

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

THE COMPLETE PIANO MUSIC, VOL. II

BENNETT LERNER, PIANO

Disc A (45:27)

Douze Études

Book 1 (20:41)

- 1 Pour les "cinq doigts"- d'après Monsieur Czerny (3:16)
- 2 Pour les tierces (4:06)
- 3 Pour les quartes (4:56)
- 4 Pour les sixtes (3:41)
- 5 Pour les octaves (3:00)
- 6 Pour les huit doigts (1:42)

Book 2 (23:52)

- 7 Pour les degrés chromatiques (2:25)
- 8 Pour les agréments (4:49)
- 9 Pour les notes répétées (3:23)
- 10 Pour les sonorités opposées (4:51)
- 11 Pour les arpèges composés (4:17)
- 12 Pour les accords (4:07)

Disc B (37:41)

Suite bergamasque (17:20)

- 1 Prélude (4:57)
- 2 Menuet (4:25)
- 3 Clair de lune (4:03)
- 4 Passepied (3:41)

5 Étude retrouvée (4:28)

"Suite bergamasque No. 2" (15:38)

- 6 Masques (4:42)
- 7 D'un cahier d'esquisses (4:41)
- 8 L'Isle joyeuse (6:48)

Volume 2 of this survey of the complete piano music of **Claude Debussy** (1862-1918), presents, as did Volume 1, compositions from the composer's three periods: early, still-Romantic, salon pieces; colorist and pictorial works from his middle period; and late compositions, in which he headed into abstraction and neo-classicism. Unlike Volume 1, which presents its selections chronologically, this volume begins with the latest works.

In his final period, cut short, alas, by his death at age 56, Debussy moved beyond the dream world of sound pictures (which some would call "impressionism") to the world of abstract forms, exemplified by the projected six sonatas for various combinations of instruments, only three of which were finished, and the *Douze Études* (*Twelve Etudes*) for piano.

Etudes are a virtuoso form for the composer as well as for the performer, both taking the opportunity to show off. In the **Douze Études** (1915), Debussy displays his masterful ability to derive an astonishing array of colors, textures, and moods from limited materials. His virtuosity is both musical and psychological. The dynamics and textures are always unexpected and the moods are a kaleidoscope of feeling. The surprises are constant, but the eccentricity of Debussy's inspiration is both controlled and enhanced by his sense of form. Debussy dedicated the *Douze Études* "to the memory of Frédéric Chopin," in whose two books of etudes the above qualities can be found, though not at all to the same degree.

The first etude, **Pour les "cinq doigts"- d'après Monsieur Czerny** (For "Five Fingers"- after Mr. Czerny) (*sagement; animé: mouv't de gigue*) recalls the humorous scenario of "Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum" from *Children's Corner*: a piano student, forced to practice boring technical studies, rebels and escapes into fantasy and freedom. The discontented pianist plays a

five-finger exercise in C major (based on the ninth etude in Czerny's *School of Velocity*, Opus 299) with his left hand, but his right hand rudely and insistently

Molto Allegro. ($\text{♩} = 108$)

9.

p sempre leggiero.

Czerny, Op. 299, No. 9

plays an A-flat, nudging the music into a gigue. After another desultory go at the exercise, this time in G major, and a sly two-handed reference to the almost-universally-hated piano exercise Hanon No. 1, the music breaks out into a dance of sheer delight. The five-finger pattern reappears, a bit naughtily perhaps, for example at 2:00. In fact, it permeates the entire piece. The etude is happy and free, travelling up and down the keyboard with great abandon, especially at the cadenza (2:35) and in the final two-handed rising scale.

Pour les tierces (For Thirds) (*moderato, ma non troppo; legato e sostenuto*) is a grand rumination on the mellowness of thirds. From the gentle murmuring opening to its dramatic and operatic moments (0:42 and the ending), Debussy amazes us with the possibilities he has discovered in this single interval. The harmonies vary from gentle to dissonant and nearly tone-clusterish. In this piece, Debussy almost seems to quote Chopin's etude in thirds (Opus 25, No. 9), as, for example, at 2:18. At 2:43 the mellowness of the thirds is undermined by an ominous march in the left hand, which, in the manner typical of these etudes, is immediately transformed into a carefree tune with a music-hall accompaniment.

