

Claude Debussy: *Estampes*, No. 1 'Pagodes' and No. 2 'La soirée dans Grenade'



CD 3 tracks 1–2

Claude Debussy (1862–1918) was one of the most influential composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He reacted against the Romanticism of 19th-century German music by composing in his own distinctive style. Debussy's music is often associated with **Impressionism**; a movement in which art suggests the atmosphere and environment of the subject rather than attempting to be fully descriptive and programmatic. In the same way, Debussy's music places more emphasis on colour and texture rather than a more direct expression of emotion, relying instead on allusion and understatement.

Debussy's piano-writing often used the extreme registers, with widely spaced chords and **parallel movement** and took a new approach to pedalling which produced subtle blending effects. Several of Debussy's piano pieces demonstrate that he was influenced by non-Western scales and instruments.

Following the score

Debussy gave most of his performance markings in French; it will help your understanding of the music if you translate these. The abbreviations m.g. and m.d. stand for *main gauche* (left hand) and *main droite* (right hand). Parts of 'La soirée dans Grenade' use three staves in order for the music to be more easily read e.g. bars 96–108.

Estampes (Prints) (1903) is a set of three pieces for piano. It is sometimes described as Debussy's first truly impressionistic piano work.

No. 1 'Pagodes' (Pagodas)

In 'Pagodes' Debussy attempted to capture some of the Javanese gamelan sound through his use of the **pentatonic scale**, **ostinato**, shimmering layered textures and interlocking rhythms. Debussy uses the pentatonic scale to emulate the *slendro* scale found in Javanese gamelan music.



Here is the melody line in bars 4–5, based on the pentatonic scale.

A feeling of underlying stillness is created in part by the use of long pedal points, slowing the rate of harmonic change, eg. bars 61–64.

No. 2 'La soirée dans Grenade' (The evening in Granada)

Debussy evokes varied images of Spain through a range of techniques such as the use of a **habanera** rhythm and the imitation of strummed guitar chords by the piano. The ostinato habanera dance rhythm permeates the entire piece.



The guitar strumming effect first appears in bars 17–18. Notice the use of **arpeggiation** shown by the wiggly lines in bar 18.

Many of the chords use **parallel movement** (where the movement of two or more parts use the same interval in the same direction) as in the example above. This is a common characteristic of Debussy's music.

In bars 23–28 Debussy uses the **whole tone scale**.



Notice the long pedal points Debussy uses to provide a tonal centre for the music e.g. the C♯ in bars 5–14. A dance-like section opens at bar 38 marked '*Très rythmé, mf en augmentant beaucoup*' (very rhythmic and getting a lot louder).

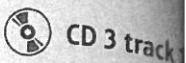
What to listen for

- Which characteristics of Impressionism are evident in 'Pagodes' and 'La soirée dans Grenade'?
- Describe the different textures used in each piece.
- Which aspect of the gamelan sound does Debussy evoke in 'Pagodes'?
- How does Debussy evoke Spain in 'La soirée dans Grenade'?
- Notice the use of the double-harmonic scale (sometimes referred to as the Arabic scale) starting at bar 7.

Wider listening

The two movements of *Estampes* are examples of the fusion of Classical music with Indonesian and Spanish music. In *Bachianas Brasileiras*, the composer Villa-Lobos fuses elements of the music of his native Brazil with the contrapuntal spirit of J. S. Bach's music. You could examine how the musical elements are treated in No. 2 for small orchestra and No. 5 for soprano and cellos.

Estampes
No. 1 'Pagodes'



Claude Debussy

Modérément animé

m.g.

Piano

delicatement et presque sans nuances

pp

m.d.

2. Péd.

8va

a tempo

rit.

8va

a tempo

rit.

a tempo

8va

a tempo

rit.

10

p

3

2. Péd.

55

13

p

*

16

p

17

18

Animez un peu

p

poco cresc.

19

21

Toujours animé

pp

22

25

pp

in Durand

26

Revenez au 1^o Tempo

27

pp

2. Léo.

rit.

30

m.g.

m.d.

*

33

sans lenteur

p

37

dans une sonorité plus claire

p

39

cresc.

cresc.

V

44

45

pp

48

51

Retenu

tr.

Tempo I°

pp

54

a tempo

rit.

8va

3

rit.

The musical score for Debussy's "Estampes" on page 323 features five staves of music. The first three staves are in common time, while the last two are in 3/4 time. The key signature is A major (three sharps). Measure 44 starts with a forte dynamic (ff) in the upper staff, followed by a series of sixteenth-note chords. The lower staff begins with eighth-note chords. Measure 45 continues with eighth-note chords in both staves, starting at piano dynamic (pp). Measure 48 shows a rhythmic pattern of eighth-note pairs in the upper staff and eighth notes with a sharp sign in the lower staff. Measure 49 concludes with a piano dynamic (p). Measure 51 begins with a dynamic instruction "Retenu" and a trill symbol (tr.) over the upper staff. The upper staff then transitions to a tempo marking "Tempo I°". The lower staff begins with eighth-note chords. Measure 54 starts with a dynamic "pp" and a tempo marking "a tempo". The upper staff features eighth-note pairs with slurs and grace notes, marked with "8va" and a "3" above the staff. The lower staff also has eighth-note pairs. The score concludes with a dynamic "rit." (ritardando) in both staves.

