
21 Hanning, *Concise History of Western Music*, 518.
22 Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, 79.

Roberts, the author of *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, also quotes the painter Maurice Denis (1870-1943) speaking of Debussy in order to emphasize this shared aesthetics between Symbolists and the composer:

> His music kindled strange resonances within us, awakened a need at the deepest level for a lyricism that only he could satisfy. What the Symbolist generation was searching for with such passion and anxiety - light, sonority, and color, the expression of the soul, and the *frisson* of mystery - was realized by him unerringly; almost, it seemed to us then, without effort … We perceived that here was something new.[23]

How did Debussy feel about being defined by such terms? Obviously the composer rejected any labels, dismissing both Impressionism and Symbolism as "useful terms of abuse".[24] In a letter to his publisher, Debussy revealed his concern, speaking of his orchestral *Images*:[25]

> I'm trying to do "something else" - in a way realities - what imbeciles call "impressionism", a term as misused as it could possibly be.[26]

What we know for sure is that the composer was searching for something distinctly different from the past by challenging traditional aesthetics, melting the boundaries of different art forms, and finding beauty in ambiguity and the inexpressible, which reflected "the swinging together of literature, poetry, painting, decorative arts, and music, the trends of different nations converging toward similar goals".[27] Louis Laloy, the first biographer of Debussy, also illuminates this point:

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[23] François Lesure and Guy Cogeval, *Debussy e il simbolismo* (Rome: Palombi, 1984), 105; quoted in Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, 19.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Lesure, "Debussy, (Achille-)Claude," on *Grove Music Online*.
[26] Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, 113.
[27] Klaus Berger, "Mallarmé and Visual Arts," in *Les Mardis: Stéphane Mallarmé and the Artists of His Circle* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Museum of Art, 1966), 51; quoted in Snyder, *Afternoon of a Faun: How Debussy Created a New Music for the Modern World*, 137.

> He received his most profitable lessons from poets and painters, not from musicians.[28]

What is fleetingness? It is what is fragile, ambiguous, vague, implied, elusive, unstable, inexpressible, and intangible, which in a way forces us to stay in an uncomfortable place. And yet, there is something very human about finding beauty in such a place. What this program attempts to present is, no doubt, related to what Debussy sought after, which explains why the French composer was chosen to open this program.

The fleeting qualities described above are also evident in *Cloches à travers les feuilles*. Debussy signed a contract with the publisher Durand in 1903 to publish twelve *Images*, six for solo piano and six for two pianos, which eventually resulted in six images for solo piano, published as *Images, 1re série*, and *Images, 2e série*, in addition to *Images pour orchestre*.[29] As the title of the work *Images* suggests, Debussy offers music that allows listeners to experience images through sounds. *Cloches à travers les feuilles*, which is translated as "Bells through the leaves", is a fascinating title as it blurs the boundary between the sound world and the visual world; we often associate flickering light with something seen through leaves, but Debussy wants us to picture bells sounding through leaves. Debussy's intention to create this ambiguity manifests in his instruction "comme une buée irisée" (like an iridescent mist) at measure 13.

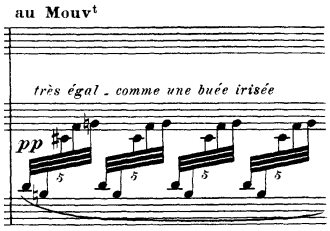

Figure 3. Debussy's marking, m. 13.

The following description of the piece by the French pianist Alfred Cortot (1877-1962) beautifully captures the mood:

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[28] Lesure, "Debussy, (Achille-)Claude," on *Grove Music Online*,.
[29] Roy Howat, "Foreword," in *Claude Debussy: Images, 2e série*, (Paris: Éditions Durand, 2005).

> [*Cloches à travers les feuilles*] paints a tone picture of hardly stirring boughs lulled in a sweet silence, a tranquil green shade touched but not disturbed by far-off vibrations sustained, quivering, by the pedals.[30]

There are two possible events that inspired the composer to write this piece. As the source of the title, the publisher Durand cites Louis Laloy's description of the tradition of tolling the bells on All Saints' Day, "sounding across the darkening forests in the evening silence" in the Jura region of France.[31] Meanwhile Roberts suggests Debussy's experience of hearing the Javanese gamelan at the Paris Universal Exposition in 1889 as another possible source of inspiration for the piece because of the similar function of the gamelan's slendro scale and the whole-tone scale as both scales destroy "the hierarchy that is fundamental to a western scale and that governs the harmonic structure of all western tonal music."[32]

Since Debussy did not explicitly mention the gamelan as the source of inspiration, it is impossible to tell if the use of the whole-tone scale is in fact connected to the gamelan, but the whole-tone scale certainly plays an important role in producing the fleeting sound in this piece. As pointed out by Roberts, unlike the scales used in the traditional tonal music, the whole-tone scale dismisses the usual hierarchy because it never ends due to the absence of semitones. As such, what we hear in the first eight measures, constructed entirely on the whole-tone scale (four layers of a whole-tone scale), is the hazy atmosphere.

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[30] Alfred Cortot, *French Piano Music*, trans. Hilda Andrews (New York: Da Capo, 1977), 16; quoted in Catherine Kautsky, *Debussy's Paris: Piano Portraits of the Belle Époque* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), 77 and 79.
[31] Howat, "Foreword," in *Claude Debussy: Images, 2e série*.
[32] Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, 167.

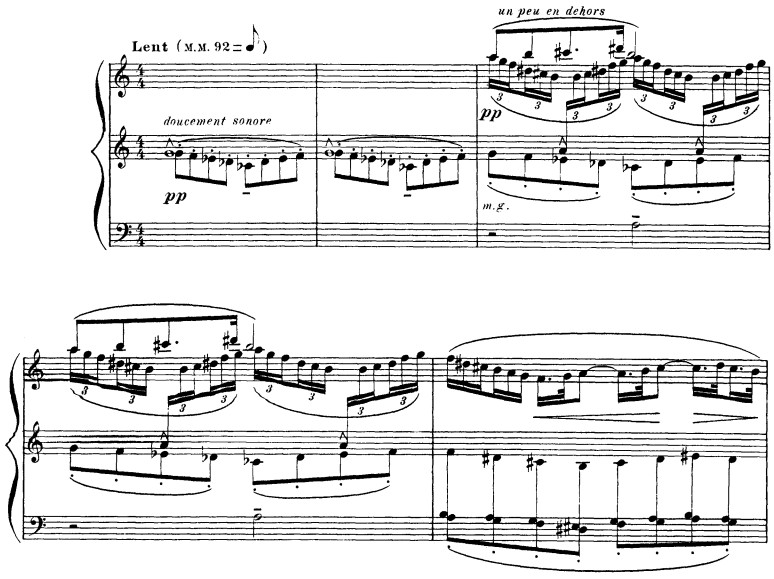

Figure 4. Opening measures consisting of four layers of the whole-tone scale, mm. 1-5.

The mood definitely changes at measure 24 with the marking "Un peu animé et plus clair" (rather lively and brighter) and the harmonic structure shifting to the Lydian mode on E. These changes result in implying the proximity of the bells and adding more light through the brighter color of the Lydian mode.

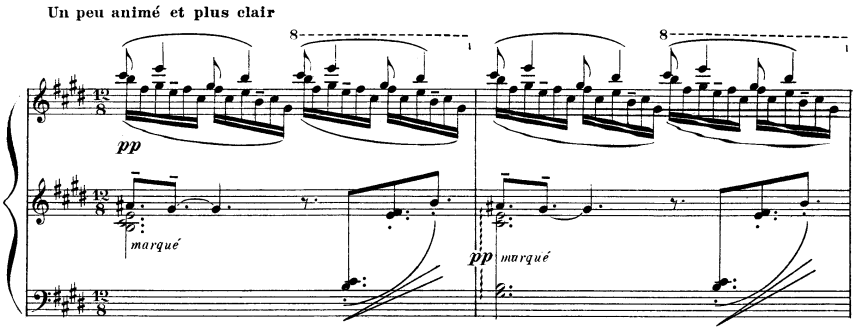

Figure 5. New section in Lydian mode on E, m. 24-25.

At measure 31, the bells are unquestionably present with the dynamic marking *forte* and the pentatonic scale on B-flat, which gives a sense of stronger stability. However, this stability turns out to be a fleeting moment as it quickly goes back to the Lydian mode on E and gradually returns to the beginning ambiguity built on the whole-tone scale,

now embellished at measure 40.

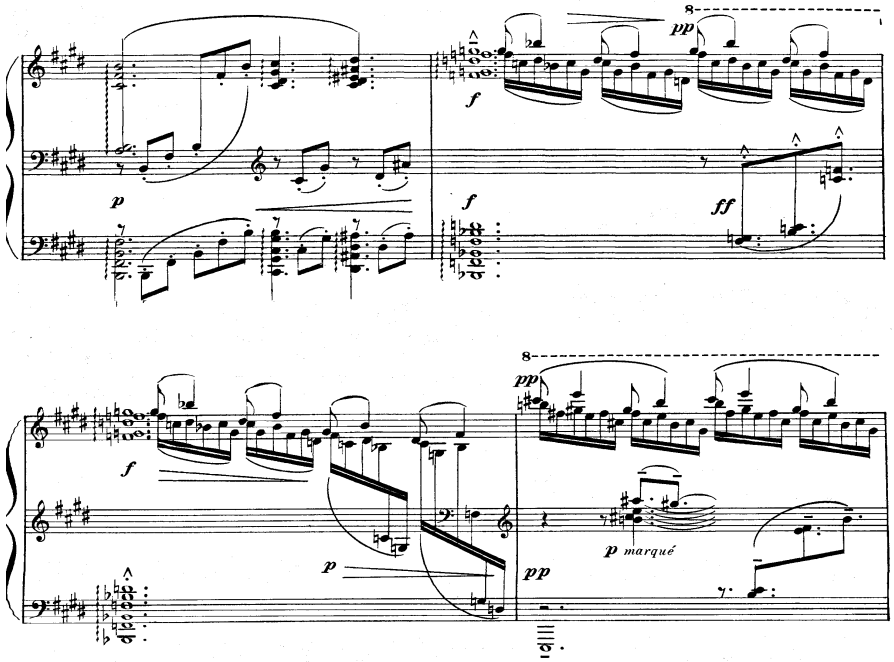

Figure 6. Return of Lydian mode on E after two measures built on pentatonic scale on B-flat, mm. 30-33.

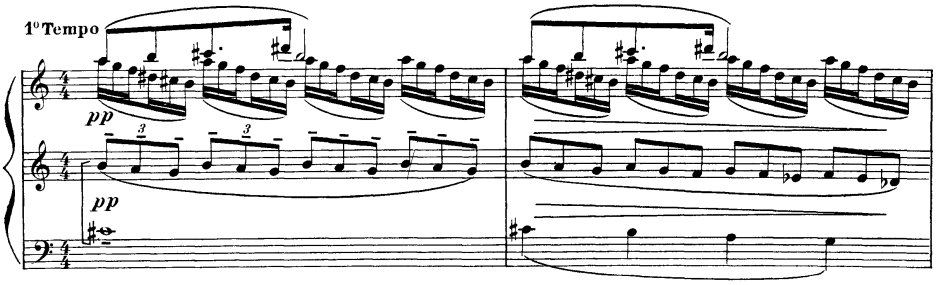

Figure 7. Return of opening whole-tone layers, mm. 40-41.

The last three measures also communicate fleetingness; G minor suggested in measures 47 and 48 quickly evaporates because of the added C-sharp in the last measure. Despite the obvious presence of the bells earlier, what remains with the listener at the end is the intensified fleetingness of the sound.

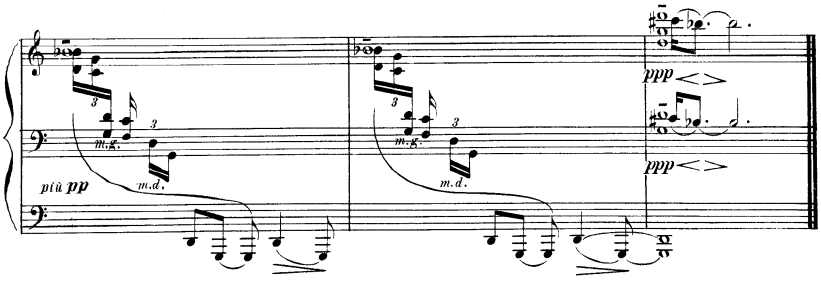

Figure 8. Ambiguity created by C-sharp after a brief moment of G minor, mm. 47-49.

Claude Debussy, IV. Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir, Préludes, 1et livre (1910)

Debussy published his twenty-four preludes in two books of twelve in 1910 and 1913. The French composer was unquestionably inspired by Frédéric Chopin's twenty-four preludes since the first book was published in the centenary year of the Polish composer's birth.[33] Debussy regarded Chopin's pianism highly, possibly resulting from his early lessons with Madame Mauté de Fleurville, who was associated with Chopin.[34]

Unlike Chopin, Debussy not only gave each prelude an evocative title but also placed the title not at the beginning but at the end of the prelude. To highlight the similarity between Symbolists and Debussy, Roberts quotes the Symbolist visual artist and Debussy's friend Odilon Redon (1840 - 1916) speaking of the titles to his works:[35]

> To designate my drawings by titles is sometimes to invite people to mis-understand them. The titles can be justified only if they are vague, indeterminate and suggestive, even at the risk of confusion, of ambiguity. My drawings are not intended to define anything: they inspire. They make no statements and set no limits. They lead, like music, into an ambiguous world

[33] Howat, "Foreword," in *Claude Debussy, Préludes, 1et et 2e livres,* (Paris: Éditions Durand, 2007).
[34] Schmitz, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, 38.; Edward Lockspeiser, "Claude Debussy: French Composer," on *Encyclopædia Britannica* (accessed June 18 2018), <https://www.britannica.com>.
[35] Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, 30.

where there is no cause and no effect.[36]

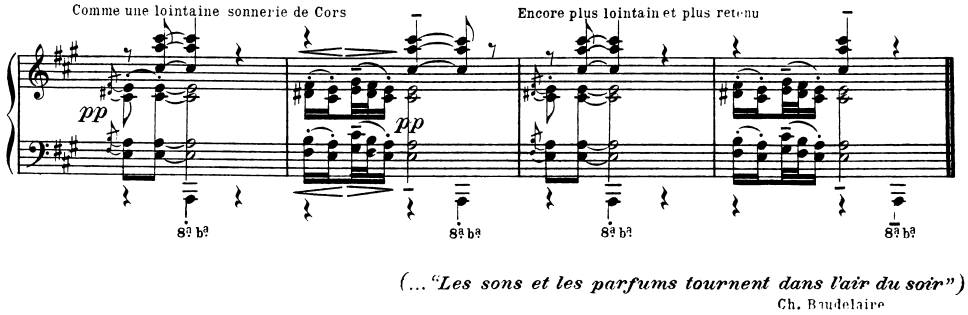

Figure 9. "Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir", title given at the end of the score, mm. 50-53.

After performing Debussy's prelude, the pianist can savor the resonance by uniting the title with the music she or he just performed, which is similar to the experience of reading a Symbolist poem or highly condensed poem such as *haiku*.

The title *Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir*, translated as "Sounds and scents turn on the evening air" or "The sounds and fragrances swirl through the evening air", is taken from the first stanza of the poem *Harmonie du soir* (Harmony of Evening) written by the symbolist poet Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867) who had a significant impact on Debussy:

> Voici venir les temps où vibrant sur sa tige
> Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir;
> Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir;
> Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige!

[36] Linda Nochlin, "Impressionism and Post-Impressionism: 1874-1904", in *Sources and Documents in the History of Art Series*, ed. H. W. Janson (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966), 194; quoted in Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, 30.

