

IMPRESSIONISM IN FRENCH PIANO MUSIC

by

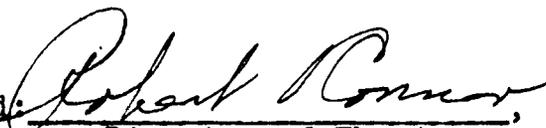
Virginia Gayle Smith

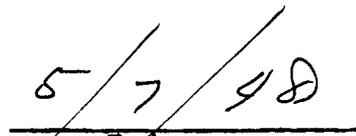
A Thesis

submitted to the faculty of the
Department of Piano
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Music
in the Graduate College
University of Arizona

1948

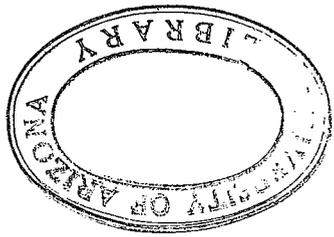
Approved:


Director of Thesis


Date

TO

Mr. Robert O'Connor, for his help in the preparation
of this thesis and his inspiring teaching.



F9991
7948
59

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	iv
Chapter	
I. PROLOGUE	1
II. THE FATHERS OF FRENCH "MODERNISM"	11
III. GABRIEL FAURE	21
IV. CLAUDE ACHILLE DEBUSSY	29
CONCLUSION	47
BIBLIOGRAPHY	49

INTRODUCTION

"Impressionism" is an indefinite term in the eyes of the general public. The essence of its meaning escapes the disinterested onlooker, and he thinks of Impressionism as simply an embodiment of vague, sensory pleasure in some one of the arts. This thesis will attempt to clarify such an erroneous "impression" in the minds of its readers.

The period of Impressionism extended roughly from the time of the Franco-Prussian War to the beginning of the First World War. Some of its qualities carry on today, but that was the period of its greatest influence on the art world. Here shall be pointed out the gradual growth of the movement and some of its primary characteristics. Most prominent in the efforts of the Impressionist artists was the desire to re-establish the force of French national spirit. Their efforts were not in vain, and their greatest worth was in the propagation of progressiveness in the creative arts. The decline of civilization comes of a dearth of progressive thought, and the creative arts would prove no exception.

This is to be a general study of the Impressionist

movement in France and of the parts played by its leaders in music and art. The survey will be derived from factual literature on the subject rather than from the detailed musical analysis of Impressionist works. The sources of material are fragmentary in their treatment of this subject, and complete volumes in English are practically non-existent. However, those found to be most helpful were: Edward Burlingame Hill's Modern French Music; Paul Lang's Music in Western Civilization; Romain Rolland's Musicians of Today; and the very recent publication, Adolfo Salazar's Music in our Time.

CHAPTER I

French music, in the early part of the nineteenth century, was quite broad in its derivations. The greater part of its literature was devoted to opera, and the greater names connected with it were those of Rossini, Gounod, Meyerbeer, and Berlioz, who was not generally accepted until later. Gradually there developed an interest in orchestras and chamber music groups, and a veritable revolution in the musical taste of the public took place. The demand for instrumental music grew, and as a result of this movement we find Saint-Saëns, Lalo, and César Franck rising into prominent positions as leaders. With the Franco-Prussian War in 1871 came the incentive for a nationalist trend in music, but when some of the bitterness subsided we find that most of Paris and the French composers had fallen under the spell of Richard Wagner. This Wagnerian influence soon felt a reaction, the trend now changing to Russian composers. Meanwhile, there came into light those who first brought the true characteristics of France back into its music, Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894) and Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924). Almost at the same time the return to classic form and method advocated by César Franck was brought forth and

championed by his pupils. Some of the more devoted to their master's ideals were "Vincent d'Indy, Ernest Chausson, Henri Duparc, Guy Ropartz, Charles Bordes and Guillaume Lekeu." ¹

This change of taste from the German to the French forms one of the focal points of discussion by several authors. Regarded as one basis for discussion is a statement of the noted author and critic, Romain Rolland, as he speaks of the first musical festival of Alsace-Lorraine which took place at Strasburg in May, 1905. A derogatory description of the method of presentation was followed by:

Such were the conditions of combat; and they were, whether intentionally or not, unfavourable to France. And yet to the eyes of an impartial observer the result was full of hope and encouragement for us.

