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Faculty Recital: "Claude Debussy: Painter of Music" Richard Shuster, piano

Richard Shuster

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*“It is
my plan
to build
a school
of music
second
to none.”*

—William
Grant Egbert
(1867–1928)
Founder,
Ithaca
Conservatory
of Music

SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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FACULTY RECITAL

“Claude Debussy: Painter of Music”

Richard Shuster, piano

Preludes, Book I.....Claude Debussy

I. *Danseuses de Delphes* (Dance of the Delphi)

By making a specific reference to ancient Greece, Debussy removes us from the world of Symbolism and Impressionism. He was undoubtedly familiar with the revered Classical period works of Nicholas Poussin and Jacques-Louis David. *Dance of the Delphi* was supposedly inspired by a photograph of a temple which was dedicated to Apollo, the god of music, poetry and prophecy.

Ancient Greek: *View of Delphi*, ruins dating to the 5th c. BCE

Ancient Greek: *Women at a Fountain House*, 520-10 BCE, MFA, Boston

Ancient Greek: *Maenad*, Roman copy of Greek original of late 5th c. BCE, Metropolitan, NY

Poussin: *The Dance of Human Life*, 1638-40, Wallace, London

David: *Mars Disarmed by Venus and the Graces*, 1824, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Brussels

Unknown: *Dancers in the Antique Greek Style*, c. 1900, choreography by Isadora Duncan

II. *Voiles* (Sails/Veils)

Voiles, which can be translated as *sails* or *veils*, depicts an atmosphere in which the motion of air fluctuates over gentle waters. The sails in the music are paralleled in these works by Eugène Boudin and Claude Monet, delivering the images of these delicate breezes to the eye.

Boudin: *Beach Scene at Trouville*, 1863, NGA, Washington D.C.

Monet: *Impression: Soleil Levant*, 1872-73, Marmottan, Paris

Monet: *Bridge at Argenteuil*, 1874, NGA Washington D.C.

Monet: *The Harbor*, 1873, private collection

Monet: *Regatta at Argenteuil*, 1874, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Monet: *The Zaan River at Zaandam*, 1871, private collection

Monet: *Boats Leaving the Harbor*, 1865, Hill-Stead, Farmington, CT

III. *Le Vent dans la plaine* (The Wind on the Plain)

While *Voiles* depicts wind over water, *The Wind on the Plain* depicts wind over land. The inspiration for this prelude is a poem by poet and composer Charles-Simon Favart. The consequent line to "The wind on the plain..." is "...holds its breath". Vincent Van Gogh was a master of painting air moving across a landscape.

van Gogh: *Wheatfields, Auvers*, July 1890, Bayerisches, Munich

Van Gogh: (detail of above)

Van Gogh: *Wheat Field with Cypresses*, June, 1889, NGA, London

Van Gogh: *Starry Night*, June, 1889, Museum of Modern Art, New York

Van Gogh: *Poplars at St-Remy*, Fall, 1889, Museum of Art, Cleveland

Van Gogh: *Wheatfield with Blackbirds*, July 1890, Stedjlick, Amsterdam

IV. *Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir* (Sounds and Smells Mingle in the Evening Air)

The title is taken from Charles Baudelaire's poem *Evening Harmony*, from the collection *The Flowers of Evil*. This prelude perfectly demonstrates Baudelaire's concept of "Correspondences," in which the unification of the senses is glorified. The listener is encouraged to unify all the senses (even the sense of smell!) into a nostalgic and intimate experience.

Whistler: *The Ocean*, 1866 (reworked c. 1891), Frick Collection, New York

Whistler: *Nocturne, San Giorgio*, 1880, Freer, Washington, D.C.

Whistler: *Nocturne in Blue & Gold: Old Battersea Bridge*, 1877, Tate, London

Whistler: *Nocturne in Blue & Silver*, 1871, Fogg, Cambridge

Whistler: *Nocturne in Black & Gold, Falling Rocket*, 1874, Institute, Detroit

Whistler: *Nocturne, (First Venice Set)*, 1879-80, etching

Whistler: *Nocturne, Blue & Silver, Battersea Reach*, c. 1890, I.S. Gardner, Boston

V. *Les Collines d'Anacapri* (The Hills of Anacapri)

Anacapri is a small Italian town on the island of Capri. Set in the bay of Naples, Anacapri has been a popular vacation site for the various peoples who have inhabited the island for the past 2,500 years. Even in modern times, it provides a retreat in seclusion and unspoiled nature.

Renoir: *The Swing*, 1876, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Renoir: *Woman with a Parasol*, 1875, NGA, Washington

Renoir: *Dance at Bougival*, 1883, MFA, Boston

Monet: *Terrace at St-Adresse*, c. 1876, Metropolitan, NY

Renoir: *Luncheon of the Boating Party*, 1880-81

Monet: *La Grenouillère*, 1869, Metropolitan, NY

VI. *Des pas sur la neige* (Footsteps in the Snow)

Debussy's use of minimal material produces this highly emotional and individualistic piece. Similarly, Georgia O'Keeffe's simplistic abstractions were personal transcriptions of her individual sight, very much in keeping with the Impressionist idea of recording sensory data. The last image in this set evokes the metaphor of the road of life.