Now comes the time, when vibrating on its stem
Each flower sheds its scent like a censer;
Sounds and scents turn on the evening air;
Melancholy waltz and languorous vertigo![37]

The importance of Baudelaire to the composer is clear, given that his name is quoted together with the title at the end of the prelude in the score, as shown in Figure 9.

Roberts suggests that the title alludes to synesthesia, "the fusion of the senses into a single harmonious sensation" because it implies the blend of the auditory (sound), visual (evening), and olfactory (perfume) senses.[38] This blend of senses overlaps the melting boundaries of different art forms mentioned earlier. As a result, the listener can savor the "air" or "atmosphere" of the music created by different elements dissolving into one, which presents the essence of Debussy's aesthetics: "the Inexpressible, which is the ideal of all art".[39]

In this prelude, the French composer responds to Baudelaire's poem in various ways. The first example is the ambiguous time signatures used in the first two measures: 3/4 and 5/4. This ambiguity certainly expresses the elusive swirling "air".

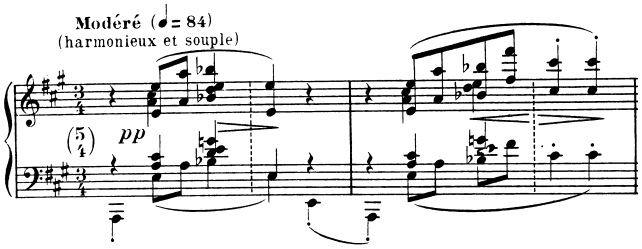

Figure 10. Ambiguous time signatures, mm. 1-2

It is likely that Debussy assigned the time signature 3/4 in response to "melancholy waltz" in the poem, but because of the time signature 5/4 indicated at the beginning,

[37] Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, 73-74.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., 79.

the waltz sounds reluctant to move forward, giving us a hint of languor, which could be understood as a response to "languorous vertigo" in the poem.

Secondly, although the key signature and the overall sound world indicate that the tonal center is A, Debussy offers different sonorities by introducing notes that do not belong to A major. For example, B-flat inserted in the first two measures (Figure 10) successfully emanates "melancholy" while D-sharp inserted in the last four measures (Figure 9), resulting in the Lydian mode, allows the piece to end with a tinge of exoticism, perhaps a reflection of his instruction "*Comme une lointaine sonnerie de Cors*" (like a distant ringing of horns).

Lastly, Debussy realizes musical "vertigo" through the up-down contour in the new section starting at measure 41. Together with the instruction "*Tranquille et flottant*" (tranquil and floating) and the fragments of the music from the beginning in 5/4 (measures 44 and 45), the audience can experience "melancholy waltz and languorous vertigo".

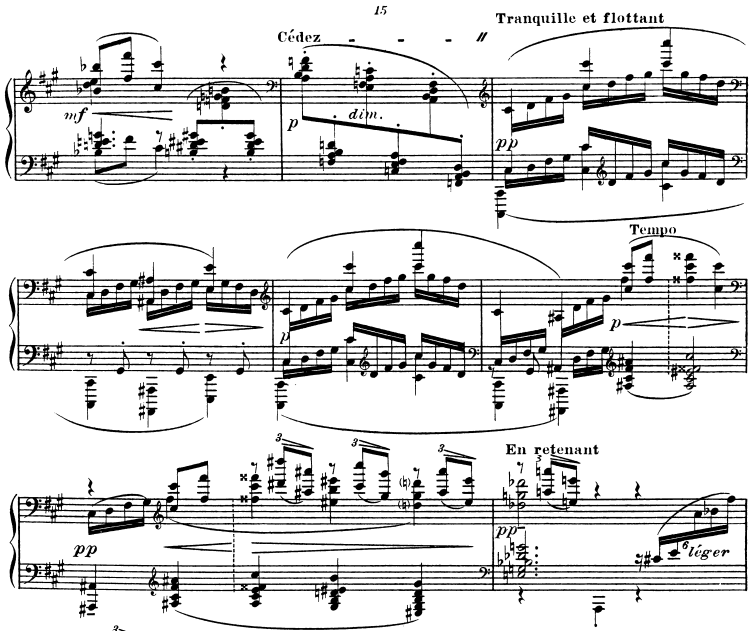

Figure 11. Up-down contour conveying "vertigo" and return of "melancholy waltz, mm. 39-46.

Henry Cowell, I. Floating, *Six Ings* (1922)

Born in California in 1897, Henry Cowell grew up with limited formal schooling and musical training, but this unusual background probably was a significant part of what shaped him as a musical pioneer, whom John Cage (1912-1992), another influential American composer, once described as "the open sesame for new music in America".[40] Cowell's contributions to the twentieth-century music are not limited to the development of the systemic structures for modernist techniques and the use of non-Western musical resources, but also involve the foundation of organizations and publication of scores as part of the efforts to promote works by unconventional composers.[41] Unfortunately, his unusual path also led him to prison where he taught music to more than two thousand inmates.[42] Indeed, as described by Richard Franko Goldman (1910-1980), one of the prominent American conductors and music critics, Cowell "helped two generations to see and think and hear, and he helped to create and build a foundation for 'modern' music in America. This is not a small achievement; it is a gigantic one."[43]

Floating is one of *Ings*, a set of characteristic pieces that suggest states of motion, which in a way resulted in "sound in motion".[44] Cowell composed the following fourteen pieces as the *Ings* set, and published the first six as *Six Ings*, and later added the seventh through ninth, publishing the set as *Nine Ings*:[45]

1. Floating (1922)
2. Frisking (1922)
3. Fleeting (1917)
4. Scooting (1917)
5. Wafting [no. 1] (1917)
6. Seething (1917)

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[40] David Nicholls and Joel Sachs, "Cowell, Henry (Dixon)," on *Grove Music Online* (accessed June 3 2018), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Michael Hicks, *Henry Cowell: Bohemian* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 168.
[45] Nicholls and Sachs, "Cowell, Henry (Dixon)," on *Grove Music Online*.

7. Whisking (1917)
8. Sneaking (1917)
9. Swaying (1924)
10. Sifting (1917), lost
11. Trickling (1917)
12. Wafting [no. 2] (1917)
13. Whirling (1930), lost
14. Rocking (1955)

In *Floating*, the first movement of *Six Ings* (and *Nine Ings*), Cowell communicates the elusive floating motion through several elements.

First and foremost, the absence of a clear tonal center conveys a lack of stability. Cowell also communicates the unstable nature of floating by assigning different time signatures for the right hand and left hand, 3/4 and 4/4 respectively, as shown in Figure 12.

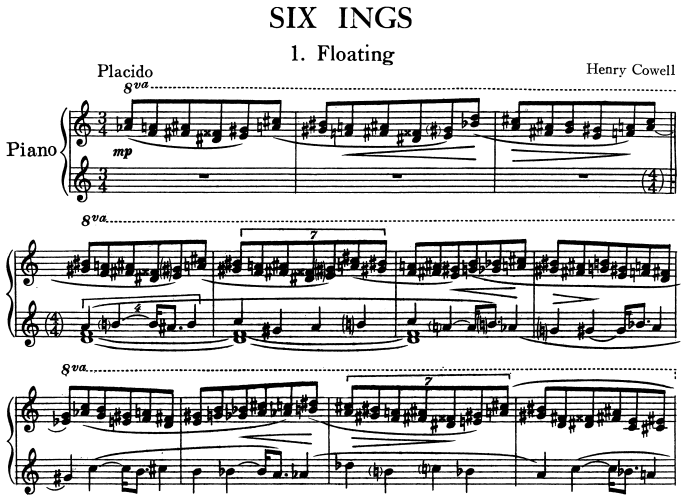

Figure 12. Two different time signatures and septuplets, mm. 1-11.

Another device adopted by the composer is subtle changes added to patterns, which can be found in various aspects. For instance, what the right hand plays consists only of an interval of a major third throughout the piece, but how those major thirds move from one to the next (the interval between two major thirds) constantly changes.

Measure	Interval between M3s						
1	m3	m2	m3	m2	P4	m2	
2	m3	m2	m3	m2	TT	m2	
3	m3	m2	m3	m2	M3	m2	
4	m3	m2	m3	m2	P4	m2	
5	m3	m2	m3	m2	P4	m2	m3
6	m2	M2	m3	m2	m3	m2	
7	M2	m2	m3	m2	m3	m2	
8	P4	m2	m3	m2	m3	M2	
9	m3	m2	m3	m2	m3	M2	
10	m2	m3	m2	m3	m2	P4	m2
11	TT	m2	m3	TT	m2	m3	
12	m2	M2	m2	m3	TT	m2	
13	m3	TT	m2	m3	TT	m2	
14	m3	m2	m3	m2	m2	P4	m3
15	m3	m2	TT	m2	TT	m2	
16	TT	m2	m3	m2	m3	m2	
17	TT	m2	m3	m2	m3	m2	
18	m3	m2	m3	m3	m2	m2	m2
19	m3	m2	m3	m2	P4	m2	
20	m3	m2	m3	m2	TT	m2	
21	m3	m2	m3	m2	M3	m2	
22	m3	m2	m3	m2	m3	m2	
23	-						

Figure 13. Analysis of intervals between M3s played by the right hand (color-coded by pattern).

***m3: minor third; m2: minor second; P4: perfect fourth; TT: tritone; M3: major third; M2: major second**

As shown in Figure 13, Cowell repeats the same patterns in some places but adds subtle changes enough to dislodge the listener and infuse a sense of instability. There are also subtle differences between the patterns. For instance, measure 22 could have adopted

the same pattern as in measure 4, which would result in repeating the same pattern of the first four measures, but Cowell changes the fifth interval in measure 22 from a perfect fourth to minor third, again faintly deceiving the listener's expectation. Another subtle change that contributes to uncertainty is the septuplet (Figure 12) and the frequency of its appearance; the septuplet disrupts the stable six-eighth-note pattern, and the frequency of its appearance changes from every five measures to every four measures. Again, these subtle changes are just enough to make the listener (and also the performer) uncomfortable.

The stability (in other words predictability) established by the left hand is the rhythm of the upper voice. There are practically only two rhythmic patterns played by the upper voice of the left hand: Rhythmic Patterns A and B as described below. Whenever the right hand has the septuplet, the left hand has the Rhythmic Pattern B.

Rhythmic Pattern A **Rhythmic Pattern B**

Figure 14. Two rhythmic patterns executed by the left hand upper voice.

Although the upper voice of the left hand contributes to a sense of stability, what the lower voice pedal tone does is the opposite; unlike the right hand playing only an interval of a major third, the pedal tone played by the left hand indecisively sways between a major third and minor third and ends with ambivalence.

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Interval	-	-	-	m3	m3	m3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Measure	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**	**18**	**19**	**20**	**21**	**22**	**23**	
Interval	M3	M3	M3	-	-	M3	m3	m3	m3	m3	?	

Figure 15. Intervals of the pedal tone executed by the left hand lower voice.

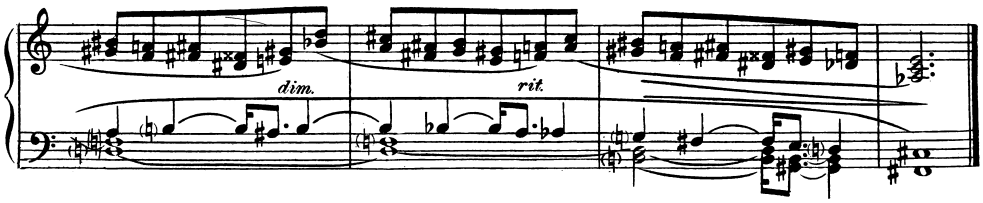

Figure 16. Ambivalent ending, mm. 20-23.

Cowell also slightly changes the rhythm of the lower voice of the left hand as marked in Figure 17, again just enough to dislodge the listener (and the performer) and convey elusiveness.

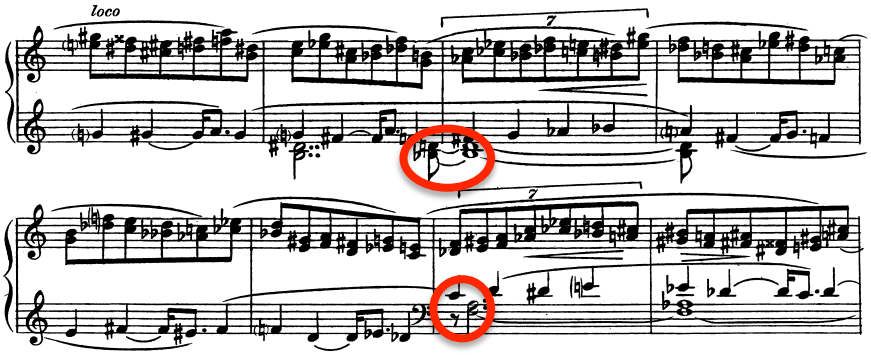

Figure 17. Dislodged left hand bass, mm. 12-19.

Through the delicate balance of stability and instability as illustrated in the examples above, Cowell ingeniously captures the nature of floating.

Henry Cowell, III. Fleeting, *Six Ings* (1917)

Fleeting is the third movement of the same set, *Six Ings* (and *Nine Ings*), composed by Cowell. The form is a clear A-B-A ternary form with the A section repeated in the same form as indicated by *Da capo* at the end of the B section. The A section consists of the sixteenth-note melody played by the right hand and the pedal tone and chords with the bass serving as a secondary melody played by the left hand. In the B section, the right hand and left hand switch their roles; the right hand now is in charge of the pedal tone

and chords while the left hand plays sixteenth-note figures. However, this time, the melody does not come from the sixteenth notes but the bass of the chords played by the right hand.

Cowell uses several devices to convey fleetingness. Firstly, the tonal center of this piece is definitely A, and the key signature also indicates A minor, but the composer cleverly inserts notes that do not belong to the key as marked in Figure 18.

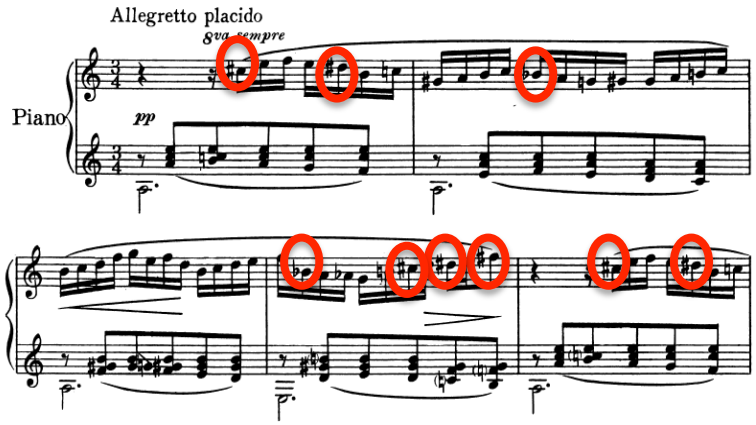

Figure 18. "Wrong notes", mm. 1-5.

Michael Hicks, the author of *Henry Cowell: Bohemian*, shares the exchange between Cowell and Rachmaninoff when Rachmaninoff looked at it intently with no comment for two hours, upon which he marked tiny red circles around 42 notes, saying 'You have 42 wrong notes.'" Sensing Cowell's dismay, the older composer added, "I too have sinned with wrong notes in my youth, and therefore you may be forgiven." Cowell asked what was wrong with those notes. Rachmaninoff replied that they were "not within the rules of harmony." Cowell then asked if the composers still needed to follow those rules, whereupon the older composer replied, "Oh yes, these are divine rules."[46]

[46] Sergei Bertensson and Jay Leda, *Sergei Rachmaninoff: A Lifetime in Music* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 219-20; quoted in Hicks, *Henry Cowell: Bohemian*, 96-97.