I have never bothered myself in art with questions of nationality. I have not even concealed my preference for German music; and I consider, even today, that Richard Strauss is the foremost musical composer in Europe. Having said this, I am freer to speak of the strange impression that I had at the Strasburg festival--
an impression of the change that is coming over music, and the way that French art is silently setting about taking the place of German art. ²

This last phrase is used by Mr. Hill and by M. Jean-Aubry in his book, French Music of Today, as they begin their discussions of the development of French tradition.

¹Edward Burlingame Hill, Modern French Music (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1924), pp.4-5

²Romain Rolland, Musicians of Today, trans. Mary Blaiklock (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1915), p. 214

As we now look back upon this criticism, M. Rolland's foresight seems almost incredible. Germany's absolute rule over music, which lasted nearly 150 years, has faltered and given way to the creative abilities of other nations. And rising high among these nations is France. The Franco-Prussian War marked the beginning of this renaissance in French art, and since then great advances have been made in its originality, method of expression, and technical perfection. The French composers have outranked all of their contemporaries. They have investigated and perfected new methods of harmony. They have achieved a new outlook on musical form, discarding the neo-classic manner and lending the subtle quality of French expression. They have influenced the entire world in its conception of musical expression.

"The tending of musical thought in the immediate past is so inclined toward the assimilation of French methods as to present irrefutable testimony to the vitality of the movement as a whole and its permanent contribution to the musical literature of the world." ¹

The development of any new style is opposed by the survivors of the established mode, and the two must necessarily be in existence at one and the same time.

¹Hill, op. cit., p. 3

No complete separation of the two styles is possible; the old must die before the new ascends the throne; and "French music became 'modern' in direct proportion to its reflection of national traits, and its history is summed up in the unfolding of successive stages of independent expression."¹

IMPRESSIONISM is the term which refers to the period treated by this paper. The Impressionist Period came into being during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The time had come when the ideals of Romanticism were beginning to break down. Music through the centuries has tended to follow the other arts in its development, and Impressionism in music makes no exception.

On April 15, 1874, there opened in Paris an exhibition entitled "Anonymous Society of Painters, Sculptors, and Engravers." This society was composed of independent, individualist artists who refused to compromise their art for the pleasure of official recognition, and consequently organized their own "Salon". One painting exhibited in this show by Claude Monet was entitled Impression: Soleil levant. This was the cue for the press. M. Louis Leroy, critic of the newspaper Charivari, titled his review

¹Hill, op. cit., p. 3

"Exposition des Impressionistes." Immediately, the public gave this name, Impressionist, to the group of independents. The artists themselves did not want to be linked with such a name, for it limited their efforts to those elements contained in the so-called "Impressionist" school.¹ However, they had no choice.

Earlier in the century, Édouard Manet, veering away from "realism" and "true to nature" ideas, introduced the "plein-airiste" movement. This new idea was to portray the object or landscape as seen emotionally, not as a detailed, photographic reproduction. The primary stimulus to the eye became color, as it was affected by the changes in light and atmosphere of the different times of day. The painting became, not a general everyday view of the subject, but, the subject as seen at a particular time of day, under particular conditions. Verlaine said, "...the painter's interest is no longer in a special object as a pictorial motive but rather in the manner in which the light plays on its surface."² Thomas Craven in his Men of Art describes the Impressionist as:

One receptive to stimuli from every source; roused to action by the force of immediate circumstances; staking all on the dramatic

¹Sheldon Cheney, The Story of Modern Art (New York: The Viking Press, 1945), p. 182

²Adolfo Salazar, Music in our Time, trans. Isabel Pope (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1946), p. 150

freshness of the new experience. The original as opposed to the conventional; personal freedom rather than traditional safety. Color instead of form, and instead of absolute space, atmosphere, luminosity, and tone. Not objects themselves, but the effects of objects as seen through sheaths of tone.¹

As in painting, impressionism in literature also existed before a similar period in music. The poets of impressionism showed as many individualities as the painters. They all struggled against any confining elements or rules, so that they could have their own "poetic pointillism." (Pointillism is an artistic technique of placing dots of contrasting color side by side, letting the eye fuse them together, with the ultimate effect of one solid color.)

