



ESTAMPES

Claude Debussy (1903)



POINTS OF INTEREST:

- The French style and Impressionism
- 20thC features
- The Far East and Exoticism- Gamelan
- How he broke away from German Romantic tradition

NOS. 1 AND 2 ('PAGODES' AND 'LA SOIRÉE DANS GRENADE')

STRUCTURE:

- Short pieces in comparison to long German structures
- Pagodes:
 - Loose ternary form
 - Central section has elements from the first one
 - All 3 sections have subsections.
- La soirée dans Grenade: Introduction, habanera

HARMONY AND TONALITY:

- Avoids sense of tonic and dominant chords and traditional modulation.
- More diatonic than 20thC contemporaries.
- Parallel chords
- Pagodes: opening- gong like open 5ths, Chords feature added notes, recreating gamelan harmonies. Uses black notes of the piano for pentatonic sound. B is a tonal centre rather than a key, flattened seventh
- La soirée dans Grenade: parallel 7th chords, Added note chords, chords based on 4ths and 5ths, some music tonal in character: Central melody in A major.

CONTEXT:

- Debussy: Works marked a break from 19thC Romantic tradition. Described as impressionist in style although he was reluctant to be classified in this way. Include French directions in music.
- Like painters of the time, fascinated with nature, art coming from the Far East (Javanese Gamelan) and exoticism in general, eg looking to Spain (Le Soiree dans Grenade)
- Estampes: 3 piano pieces exploring main elements of Impressionist style:
 - Brevity: short melodies and structure,
 - Descriptive music: titles give starting point for interpretation of listener
 - Pentatonic and modal melodies- Eastern and Western folk elements.
 - Unconventional tonal schemes.
 - More diatonic than other early 20thC music.
 - Parallel chords.
 - Sustaining pedal on the piano to produce misty, watery effects.

RHYTHM, METRE AND TEMPO:

- Pagodes: Varying speeds as typical in Gamelan music, triplets, rippling demisemiquaver ideas, cross rhythms, 'slow trills', syncopated chords
- La soirée dans Grenade: habanera rhythm (Cuban dance that spread to Spain in 19thC), simple duple time, dotted quaver, semiquaver and two quavers rhythm, improvisatory rhythm typical of flamenco, frequent tempo changes eg. rubato, tempo giusto, free time,

TEXTURE:

- Pagodes: 'Gong' sounds act as pedal, Left hand of bar 11 returns in octaves at the top of the texture, trill accompaniment,
- La soirée dans Grenade: accompaniment in high tessitura.
- La soirée dans Grenade: inverted pedal

SONORITY:

- Sustain pedal. cross hand technique
- Pagodes: playing in octaves, contrary motion, slow trills,
- La soirée dans Grenade: Rapid staccato spread chords at the ends of phrases emulating flamenco guitar, acciaccatura ornaments, extreme ranges of piano explored

MELODY:

- Pentatonic melodies
- Modal melodies
- Pagodes: Javanese slendro scale. 4 note ostinato, undulating scalic countermelody, whole tone scale,
- La soirée dans Grenade: Moorish lament like melody, dissonance, distinctive flamenco augmented 2nd, conjunct melody, whole tone scale,