We do not know which notes were circled as wrong notes by Rachmaninoff, but it is highly likely that the notes marked in Figure 18 were among them. Interestingly, these "wrong notes" play the central role in creating elusiveness, the main facet of fleetingness.

Secondly, the composer adds subtle changes to a pattern to create a sense of elusiveness by deceiving the listener's expectation, a device similar to the one used in *Floating* as examined previously. Specifically, in the A section, the number of measures per phrase changes slightly from four measures (measures 1 through 4) to five measures (measures 5 through 9) to seven measures (measures 10 through 16) as it works its way toward the end of the section.

Thirdly, the tempo change in the B section, as indicated by *Più mosso*, also communicates restlessness, another aspect of fleetingness. However, it is important to note that the restlessness quickly returns to the calmness of the A section with the tempo marking *Allegretto Placido*, which displays another sign of fleetingness.

Lastly, the most significant element that conveys fleetingness is that the piece ends with a half cadence with no resolution, which certainly reminds us of something similar to a creature that manages to escape while the hunter attempts to grasp it.

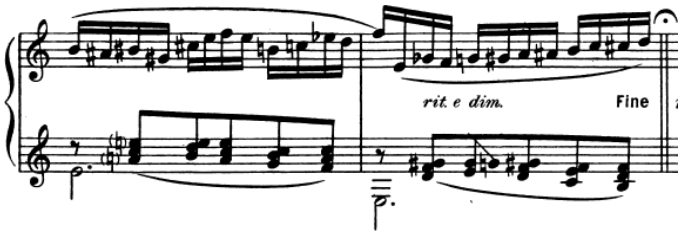

Figure 19. Unresolved ending, mm. 15-16.

Fleeting Landscapes

Robert Schumann, Des Abends, *Fantasiestücke*, op. 12 (1837)

If Romanticism in music can be defined as "a state of mind that enabled composers to seek individual paths for expressing intense feelings", Robert Schumann was, with no doubt, a quintessentially Romantic composer.[47] Born as the son of a writer and book dealer in Germany in 1810, Schumann studied law but later decided to pursue a path to become a concert pianist, studying with Friedrich Wieck, the father of his future wife, Clara.[48] Schumann was unfortunately forced to abandon this plan due to a major injury to his right hand, and instead turned to composing and writing as a music critic.[49] His last years were plagued by mental illness, which led to his attempted suicide and admission to an asylum where he spent the last two and a half years of his life.[50]

It is probably odd to find parallels between Schumann and Debussy, given that Romanticism is precisely what Debussy was moving away from. However, one cannot but discover the common spirit between the two composers when reading Schumann's response to a critic who denounced him for not writing orthodox sonatas:

> As if all mental pictures must be shaped to fit one or two forms! As if each idea did not come into existence with its form ready-made! As if each work of art had not its own meaning and consequently its own form![51]

To the establishment, the music produced by both Schumann and Debussy probably appeared insane. What separated the two composers, however, was the driving force behind their composing. While "pleasure" was the law for Debussy, for Schumann, music existed to "reflect an inner state of mind", which inevitably resulted in the personal nature of his works.[52] For example, it is nearly impossible to appreciate

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47 Hanning, *Concise History of Western Music*, 414.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., 415.
51 Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers*, 3rd ed., 169.
52 Ibid.

Schumann's works (especially piano works) without understanding the products of his imagination such as Davidsbündler, Eusebius, and Florestan. Davidsbündler (League of David) is an imaginary society Schumann invented to write reviews.[53] The members were given pen names such as Florestan, Eusebius, Chiara, and Master Raro who represented real people; Florestan was the "exuberant side" of Schumann's nature while Eusebius represented his "reflective side".[54] Chiara was Clara, and Master Raro was Friedrich Wieck, Clara's father.[55] The society was put together to fight the Philistines, "those unimaginative bourgeois or pedants or musical tricksters who immersed themselves in safe or meretricious music".[56] (It is fascinating that Debussy also had a pen name, Monsieur Croche, for writing reviews. M. Croche criticized "fashionable music [written] to soothe convalescents in well-to-do neighborhoods" and looked "doggedly for ways to save French music from inferior talents".)[57] Because of this personal nature, Schumann's music was (or probably is even today) criticized for being self-indulgent.[58] However, this is exactly what makes him the embodiment of Romanticism. His music even appears awkward sometimes because it is so raw. Nothing captures the essence of Schumann better than Schonberg's following statement:

> Purity is not a word normally used in association with Schumann, but everything about him was pure - his life, his love, his dedication, his integrity, his mind, his music.[59]

Des Abends, the first movement of *Fantasiestücke*, op. 12, a piano cycle consisting of eight movements, is also one of those works involving Eusebius and Florestan. Schumann borrowed the title *Fantasiestücke* (Fantasy Pieces) from *Phantasiestücke in Callots Manier*, a combination of stories and sketches on music and musicians, written by E.T.A. Hoffmann, a German author famous for fantasy stories such as *The Nutcracker and the*

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53 Ibid., 177.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
57 Lesure, "Debussy, (Achille-)Claude," on *Grove Music Online*.; Kautsky, *Debussy's Paris: Piano Portraits of the Belle Époque*, xx.
58 Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers*, 3rd ed., 179.
59 Ibid., 182.

Mouse King, which became the basis for the ballet *The Nutcracker*.[60] *Fantasiestücke* was the first piano work in which Schumann assigned a descriptive title for each movement, but it is important to note that almost all of his pieces were named after they were composed.[61] The work was originally published in two volumes of four movements each.[62]

Vol.	Mvt.	Title	Key	Character
I	I	Des Abends (Evening)	D-flat major	Eusebius
	II	Aufschwung (Soaring)	F minor	Florestan
	III	Waum? (Why?)	D-flat major	Eusebius
	IV	Grillen (Whims)	D-flat major	Florestan
II	V	In der Nacht (In the Night)	F minor	Eusebius/Florestan
	VI	Fabel (Fabel)	C major	Eusebius/Florestan
	VII	Traumes Wirren (Dream Confusion)	F major	Eusebius/Florestan
	VIII	Ende vom Lied (The End of the Song)	F major	Eusebius/Florestan

Figure 20. Titles, tonality, and characters of eight movements in *Fantasiestücke*, op. 12.[63]

The first set mainly in the key of D-flat major represents the real world while the second set mainly with a tonal center of F represents Schumann's fantasy world.[64] As shown in Figure 20, "Eusebiusian introspection and Florestanian impulsiveness" alternate in this piano cycle.[65]

Schumann wrote this set in a very short period of time between the fourth and

[60] Maurice Hinson, "About the Music," in *Schumann: Fantasiestücke (Fantasy Pieces), Opus 12 for the Piano, An Alfred Masterwork Edition*, ed. Maurice Hinson (Van Nuys: Alfred Publishing, 1992), 4.
[61] Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers*, 3rd ed., 179.
[62] Hinson, "Background," in *Schumann: Fantasiestücke (Fantasy Pieces), Opus 12 for the Piano, An Alfred Masterwork Edition*, ed. Maurice Hinson, 3.
[63] Hinson, "Background," in *Schumann: Fantasiestücke (Fantasy Pieces), Opus 12 for the Piano, An Alfred Masterwork Edition*, ed. Maurice Hinson, 3.; David Ewen, *The Complete Book of Classical Music* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 474.
[64] Hinson, "About the Music," in *Schumann: Fantasiestücke (Fantasy Pieces), Opus 12 for the Piano, An Alfred Masterwork Edition*, ed. Maurice Hinson, 4.
[65] John Daverio and Eric Sams, "Schumann, Robert," on *Grove Music Online* (accessed June 3 2018), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

nineteenth of July in 1837.[66] The composer described the first half of 1837 as the "darkest hour" in his life because Clara was keeping a distance from him while seeking a closer relationship with the composer and critic Carl Banck.[67] Around this time, Schumann also met two important women: the soprano Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient and the pianist Robena Ann Laidlaw, to whom Schumann ended up dedicating *Fantasiestücke*.[68] On the second of July in 1837, Schumann attended Laidlaw's recital in Leipzig, and the first full draft of *Des Abends* indicates the date "evening of the fourth of July, 1837", possibly tied to a meeting with Laidlaw.[69] Unfortunately, it is not possible to confirm that Schumann was in fact inspired to compose *Fantasiestücke* by the pianist, but the composer did send a presentation copy of the work with the following note to Laidlaw:[70]

> This time of your stay here will always remain fondly in my memory; and you will discover the truthfulness of these words with still greater clarity in [my] eight fantasy pieces for the pianoforte… I have, it is true, not specially asked for permission to dedicate them to you, but they belong to you none the less…[71]

Schuman even requested that the work "appear in print on the last day of September", which was Laidlaw's birthday, but due to the quality issue with the engraver's copy, it was delayed until early February of 1838.[72] Once it was published, the work instantly became popular repertoire for the pianists, including Clara who incorporated several pieces from the set into her recital program in March, 1838.[73] Franz Liszt (1811-1886) also wrote to the fellow-composer, sharing his excitement over the work:

> The *Carnaval* and *Fantasy Pieces* [*Fantasiestücke*] have captured my interest in an

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[66] Ernst Herttrich, "Preface", in Robert Schumann: *Fantasiestücke*, Opus 12, ed. Ernst Herttrich (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2004), V.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.

extraordinary way. I play them truly with delight, and Lord knows there are not many things of which I can say the same.[74]

Laidlaw, the dedicatee of the composition, also wrote to Schumann:

> *Fantasy Pieces* [*Fantasiestücke*] give pleasure everywhere; I have played them in Danzig and Stettin and will play them to the Princess in a couple of evenings.[75]

With the tempo marking *Sehr innig zu spielen* (Play very intimately), *Des Abends* definitely expresses the Eusebiusian world, producing the serene atmosphere of the evening. Although the time signature is 2/8, the music sounds in triple (3/8) with the melodic line executed as instructed by the composer. This rhythmic ambiguity and the dreamy atmosphere delicately capture the fleeting colors of the evening sky.

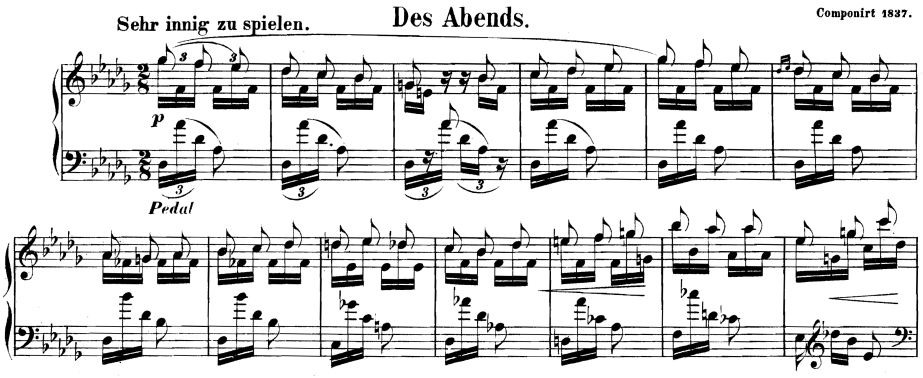

Figure 21. Rhythmic ambiguity, mm. 1-13.

Leoš Janáček, I. Andante, *V mlhách* (1912)

Born in 1854 before the last wave of Romantic composers such as Gustav Mahler and Richard Strauss, Leoš Janáček is mostly known for incorporating elements of folk music from his native region of Moravia into his compositions.[76] The Czech composer was a

[74] Ibid., VI.
[75] Ibid., V.
[76] John Tyrrell, "Janáček, Leoš [Leo Eugen]," on *Grove Music Online* (accessed June 3 2018),

late bloomer; his major compositions were written in the last thirty years of his life, and he was not widely known until his sixties.[77]

Andante is the first movement of *V mlhách* (In the mists), a collection of four pieces for solo piano. When Janáček wrote this work, he was already fifty-eight years old, still little known as a composer, and trapped in an unhappy marriage.[78] Some of Janáček's biographers seem to suggest that *V mlhách* was a reflection of the composer's state of mind at that time; he was feeling lost in the mist as a composer.[79] Unfortunately there is no evidence that confirms this suggestion as a fact.

Andante employs the A-B-A' ternary form; while the A section presents a serene and melancholic mood, the B section offers a contrasting material. Janáček conveys the atmosphere of being in the mists through two types of ambiguity: rhythmic and tonal ambiguity. The rhythmic ambiguity used in this piece is a device similar to that of Schumann's *Des Abends*; although Janáček assigned 2/4 as the time signature, the music actually feels like 3/2, given the structure based on three-measure units. Unlike the widely used four-measure unit consisting of symmetrically-divided two parts which provides a steady feel, this three-measure unit infuses imbalance, resulting in a sense of uncertainty equivalent to the experience of being in the mists.

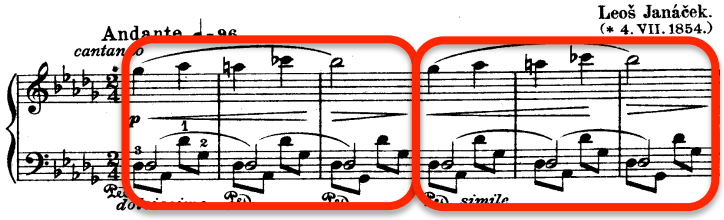

Figure 22. Rhythmic and tonal ambiguity, mm. 1-6.

The composer also utilizes the tonal ambiguity to communicate uncertainty. As shown in Figure 22, within the first three measures, the music sways between the minor and

<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.; Hanning, *Concise History of Western Music*, 527-528.

[77] Max Wade-Matthews and Wendy Thompson, *The Encyclopedia of Music: Instruments of the Orchestra and the Great Composers* (New York: Hermes House, 2002), 446-447.; Eric Bromberger, "Program Notes: Hélène Grimaud, piano," on *La Jolla Music Society* (accessed June 21 2018), <http://ljms.org>.

[78] Bromberger, "Program Notes: Hélène Grimaud, piano," on *La Jolla Music Society*.

[79] Ibid.

major modes. Combined with the unstable three-measure units, this tonal ambiguity emphasizes the transient nature of mists.

Another device that the composer adopts to communicate mists is the descending cascade. While the descending cascade in the A section suggests a hint of D-flat minor, the one in the A′ section toward the end of the piece is unmistakably in D-flat major, which results in creating a sense that the mists are slowly fading away, perhaps even hinting at a sign of sunlight.

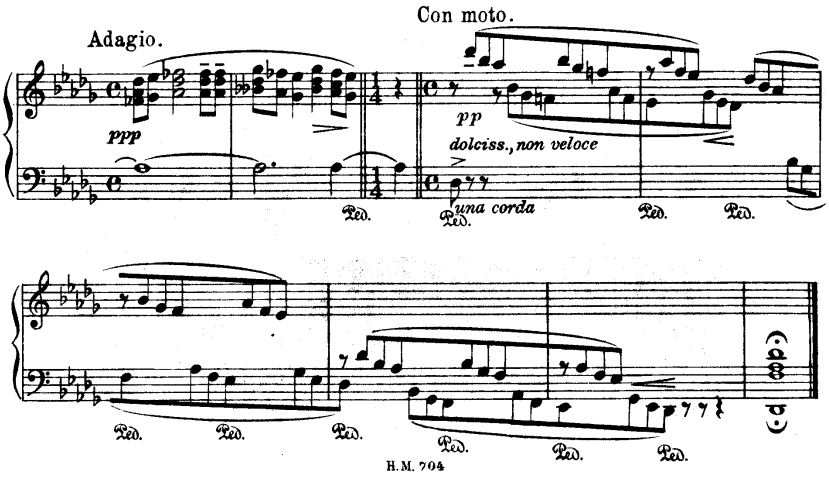

Figure 23. Descending cascade at the end, mm. 113-116.