Pour les quartes (For Fourths) (*andantino con moto; dolce*) adds something new to the body of piano études and is the first devoted to this heretofore-recalcitrant interval. Formerly used for its “hollow” or “sacred” quality, the fourth is here revealed to contain both sweetness and nastiness. The opening mood is pastoral. Indeed, the little shepherd from *Children’s Corner*, now grown up and sad, is found here, especially in the chords at 0:29 and 0:39, which recall the “sound” of the mountains in the earlier piece. There is an astonishing variety of performing instructions on the first page: *dolce* (the opening is like two flutes); *sonore, martelé* (“sonorous,” “hammered”; the flutes becoming trumpets); *murmurando* (the trill at 0:51, a sonority that recalls “La Danse de Puck” from *Préludes*, Book I); and *risoluto*. In fact, moods change rapidly throughout the piece. At 3:01 we meet another scary march, in which acidly dissonant chords alternate with rapidly descending passages in double fourths. After the climax, the piece returns to the pastoral mood (with sonorities recalling “La Fille aux cheveux de lin” from *Préludes*, Book I), but now more shaded with melancholy. The shepherd boy plays his flute *con tristezza* (“with sadness”) (4:12) and the piece fades away with just an insinuation of American blues.

There is an oft-quoted remark by Debussy about **Pour les sixtes** (For Sixths) (*lento; mezza voce, dolce sostenuto*) that “for a long time, the continuous use of sixths reminded me of pretentious young ladies, sitting in a drawing room, sulking over their embroidery.” This étude is, indeed, languid, but it is also bitter-sweet. It is filled with wonderful cross relations (successive dissonance between voices) that give the music an aching sourness and taint the inherent sensuousness of the sixths. Languor alternates with agitation (1:01). At 2:40 the music moves to another plane, as the formerly earth-bound sixths float aloft. At the end, the music returns to its opening calm.

Pour les octaves (For Octaves) (*joyeux et emporté, librement rythmé*) is an out-and-out bravura showpiece in waltz time. It is grand, exuberant, and perhaps a bit pompous. At 1:14 the octaves turn gossamer. After a passage starting at 1:39 that has the bizarre marking *sourdement tumultueux* (“dully tumultuous”), there are four measures of very difficult double octaves in unison, and then, the most enigmatic spot in all of Debussy: the pianist is instructed to play fortissimo with both the damper and the una corda pedals depressed, producing a strangely muffled yet intense sound. After this, the brazen waltz returns.

Pour les huit doigts (For Eight Fingers) (*vivamente, molto leggiero e legato*) reverts to the pre-Baroque keyboard technique of hardly ever using the thumbs. Debussy even suggests in a footnote that use of the thumbs would be *incommode* (“bothersome”) and would make the playing *acrobatique*. Like the last measures of “La Danse de Puck,” this is evanescent music that doesn’t touch the ground, even at the fortissimo glissandos in the middle section. The piece ends as lightly as it began.

Pour les degrés chromatiques (For Half Steps) (*scherzando, animato assai*), which in its technical demands is a descendant of Chopin’s Etude, Opus 10, No. 2, in A minor, is a “tickle-feast” for the ears and fingers. The texture recalls “The Snow is Dancing” from *Children’s Corner*: a wisp of a tune embedded in a chromatic blur (0:16 and 0:38). After the last of the five statements of the tune (2:05), the piece simply disappears.

To me, the most sublime of all the études, and perhaps the most sublime piece in all of Debussy’s piano music, is **Pour les agréments** (For Ornaments) (*lento, rubato e leggiero*). This is a totally “delicious” piece. The ornaments found here are of many kinds: grace notes (single or in groups), rolled chords, appoggiaturas, and cadenzas. The piece is an extended barcarolle with alternate sections

that are tender and pastoral (0:53 and 1:55). The music is by turns humorous (1:43) and frightening (2:30), and at 2:50 - in one of the most sumptuous passages in all piano music, with its ecstatic descending scales in triads - it turns deeply sensuous. At 3:55 the opening barcarolle returns, only to melt away in a flurry of thirty-second notes.