But poetry and drama cannot here compete with painting and music, for words and verse always have a meaning, they always induce associations. Nevertheless, the greatest poets of impressionism, the French -- such as Paul Verlaine (1844-1896) or Arthur Rimbaud (1856-1891) -- could create almost purely musical-pictorial moods in which sonorous words take the function of colors. Their arrangement of consonants and vowels induces almost the same sensuous pleasure as the color oscillations of the painters, or the chain dissonances of the musicians.

Les sanglots longs
Des violons
De l'automne
Blessent mon coeur
D'une langueur
Monotone. 2

¹Thomas Craven, Men of Art (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1934), p. 419

²Paul Henry Lang, Music in Western Civilization (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1941), p. 1017

Here you have the musical element entering into the art of poetry by what the Germans call Anders-streben-- a partial alienation of an art, as it passes into the condition of some other art, not to take the place of the other, but each to lend the other new forces.¹ This is music in poetry -- tonal beauty, very well justified by the thought of Ronsard, repeated by Paul Verlaine, "la musique avant toute chose."²

The new style in music evolved from the dis-integrating postromantic and nationalistic schools and assimilated elements of the music of many other individual and nationalist styles, while reacting sympathetically to impressionism in painting and poetry. Impressionism probably would have come to music without Debussy, the accepted innovator of the new manner. Its elements were prevalent in the times; they could not help but find their way to the art of music. However, Debussy hastened this progression. He was in close contact with the circle of young symbolist poets and impressionist painters, and there he received the stimulus for creating a similar technique in music.

¹Walter Pater, "School of Giorgione", The Renaissance, Studies in Art & Poetry (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1924), p. 139-143

²Salazar, op. cit., p. 149. See also Lang, op. cit.

Just as the poets used the rhythms and sounds of language, and the painters, the rhythm of line and colour, so Debussy used rhythm, harmony, and melody, to suggest the sentiments and emotions which defy analysis, in other words--Impressionism.¹

A music which seems to hint rather than to state; in which successions of colors take the place of dynamic development, and 'atmospheric' sensations supersede heroic pathos; a music which is vague and intangible as the changing lights of the sun, the subtle noises of the wind and the rain. The realization of these ideas led to a complete abandonment of such typically "German" achievements as sonata, symphony, thematic material, development technique, and resulted in the introduction of various novel devices which are antithetic to the principal features of classical and romantic harmony.²

Some of these radical "devices", achieved by using the chord as an independent entity rather than as related to and generating other chords, are as follows: the use of unusual chords or those seldom used in the classic style; the linking of harmonies not previously considered as related; the use of chords, consonant as well as dissonant, in parallel motion; unusual chord resolutions; non-resolutions to free appoggiaturas; and unresolved dissonances, mostly triads with added seconds, fourths, sixths, and sevenths.

¹Marion Bauer and Ethel Peyser, Music Through the Ages (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1946), p. 469

²Willi Apel, Harvard Dictionary of Music (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1944), p. 350

Other characteristics of Impressionism are: chromaticism, resulting in vagueness of tonality; use of the whole-tone scale in melodic as well as harmonic combinations; combination of tonalities, that is, placement of melodic elements of one tonality over a harmonic basis of another tonality; and irregular and fragmentary construction of phrases.¹

However, form was not completely abandoned, as one might think from the previous statements; this will be seen in later chapters. But, these new chords, combinations of tone, cannot be assimilated into the old, conventional manner. As the musician works, so do the other artists, painters and poets. They are in the process of discovering new ways of expression, and the musician finds himself drawn by the same spirit of creation. The new order of plastic or verbal sensations brings corresponding sensations in the composer.

In order to clarify his process of thought for the listener, somewhat disconcerted by this new aesthetic approach, the composer seeks the aid of the painter or the poet in giving realization to these new sonorous elements. He says that his piece of music is something like those "perfumes in moonlight" or like those "magnolias at twilight", --titles which, without malice, we all understand to be mere excuses.²

¹Ibid. Also Salazar, op. cit., p. 148

²Salazar, op. cit., pp. 145-146

Now, what will be the source of subject matter for the Impressionist musicians? It cannot continue to be classical, heroic description. The poet is absorbed in the phonetic aspect of vowels and consonants, the painter sees objects in relations to light and the atmosphere; the musician will content himself with pure music and its essential and intrinsic elements. Above all, he will "seek independent harmonic associations for their own sake, for their essential worth, not simply for their function in tonal relationships."¹

¹Ibid., p. 150

Chapter II

THE FATHERS OF FRENCH 'MODERNISM'

In the period of transition to nationalism, three personalities stood out as being most responsible for the next period in music. They were Camille Saint-Saëns, Édouard Lalo, and César Franck.