Claude Debussy, I. Brouillards, *Préludes, 2e livre* (1913)

Brouillards is another prelude composed by Claude Debussy which opens the second collection of the twelve preludes. The title is translated as Fog or Mists since there is no distinction between the two words in French language.[80]

Although this prelude depicts a landscape similar to that of the previous piece by Janáček, the mood created by Debussy is quite different from the melancholic and ethereal atmosphere produced by Janáček; what *Brouillards* presents is the eerie and haunting air. Fog and mists do form a fleeting landscape, but it seems that Debussy and

[80] Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, 269.

Janáček present different types of fleetingness. While the Czech composer's *Andante* from *V mlhách* depicts the fleetingness of the mists, what *Brouillards* seems to communicate is the fleetingness of the blurred images we see in fog; this prelude by the French composer forces us to notice our unreliable perception due to our uninvited imagination.

Many commentators have suggested a connection between this prelude and Whistler or Turner's painting.[81] For example, Roberts suggests Whistler's *Nocturne in Silver and Blue: Battersea Reac*h and Turner's *Yacht Approaching the Coast* as possible visual parallels for *Brouillards*.[82] However, there is no evidence that confirms it was the composer's intention to connect this prelude with any particular painting.[83]

Figure 24. (Left) James McNeill Whistler, ***Nocturne in Blue and Silver: Battersea Reach;***
(Right) J.M.W. Turner, ***Yacht Approaching the Coast.***

In this prelude, Debussy successfully communicates fog through several ways. First, the most important element is the bitonality. As shown below, the prelude begins with the left hand with a tonal center of C and the right hand with a tonal center of D-flat. The semitone between C and D-flat certainly reminds us of a blurred image produced by an unfocused lens, equivalent to our vision in fog.

[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.

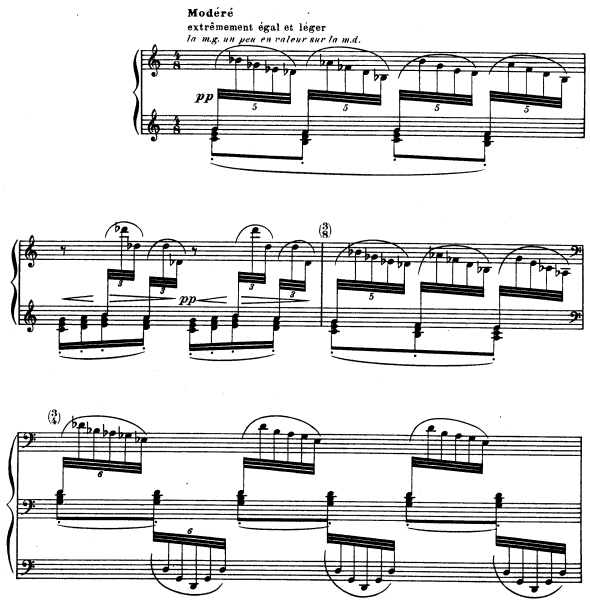

Figure 25. Bitonality and constantly changing meter, mm. 1-4.

Secondly, Debussy changes the meter constantly, depriving the listener of something solid to hold on to. The anxiety produced by uncertainty reflects our experience in dense fog.

Thirdly, the composer utilizes an odd number of notes to generate an unsteady feel. For example, quintuplets are prevalent throughout the piece, including the opening measures as shown in Figure 25. Another example is the passage with seventeen notes played by the right hand in measures 32 through 37. Odd numbers are harder to digest and execute because they cannot be symmetrically divided, which leads to a lack of balance. The twelve against seventeen in measures 29 and 30 contributes to creating not only an unsteady feel but also a feel of being out of sync, perhaps another way to express a blurred image.

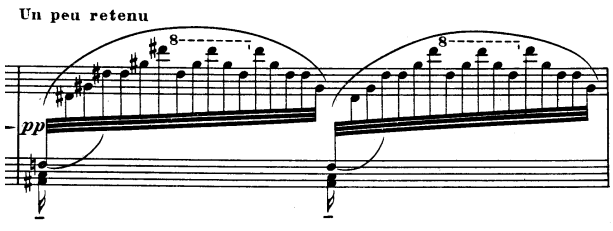

Figure 26. Seventeen-note passage, m. 32.

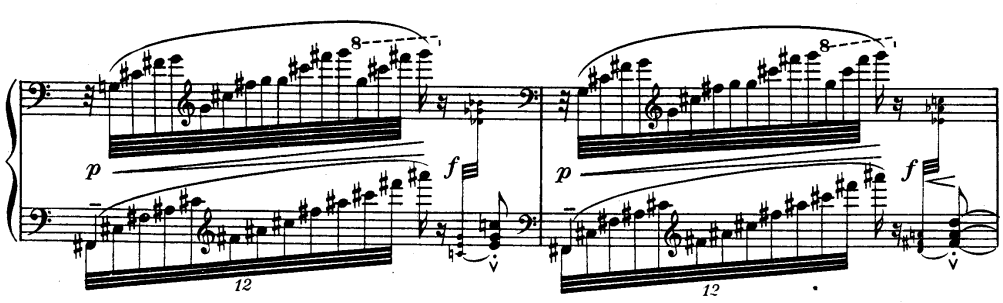

Figure 27. Twelve (left hand) against seventeen (right hand), mm. 29-30.

Debussy also utilizes enharmonic equivalents to deceive our perception. For example, at measure 38, the top staff shows six notes, but as the next measure reveals, those six notes actually represent only three different pitches (G-sharp-A-flat, C-sharp-D-flat, G-sharp-A-flat). It is equivalent to how our imagination leads us to misperception when our vision is not clear (e.g. mistaking a tree for a ghost). It could be alternatively understood as a representation of the blurred vision in fog.

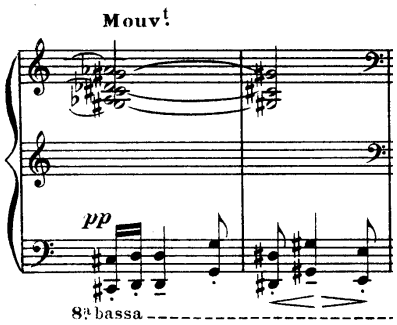

Figure 28. Use of enharmonic equivalents, mm. 38-39.

The composer also produces the ghostly atmosphere of fog through parallel five octaves as shown below.

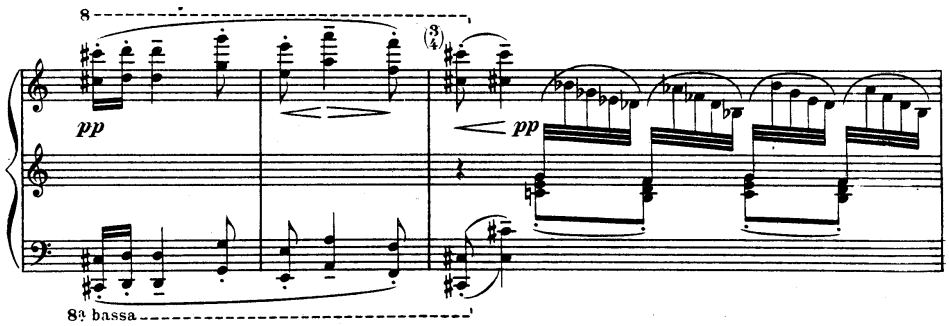

Figure 29. Use of parallel five octaves, mm. 22-24.

Lastly, there is nothing more uncertain or ambiguous than to end a piece with a diminished triad as this prelude does. This unresolved ending certainly leaves the audience in an uncomfortable place, just like being in fog. Roberts suggests that *Brouillards* and the ensuing prelude *Feuilles mortes* (Dead leaves) are inseparable as the opening of *Feuilles mortes* actually provides what is equivalent to a resolution; the bass notes of the opening chords of *Feuilles mortes* are derived from the top notes of the closing triads of *Brouillards* (G-F). Just like fog, *Brouillards* dissolves into the next prelude.[84]

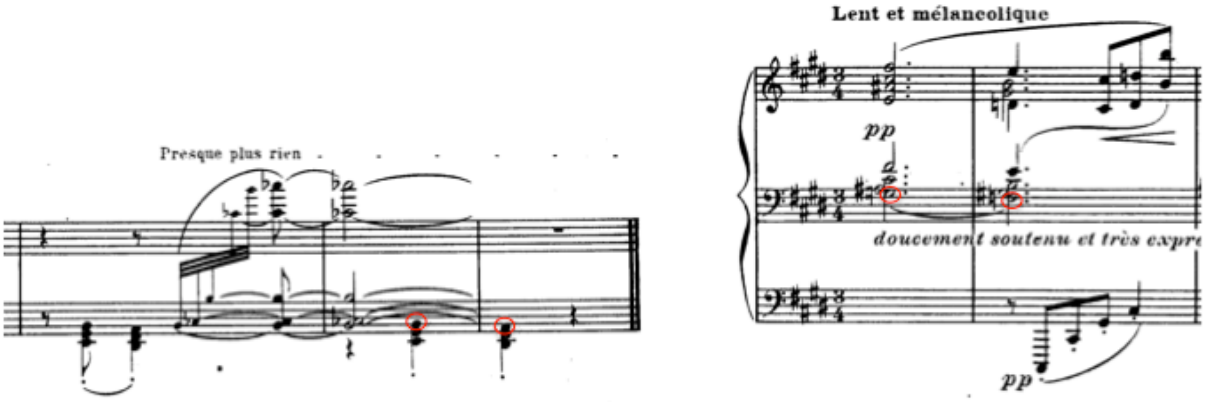

Figure 30. (Left) *Brouillards*, mm. 50-52; (Right) *Feuilles mortes*, mm. 1-2

Interestingly, Debussy employs a similar device to tie two other preludes with completely opposite characters in the first set of twelve preludes: *Ce qu'a vu le Vent d'Ouest* (What the west wind saw) and *La fille aux cheveux de lin* (The girl with the flaxen hair). As shown below, the opening phrase executed by the right hand in *La fille aux*

[84] Roberts, *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, 268.

cheveux de lin is derived from the chords in the last two measures of *Ce qu'a vu le Vent d'Ouest* but enharmonically transposed (F-sharp/G-flat, C-sharp/D-flat, D-sharp/E-flat, A-sharp/B-flat).[85]

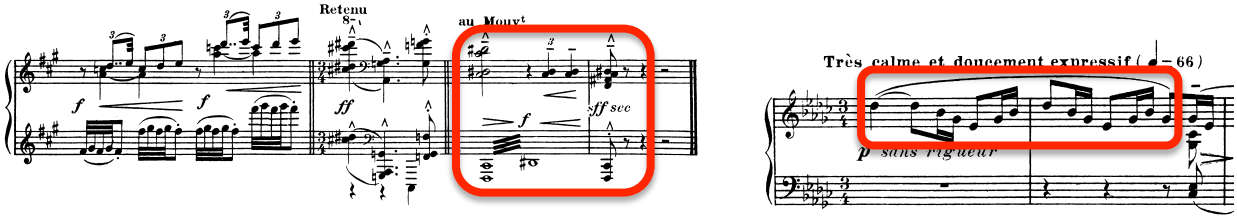

Figure 31. Connection between two preludes from the first book;
(Left) ***Ce qu'a vu le Vent d'Ouest*****, mm. 68-71; (Right)** ***La fille aux cheveux de lin*****, mm. 1-2.**

Claude Debussy, II. Feuilles mortes, *Préludes, 2e livre* (1913)

As mentioned above, there is a thread that connects and blurs the boundary of *Brouillards* and *Feuilles mortes*. Unlike *Ce qu'a vu le Vent d'Ouest* and *La fille aux cheveux de lin*, *Brouillards* and *Feuilles mortes* have the same mood. It does make sense, given the fact that we associate fog with autumn (the season of dead leaves). Although there is no evidence indicating that it was Debussy's plan, another interesting connection between those two preludes is that both pieces consist of fifty-two measures.

The publisher Durand cites an identically titled volume of poems by Georges Turpin (1885-1952) as a possible source of the title.[86] Meanwhile, Catherine Kautsky, the author of *Debussy's Paris: Piano Portraits of the Belle Époque*, states that the prelude was probably named after a collection of poems written by Gabriel Mourey (1865-1943) who was a close friend of Debussy.[87]

Feuilles mortes communicates the fleeting landscape of autumn mainly through the harmonic structure that changes constantly. The key signature suggesting either E major or C-sharp minor is not helpful here, given the numerous accidentals throughout

[85] Ibid., 253.
[86] Claude Debussy, *Préludes, 1er et 2e livres*, ed. Roy Howat and Claude Helffer (Paris: Éditions Durand, 2007), IV.
[87] Kautsky, *Debussy's Paris: Piano Portraits of the Belle Époque*, 161.

the piece. The first example of the transient harmony is the very beginning; the prelude opens with a measure built on the octatonic scale (a scale built on alternating whole and half steps) OCT (0,1) B (C-sharp, D-sharp, E, F-sharp, G, A, A-sharp, B-sharp) while the second measure is built on the octatonic scale OCT (1,2) A (C-sharp, D, E, F, G, G-sharp, A-sharp, B). The third measure goes back to OCT (0,1) B while the fourth measure adopts OCT (1,2) A, which demonstrates that the two different octatonic scales are alternating in the first four measures.

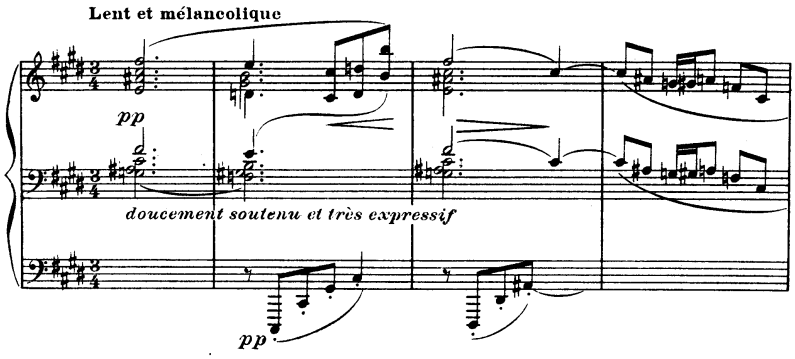

Figure 32. Alternating octatonic scales, mm. 1-4.

We do hear a hint of E major at measure 8, but this momentary stability quickly fades away in the next measure as it starts to head toward C major. It is also important to note that another distinctive sound world based on a whole-tone scale appears in measures 19 through 24.

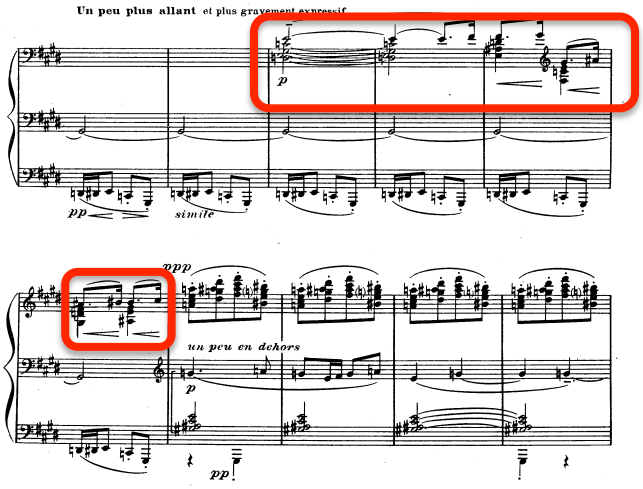

Figure 33. Use of a whole-tone scale, mm. 19-29.