Pour les notes répétées (For Repeated Notes) (*scherzando*) is dry and bitter. (Similar texture and mood are found in the second movements of Debussy's cello and violin sonatas.) Whether pianissimo or fortissimo, the music is sarcastic and witty, although there is a brief moment of lushness at 2:16, marked *armonioso* ("harmonious"), the sonority of which recalls Liszt's "La Campanella," also an etude for repeated notes.

Pour les sonorités opposées (For Contrasting Sonorities) (*modéré, sans lenteur*) is the deepest of the etudes and one of Debussy's most profound piano compositions. It is filled with sorrow and nostalgia. The pianist must produce a great variety of tone colors, often simultaneously, and often in only one hand. The first six bars establish the G-sharp ostinato that permeates most of the piece and sets the somber mood. The slow main theme in octaves, *expressif et profond* ("expressive and profound"), enters at 0:28 and is followed by a descending theme in chords with different articulation in each hand and a chromatic voice floating in between. At 1:40 another tender shepherd appears, *lointain, mais clair et joyeux* ("far away, but clear and joyous"). From 2:24 the main theme, starting in a lower voice, builds to a climax that is suddenly broken off. At 3:00 we have a crystalline example of contrasting sonorities: low and high, dark and light, lush and limpid. After an ominous moment (like the closing of the gates in Debussy's opera *Pelléas et Mélisande*), the shepherd returns and the piece floats up to its end.

Following Hilda Andrews's translation of Alfred Cortot's book, *French*

Piano Music (Oxford, 1932), I take **Pour les arpèges composés** (*dolce et lusin-gando*) to mean "For Extended Arpeggios," i.e., arpeggios with a span of more than an octave. Indeed, the etude demands a stretched hand throughout. Perhaps the most luscious of Debussy's piano works, the etude opens with a shimmer of sonority that continues throughout the piece. The hands glide smoothly over the whole keyboard. There are touches of humor (the music hall bass lines under the arpeggios at 0:22 and 1:16) and dance (0:44). The middle section (starting at 1:34), one of the most luminous pages in all piano music (marked, in fact, "*lumineux*"), has a dazzling variety of brilliant colors and textures: in the first six measures, we find the performing instructions *lumineux* ("luminous"), *elegamente* [sic] ("elegantly"), *un poco pomposo* ("a little pompous"), *giocoso* ("playful"), and *scherzandare* ("joking"). At the end the piece vanishes into its own resonance.

Pour les accords (For Chords) (*décidé, rythmé, sans lourdeur*) is one of the "impossible" pieces. To play this piece, the pianist should really have independently-mobile eyes like a frog. Both hands are required to leap up and down in very large intervals in contrary motion. It is terrifying and joyous in its difficulty. With its motoric rhythm, it is truly modern and there is nothing else like it in Debussy's oeuvre: it seems more like Stravinsky, Prokofiev, or Bartók than Debussy. On the other hand, the middle section (starting at 1:17) expresses stasis, with its long pauses and no clearly defined rhythm. After an "Uh-oh, here they come again" moment (2:57), the percussive and relentless opening returns and the coda brings the piece to an ending both jubilant and brutal. (Was this perhaps an indication of Debussy's future path?)

The **Suite bergamasque** (1890) was written when the 22-year-old composer was still under the influence of the French Romantic composers (such as Massenet) and Wagner. This shows especially in the first two pieces of the set, in

which the piano writing is full, rich in sonority, and even a bit heavy. In the form of a Baroque suite (a prelude followed by dance pieces), the *Suite bergamasque* is Debussy's tribute to the elegance and charm of the *commedia dell'arte* (called *la comédie Italienne* in France), which fascinated him all his life.

A grand French Baroque overture in its proud and noble mood (if not in its rhythm), **Prélude** (*moderato, tempo rubato*) opens in declamatory fashion. A lighter and brighter theme enters at 1:11, and Debussy's already evident ability to use harmonic variation to create instant changes of mood is shown in the varied repetitions of this theme's elements. A stately march starting at 2:35, with just a touch of Wagner's *Parsifal* in it, crescendos to a brief moment of ecstasy, after which the grandiose opening, subtly varied in its harmonies, returns (3:38). The piece ends as grandly as it began.