M. Saint-Saëns (1835-1921) was an exception in French music of his time. He possessed a great classical spirit and fine breadth of musical culture.

French music of the nineteenth century is rich in clever artists, imaginative writers of melody, and skillful dramatists; but it is poor in true musicians, and in good and solid workmanship. Apart from two or three splendid exceptions, our composers have too much the character of gifted amateurs who compose music as a pastime, and regard it, not as a special form of thought, but as a sort of dress for literary ideas. Our musical education is superficial: it may be got for a few years, in a formal way, at a Conservatoire, but it is not within reach of all; the child does not breathe music as, in a way, he breathes the atmosphere of literature and oratory; and although nearly everyone in France has an instinctive feeling for beautiful writing, only a very few people care for beautiful music. From this arise the common faults and failings in our music. It has remained a luxurious art; it has not become, like German music, the poetical expression of the people's thought.¹

Saint-Saëns, in addition to being a remarkable pianist, was also a famous organist. He was an admirable

¹Rolland, op. cit., pp. 99-100

interpreter of Bach. He was a composer of many sacred works, songs, piano concertos, symphonies, chamber music, and nearly every phase of musical composition. He possessed that all-important quality of a French artist -- perfect clearness of conception.

An innovation in the instrumentation of the symphony consisted in Saint-Saëns' use of the organ and of the piano. "This was, I believe, the first time that the instrument of the household had been introduced into a symphony." The piano is used both as an integral part of the orchestra and as a solo instrument in Franck's Les Djinns and d'Indy's Symphonie sur un Chant Montagnard.¹

Saint-Saëns presented his works in a classic form, and it may be said that he was the first Frenchman "to have successfully competed with German composers on their own ground, that is, in the domain of symphonic and chamber music."² In Germany, he was highly esteemed as the embodiment of the French "classical spirit" and considered the representative of France from the time of Berlioz until the appearance

¹Arthur Hervey, French Music in the XIXth Century (London: Grant Richards; New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1903); p. 185.

²Ibid., p. 188

of César Franck.¹

Lalo (1823-1892) brought to French music an ardent temperament. He was a contemporary of Saint-Saëns, but he had a more modern influence on his followers. He carried on, of course, the typical French traits: great rhythmical vitality, precision, finesse, and clarity of expression. But he added to these "an unconquerable leaning toward the exotic and a strong vein of poetic imagination".² This new quality will continue to be present in later French music.

In this age of superficial French music (the school of Gounod, Meyerbeer, Offenbach, etc.), César Franck (1822-1890) occupied a unique place.

I run no risk of contradiction in asserting that no modern musician was more single-hearted and sincere, both in his work and in his life, than Cesar Franck. None possessed in a higher degree the artistic conscience which is the touchstone of genius.³

During his lifetime he was practically ignored. With a sublime indifference to worldly gain, exerting no effort to acquire popular recognition, he spent his time in teaching, in composing, and in service to God. He lived in Paris; yet, untroubled by the turmoil of the world outside,

¹Rolland, op. cit., p. 101

²Hill, op. cit., p. 33

³Vincent d'Indy, César Franck, trans. Rosa Newmarch (London: John Lane Co., 1929), p. 77

he worked incessantly and with only the desire to accomplish the best that was in him.

César Franck was born in Liège, in the Walloon district of Belgium; and here he spent the first years of his life. He came of German stock. This land is French in its sentiment, language, and outward appearance, and German in its customs. Though Franck became a naturalized Frenchman, it may be the Belgian and German influences which account for his contemplative nature.¹ Yet the Gallic trait of the land penetrated into his music, which was exceedingly French in its spirit of balance and precision while resting on the solid foundation of older traditions.

