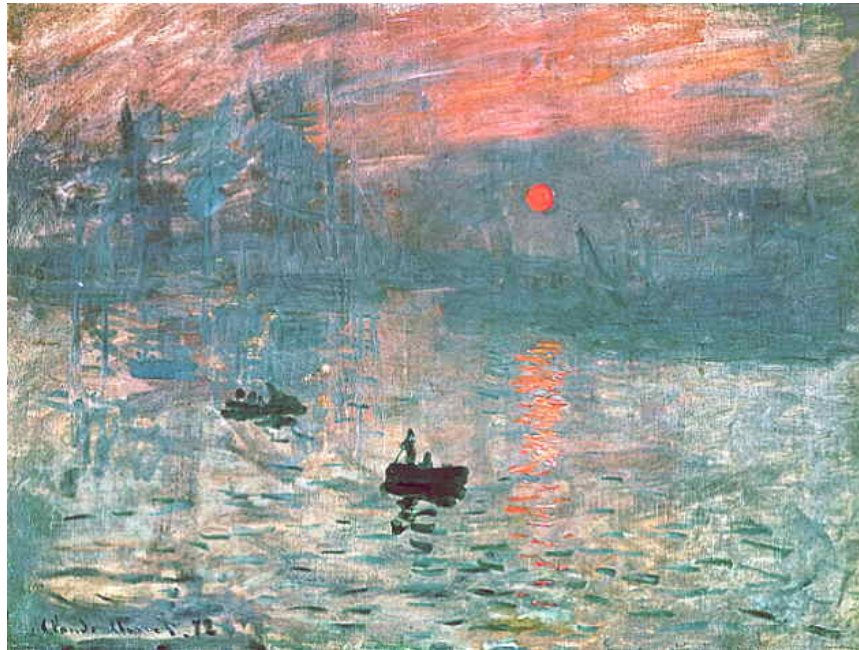


## Debussy: Estampes No 1 `Pagodes` and No2 `La soirée dans Granade`

- `Estampes` is a set of three pieces composed 1903;
- the title translates as `Prints` . . . the type of image created by the use of a (wooden) carved stamp - an imprint;
- Impressionism: a French artistic movement, first associated with the paintings of Monet, Renoir (and others) and later embracing both literature and music / changing quality of light / without defined lines / bright colours;



- often applied to music (but not necessarily to every composition) by Debussy, Ravel, Delius, Satie . . . although Debussy himself dismissed the label;
- glimmering sound, fleeting motifs, fast movement in a *piano* dynamic, uncertain tonality, lack of regular pulse, chromatic movement, chromatically altered harmonies, parallel chords, the use of 7th, 9th and 11th chords, the whole tone scale, shimmering string *tremolos*, changing tempi, a dreamy trancelike feel are all features associated with the style;
- scores often contain evocative performance directions . . . 'similarly to the flute', 'from a distance', `delicately and almost without shades of expression` (`Pagodes`) and so on.
- Debussy was an outstanding pianist and this is reflected in his understanding of the potential of the instrument and his ability to explore new sonorities and innovative techniques.

### No 1 `Pagodes`

- `Pagodas` . . . influenced by the music of East Asia;
- Debussy was greatly impressed and influenced by the music of a Javanese gamelan orchestra which performed in Paris at the Paris International Exhibitions of 1889 and 1890;
- the influence of this contact with gamelan music can be seen in a number of his works - `Prelude` from *Pour le Piano*, `L`isle joyeuse` and above all, `Pagodes` (As Debussy never travelled to Java, he wouldn`t appreciate the total lack of Pagodas in that country!);

- *Kiyoshi Tamagawa, in a dissertation 'Echoes from the East', lists five criteria for determining if a particular piece was influenced by gamelan music . . .*
- *1 - titles suggestive of the orient or exoticism;*
- *2 - passages or formal structures built around ostinato techniques or large-scale repetition, including forms which are built on circular or symmetrical patterns, rather than on the tonal logic of western music;*
- *3 - pitch materials, motives or scales suggestive of gamelan. Aside from the few examples of direct borrowing, this mostly consists of the use of non-diatonic scales (whole-tone and pentatonic, among others) which suggest slendro and pelog tunings used in gamelan music, or at least scales and tunings which are different from the major-minor system;*
- *4 - timbres and tone colors evocative of the gamelan. The resonating piano is perhaps Western music's closest approximation of the sound of the gamelan. Soft, pedalled, staccato notes, soft seconds, low fifths held in the pedal, and high, fast, ostinato-type figures all suggest aspects of the gamelan's timbre;*
- *5 - textures reminiscent of layered gamelan texture. The most characteristic texture is a low, slow-moving, sustained gong sound, overlaid by a moderately moving melody in the middle range of the piano, and faster-moving figures in the upper range of the piano;*
- all five of these criteria are features of 'Pagodes' ;
- layering of independent motifs, rather than the more 'mathematical' and structured polyphony of, for instance, a Bach fugue;
- bells and gongs in the first two bars / soft, pedaled staccatos / often in octaves / upper layers of 4ths and 5ths;
- low gongs sound periodically / a moderately paced melody in the middle / faster moving figures in the upper range / each layer with a different articulation eg bar 11+;
- emulating the cycles of gamelan music, which often end with a *ritardando* leading to a solo gong beat which begins the next cycle eg at bars 4, 6, 8, 10 etc;
- suggestions of the rhythmic complexity and interplay among the various gamelan instruments, for instance in the 3 against 2 rhythms of bar 23+ and in the more complex overlaid rhythms of bar 37+ and bar 78 to the end;
- the main melody is expanded and rhythmically developed in a manner similar to the nuclear melodies of gamelan music / eg bars 11, 13 and 14 all have a different, rhythmically modified version of the same pitch outline used in the original motif (bar 3);
- in bar 14 the increasing rhythmic diminution results in the series of pitches starting again (with the return of G# and C# at the end of the bar);
- bars 17 and 18 also have a rhythmically modified version OR diminution of the same pitch outline used in the original motif (bar 3) / in bar 17, the complete motif outline is played twice / bar 18 begins with the second part of the motif / followed by the first part three times (the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in a higher octave);
- the main melody is always presented in the middle range of the piano;
- use of 'black key' pentatonic scale / and often using just four of the five notes / the A# appears infrequently until the final passage bar 78+;
- the tonal ambiguity of the inner motif in bars 7 and 8 / a non-pentatonic element , this motif could be modal (transposed Dorian / Aeolian) or tonal (G# minor / B major);