Menuet (*andantino, pp et très délicatement*) begins lightly with the melody in the middle voice (in the French manner) while the left hand crosses over and under playing the accompaniment. The music here is delicate and winsome. The second section begins (0:45) with lightly plucked chords - suggesting a mandolin, perhaps - but, with a sweet yet sweeping tune, rises to a grand climax. The climax is short, however, and the music quickly reverts to the opening texture and mood, this time somewhat musingly, only to be interrupted at 2:06 by loud descending scales (a near quote from Fauré's famous *Pavane*). At 3:07 with a surprising change of key (E-flat major, far distant from the A major tonic) and a deepening of texture, the final section begins. Its climax, as so often in Debussy, is evaded. After a hint of a *trepak* (like the "Russian Dance" in Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker*), the piece ends with a witty glissando.

Clair de lune (Moonlight) (*andante, très expressif*) is perhaps Debussy's most popular piece and his first to have a descriptive title. Though not a Baroque

dance piece, it still refers to the *commedia* and its leading character Pierrot, who was often moonstruck. "Clair de lune" is also Debussy's first piano piece to have that recognizable combination of sweetness, delicacy, and passion that is his unique quality. The great French pianist Robert Casadesus liked to point out when teaching (*Casadesus, First Family of the Piano*, DVD, 2004), that the piece begins with two parallel voices (a duet for two flutes, perhaps?) and has many such duets throughout. The rhythm is a delicately undulating combination of duplets and triplets. From 0:48, low gongs in the bass, under bell-like chords in the treble, rise to a semi-climax. At 1:27 sixteenth notes in the accompaniment begin to bubble up, and a climax is reached (right at the piece's Golden Section) but dissolves quickly and the music becomes calm. The opening returns over an F pedal point, with sixteenth notes now added to the accompaniment. At its repeat, a mysterious foghorn plays a C-flat. In the last measures, the hands float from the low register to the high to bring the piece to its end.

Unlike the first two pieces in this set, **Passepied** (*allegretto ma non troppo*) is light and delicate, its Aeolian mode giving it an archaic quality. The influence here is Fauré and the piece bears more than a passing resemblance to Fauré's well-known *Pavane*, already quoted in "Menuet," and composed only three years earlier. Both works feature a simple, flowing melody over a staccato accompaniment and both pieces are in F-sharp minor. Perhaps Debussy named his piece "Passepied" to avoid such comparisons. However, a *passepied* is a quick dance in 3/8 time and Debussy's piece is in the 4/4 time of a *pavane*. With its sprightly tempo, it might better have been called a "Passamezzo." (Arbeau, in his *Orchésographie* of 1589, explains that the *passamezzo* is a "*pavane moins pesamment et d'une mesure plus légère*", "a *pavane* less heavy and with a lighter beat.") At 0:33 a new theme in quarter-note triplets enters, which, when it reappears later

in the piece, creates a slightly darker tone. The third theme, the bounciest in the piece, enters at 1:24. At 2:16 there is a surprising moment of stasis. Near the end of "Passepiéd" (3:27) the first three notes of the opening theme appear three times in the bass, like deep bells, while the right hand descends and ascends agilely, bringing the piece to its evanescent end.

Étude retrouvée (1915) (Retrieved Etude) is an unfinished work. The manuscript paper and the page numbering indicate that Debussy worked on this piece at the same time as the *Douze Études* and originally intended it to be one of them. In the manuscript, it is called "Pour les arpèges composés," a title that was later given to another etude. The sketches, which are in the collection of Margaret G. Cobb in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York, consist of six pages, the first three copied neatly and the last three in very rough draft. The music was realized for publication by Roy Howat in 1979. Debussy was very careful throughout his life to destroy sketches and drafts of unfinished pieces. That these sketches survived and, in part, were copied neatly, shows his special affection for this music.