Franck was a young piano virtuoso, and in 1842 he was withdrawn from the Paris Conservatoire and embarked upon a career as a concert artist. He did this unwillingly, but in spite of it he continued to compose. In the majority, his products were those necessary to the virtuoso pianist-composer: transcriptions, caprices, showy fantasias. However, even in these minor compositions, he could not help seeking new forms. These pieces were not of the caliber of his later works, but they contained innovations which still would interest a musician, or pianist in particular: novel methods of fingering and harmonic effects which give a new

¹Hervey, op. cit., pp. 217-218

sonerity to the pianoforte.¹

. . . . the chief preoccupation of his whole life was to find in every divergence of musical radiation new forms-- . . . --while keeping as his basis of investigation the sure and immovable principles laid down by the gathered traditions of the great musical geniuses.²

M. Camille Mauclair, in an article titled "La Religion de la Musique", says,

Franck forms the natural link between classicism and the polyphony to come. The direct line of descent in pure music had been broken by the descriptive romanticism of Liszt and Berlioz, and finally by Wagner, whose deviations were marvelous, but dangerous to the destinies of their art. The intervention of Franck which was at once traditional and innovating, set the wandering feet of a whole generation on the right track, with rare tact and without any reaction. This is what caused this mystic, this visionary of the golden age of music, to be not only the last master of the nineteenth century, but also the one man who could assure the free evolution of the music of the future; the evolution of music itself, which should be neither descriptive, theatrical, nor picturesque, but only psychological, moving the soul and revealing the infinite by the very song of the lyre.³

In his mature years, Franck unknowingly founded a new school of musical thought. After he became the organist of the church of Sainte Clotilde, Franck spent most of his time teaching; and though he had little time left for composition, he accomplished wonders in this field. His representative works show how, more successfully than any of his contempo-

¹d'Indy, op. cit., pp. 34-35

²d'Indy, op. cit., p. 91

³Ibid., Intro., p. 21, cited by Rosa Newmarch

raries, he enlarged and revitalized classical forms without destroying them.

In his time, there were two kinds of creators:

(1) those who, regarding form as an end in itself, created a conventional type of music, arresting the normal development of the art, and, (2) those who, unable to create within a good formal pattern, abolished form altogether. Franck considered form only as "l'être oeuvre d'art", the corporeal part of the work, serving as the cloak for the "soul of the music", the idea. The form is subordinated to the idea, but not without retaining a definite identity.¹

Paul Dukas has said, in effect, that Franck's music may follow the forms advocated by the classic masters, but that it does not derive its integral beauty from a reproduction of the forms of the sonata or the symphony. These latter forms build themselves under the impulse necessary for the development of the idea, a spacious large form. With Franck, the idea is classical, therefore falls naturally into a classical form. However, this does not happen because of a pre-conceived theory which subordinates the thought to the form, as in the older symphonies.²

To this I would add on my own account that it is precisely because Franck continually draws upon tradition, instead of remaining the slave of convention, that his ideas have acquired the

¹d'Indy, op. cit., p. 75

²Ibid., pp. 83-84

power to be absolutely original, and have put forth a sane and vigorous branch from the tree of tradition, thus bringing his personal contribution to the progress of music.¹

Many of his organ works show the influence of Bach in the handling of polyphony and in the use of seventeenth and eighteenth century forms. Franck also used the variation form to good advantage, as shown in his Variations Symphoniques for piano and orchestra. And his use of chromaticism, a characteristic of Wagner, was quite individual in its treatment, instigating imitation by his followers.²

If César Franck brings to the mind some of the older masters, particularly John Sebastian Bach, by the wonderful ease with which he employs polyphonic methods, he is also a modern of moderns in the boldness of his modulations and what might be termed the chromatic nature of much of his music. His learning is not far expended in a mere barren show of knowledge, but is the handmaiden of his inspiration.³

Probably the most important phase of Franck's creative work was his innovation of the cylical form. He established the form by using generative motifs in all of the movements of the composition, thus creating the effect of inter-movement connection. His conception of this style was

¹d'Indy, op. cit., p. 84

²Marion Bauer, Twentieth Century Music (New York: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1947), pp. 76-78

³Hervey, op. cit., p. 223

developed while he was still enrolled in the Paris Conservatoire. Liszt had foreseen this form but had not fully developed it. Still this young student conceived the idea of constructing an entire work on a single theme, concurrent with other melodies which reappear in the course of the work, thus forming a musical cycle. His first Trio, in F sharp (1841), "was actually the point of departure of the entire synthetic school of symphony which sprang up in France late in the nineteenth century."¹ This Trio has two generative themes, and treated fugally or in variation form, they create a new method of musical construction, resulting in a broad sphere of rhythm.

The cyclical method is not limited to this interplay of motives; it also has a tonal aspect. As the motives follow each other in the cycle, they go through the tonalities of the tonic and the dominant.