The octatonic scale OCT (0,1) B reappears again in measures 25 through 30 but it soon dissolves into a brief moment of F-sharp major at measure 31, followed by the octatonic scale OCT (0,1) B at measure 32; in hindsight, the performer and audience realize that F-sharp major chord was merely a part of the octatonic scale.

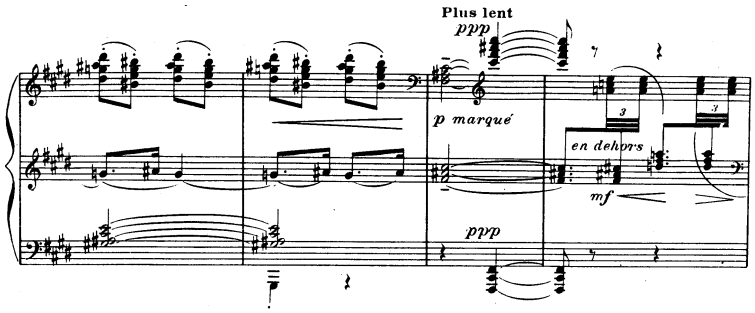

Figure 34. Quick transition: OCT (0,1) B - F-sharp major - OCT (0,1) B, mm. 29-32.

The music finally finds stability in the end as it arrives surprisingly in C-sharp major, the parallel major of C-sharp minor suggested by the key signature. The C-sharp major chord in the end could be understood as a Picardy third, possibly expressing the composer's own statement about this prelude: "…the fall of the golden leaves that invest the splendid obsequies of the trees".[88]

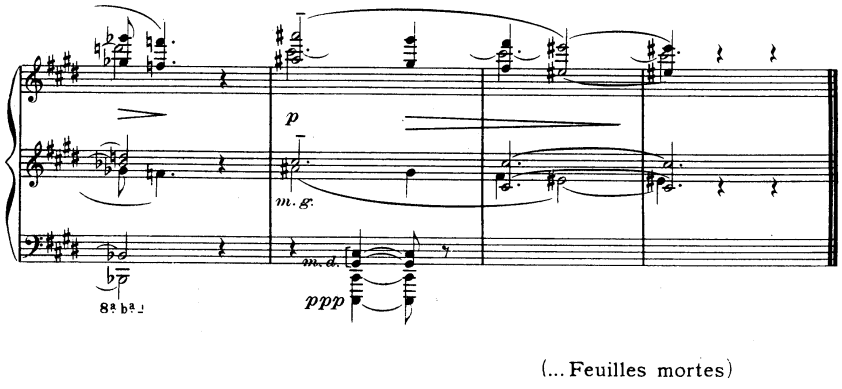

Figure 35. Surprising end in C-sharp major, mm. 49-52.

As described in the examples above, the harmonic structure remains elusive throughout the prelude, capturing the nature of the fleeting landscapes that we see in autumn. E. Robert Schmitz, the author of *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, says "it would be a

[88] Schmitz, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, 164.

great mistake to try to find here a realistic description of 'Dead Leaves,' be it on a windy day or a quiet one".[89] However, one cannot but "hear" and "see" many forms of dead leaves in this prelude, especially leaves slowly falling from a tree in measures 12 through 14 and whirling leaves in measures 19 through 40. Again Debussy successfully melts the sound and visual worlds to depict the fleeting autumn landscape.

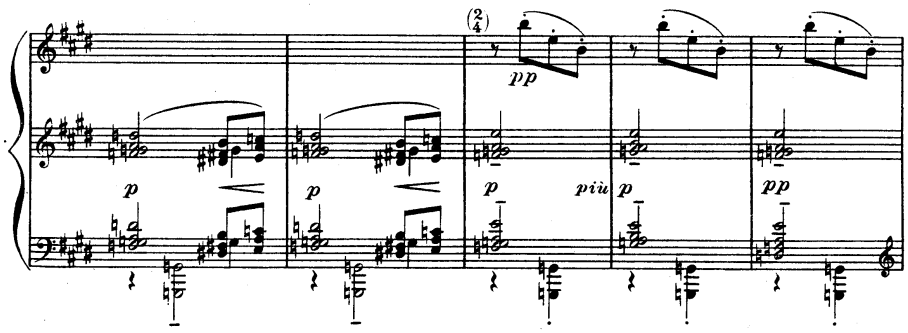

Figure 36. Descending contour evoking dead leaves slowly falling from a tree, mm. 10-14.

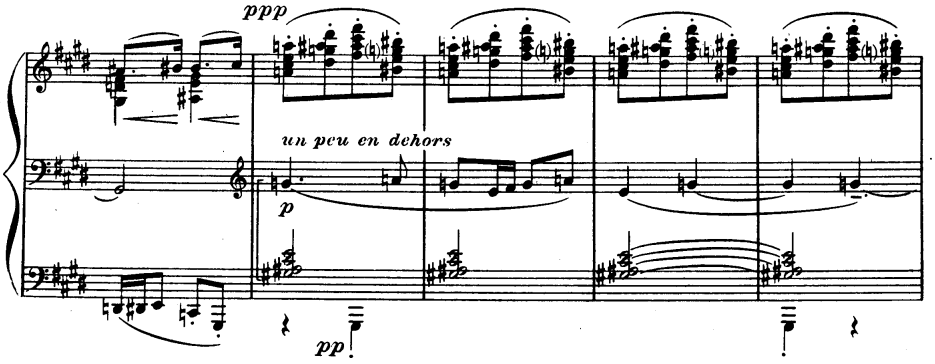

Figure 37. Up-down contour evoking whirling leaves, mm. 24-28.

[89] Ibid.

Fleeting Visions

Sergei Prokofiev, Select Movements from *Visions Fugitives*, op. 22

Sergei Prokofiev was born during a turbulent time in history. In the world of music, while Romanticism was still present, modernism was on the horizon, and some embraced the new sound while others openly criticized it.[90] His home country also went through major changes after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. His life certainly reflected this dramatic period in history.

Born to an agronomist father and a well-educated mother in current Ukraine in 1891, Prokofiev grew up in a comfortable environment.[91] As he listened to his mother playing the piano for hours at home, the young Sergei started to experiment on the instrument himself, which resulted in his very first piece "Indian Galop" composed at the age of five.[92] While studying at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, Prokofiev became a successful performer and composer although his works did not necessarily please the conservatives because of his radical modernist approach, "combining striking dissonance with motoric rhythms".[93] Anna Essipova, his piano teacher who was considered as one of the best pianists at that time, described Prokofiev as "very talented but rather unpolished" at the "Romantically oriented" conservatory.[94] Just like Debussy, Prokofiev abandoned Romanticism and embraced the modernism movement, but the Russian composer adopted a very different style, resulting from his belief that the piano is a percussion instrument and should be played percussively.[95] Consequently, Prokofiev's sound world is at times quite different from Debussy's especially in his earlier works (e.g. *Suggestion Diabolique*, op. 4, no. 4; *Toccata*, op. 11). However, as the later discussion suggests, there are similarities between Prokofiev's music and Debussy's as evident in *Visions Fugitives*.

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90 Dorothea Redepenning, "Prokofiev, Sergey (Sergeyevich)," on *Grove Music Online* (accessed June 3 2018), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
93 Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers*, 3rd ed., 526.; Hanning, *Concise History of Western Music*, 593.
94 Ibid.
95 Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers*, 3rd ed., 526.

Shortly after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the composer left his homeland to tour the world, including the United States and France, but Prokofiev did not necessarily have a positive experience overseas; he considered his years abroad as "a gradual process of failure", partly due to the public taste that turned out to be more conservative than the composer's expectation.[96] This unpleasant experience eventually led him back to Russia permanently in 1936. However, at that time back home, any adventurous music was banned and labeled as "formalism": the music that "did not reflect the heroic ideals of the Soviet worker" or as Prokofiev himself described, "the name given to music not understood on first hearing".[97] Then why did the composer choose to return to such an environment? As a matter of fact, his friend Vernon Duke asked the composer how he could live and work in the atmosphere of Soviet totalitarianism.[98] This is how the composer explained why he was content:

> Here is how I feel about it: I care nothing for politics - I'm a composer first and last. Any government that lets me write my music in peace, publishes everything I compose before the ink is dry and performs every note that comes from my pen is all right with me. In Europe we all have to fish for performances, cajole conductors and theater directors; in Russia they come to me - I can hardly keep up with the demand.[99]

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), another Russian composer who fled to the United States and unlike Prokofiev settled in the country, bluntly called Prokofiev "politically naïve" for returning to Russia.[100] Indeed, naïve he was. In 1948, the resolution issued by the Central Committee accused Prokofiev and other leading composers such as Dmitri Shostakovich (1906-1975) and Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978) of "formalism", "anti-democratic tendencies that are alien to the Soviet people and its artistic tastes", and accused their music of being "strongly reminiscent of the spirit of contemporary modernistic bourgeois music of Europe and America".[101] Along with other composers,

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96 Redepenning, "Prokofiev, Sergey (Sergeyevich)," on *Grove Music Online*.
97 Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers*, 3rd ed., 529.
98 Ibid., 530.
99 Ibid.
100 Ibid., 529-530.
101 Ibid., 532.

Prokofiev ended up issuing a joint letter to Joseph Stalin to thank him for giving them the "public spanking".[102] Even after the crackdown, Prokofiev continued to write music but unfortunately never recovered his unique musical voice.[103] Ironically, he died on the same day in 1953 as his oppressor Stalin.[104]

Visions Fugitives is a collection of twenty short pieces written between 1915 and 1917. Prokofiev originally called this set *Mimolyotnosti*, which comes from the following poem written by the Symbolist poet Konstantin Balmont (1867-1942):[105]

> I do not know wisdom - leave that to others -
> I only turn fugitive visions into verse.
> In each fugitive vision I see worlds,
> Full of the changing play of rainbows.
> Don't curse me, you wise ones. What are you to me?
> The fact is I'm, only a cloudlet, full of fire.
> The fact is I'm only a cloudlet. Look: I'm floating.
> And I summon dreamers … You summon not.[106]

While the Russian word *mimolyotnosti* literally means "transiences", it is translated as "fugitive visions" in this English translation of the poem, but is also often translated as "fleeting visions".[107] The French title *Visions Fugitives* was suggested by Balmont's friend, Kira Nikolayevna, to Prokofiev according to his diary, written in August, 1917:[108]

> I played the *Mimolyotnosti* and given that my title had been taken from Balmont's verses […] I asked if he found it appropriate to the music. Balmont

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[102] Ibid., 534
[103] Hanning, *Concise History of Western Music*, 594.
[104] Redepenning, "Prokofiev, Sergey (Sergeyevich)," on *Grove Music Online*.
[105] David Nice, *Prokofiev: From Russia to the West 1891-1935* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 129.
[106] Konstantin Balmont, *Stichotvoreniya* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, 1990), 151; quoted in Nice, *Prokofiev: From Russia to the West 1891-1935*, 129.
[107] Nice, *Prokofiev: From Russia to the West 1891-1935*, 129.
[108] Sergei Prokofiev, *Sergey Prokofiev Diaries, 1924–1933: Behind the Mask*, trans. Anthony Phillips (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 221.

> liked both the piece and the title very much, and Kira, who spoke excellent French, came up with a French translation for the term: 'Visions fugitives'. Up till that moment I had not been able to find it.[109]

It is important to note that *Visions Fugitives* was composed before and around the revolution, which means that the fear of being accused of "formalism" by the authorities was still absent, and the composer was still free to experiment and pursue the modernist path. As shown below, the order of the twenty miniatures is not chronological, which indicates that Prokofiev had a particular idea about the order. David Nice, the author of *Prokofiev: From Russia to the West 1891-1935*, suggests that there is a musical logic to the set; while "the first numbers play with his usual harmonic evasiveness round A minor or C major", "[a]fter the midpoint, the *Visions* seem to pass through the crucible of the *Sarcasms*, and the later stages palpably darken".[110]

Year of Composition	1915	1916	1917
Movements	5, 6, 10, 16*, 17*	2, 3, 7*, 12, 13, 20	1*, 4, 8*, 9, 11, 14, 15, 18*, 19

* Selected for this program

Figure 38. Years of Movements Composed.

The movements selected for this program are the ones that convey fleetingness or evoke fleeting images. As such, you will mostly hear the colorful side rather than the percussive or steely sound that many associate with Prokofiev. The fact that Balmont whose poem inspired Prokofiev to write this work was a Symbolist poet is no surprise. As a matter fact, Vyacheslav Karatygin, a music critic, wrote about *Visions Fugitives* in the newspaper *Nash Vek* in 1917 as follows:[111]

> Prokofiev and tenderness - you don't believe it? You will see for yourself when this charming suite is published.[112]

[109] Ibid.
[110] Nice, *Prokofiev: From Russia to the West 1891-1935*, 130.
[111] Ibid., 129.
[112] Ibid.

I. Lentamente

Prokofiev's favorite use of "white-note melodies" manifests in this pensive piece that opens *Visions Fugitives*.[113] It starts and ends with an E minor chord, but remains harmonically evasive until the end. It is somewhat reminiscent of Debussy's world partly due to planing, the parallel voice leading frequently used by French composers at that time. The simple binary form is possibly a reflection of his instruction *con una semplicità espressiva*; the A section consisting of thirteen measures are practically carried over in the ensuing A' section consisting again of thirteen measures but embellished and partially transposed. As *misterioso* suggests, the piece concludes with an E minor chord, a surprising end tinged with ethereality.

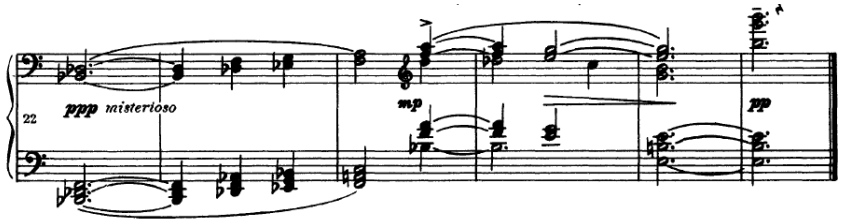

Figure 39. Surprising end with E minor chord, mm. 22-27.

VII. Pittoresco (Harp)

P*ittoresco* (picturesque), an unusual tempo marking, certainly indicates the importance of colors in this piece. The "harp", the only descriptive title the composer gave in *Visions Fugitives*, is expressed by arpeggios prevalent in this movement. The Mixolydian mode is implied, but again it remains harmonically elusive. A surprising thunder-like dissonance played *forte* at the penultimate measure quickly evaporates like a mist at the very end with the dynamic marking *pianissimo*.

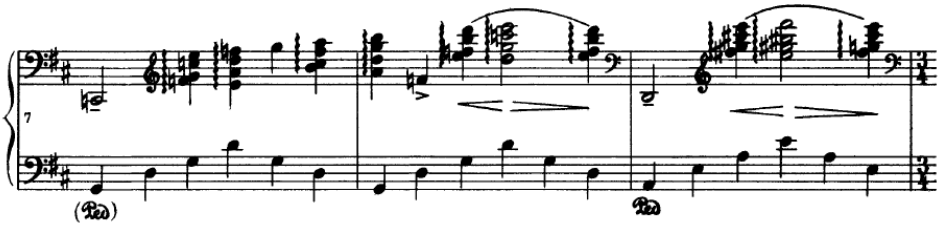

Figure 40. Arpeggios depicting "harp", mm. 7-9.

[113] Ibid.