Like "Pour les arpèges composés" in the *Douze Études*, the *Étude retrouvée* demands a large span in the hand. Almost every measure has arpeggios or bass figurations that are wider than an octave. However, this is a quite different piece and has little in common with the other work other than its key of A-flat major and its arpeggio texture; or, for that matter, with the other etudes, as it is not at all in their eccentric and quicksilver style. The music here is continuous in texture with almost no breaks, and the sonority is quite dense. Interestingly, there is a surprising amount of polyrhythm, appearing in almost every measure, which gives the piece an experimental feel. (Two spots in *Étude retrouvée*, at measures 14 and 67 (0:39 and 4:10), which have arpeggios of six sixteenth notes in the right hand over four descending sixteenth notes in the left, might be compared with the

Fourth page of the manuscript of *Étude retrouvée*

The image displays four systems of handwritten musical notation for the fourth page of the manuscript of *Étude retrouvée*. Each system consists of two staves. The notation is dense and complex, featuring a variety of rhythmic values, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and rests. The music is characterized by wide intervals and arpeggiated textures, consistent with the description of the piece. The handwriting is in dark ink on aged paper, with some corrections and markings visible. The first system begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B-flat major). The notation is highly detailed, with many notes and rests written in a compact, overlapping manner, reflecting the dense and experimental nature of the piece.

second measure of "Pour les arpèges composés" and might possibly have been the source for that etude.)

The music seems to be a collage of musical bits and pieces. As Howat wrote to me (1/31/98), "The ideas are nice but don't all tie up." Some measures, for example at 1:03, might seem more at home in Debussy's works from the 1890s, such as "Clair de lune" (see, for example, 2:10 of that work). In fact, I suspect that the *Étude retrouvée* is a kind of mosaic of many old ideas that, for some reason, resurfaced in Debussy's mind.

In 1998, as an experiment and for the experience of grappling on my own with the problems of Debussy's sketches for this etude (no indication of tempo or key; no clefs or dynamics; missing notes; empty spaces), I made my own realization, without referring to the published version. In quite a few places my realization turned out differently. (As Howat wrote in the letter cited previously, "There are, of course, many possible readings. Maybe Debussy's ghost will gently play the correct version into your, or my, shoulders.") At a later point in making my own version, I threw musicological caution to the winds and (inspired by Debussy's ghost?) was brazen or perhaps confident enough - based on my long experience with Debussy's complete piano oeuvre - to make intuitive choices for both musical and physical reasons, even going so far as to repeat a favorite measure. (Repeating measures was, indeed, one of Debussy's favored compositional techniques.) In any case, this often very lovely music is well worth rediscovering, playing, and hearing.

Roy Howat has proven ("En route for *L'Isle joyeuse*: the restoration of a triptych," *Cahiers Debussy*, Vol. 19, 1995) what many pianists had intuited: that the three pieces grouped here as "**Suite bergamasque No. 2**" (1904) - "Masques," "D'un cahier d'esquisses," and "*L'Isle joyeuse*" - were originally intended to be

performed together. In fact, Debussy intended to publish them as a triptych called *Suite bergamasque*. However, the publisher Fromont, in spite of Debussy's objections, went ahead with the publication in 1905 of the earlier works grouped under this title, works that Debussy felt were no longer representative of his style.

Like the earlier works, the "*Suite bergamasque No. 2*" contains references to the commedia dell'arte. However, there is also a strong autobiographical element, which is unusual in Debussy's works. In the summer of 1904, Debussy eloped to the island of Jersey (one of the British Channel Islands) with his future wife - and former mistress of Gabriel Fauré - Emma Bardac, causing a great scandal. During their sojourn on Jersey, Debussy worked on "Masques" and "L'Isle joyeuse," as well as *La Mer*. These pieces are suffused with the atmosphere of the ocean and of romance.