Franck called these modulatory notes 'tonal poles' which, by a simple mechanical device, seem to lead to bright tonalities when the harmonic progression ascends by fifths (by the dominants) or to dark tonalities when it descends by fifths (by the sub-dominants).²

Hence we find a blend of tradition and classicism in the construction and style of Franck's works, and, as a result, "complete freedom in the expression of his individuality, which he felt to be so firmly stayed by tradition

¹d'Indy, op. cit., p. 88

²Salazar, op. cit., pp. 108-109

that he could leave himself a free hand in the matter of melodic progression and harmonic aggregations".¹ Franck used augmented harmonies, the basis of Impressionist technique in Debussy's hands; he anticipated Debussy in the chromatic movement of voices; he added many new tonal combinations to the resources of music extending the scope of musical tonalities. "In everything he did, Franck was an independent thinker and an innovator far in advance of his day. He opened the door for Impressionism and for Faure, Debussy, and Ravel."²

The principal characteristics, or qualities, of Franck's style were:

- (1) The nobility and expressive value of his melodic phrase;
- (2) The originality of his harmonic combinations;
- (3) The solid eurythmy of his musical structure.³

M. Guy de Ropartz says of César Franck,

He stands out from among his contemporaries like a man of some other age; they are sceptics, he was a believer; they are self-advertising, he worked in silence; they seek glory, he was content to await it; they aim at an easily acquired reputation by daring improvisations, he built enduring monuments amid the calm of a retired life; they shrink from nothing if only they may attain--concession, compromise, meannesses even, to all those they consent; he unhesitatingly performed

¹d'Indy, op. cit., pp. 88-89

²Bauer, Twentieth Century Music, pp. 77-78

³d'Indy, op. cit., p. 90

his mission without yielding, without counting the cost, leaving us, indeed, the very finest possible example of artistic uprightness.¹

¹Hervey, op. cit., pp. 217-218.

CHAPTER III

GABRIEL FAURÉ

Gabriel Urbain Fauré stands chronologically between the generation of Franck, Lalo, and Saint-Saëns and that of Debussy, Dukas, and Ravel. He was born at Pamiers, Ariège on May 13, 1845, and died in Passy on November 4, 1924. He is "universally admired and worshipped by Frenchmen of all musical denominations, and held up by French writers on music as the embodiment of French musical genius."¹ But to the foreigner, Fauré does not communicate this enthusiasm. "What the French call in Fauré's style souplesse strikes the German or American as verging on the salon style, even though they may concede that the intentions are noble and lofty."²

By freeing French music of all its former pretensions and pompous metaphysical aims, by perfecting a style of crystalline purity, Fauré has influenced all the French composers who followed him and is, to a great degree, the significant precursor of the modern French school of composers.³

At the age of nine, Fauré was sent to l'École Niedermeyer in Paris to study music. He was talented enough to warrant a scholarship, which was paid by the

¹Lang, op. cit., p. 929

²Ibid.

³David Ewen, Composers of Today, (New York: H.W. Wilson Co., 1934), p. 75

director of the school. There, he was put into the piano class of M. Saint-Saëns; and later in life, Fauré often said that he owed everything to this master. In 1866, Fauré left this school and began his career as an organist. He filled this capacity in various churches, until he returned to the Niedermeyer school in the position of professor.¹

Later he accepted the same position at the Paris Conservatoire. His influence as a teacher was great. He did not follow strict academic procedure, but he was stimulating to the creative efforts of his pupils. His appearance was one which commanded respect, but it was his work which impelled them on. A student never thought of submitting to him an assignment which was not the very best he could do. Fauré had no use for the competition for the Prix de Rome; but he continued, as had Massenet, to direct his pupils "toward a musicianship based on a serious technique".²

In 1905, Fauré succeeded Dubois as director of the Conservatoire. He remained in this position for fifteen years, making many improvements, but spending time in the execution of his duties as director which could have been used more profitably in composition. Among his more successful pupils were: Louis Aubert, Nadia Boulanger, Georges Enesco, Maurice Ravel, Roger-Ducasse, and Florent Schmitt.