VIII. Comodo

This movement probably possesses the strongest sense of tonality. The simple melody, combined with the tempo marking *Comonodo* (comfortable), communicates innocence especially with the white-note melody from measures 5 through 10. The same material used in measures 1 through 10 comes back and repeated, but this time it is transposed and layered. The piece concludes with a coda based on the opening material at a slower tempo, resulting in a sense of nostalgia.

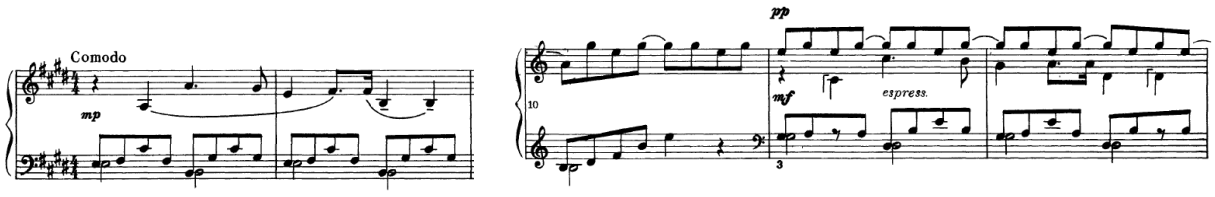

Figure 41. (Left) The opening material, mm. 1-2; (Right) The opening material repeated but transposed and layered, mm. 10-12.

X. Ridicolosamente

This movement also has an interesting tempo marking: Ridicolosamente (ludicrously, humorously). The incessant staccato thirds executed by the left hand and the contrasting legato playing and light-hearted arpeggios performed by the right hand communicate this character. Prokofiev's instruction *sostenuto* written together with staccato at the beginning is probably a part of the sarcasm.

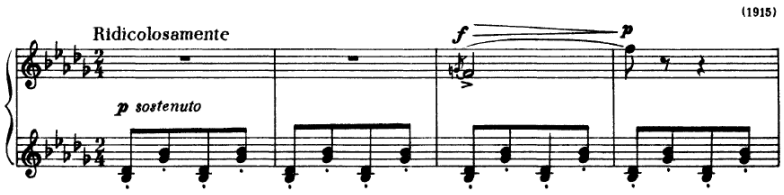

Figure 42. Humor and sarcasm expressed through *sostenuto* and contrasting materials, mm. 1-4.

XVI. Dolente

The descending chromatic motion, the central material in this movement, unquestionably contributes to realizing the tempo marking *Dolente* (sad) as the motion results in a sinking feel. The form is the A-B-A' ternary form; after the section based on the descending chromatic motion, the white-note material is presented (measures 9

through 18). When the descending chromatic motion comes back again at measure 19, it is combined with white-note open fifths. When the piece ends, all we hear is four Es played *pianississimo,* which almost sounds like a lonely sigh.

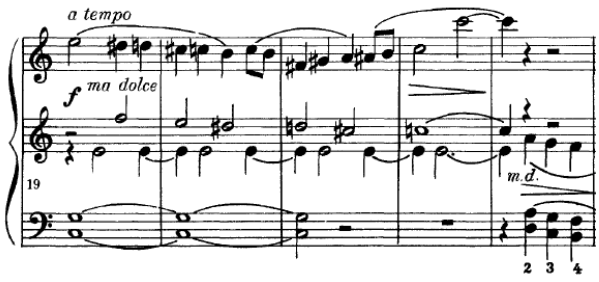

Figure 43. The chromatic descending motion combined with white-note open fifths, mm. 19-23.

XVII. Poetico

Another interesting tempo marking *Poetico* (poetic) is assigned to this movement, which again features chromatic motions. While the right hand opens the piece with semitones in the range of an ascending minor third (B-flat, C-flat, C, and D-flat), the left hand joins with semitones in the range of a descending minor third (A-flat, G, G-flat, F). This eventually results in the poignant dissonance created by C-flat (right hand) and C (left hand) at measure 11, which was implied by the right hand fluctuating between C and C-flat at the beginning. The challenge for the performer is to create a poetic sound world with such dissonances, which signals that colors play a significant role in this piece. After the ambivalence and insecurity created by dissonances, this enigmatic piece finally finds its momentary stability at the end with a B-flat minor chord with a missing fifth.

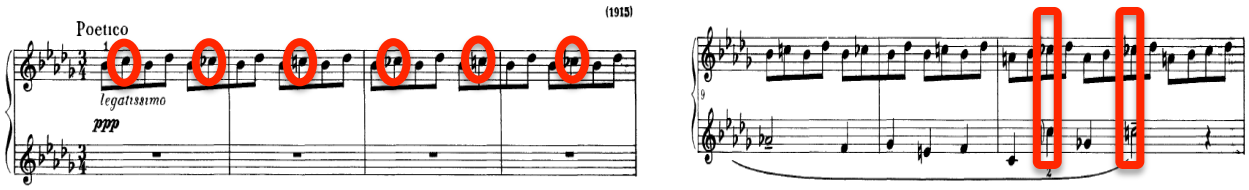

Figure 44. (Left) Right hand swaying between C and C-flat, mm. 1-4.;

(Right) Dissonances created by C and C-flat, mm. 9-12.

XVIII. Con una dolce lentezza

With the slow tempo and the gentle swinging motion generated by the left hand pattern of a half note followed by a quarter note, this movement somewhat reminds us of Debussy's prelude *Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir* in which we hear a reluctant waltz. The up-down contour and Prokofiev's instruction *languido* at measure 16 in this piece are also reminiscent of the same contour we see and "languor" we hear in Debussy's prelude. The tempo marking *Con una dolce lentezza* (with a sweet slowness) communicates an intoxicated feeling and a fleeting delicious moment that we are reluctant to let go, but just like a dream, the music dissipates into nothingness in the end.

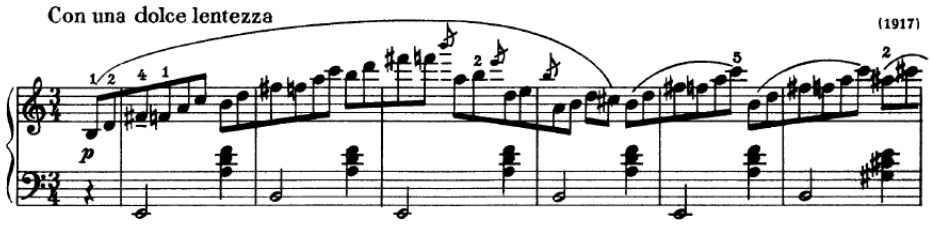

Figure 45. Up-down contour and languorous swinging motion reminiscent of Debussy's *Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir*, mm. 1-6.

George Crumb, XI. Dream Images (Love-Death Music) (Gemini), *Makrokosmos Volume I: Twelve Fantasy-Pieces after the Zodiac for Amplified Piano* (1972)

Given that one significant feature of twentieth-century music was "the exploration of new musical resources", one cannot but recognize important contributions made by George Crumb, as he is one of the most imaginative and creative composers in terms of getting the most out of instruments.[114] Born to accomplished musicians in 1929, the American composer has had a long composing career since an early age. He earned the Pulitzer Prize in 1968 for one of his orchestral works *Echoes of Time and the River*.[115] His compositional style is characterized by an unconventional approach, including unusual

[114] Hanning, *Concise History of Western Music*, 622-623.
[115] Richard Steinitz, "Crumb, George (Henry)," on *Grove Music Online* (accessed June 3 2018), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.

performance techniques (e.g. playing the flute while singing), frequent musical quotation, and unorthodox scores (e.g. use of graphic symbols).[116] *Dream Images (Love-Death Music)* contains all of these examples of his unconventionality.

Dream Images (Love-Death Music) is the eleventh movement of *Makrokosmos Volume I: Twelve Fantasy-Pieces after the Zodiac for Amplified Piano*. Crumb actually published four volumes of *Makrokosmos*: the first two volumes for amplified piano, the third for two amplified pianos and percussion, and the fourth for amplified piano for four hands. Crumb was inspired to come up with the title and format of *Makrokosmos* by Béla Bartók's *Mikrokosmos* (six volumes of pedagogical pieces), and Claude Debussy's twenty-four preludes.[117] The American composer also spoke of other sources of inspiration for *Makrokosmos* as follows in the notes he wrote for the recording of *Makrokosmos, Volume I*, performed by David Burge:[118]

> And then there is always the question of the 'larger world' of concepts and ideas which influence the evolution of a composer's language. While composing *Makrokosmos*, I was aware of certain recurrent haunting images. At times quite vivid, at times vague and almost subliminal, these images seemed to coalesce around the following several ideas (given in no logical sequence, since there is none): the 'magical properties' of music; the problem of the origin of evil; the 'timelessness' of time; a sense of the profound ironies of life (so beautifully expressed in the music of Mozart and Mahler); the haunting words of Pascal: '*Le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie.*' ('The eternal silence of infinite space terrifies me'); and these few lines of Rilke: '*Und in den Nächten fällt die schwere Erde aus allen Sternen in die Einsamkeit. Wir alle fallen. Und doch ist Einer, welcher dieses Fallen unendlich sanft in seinen Händen halt*' ('And in the nights the heavy earth is falling from all the stars down into loneliness. We are all falling. And yet there is One who holds this falling endlessly gently in his

[116] Ibid.
[117] George Crumb, Excerpted notes written for the Nonesuch recording of *Makrokosmos, Volume I* (recorded performance by David Burge, Nonesuch H-71293); quoted in *George Crumb: Makrokosmos Volume I, Amplified Piano* (Leipzig: C. F. Peters, 2016).
[118] Ibid.

hands').[119]

Crumb undoubtedly had the vast universe, or maybe even something close to mysticism, in mind when he wrote *Makrokosmos*.

The first volume of *Makrokosmos*, just like the second volume, consists of twelve fantasy-pieces grouped into three sections of four pieces each. As shown below, the last piece of each section bears [SYMBOL] whose score is shaped to reflect the title. Each fantasy-piece is associated with a sign of the zodiac and given the initials of a person born under that sign at the end of each piece. *Dream Images* ends with the initial [F.G.L.II], which represents Federico García Lorca, a Spanish poet who was a significant source of inspiration for Crumb.

[Part One]
I. Primeval Sounds (Genesis I) (Cancer)
II. Proteus (Pisces)
III. Pastorale (from the Kingdom of Atlantis, ca. 10,000 B.C.) (Taurus)
IV. Crucifixus [SYMBOL] (Capricorn) *in the shape of a cross

[Part Two]
V. The Phantom Gondolier (Scorpio)
VI. Night-Spell I (Sagittarius)
VII. Music of Shadows (for Aeolian Harp) (Libra)
VIII. The Magic Circle of Infinity (Moto Perpetuo) [SYMBOL] (Leo) *in the shape of a circle

[Part Three]
IX. The Abyss of Time (Virgo)
X. Spring-Fire (Aries)
XI. Dream Images (Love-Death Music) (Gemini)
XII. Spiral Galaxy [SYMBOL] (Aquarius) *in the shape of a spiral

[119] Ibid.

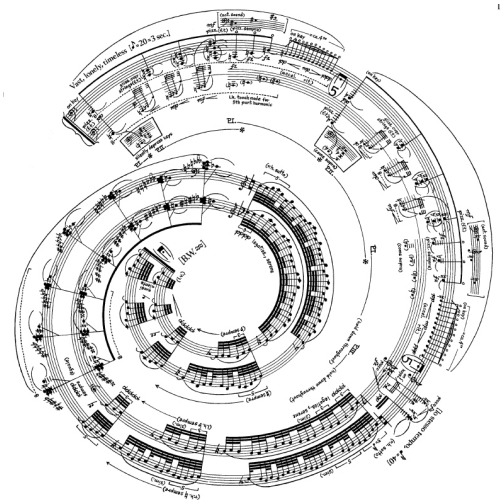

Figure 46. XII. Spiral Galaxy [SYMBOL] (Aquarius)

Performing *Makrokosmos* involves playing not only on the keys but also directly on the strings by plucking, brushing, and strumming with fingernails, fingertips, a metal plectrum, and thimbles in addition to singing, intoning, humming, moaning, and shouting.[120] *Dream Images* also requires the performer to execute glissando over strings with fingertips. His love of musical quotation is also evident in *Dream Images*; Chopin's *Fantasie Impromptu* in C-sharp Minor, op. 66 appears as a "faintly remembered music".

Another example of Crumb's unusual style, the unique layout of the score, is also present in *Dream Images*. Reading George Crumb's score is like a treasure hunt. It forces us to stare at it for a while in order to figure out what kind of musical treasures the composer is hiding. In that sense, it may be more accurate to say deciphering his score is equivalent to reading a suggestive poem that requires time to digest it. There are critics who "have accused him of emphasizing surface sensation at the expense of real substance".[121] However, his unconventional layout could be understood as another dimension added to the whole that contributes to "the Inexpressible". Rather than a surface, it is actually part of what lies at the heart of his music. There are certainly many hidden treasures in the score of *Dream Images*; from the very beginning, the tempo marking "Musingly, like the gentle caress of a faintly remembered music" speaks

[120] Larry Lusk, "Makrokosmos, Vol. 1. Twelve Fantasy-Pieces after the Zodiac for Amplified Piano by George Crumb," *Notes* 31 (1974): 157-8.
[121] Steinitz, "Crumb, George (Henry)," on *Grove Music Online*.

loudly to us. The visual layout of the score definitely supports this tempo marking; the faintly remembered music represented by Chopin's *Fantasie-Impromptu* literally emerges between the outer staves and is "caressed" by those outer staves (Figure 46).

Crumb realizes the dream-like atmosphere in this piece in various ways. Firstly, the performer soon realizes that there is no time signature assigned to this piece, which reflects the timelessness of the dream world.

The second element is the melting boundaries, which in fact offers us a glimpse into Debussy's influence on Crumb. *Dream Images* challenges the performer to walk on the blurred boundaries of different worlds: the visual world (implied by the title *Dream Images*) and sound world (the music), the past ("a faintly remembered music" in the tempo marking) and present (when the performance takes place), the preexisting music (Chopin's *Fantasie-Impromptu*) and new music (the music composed by Crumb), and the pleasure (consonances) and pains (as implied by Crumb's instruction "stinging!" toward the end and frequent dissonances which will be explained later). Crumb certainly capitalizes on these melting worlds to create *Dream Images*, which certainly reminds us of the blurred boundaries realized by Debussy.

Thirdly, Crumb sways between two similar materials, specifically the pitch-class sets (024) and (025), to convey ambiguity of the dream world as the following example shows:

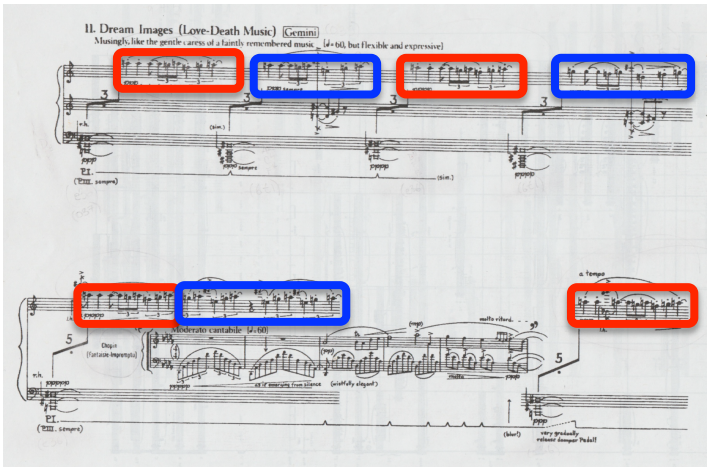

Figure 47. Alternating pitch-class sets: (024) and (025) [red: (024); blue: (025)].