According to the French pianist Marguerite Long, who coached with Debussy, the title of **Masques** (Masks) refers not only to the masks of the *commedia* but also to the "tragic expression of existence" (Long, *At the Piano with Debussy*, London, Dent, 1972). The piece begins *très vif et fantasque; détaché et rythmé* (very fast and fantastic; detached and rhythmical). It is a tarantella, similar in many ways to *Danse* of 1890, most notably in its rhythm, which constantly shifts between 6/8 and 3/4. At 0:16 a theme in oscillating thirds enters. This theme is to be found in all three pieces in the set, giving it an integration rare in Debussy's triptychs. (Howat, in the article cited above, shows that "Masques" and "L'isle joyeuse" - if you remove the latter's mysterious introduction and jubilant coda - are nearly identical in form.) At 1:09 the music suddenly recedes into lushness and restrained passion, with a sultry theme in the left hand and a suspended-in-the-air sonority reminiscent of "La Danse de Puck" in the right. The tarantella returns fiercely, after which, in the middle section of the piece (starting at 1:45), as in the



Emma & Claude
Debussy (1912)

middle of *Danse*, the music alternates between stasis and washes of color, here pentatonic (echoes of “Pagodes” from *Estampes*, perhaps). An ominous and terrifying transition (2:53) leads to a stormy return of the opening, but this is diverted by a surprising and violent low F-sharp (3:56), after which the music swoops up and then floats down into one of the most enigmatic codas in all music. The effect of this ending is most unsettling: it is not the charm of the *commedia*'s tarantella that we sense but the tragedy behind the *commedia* mask.

D'un cahier d'esquisses (From a Sketchbook) (*très lent; sans rigueur*) was first published in the magazine *Paris illustré*. If, as the title would suggest, it is merely a sketch (which I doubt), it might have been a sketch for *La Mer*, which Debussy was working on in Jersey. The key, the cello-like opening, and many rhythmic and thematic ideas, recall the larger work, as do the work's lushness and rocking cadence. At 0:20 we hear the motif of oscillating thirds previously heard in “Masques” and which will again be heard in “L'Isle joyeuse.” Lush chords at 0:38 both recall *La Mer* and foreshadow a crucial section of “L'Isle joyeuse,” and at 1:47 a motif that will reoccur triumphantly in the latter work's climax appears in the middle voice. This same motif reappears at 2:22 and 2:32. The coda contains a passage (3:06) that is surely one of the most delicately sensuous in all of the composer's piano music, after which low chords, as if played by muted horns (another sonority that recalls *La Mer*), play the motif from 1:47. The piece ends in a calm, widely-spaced chord.

Out of this peace, *comme un appel* (“like a summons,” Debussy told Long), comes the C-sharp trill and introduction (*quasi una cadenza*) that begin **L'Isle joyeuse**. (The Anglicized spelling of “isle” - in proper French, *île* - indicates the British location of the couple's “Joyous Island.”) This piece is a miniature *La Mer*: waves, sea spray, and salt air made audible. After the opening *cadenza*-

introduction, the music settles into a rocking motion (*modéré et très souple*) (“moderate and very supple”), with the left hand playing a figure almost identical to that in the “Ur” water piece, Liszt’s “Les Jeux d’eau à la Villa d’Este” (“The Fountains at the Villa d’Este,” from the third *Année de Pèlerinage: Italie*, published in 1883), a work that inspired more than one piece of pianistic liquidity, most notably Ravel’s *Jeux d’eau*. This figure is like an incessant wave.

un poco marcato la Melodia

The image shows a musical score for Liszt's "Les Jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este". It consists of two staves, a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The treble staff begins with a treble clef, a 3/8 time signature, and a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The music features a prominent, rhythmic figure in the right hand, characterized by a sequence of eighth notes and chords. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and some melodic lines. Performance markings include "sempre pianissimo, e" and "legatissimo" with a wavy line indicating a glissando. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5. The score is divided into four measures.

Liszt, “Les Jeux d’eau a la Villa d’Este

Over it the right hand plays a tune very similar in shape and rhythm to that in “The Little Shepherd” from *Children’s Corner*.