57 *a tempo*

8va----- | 3 | a tempo

rit.

60 rit. a tempo

p

2. Ped.

63

p

*

66

p

3 3 3 3

Animez un peu

p

3 3 3 3

cresc.

molto

Musical score for Debussy's Estampes, page 325, measures 72-74. The score consists of two staves. The top staff uses a treble clef and has a key signature of four sharps. The bottom staff uses a bass clef and has a key signature of one sharp. Measure 72 starts with a sixteenth-note pattern. Measure 73 begins with a dynamic ***ff***. Measure 74 concludes with a sixteenth-note pattern.

Musical score for Debussy's Estampes, page 325, measures 75-77. The top staff continues with sixteenth-note patterns. Measure 75 includes dynamics ***toujours ff***. Measures 76 and 77 show sustained notes with grace notes above them. Measure 77 ends with a dynamic ***p***.

Musical score for Debussy's Estampes, page 325, measures 78-80. The top staff shows a continuous sixteenth-note pattern. Dynamics ***ff*** and ***dim.*** are indicated. Measures 79 and 80 begin with dynamics ***p*** and ***dim.*** respectively. The bottom staff provides harmonic support with sustained notes.

Musical score for Debussy's Estampes, page 325, measures 80-82. The top staff starts with a dynamic ***pp***. Measures 80 and 81 feature eighth-note patterns with grace notes. Measure 82 concludes with a dynamic ***p***.

Musical score for Debussy's Estampes, page 325, measures 81-83. The top staff continues with eighth-note patterns. Measures 81 and 82 feature dynamics ***8va***. Measure 83 concludes with a dynamic ***p***.

The sheet music consists of five staves of musical notation for piano, labeled 82 through 87. The notation is as follows:

- Staff 1 (Treble Clef):** Features sixteenth-note patterns. Measure 82: 3 groups of 4 notes. Measure 83: 3 groups of 4 notes. Measure 84: 4 groups of 4 notes. Measure 85: 4 groups of 4 notes. Measure 86: 4 groups of 4 notes. Measure 87: 4 groups of 4 notes.
- Staff 2 (Bass Clef):** Measures 82-83: 3 groups of 4 eighth notes. Measures 84-87: 4 groups of 4 eighth notes.
- Staff 3 (Treble Clef):** Measures 82-83: 3 groups of 4 eighth notes. Measures 84-87: 4 groups of 4 eighth notes.
- Staff 4 (Bass Clef):** Measures 82-83: 3 groups of 4 eighth notes. Measures 84-87: 4 groups of 4 eighth notes.
- Staff 5 (Treble Clef):** Measures 82-83: 3 groups of 4 eighth notes. Measures 84-87: 4 groups of 4 eighth notes.

Performance instructions include dynamic markings (e.g., *pp*, *5*) and articulations (e.g., *8va*, *8va*).

Musical score for Debussy's *Estampes*, featuring five staves of piano music. The score includes dynamic markings such as *più pp*, *encore plus pp*, *Retenu*, and *aussi pp que possible*. Performance instructions like *(laissez vibrer)* are also present. Measure numbers 88, 90, 92, 95, and 97 are indicated at the beginning of each staff.

88 *più pp*

90 *encore plus pp*

92

95

Retenu
aussi *pp* que possible *(laissez vibrer)*

Mouvement de habanera*Commencer lentement dans un rythme nonchalamment gracieux*

Piano



Mouvement de habanera
Commencer lentement dans un rythme nonchalamment gracieux

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19

Retenu **Tempo giusto**

pianissimo *pianissimo*

k2
150

Tempo rubato

23

p expressif

pp

dim.

p

Retenu

29

Tempo giusto
pp
pp

pp

pp

33

mf
dim.
p

mf

dim.

p

Très rythmé

mf en augmentant beaucoup

38

mf en augmentant beaucoup

ff

43

mf

mf

47

mf

dim.

(h)

51

più dim.

(h)

56

p

più p

pp

8va

56

Tempo rubato

p expressif

pp

dim.

Retenu

Tempo I° (avec plus d'abandon)

pp

3

72

77

82

87

92

Tempo giusto

96

(8)

101

Léger et lointain
(la ♩ = ♪ de la mesure précédente)

106 (8)

110

Tempo I°**Léger et lointain**

(la ♩ = ♪ de la mesure précédente)

113

116

Mouvt du début**Tempo I°**

119

124

en allant se perdant

130