- the use of tonality at bar 33 is also very ambiguous / the best `fit` seems to be transposed mixolydian (the `G` mode) with C# as the tonic (the `B` feels like a flattened 7<sup>th</sup>) / there is also however, much to recommend the whole tone scale . . . the new motif begins and ends with the characteristic tritone in whole tone steps / but the G# does lie outside the whole tone scheme. (*Some analyses suggest the `dominant` key, F# major. But there is no feel of F# as a new tonal centre here and neither for that matter, is there any real feel of B major ever being established as the overall `home` key in the traditional tonal sense.*)
- use of dissonance, especially major 2<sup>nd</sup>;
- crossing of hands . . . *main droit* and *main gauche*;
- use of pedals . . . BOTH pedals are specified in bar 1 and restated in bar 11, to remain depressed through to the end of bar 14 / intended to simulate the delicate (soft pedal) but also the resonant, undamped tones of a gamelan ensemble / and to strengthen the mix of harmonic overtones;
- **translations of the French terms:** bar 1 - Moderately lively / bar 3 - delicately and almost without shades of expression (*an important indication that the music is to be played without Romantic indulgence*) / bar 19 - a little livelier / bar 23 - always busy and bright / bar 27 - return to the original (first) tempo / bar 33 - without slowing / bar 37 - with greater clarity (`in a tone more clear`) / bar 52 - held back / bar 69 - a little livelier / bar 76 - always very loud / bar 88 - even quieter (more *pp*) / bar 91 - still more quietly / bar 97 - as quietly as possible (*these terms are actually quite confusing . . . pianissimo and fortissimo are ALREADY superlatives ie. `as quiet (or as loud) as possible` . . . so how do you play `quieter than possible`? But we get the idea . . . not loud then!*) / bar 98 - let the sound resonate (to nothing).

## No2 `La soirée dans Granada`

- `The evening in Granada` . . . influenced by the music of Spain;
- specifically, this piece is dominated by the swaying rhythm of the Habanera - a traditional Spanish dance;



- bars 1 - 6 . . . bare 5ths and octaves;
- bars 7 - 16 so-called `Arabic` scale - using flattened supertonic (D natural) / and (two) intervals of an augmented 2<sup>nd</sup> / also the scale has two identical tetrachords (half-scales) . . . semitone + augmented 2<sup>nd</sup> + tone;
- the `Moorish / Spanish` feel is further enhanced by the languid, flexible, irregular rhythm / with an absence of regular metrical pulse / use of ornamentation;
- bars 17 - 20 provide contrast, with an agitated, unsettled feel / chordal / detached, staccato articulation / crescendo / (mostly) homorhythmic / homophonic / a denser texture / and (more) dissonant;
- bars 23 - 28 . . . use of whole tone scale - F#, G#, A, B, C#, D#;
- bars 33 - 36 . . . this passage uses a syncopated rhythm (*off-beat rhythms*) / uses tertiary key / chord progressions (*chords a third apart eg A minor - F# major*) / uses false relations (*chromatically altered versions of the same pitch in adjacent chords eg. C natural - C sharp*) / uses a bass pedal (*an F# bass pedal runs through the four bars*) / uses

- repetition (*repetition of the last two chords D major and B major*) / uses parallel motion (*chords in parallel motion throughout, in second inversion over the pedal*);
- bars 38 - 43 . . . Spanish flamenco guitar feel / with rapid double (two finger) picking - *picado* . . . the repeated, semiquaver `E` and `A` in bars 39, 41 and 43 / and `fan` technique - *abanico* or *rasgueado* . . . on the final arpeggio chord in each bar;
- there are similar guitar style figurations in the `*Léger et lointain*` passages towards the end of the piece;
- a lively and vigorous A major dance starting at the end of bar 41 is a passage of unusually settled tonality;
- followed by a return of the whole tone motif from bars 23 - 28;
- bar 67 - a second, more energetic and syncopated flamenco-like passage in an ambiguous F# major - F# minor tonality (caused by the use of A natural and its enharmonic equivalent G double sharp);
- the remainder of the movement reprises previous material (often modified) with some characteristic `three hand` technique / the `*Léger et lointain*` passages are new material.
- **translations of the French terms:** bar 1 - Begin slowly, with a relaxed (carefree) graceful rhythm / bar 7 - expressively / bar 15 - held back / bar 17 - in a strict tempo / bar 23 - in a flexible tempo (*ok so those last two are Italian*) / bar 38 - very rhythmically . . . medium loud increasing substantially (*mf crescendo molto*)/ bar 67 - back to the first tempo, with more vigour (more impetuous) / bar 109 - lightly and distant . . . a crotchet (beat) = a quaver of the previous bar (or `half tempo` or even . . . just use double the note values?) / bar 122 - back to the tempo of the beginning (of the movement) . . . Tempo 1<sup>o</sup> in bar 113 and 119 presumably refers to the tempo of bar 67.