The theme in oscillating thirds heard in the previous two pieces enters (1:13) as if played in the distance. The time signature, heretofore 4/4, changes to 3/8 (1:39), in which it will stay for most of the piece, and a chromatic melody in the middle voice builds up tension, leading to a return of the opening trill and shepherd’s tune. A new theme, based on chords and rhythm from “D’un cahier d’esquisses” enters (2:30) *ondoyant et expressif* (“wave-like and expressive”). Its climax is evaded and we enter a world of sparkling light and waves - somewhat like the “Jeux de vagues” (“The Play of the Waves”) movement of *La Mer*. The

fog rolls in over the *ondoyant* melody (3:45), but the sun comes out in a burst of C major (4:21). This turns out to be a harmonic diversion and, after a raucous section using the alternating-thirds motif in an agitated whole-tone texture, the music finally reaches the home key of A major (4:48). The left hand leaps high and low like waves splashing on rocks. After another foggy moment with the motif in thirds (complete with foghorns!), a stupendous whole-tone quasi-glissando, and a deep breath to gather one’s strength, the famous final peroration begins, commencing with the sounds of Scottish war drums and bagpipes (5:18). This is one of the great examples of a musical crescendo to an explosive climax. (Other examples are in Ravel’s “Ondine” and the fourth movement of Charles Ives’s *First Sonata*.) The motif from “D’un cahier d’esquisses” is blared out in triumph as if by trumpets and trombones, over which the melody in chords is proclaimed grandly. With a death-defying leap from the highest A on the keyboard to the lowest, this tone poem comes to its brilliant end.

- Bennett Lerner

Bennett Lerner is well known as a performer of new music and has premiered music by composers such as Aaron Copland, Alexander Tcherepnin, David Diamond, Irving Fine, Marc Blitzstein, Otto Leuning, Paul Bowles, Samuel Barber, Roy Harris, Virgil Thomson, Vittorio Rieti, Christopher Berg, Narong Prangchareon, Phillip Ramey, Roger Zahab, and Tison Street.

Highlights of Lerner's career include a 1985 performance of Aaron Copland's *Piano Concerto* with the New York Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta, performances with the Los Angeles Symphony, the Boston Pops Orchestra, the Indianapolis Symphony, the Minnesota Symphony, the Sand Point Music Festival Orchestra, and at the Teatro Massimo in Palermo, Sicily. In 2002 he was soloist with the National Symphony of Thailand in the world premiere performance of *Bhawanka* by Thai composer Narong Prangchareon. In 2006 Mr. Lerner participated in the first performance of Prangchareon's *Anusorn (Commemoration)* for cello and piano in New York City. Earlier recordings include *American Piano Music, Vols. 1 and 2*, *Alexander Tcherepnin: Piano Works*, and *Exposition - Paris 1937*, all on the Etcetera label, *Music By My Friends* on Albany Records, and *The Complete Works of Claude Debussy, Volume 1*, on Bridge Records.

Lerner's primary teachers were the Chilean virtuoso Claudio Arrau (through whose teacher, Martin Krause, can be traced a direct lineage to Liszt, and, through Liszt, to Czerny and Beethoven), Arrau's assistant Rafael de Silva, the famous Cuban pedagogue German Diez, the American pianist-composer Robert Helps, and the Argentine virtuosa Arminda Canteros (a friend and pupil of the great German Debussy player Walter Gieseking).

Lerner has his Doctor of Musical Arts degree from City University

of New York and his Bachelor and Master of Music degrees from the Manhattan School of Music. He has lived in Thailand since 1990 and is currently a lecturer in the Music Department of Payap University in Chiang Mai, where he is currently producing a two-year-long Debussy Festival featuring piano, vocal, and chamber music, dance, and film.