O'Keeffe: *Shell & Old Shingle No. VII*, 1926, MFA Boston

O'Keeffe: *White Abstraction (Madison Avenue)*, 1926, MFA St. Petersburg

O'Keeffe: *Abstraction*, 1926, Whitney, NY

O'Keeffe: *Black Lines*, c. 1916, Addison Gallery, Andover, MA

O'Keeffe: *Line & Curve*, 1927, NGA, Washington D.C.

O'Keeffe: *Abstraction IX*, 1916, Metropolitan, NY

O'Keeffe: *Winter Road*, 1963, NGA, Washington, D.C.

VII. *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest* (What the West Wind Saw)

While *Voiles* and *The Wind on the Plain* depict gentle and swift wind respectively, this prelude depicts much stormier weather. Debussy has taken the title from the fairy tale *The Garden of Paradise*, by Hans Christian Andersen. The West Wind is a mischievous character who entertains himself by creating storms that wreak havoc all over the globe. Legend has it that Joseph Mallord William Turner had himself tied to the mast of ship for four hours in a high gale in order to absorb the experience of a ship being tossed by the sea.

Monet: *Rocks of Belle-île*, 1886, Pushkin Museum, Moscow

Monet: *The Manneporte, Étretat*, 1883, Met, NY

Courbet: *Seascape*, (c. 1860), Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, MA

Turner: *Steamer in a Snowstorm*, 1842, Tate Gallery, London

Monet: *Coast at Belle-île, Storm*, 1886, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Turner: *Rain, Steam, & Speed*, 1844, NGA, London

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VIII. *La Fille aux cheveux de lin* (Girl with the Flaxen Hair)

Ironically, Debussy incorporates the exotic scales of the Balinese Gamelon in a piece which represents the Western ideals of innocence, naiveté and genteel character. This subject is also common in Impressionist paintings.

Renoir: *Girl with the Watering Can*, 1876 NGA, Washington D.C.

Morisot: *Little Girl Reading*, 1888, Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg, FL

Cassatt: *Children on the Beach*, 1884, NGA, Washington D.C.

Morisot: *Julie Manet with a Doll*, 1884, private collection

Renoir: *Young Girls at the Piano*, 1892, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

IX. *La Sérénade interrompue* (Interrupted Serenade)

Debussy was not the only artist in Paris who kept a special place in his heart for Spain. The enthusiasm for Spanish styles was promoted by Emperor Napoleon III, whose wife, Eugénie, was a Spaniard. The great Spanish painters of the 1860's, such as Diego Velázquez and Francisco Goya, made a profound impression on French artists, especially the young Edouard Manet.

Manet: *Ballet Español*, 1862, Phillips Collection, Washington D.C.

Manet: *Lola de Valence*, 1862-67, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Sargent: *El Jaleo*, 1882, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston

Manet: *Bullfight*, 1865-66, Institute of Art, Chicago

Cassatt: *Torero and Young Girl*, 1873, Clark Art Institute, Williamstown

Manet: *Dead Toreador*, 1864, NGA, Washington D.C.

X. *La Cathédrale engloutie* (The Sunken Cathedral)

This prelude is based on an ancient Breton legend. Suffering a similar fate to the biblical Sodom, the town was engulfed by the sea because of the impiety of its people. At sunrise, the town's cathedral supposedly rises from the sea, representing the innocents who suffered the consequences of the sinners actions. Chanting monks and clanging church bells accompany this dramatic event.

The images selected to accompany this prelude are from Monet's series of paintings of the cathedral at Rouen, painted between 1892 and 1894. They are located in collections from around the world: Paris; Washington D.C.; Boston; New York; Moscow; Williamstown, MA; Cardiff, Wales; and Essen, Germany.

XI. *La Danse de Puck* (The Dance of Puck)

This is a character piece that portrays Puck, the mischievous fairy from Shakespeare's, *A Mid-summer Night's Dream*. Although Debussy was probably unaware of the American artist Maxfield Parrish, both Debussy and Parrish magically capture worlds of fantasy.

Parrish: *The Dinky Bird*, 1904, C.H. Morse Museum of American Art, Winter Park, FL

Parrish: *Dreamlight*, 1924, color lithograph, private collection

Parrish: *Daybreak*, 1922, private collection

Parrish: *Princess Parizade Bringing Home the Singing Tree*, 1906, PA Academy of Fine Arts

Parrish *Errant Pan*, 1910, Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY

Parrish: *The Storm*, Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, MA

Parrish: *Stars*, 1926, private collection

XII. *Minstrels*

Although the title refers to the black-faced entertainers, *Minstrels* is a collage of musical fragments representing American-influenced entertainment in turn-of-the-century Paris. *Minstrels* includes musical references to the dance hall and cabaret, as well as the organ grinders, clowns and acrobats of the circus. French artists such as Henri Toulouse-Lautrec and Edgar Degas were also fascinated with these subjects.

Toulouse-Lautrec: *Chilpéric*, 1896, private collection

Degas: *Café Concert: Song of the Dog*, 1875, private collection

Toulouse-Lautrec: *The Clowness at the Moulin Rouge*, 1897, lithograph

Tissot: *The Amateur Circus*, 1883-85, MFA, Boston

Seurat: *The Circus*, 1890-91, Musée d'Orsay, Paris

Degas: *Miss La-la at the Cirque Fernande*, 1879, NGA, London

Toulouse-Lautrec: *At the Moulin Rouge*, 1892-93, Art Institute, Chicago

Recital Hall
Saturday, October 28, 2000
12:00 p.m.