Crumb also adopts particular ways to use the instruments in order to create the dream-like sound world. For example, the way he instructs the performer to use the pedals contributes to generating blurred sounds that remind us of how we hear in our dreams. He is very specific as to which pedal should be used how and where. For instance, when Chopin's Fantasie Impromptu fades away and melts into a B major chord, Crumb writes in "very gradually release damper Pedal!" Directly strumming the strings with fingertips also adds an ethereal sound evocative of a dream. (Crumb's instruction says <like a breath>.)

Lastly, the polytonality also contributes to conveying blurred images in the dream, which is, to some extent, reminiscent of Debussy's *Brouillards*. The piece begins with the bottom staff providing the tonic and dominant chords in B major while the top and middle staves provide the white-key melody constructed on (024) and (025) with major sevenths and tritones inserted mainly through grace notes. These major sevenths and tritones result in discomfort that possibly communicates ambiguity or a sign that something is not quite right. Subsequently, while the beginning melody still continues, Chopin's *Fantasie-Impromptu* in D-flat major emerges slowly, producing a dream-like swirl of sounds. This "faintly remembered music" eventually dissolves into a B major chord, and the melody with dissonances reappears again. When Chopin's music emerges again, it starts in A-flat major but sounds like it is heading back to D-flat major. However, without a resolution, it again dissolves into a B major chord. After the music decays with a series of dissonances produced by major sevenths, minor seconds (inversion of major sevenths), and tritones, a fraction of *Fantasie-Impromptu* reemerges, leaving a hint of D-flat major but not actually providing a D-flat major chord; what we hear instead is a B major chord played *fortississimo*, followed by the melody this time based only on (025), with major sevenths and tritones inserted to end the piece with unease. This polytonality could be alternatively understood as the dichotomy of love and death (pleasure and pain): love (pleasure) represented by the consonances resulting from the chords provided by the bass staff while death (pain) is represented by the harsh dissonances produced by major sevenths, minor seconds, and tritones.

Although there is no evidence that Crumb had this in mind when he composed this

piece, the subtitle "Love-Death Music" reminds us of Richard Wagner's "Liebestod" (Love-Death) from *Tristan und Isolde*.

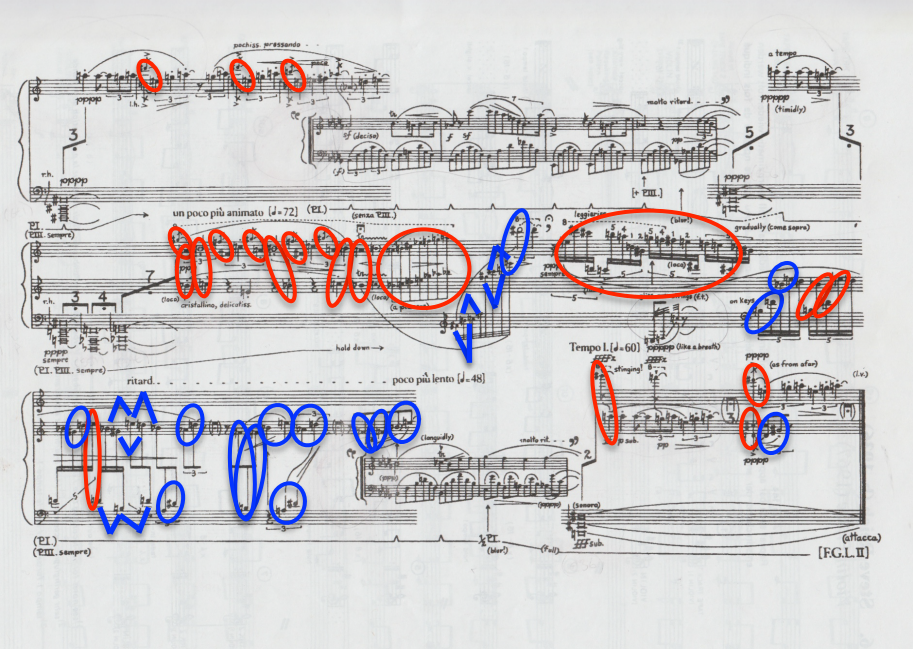

Figure 48. Examples of M7s, m2s, and TTs [red: M7/m2; blue: TT].

Fleeting Moments

Clara Schumann, Volkslied (1840)

Volkslied	**Folksong**
Heinrich Heine	(English Translation by Richard Stokes)
Es fiel ein Reif in der Frühlingsnacht,	There fell a frost one night in spring,
Es fiel auf die zarten Blaublümelein:	It fell on the tender forget-me-nots:
Sie sind verwelket, verdorret.	They are now blighted, withered.
Ein Jüngling hatte ein Mädchen lieb;	A young man loved a maiden;
Sie flohen heimlich von Hause fort,	In secret they eloped together;
Es wusst' weder Vater noch Mutter.	Neither father nor mother knew.
Sie sind gewandert hin und her,	They wandered to and fro;
Sie haben gehabt weder Glück noch Stern,	They had neither luck nor guiding star;
Sie sind gestorben, verdorben.	They perished, died.[122]

It is probably not an exaggeration to describe Clara Schumann's life as "one of musical triumph and personal tragedy".[123] Born to musicians in Leipzig, Germany in 1819, she received her musical training from her father, Friedrich Wieck who had acquired a reputation as an excellent piano teacher. By age eleven, she made her formal solo debut in Leipzig, performed in Paris at age twelve, and excited audiences in Vienna at age eighteen.[124] She was dubbed "Europe's Queen of the Piano" by notable pianists such as Liszt and had a remarkable career as a concert pianist for over sixty years.[125] On the other hand, her personal life was tormented by a series of painful events such as the divorce of her parents in her early childhood, the bitter fight with her father over her

[122] "Volkslied [1840]," on *Oxford Lieder* (accessed July 16 2018), <https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk>.
[123] Nancy B. Reich, "Schumann [née Wieck], Clara (Josephine)," on *Grove Music Online* (accessed July 7 2018), <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com>.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Ibid.

marriage to Robert Schumann, the mental illness and loss of her husband, the illness of one son who spent forty years in a mental institution, and the loss of four children who predeceased her.[126] However, those events were perhaps a significant part of what made her the artist she was. While the audiences were accustomed to showy variations on popular and operatic melodies, Clara Schumann introduced works by J.S. Bach (1685-1750), Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757), Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827), Franz Schubert (1797-1828), Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849), Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847), and her husband Robert Schumann.[127] She was her husband's spokesperson "since Robert Schumann was the only composer of piano music among his contemporaries who did not perform in public" due to the problems with his hand as previously mentioned.[128]

In addition to performing, Clara Schumann composed. Despite the fact that many of her works were published and her husband Robert Schumann encouraged her composition, in reality it was a struggle partly due to the fact that Schumann's creative work had to come first.[129] Clara's following statement exposes her complex relationship with composing:

> I once thought that I possessed creative talent, but I have given up this idea. A woman must not desire to compose - not one has been able to do it, and why should I expect to? It would be arrogance, although indeed, my father led me into it in earlier days.[130]

After her husband's death, Clara Schumann stopped composing (except for one march she composed for a friend's anniversary).[131]

The reasons why Volkslied was selected for Fleeting Moments in this program are twofold: the "fleeting moment" experienced by the young man and maiden in the poem and the happiness that Clara and Robert were allowed to enjoy when this song was

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126 Ibid.
127 Ibid.
128 Ibid.
129 Ibid.
130 Schonberg, *The Lives of the Great Composers*, 3rd ed., 176.
131 Ibid.

conceived. After a court battle with Clara's father who was staunchly against their marriage, Clara and Robert finally wed in 1840, and on their first Christmas together, Clara presented three songs, including *Volkslied*, to her husband.[132] It is worth noting that 1840 also happens to be Schumann's Liederjahr (year of song), in which he composed more than one hundred and sixty vocal works.[133] Clara's decision to choose this poem at this point in her life is fascinating and at the same time almost ironic because the poem probably implies what the couple could have faced if they had chosen to elope rather than fighting in the court. Or given that Clara was forbidden by the doctors to visit Robert in the mental institution during the last two and a half years except for the last two days of his life, her selection of this poem was maybe foreshadowing the tragic ending they were to face.[134]

Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) is cited as a source of the text for *Volkslied*, but the text is in fact merely quoted by Heine.[135] It is the second poem in the set of three poems comprising Heine's *Tragödie* (Tragedy), but the poet himself admitted that he was not the author of the second poem and noted that it was "a real folksong which I heard on the Rhine".[136] As a matter of fact, the poem appears as a folksong in *Deutsche Volkslieder*, compiled by Andreas Kretzschmer and August Wilhelm von Zuccalmaglio, a collection of German folksongs, which also played an important role for the folksong settings by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897).[137] The poem is attributed to Zuccalmaglio in *Oxford Book of German Verse* (Second Edition), and the Schumanns personally knew Zuccalmaglio, but interestingly the Schumanns considered this poem as Heine's.[138] (Robert Schumann also composed *Tragödie*, op. 64, no. 3 based on Heine's *Tragödie*, possibly inspired by Clara's *Volkslied*.)[139] By giving the title *Volkslied* to the song, Clara may have indirectly acknowledged the root of the text.[140]

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132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
134 Reich, "Schumann [née Wieck], Clara (Josephine)," on *Grove Music Online*.
135 Graham Johnson, "Volkslied: Introduction," on *Hyperion Records* (accessed July 16 2018), <https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk>.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid.

The song is in the modified strophic form in which basically the same music is given to the first and third stanzas but the music for the second stanza is markedly different; the second stanza starts in the major mode probably in response to "Ein Jüngling hatte ein Mädchen lieb" (A young man loved a maiden), followed by a dramatic rise that expresses the momentary freedom the couple is allowed to savor, reaching the highest point of the song in terms of both the pitch and dynamics. As the couple follows the path to their tragic fate, the music also sinks and perishes. The postlude by the piano effectively communicates the poignancy and gives the audience a chance to reflect, which is reminiscent of Schumann's song cycles such as *Dichterliebe* and *Frauen-Liebe und Leben*, both also written in 1840.

Robert Schumann, VII. Die Lotosblume, *Myrthen*, op. 25 (1840)

Die Lotosblume	**The Lotus-Flower**
Heinrich Heine	(English Translation by Richard Stokes)
Die Lotosblume ängstigt	The lotus-flower fears
Sich vor der Sonne Pracht,	The sun's splendour,
Und mit gesenktem Haupte	And with bowed head,
Erwartet sie träumend die Nacht.	Dreaming, awaits the night.
Der Mond, der ist ihr Buhle	The moon is her lover,
Er weckt sie mit seinem Licht,	And wakes her with his light,
Und ihm entschleiert sie freundlich	And to him she tenderly unveils
Ihr frommes Blumengesicht.	Her innocent flower-like face.
Sie blüht und glüht und leuchtet	She blooms and glows and gleams,
Und starret stumm in die Höh';	And gazes silently aloft—
Sie duftet und weinet und zittert	Fragrant and weeping and trembling
Vor Liebe und Liebesweh.	With love and the pain of love.[141]

[141] "Myrthen (1840) op. 25," on *Oxford Lieder* (accessed July 16 2018), <https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk>.

In early 1840, the Liederjahr (year of song), Robert Schumann shared with his fiancée Clara in a letter that he was working on new music:

> Since yesterday morning, I have written about twenty-seven pages of music (something new) … while composing I laughed and cried from joy.[142]

The new music he mentioned was *Myrthen*, op. 25, a song cycle consisting of twenty-six songs for voice and piano, which was a wedding gift that Robert was preparing to present to Clara.[143] The title *Myrthen* (Myrtles) comes from its association with bridal wreaths. Unlike *Dichterliebe*, op. 48 and *Frauenliebe und -leben*, op. 42, the texts of the twenty-six songs in the cycle are not by a single poet but by multiple poets including Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), Lord Byron (1788-1824), and Thomas Moore (1779-1852).[144]

Die Lotosblume is the seventh song in *Myrthen*, based on a poem by Heine, to whom Clara attributed the text of her *Volkslied* as previously discussed. In the original key, the music modulates from F major to the remote key of A-flat major (relative major of the parallel minor) in response to "Der Mond, der ist ihr Buhle, Er weckt sie mit seinem Licht" (The moon is her lover, And wakes her with his light), and reaches its climax with the word "zittert" (trembling). A-flat major is an important key in this song cycle as it is the key that opens and closes the entire work.

Die Lotosblume was selected to be part of Fleeting Moments in the program for the two reasons similar to those for *Volkslied*: the brief moment that the lotus flower reveals herself to the moon in the text and the fleeting moment of happiness in Robert and Clara's lives. With the tempo marking *Ziemlich langsam* (quite slow) and the soft dynamic range between *pianissimo* and *piano*, *Die Lotosblume* reveals the Eusebius side of Schumann.

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142 Iosif Raiskin, "Robert Schumann. A Bouquet of Love Songs," on *Mariinsky Theatre* (accessed July 21 2018), <https://www.mariinsky.ru>.
143 Ibid.
144 Raiskin, "Robert Schumann. A Bouquet of Love Songs," on *Mariinsky Theatre*; Daverio and Sams, "Schumann, Robert," on *Grove Music Online*.

Robert Schumann, III. Langsam getragen (ursprüngliche Fassung), Fantasie in C Major, op. 17 (1836)

Fantasie in C Major, op. 17, which is considered to be one of the greatest piano works composed by Schumann, is dedicated to Franz Liszt, and is headed by Friedrich Schlegel's following poem:

Durch alle Töne tönet	Through all the notes
Im bunten Erdentraum	In earth's many-coloured dream
Ein leiser Ton gezogen	There sounds one soft long-drawn note
Für den, der heimlich lauschet	For the one who listens in secret.[145]

In order to understand the backdrop to the dedicatee and motto, we must walk through its complex compositional history. Although a "call to Beethoven's admirers" announced by the "Bonner Verein für Beethovens Monument" (Bonn Society for Beethoven's Monument) on December 17, 1835, is sometimes mentioned as the event that initiated the composition of Fantasie in *C* Major, op. 17, according to Robert Schumann's letter to Clara, it seems more accurate to say that a "deep lament" for Clara due to their separation enforced by Clara's father's opposition to their marriage first resulted in a single-movement work titled *Ruines* (Ruins) in 1936.[146]

The "call to Beethoven's admirers" was an effort to raise funds to build a monument to Beethoven in Bonn, Germany, an initiative in which Franz Liszt (1811-1886) and other composers were involved. Inspired by this "call", Schumann added the second and third movements to *Ruines*, and proposed to publish the three movements as *Ruinen, Trophaeen, Palmen. Grosse Sonate f.d. Pianof. für Beethovens Denkmal* (Ruins, Trophies, Palms. Grand Sonata for Pianoforte. For Beethoven's Monument) later that year.[147] The work is dedicated to Liszt because of the Hungarian composer's involvement in the efforts to build a monument to Beethoven. (In return, Liszt dedicated his Sonata in B

[145] Nicholas Marston, "Fantasie in C major, Op 17: Introduction," on *Hyperion Records* (accessed July 16 2018), <https://www.hyperion-records.co.uk>.
[146] Ernst Herttrich, "Preface", in *Robert Schumann: Fantasie C-dur, Opus 17*, ed. Ernst Herttrich (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2003), III; Marston, "Fantasie in C major, Op 17: Introduction," on *Hyperion Records*.
[147] Ibid.

minor to Schumann in 1854, ironically the year in which Schumann attempted suicide and was admitted to the asylum.)[148] Schumann's original plan was to donate the proceeds of this composition to the Bonn Beethoven monument, but as the talks with the publisher fell apart, the work was put aside for a while.[149] The letter Schumann wrote to Clara in 1838 reveals that the titles of the movements were changed to *Ruine, Siegesbogen, u. Sternbild* (Ruins, Victory Arch and Constellation), and the title of the overall work became *Dichtungen* (Poems).[150] In the letter, he shared with Clara, "I strove after this word [*Dichtungen* (Poems)] for a very long time, without being able to find it; I feel it is very noble and descriptive for musical compositions".[151] However, less than a month prior to the publication, *Dichtungen* (Poems) was replaced by the generic title *Fantasie* (Fantasy).[152]

Along with the complicated history described above, Schumann's focus also shifted over time. It is true that the composer had Beethoven in mind as evident in the original title "Grand Sonata for Beethoven". Schumann also paid tribute to Beethoven by quoting "Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder" (Accept, then, these songs), the last song from Beethoven's song cycle *An die ferne Geliebte* (To the distant beloved), op. 98, at the end of the first movement.[153] And yet it seems that Schumann could not help going back to Clara for the source of inspiration. His choice of *An die ferne Geliebte* (To the distant beloved) to quote Beethoven was a sign of his longing for Clara as the couple was forcibly separated at that time, and Clara was the "distant beloved" to Schumann. Schumann's following comment on Schlegel's poem in a letter to Clara in 1839 also confirms what was driving Schumann's composition:

> Are not you really the 'note' in the motto? I almost believe you are.[154]

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148 Wolf-Dieter Seiffert, "Schumann's Fantasie Opus 17 (and Franz Liszt's Sonata in B minor)," on *G. Henle Verlag* (accessed July 21 2018), <https://www.henle.com>.
149 Herttrich, "Preface", in *Robert Schumann: Fantasie C-dur, Opus 17*, ed. Ernst Herttrich, III.
150 Ibid., IV.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
153 Herttrich, "Preface", in Robert Schumann: Fantasie C-dur, Opus 17, ed. Ernst Herttrich, III.; Nicholas Marston, "Fantasie in C major, Op 17: Introduction," on *Hyperion Records*.
154 Nicholas Marston, "Fantasie in C major, Op 17: Introduction," on *Hyperion Records*.