Bennett Lerner

This recording was made possible through the generosity of my friends, family, colleagues, and students. My thanks to: Allan and Joan Eubank, Allan Stoops, Anik Amranand, Annette George, Barry Ford, Bernard Davis, Bernard Sumner, Bettina Krampetz, Bob and Carol Dougherty, Bob Jaekle, Brent de Chene, Bruce and Lynda Hobson, Bud and Leona Zarsky, Candy Sanphakij, Carl Weinberg and Jeni Slotchiver, Carrie Abels, Charlie Cinnamon, Charn Chaipongpum and Supitchaya Chanakok, Chester Biscardi, Chris Johnson, Chris McKiggan, Christopher Blasdale, Claudia and Emily Fine, Colin Mackerras, Connie Kruger, Dan White, Daniel and Rosalind Richter, David and Barbara Oldham, David Brown, David Wilson and Tananan Willson, Don Miller, Donald Richie, Ernst and Kazuko Seiler, Family Tapanakornvut, Frances Kunkel, Frank and Kathy Lopez, Geoff Puterbaugh, George and Carol Jochnowitz, George Gopen, Helene Blue, Henry H. Lerner, Horatio Law, HRH Galyani Vadhana, Ivan and Suzan Nunez, Jack Hiemenz, Jack Hines, Jacques Bekaert, James Ansin, Jamie Shaak, Jamorn Supapol, Jeannette Ohmae, Jeffrey Gilliam, Jenny Wrightson, Jittamas Wiboonpong, Jo Ivester, John and Martha Butt, John Ferguson, Judith Bettina, Kamolvann Noot Punyashthiti, Kirk Horton, Laura Calzolari, Lauren Fadem, Loretta Goldberg, Melissa Connely, Michael Thaddeus, Michel Tharpe and Barbara Dickinson, Music Department of Payap University, Naiyana Nagavajara, Nancy Goldberg, Narong Prangcharoen and Lek, Natalie M. Weissblum Weinstein, Nathan Gross, Nikki Feirn, Noël Lee, Nopanand Chanorathaikul, Nuala Hallinan, Paul and Judy Utley, Paul McCarthy, Pawatchai Suwankangka, Phillip and Jeanne Geraci, Pinnarat Tossayanonda, Pojana Nagavajara, Ralph Kneeream, Remi Namtep, Richard and Connie Harrier, Richard Belanger, Richard Burke, Richard Hudson, Robert and Kristen Lopez, Robert Halliday, Robert Roth, Rosalie Calabrese, Rungnapa Wongpisutipong, Salukjit Rattakasikorn, Samran Sombatpanit, Santi Saengtong, Sheilagh Angpiroj, Shelley Haven, Stephanie Ansin and Oleg Kheyfets, Steven Ault, Steven Watson, Surasak Suringpong, Terry and Carol Winograd, Tison Street, Toby Lerner Ansin, Tom Sexton, Trae Williamson, Umawadee Lopetch, Valerie Veres, Visudhisom Roong-In, William Tate, Zoe Halstead Burns.

Special thanks for their help of various kinds to: Amnat Kittipanna, Andrea Johnson, Bringkop Vora-urai, Giat, Jan Verwers, Juk Tulalamba, Noon, Potai Karawi, Roy Howat, Samm, and Thomas Ohlson.

Producer: Judith Sherman

Engineer: Judith Sherman

Engineering assistant: Jeanne Velonis

Editing assistant: Jeanne Velonis

Photograph of Bennett Lerner: ©Tanawat Gatanyu 2006, used by permission

Cover painting: ©Vichit Chaiwong 2003, used by permission

Photograph of cover painting: ©Angela Srisomwongwathana 2004, used by permission

Recording dates: April 26, 27, and 30, 2006

This recording, *Claude Debussy: The Complete Piano Music, Vol. II*, is a sponsored project of the New York Foundation for the Arts.

Executive Producers: Becky Starobin & David Starobin

For Bridge Records: Ashley Arrington, Alexis Napoliello, Brad Napoliello, Charley Post and Robert Starobin

Bridge Records, Inc.

200 Clinton Avenue · New Rochelle, NY · 10801

For information about Bridge releases and to join our mailing list:

Email: Bridgegrec@bridgerecords.com · www.BridgeRecords.com

Robert Starobin, webmaster

New on  **BRIDGE**®

Duos from Marlboro

Schubert, Prokofiev, Kirchner

P. Robison, R. Serkin, P. Zazofsky, D. Phillips, I. Levin, J. Denk

BRIDGE 9203

Beethoven Sonatas, Vol. 2

Garrick Ohlsson, piano

BRIDGE 9201

Artur Balsam: Concerto Album

5 piano concertos

C.P.E. Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Hummel

BRIDGE 9196A/B

Music of a Bygone Era

Frank Glazer, piano

BRIDGE 9194

American Tone Poems by Edward Burlingame Hill, Louis Coerne

Horatio Parker, John Alden Carpenter

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Karl Krueger, conductor

BRIDGE 9190

www.BridgeRecords.com