¹Ewen, op. cit., p. 74

²Charles Koechlin, Gabriel Faure, trans. Leslie Orry (London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1945), p. 8

During his early attempts to make known his compositions, the Société Nationale had been quite helpful to Fauré. It had performed some of his works, and prompted recognition for this French composer. Fauré remained ever faithful to this group for its help; but this loyalty did not prevent him from encouraging the foundation of a rival society, the Société Musicale Indépendante. This project was instigated in opposition to the school of Franck and the supremacy of the Schola Cantorum in the Société Nationale. The name explains the goal: "independence of cliques, dogmas, and theories".¹ Total independence is almost impossible, but the ideals of Fauré, both liberal and traditional in thought, played a part in the group. By accepting all works, regardless of tendency, the S.M.I. had a brilliant beginning. And its success brought the Société Nationale to a broader outlook in the rivalry which ensued.²

The evolution of Fauré can be divided roughly into three parts. M. Alfred Cortot wrote:

In the first there is the fleeting, sensuous pleasure of his waking hours, the charming and glowing pictures of his dreams, the emotions and desires of adolescence. In the second, up to the time of the ninth Nocturne, there is the emotional glow of maturity--the passionate and deliberate conflict of feeling. In the third, including Pénélope and onwards, an ineffable grave beauty, a restrained ardour,

¹Koechlin, op. cit., p. 12

²Ibid.

on which a purified and spiritualized musical style confers a sort of serene philosophy. . . . the reserved and urgent eloquence of a harmonic language whose intensity seems to grow in proportion as it frees itself of superfluous ornamentation.¹

The characteristics of his style were:

- I. Plain-chant. The feeling for plain-chant had been manifest since his early schooling at the Niedermeyer. This preference of Fauré shows itself in his employment of certain Gregorian Modes. A number of progressions dear to Fauré are forbidden by the harmony books but are compatible with the character of the plain-chant. Thus, while remaining a "purist", he seemed revolutionary to the academicians.
- II. Progressions in harmonic style little known before. "In general, he discovered them; sometimes he made them his own by a treatment so appropriate to the feeling and so felicitous, that they became personal to him."² He was an incomparable master in the use of passing notes. His rhythms and harmony are diversified, never boring.
- III. Fugal style. In his own way, he restored life to this method of former times. His treatment never

¹Alfred Cortot, cited by Koechlin, op. cit., p. 36

²Koechlin, op. cit., p. 62

became over-intellectual; it seems so only to those incapable of realising its sensitive beauty.

IV. Modulations. His compositions are a veritable tour de force of modulations. They alarmed the critics; but "the relationship of keys springs from a legitimate cause, expressive and musical--the very essence of the idea."¹ The modulations are accomplished in an easy and sure manner; the simplicity of his methods accounts for this.

V. Form. Its general plan is ternary, the classical method of Beethoven and Mozart. New life is instilled into it by modulations and by sequence.

Gabriel Fauré came to unmistakable greatness in his smaller works--his songs, chamber music, and piano compositions. He reached his greatest heights with his songs. He has composed a great number of them, nearly all gems of French music. In this heritage left by him, is found cause to call him the "French Schumann" or the "French Schubert". The purity of style, the infinite variety, and the perpetually fresh melodic line prove him one of the great song composers of all time.²

"Fauré's pianoforte music as a whole furnishes the key to many of his characteristic traits."³

¹Koechlin, op. cit., p. 69

²Ewen, op. cit., p. 75

³Hill, op. cit., p. 86

Until this time, French piano music had been largely dominated by the salon, virtuoso style. Fauré began in this style, but he was not content to remain within its strict limitations. He introduced passages of harmonic originality, his characteristic modulation, and the typical Faurean melody. Soon he advanced in depth and variety of sentiment.

The interval between 1886 and 1891 elapsed without any piano composition; this is the beginning of what we have called the second period in his art. "From 1894 on were produced some new works for piano, few in number but of rare beauty."¹ Among these were the Sixth Nocturne, La Bonne Chanson, and the Thème et Variations. The Eleventh and Twelfth Nocturnes are extraordinary in their effectiveness; they are almost expressionistic but at the same time constructed with musical logic and solidity of writing. They are not for ordinary concert consumption, but pianists should play them privately or to chosen audiences, making known these masterpieces to music lovers capable of appreciating them.²

These works illustrate Fauré's evolution.