Charles Rosen (1927-2012), one of the influential American pianists and writers on music, also pointed out that Beethoven's "Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder", hinted at throughout the first movement, was the "hidden tone" that "runs secretly through the whole".[155]

Interestingly, when the Bonn Beethoven monument was finally completed in August, 1845, Schumann did not take any notice of the event.[156] (However, it is important to note and also fascinating to know that while he was in the asylum between 1854 and 1856 after his attempted suicide, Schumann visited the monument when his health permitted.)[157] It is probably fair to say that Schumann began and ended this work with Clara on his mind while at the same time keeping Beethoven in mind. For a man of overflowing ideas, having both Clara and Beethoven simultaneously in mind offered a fertile ground to mirror his sentiment. Looking at the text of "Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder", we discover Clara (or Robert) and Beethoven perfectly merging:

Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder Alois Jeitteles	**Accept, then, these songs** (English Translation by Richard Stokes)
Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder,	Accept, then, these songs
Die ich dir, Geliebte, sang,	I sang for you, beloved;
Singe sie dann abends wieder	Sing them again at evening
Zu der Laute süßem Klang!	To the lute's sweet sound!
Wenn das Dämmrungsrot dann ziehet	As the red light of evening draws
Nach dem stillen blauen See,	Towards the calm blue lake,
Und sein letzter Strahl verglühet	And its last rays fade
Hinter jener Bergeshöh;	Behind those mountain heights;
Und du singst, was ich gesungen,	And you sing what I sang
Was mir aus der vollen Brust	From a full heart
Ohne Kunstgepräng erklungen,	With no display of art,
Nur der Sehnsucht sich bewußt:	Aware only of longing:

[155] Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1972), 451.
[156] Herttrich, "Preface", in *Robert Schumann: Fantasie C-dur, Opus 17*, ed. Ernst Herttrich, III.
[157] Daverio and Sams, "Schumann, Robert," on *Grove Music Online*.

Dann vor diesen Liedern weichet	Then, at these songs,
Was geschieden uns so weit,	The distance that parted us shall recede,
Und ein liebend Herz erreichet	And a loving heart be reached
Was ein liebend Herz geweiht!	By what a loving heart has hallowed![158]

One may also argue that abandoning structured sonata form and replacing it with the more improvisatory fantasy that expresses spontaneous feeling are a sign of moving away from Beethoven, but it is probably more appropriate to understand it as a reflection of Beethoven; Beethoven's two sonatas, op. 27, no. 1 and no. 2, were both published as *sonata quasi una fantasia*, and his late sonatas certainly challenge the boundaries of sonata form in favor of freer expressions.

Fantasie in C major, op. 17 is another work in which Florestan (the exuberant side of Schumann) and Eusebius (the reflective side of Schumann) participate as evident in the following letter Schumann wrote to the publisher regarding this work for the first time in 1936:

> Florestan and Eusebius would very much like to do something for Beethoven's monument and to this end have written something which goes by the following title: *Ruinen, Trophaeen, Palmen. Grand Sonata for Pianoforte. Beethoven's Monument*.[159]

While Florestan and Eusebius collaborate on the first movement, the triumphal second movement represents Florestan. The third movement in this program unmistakably projects the Eusebiusian world with the tempo marking *Langsam getragen. Durchweg leise zu halten.* (Slow and solemn. Consistently quiet.). As shown below, this movement takes the audience to many different and surprising keys mostly by going down a third before returning to its home key of C major in the end. A series of tonicizations and modulations could be interpreted as the representation of Eusebius' dreamy character. It is fascinating that the first important modulation that takes place at measure 30 is

[158] "Nimm sie hin den, diese Lieder (1816) op. 98 no. 6," on *Oxford Lieder* (accessed July 25 2018), <https://www.oxfordlieder.co.uk>.
[159] Herttrich, "Preface", in *Robert Schumann: Fantasie C-dur, Opus 17*, ed. Ernst Herttrich, III.

again the remote and surprising key of A-flat major, the important key in *Myrthen* as previously discussed.

Measures	Key
mm. 1-29	C major
mm. 30-35	A-flat major
mm. 36-59	Transition with a series of tonicizations
mm. 60-86	F major
mm. 87-92	D-flat major
mm. 93-110	Transition with a series of tonicizations
mm. 111-142	C major

Figure 49. Modulations in the third movement of Fantasie in C Major, op. 17.

It is also important to note that the final page of the autograph version of Schumann's copyist Carl Brückner from Leipzig (Figure 54) shows that Schumann originally intended to end the entire work with Beethoven's "Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder" (Accept, then, these songs), repeating the quotation from the first movement with slight changes to the harmonization.[160] Although Schumann abandoned this idea and replaced it with the closing measures as we know them today, notable pianists such as Charles Rosen and András Schiff (b. 1953) have recorded this work with the original ending.[161]

[160] Seiffert, "Schumann's Fantasie Opus 17 (and Franz Liszt's Sonata in B minor)," on *G. Henle Verlag*.
[161] Ibid.

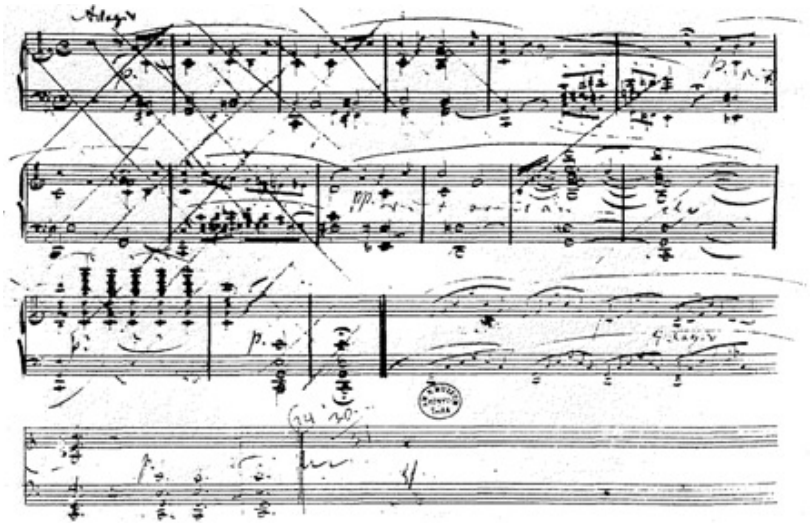

Figure 50: The final page of the autograph version of Carl Brückner with the original ending.

G. Henle Verlag, the publisher of the urtext edition, used to include in a footnote the original ending with the quotation of Beethoven's "Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder", but removed it in 2003.[162] The publisher explains that it is because of their responsibility as editors and publisher to honor the decision made by the composer; Schumann's will was clearly to cross out the original ending and replace it with the current ending, which means the composer did not want the original ending to be played.[163]

It is true that we must respect the composer's final decision. However, in this program, I have decided to present this last movement of Fantasie in C Major, op. 17, with the original ending because it beautifully captures what a fleeting moment is. In the original ending, after the overflowing (and almost uncontrollable) emotion with Schumann's instruction *nach und nach bewegter und schneller* (gradually moving forward and faster), the music comes to complete silence, and what we hear at the very end of this work is Beethoven's "Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder" with the marking *Adagio*. Although Schumann quotes only the two-measure melody, he repeats it over and over as if to savor the moment and refuse to let it go. The dissonance created by the tonic pedal and dominant chord at measure 151 reminds us of "Vor Liebe und Liebesweh"

[162] Wolf-Dieter Seiffert, "Schumann's Fantasie Opus 17 (and Franz Liszt's Sonata in B minor)," on *G. Henle Verlag*.
[163] Ibid.

(with love and the pain of love) at the end of *Die Lotosblume*.

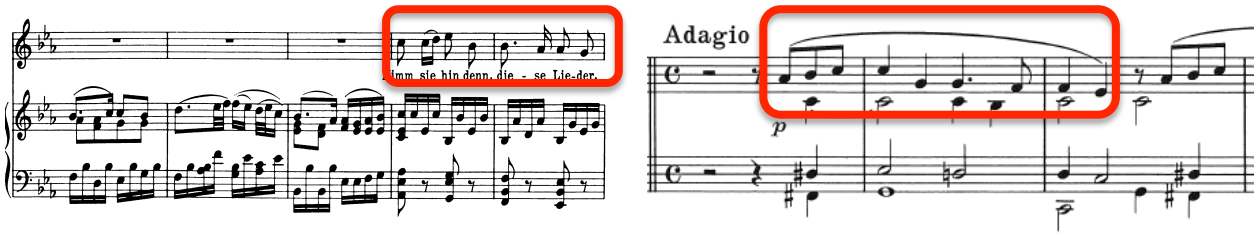

Figure 51. (Left) Beethoven: "Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder"; (Right) Schumann: Fantasie in C Major, op. 17, third movement, original ending quoting Beethoven's "Nimm sie hin denn, diese Lieder", mm. 139-141.

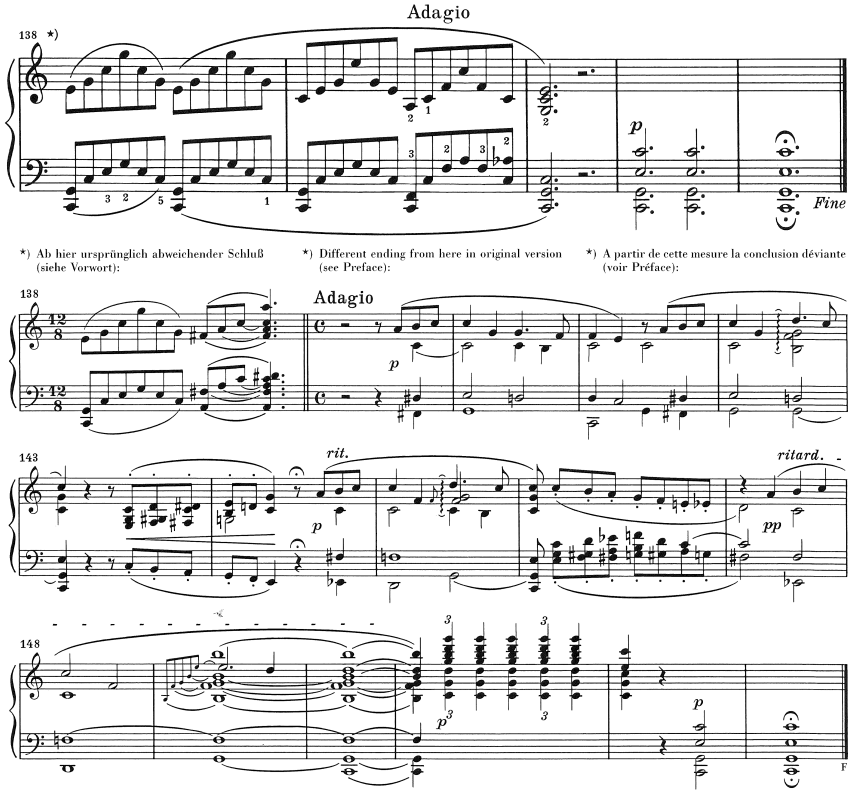

Figure 52. The Henle edition with the original ending in a footnote, printed between 1987-2003.[164]

164 Ibid.

Afterword

The idea of performing a recital titled "Fleeting" came into my mind a few years ago when I decided to learn Prokofiev's *Visions Fugitives*. Although I was not aware of this at that time, in hindsight my cultural background could have been at play when I was putting this program together.

In Japan where I grew up, the notion of *Mujo*, which is often translated as "impermanence" or "transience", is deeply embedded in the culture. I remember reciting as a middle school student the following passage that opens *The Tale of the Heike*, the epic from the Middle Ages written based on the actual historical struggle between the Heike and Genji clans and the tragic downfall of the Heike:

> The sound of the Gion shoja bells echoes the impermanence of all things; the color of the sola flowers reveals the truth that the prosperous must decline. The proud do not endure, they are like a dream on a spring night; the mighty fall at last, they are as dust before the wind.[165]

Mujo was originally the Japanese translation of *Anicca*, one of the essential doctrines in Buddhism that teaches evanescence and impermanence of existence, but combined with the social turbulence and unrest the country experienced during the Middle Ages, the concept also became a significant part of Japanese aesthetics. For example, every spring Japanese have *Ohanami* (cherry blossom viewing) to savor the fleeting moment. We see *Sakura* (cherry blossom) as the embodiment of *Mujo* because of its fleeting beauty. *Sakura*, along with *Koyo* (colored leaves) in the autumn, represents the changing of the seasons that forces us to recognize evanescence in all living things.

Here is another episode that I would like to share; as I opened the book *Appreciations of Japanese Culture* written by Donald Keene (one of the most significant contemporary commentators on Japanese culture) in order to write this afterword, I discovered that

[165] Helen Craig McCullough, *The Tale of the Heike* (Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1990), 23.

the author had used these four keywords in an effort to decipher Japanese aesthetics: suggestion, irregularity, simplicity, and perishability.[166] Unfortunately it is not possible to explain in detail what each keyword means here, but there are certainly connections between the keywords and this program. "Suggestion" is equivalent to Debussy's aesthetics while "irregularity" is the device the composers used to convey elusiveness. "Simplicity" can be seen in Prokofiev's miniatures, and "perishability" represents what is fleeting, which is the theme of the entire program. I wish I could say that I put together the repertoire with those keywords in mind, but that was not the case. It is fascinating to see how the subconscious mind works sometimes.

Logically speaking, one who becomes attached to what is fleeting while being fully aware of its impermanence is a fool, but as I stated in the beginning of the program notes, there is something very human about being drawn to (or even refusing to let go of) what is fleeting. I dare say I would rather stay foolish.

[166] Donald Keene, *Appreciations of Japanese Culture* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1971), 11-25.

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