A profoundly poetic sentiment, and a delicate use of modulations which never obscure the tonal centre of gravity are among their chief traits. Fauré has foreshadowed much of later French piano music. A comparison between the dates of Fauré's piano music and that of other French composers will establish

¹Koechlin, op. cit., p. 37

²Ibid., pp. 39-49

the justice of this statement.¹

The harmonic style, and more particularly the meditative, poetic moods which Faure indicates with such subtle precision, were a source of reflection on Debussy's part.² This can be seen unmistakably in Debussy's music, and thus we have Fauré as the fore-runner of the Impressionist school.

Fauré himself wrote, "All those who, in the immense domain of the human mind, have seemed to use thoughts and language hitherto unknown, have only been expressing through their personal sensitivity, what others have already thought and said before them."³ This corresponds to Zola's definition of a work of art, as, "a bit of creation (God's creation) seen through the medium of a powerful temperament. The object or person to be painted is but a pretext. Genius consists of conveying the object or person in a new, more real, or greater, sense."⁴

Andre Coeuroy wrote of Fauré, "Il fut le musicien prophète. . . . ce précurseur ferme et doux qui, en pleine éruption wagnérienne, créait un langage harmonique de demain et vingt ans avant Debussy suggérait la syntaxe

¹Hill, op. cit., p. 87

²Ibid., p. 199

³Koechlin, op. cit., pp. 32-33

⁴Cited by John Powell Scott in lecture on Modern Art, February 16, 1948

du nouveau siècle."¹ Freely translated, this means, "He was the prophetic musician. . . . this firm and gentle precursor who, in the face of the Wagnerian eruption, created a harmonic language of tomorrow and, twenty years before Debussy, suggested the syntax of the new century."

And the example of Fauré leads to this conclusion: that novelty can be achieved by quite ordinary means. The unexpectedness of a conglomeration of sounds in the main amounts to very little, even if the snobs and the simpletons marvel at it for a time; moreover, it quickly disappears, ousted by the inevitable counter-fashions. The only element of value in a work is the quality of its music and its thought. The creation of new sounds may be necessary to some geniuses; in their case, they will not become obsolete. But others show themselves more subtly revolutionary. Persuasive, and without iconoclasm, they are no less innovators; and such a one was Gabriel Fauré.²

¹André Coeuroy, Panorama de la musique contemporaine, (Paris: Éditions Kra, 1928), p. 106

²Koechlin, op. cit., p. 61

CHAPTER IV

CLAUDE ACHILLE DEBUSSY

Claude Achille Debussy, French musician, was born in Saint-Germain-en-Laye on August 22, 1862, and died in Paris on March 26, 1918. In him music had possessed a vital and unique personality, and France had possessed one of its greatest composers.

Debussy's family was poor and unmusical. He showed musical talent early in his life. His musical education was begun by friends of the family, and he progressed rapidly until he entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of eleven. His study here was punctuated by occasional outbursts of originality, but he became well-versed in the rules of classic composition.¹ He not only assimilated his instruction carefully and completely, but he gained honours by slow degrees, until in 1884 he was awarded the Prix de Rome.

Upon his return from Rome, he had decided to become independent. He had spent years patiently overcoming the initial obstacles of music, and giving unwearied attention to the technical difficulties of his art; and now he

¹David Ewen, Composers of Today (New York: H.W. Wilson Co., 1934), pp. 57-59

was to enjoy the complete freedom of unfolding his own evolutionary principles. "That he should have incurred suspicion from pedants, jealousy from mediocrities, and contempt from reactionary critics is a foregone conclusion."¹

Debussy's artistic career was divided into three parts, the first of which was the apprenticeship. This was when he, uncertain of his goal, composed works of great unevenness. They were a result of influences acquired during his early years, and held little of his ultimate originality. During this period, Debussy was impressed with an influence from a field other than music.

In 1885, the symbolist poet Stephane Mallarmé had fostered a group of artists: poets, painters, literary critics, and an occasional musician. Among these were Paul Verlaine and Whistler. At these gatherings the principles of symbolism and Impressionism were thoroughly discussed. In 1890, Debussy began to attend these meetings, and the ideas acquired there were the basis of Impressionism in music.

By avoiding academic "developments" of musical ideas, by relaxing some of the conventional indications of tonality, by using harmony largely as a means of coloristic effect, he obtained results strikingly analggous to those of impressionism in painting. Indeed, the entire history of Debussy's original attainment in music lies in the

¹Louise Liebich, Claude-Achille Debussy (New York: J. Lane Co., 1908), p. 7

formulation and expansion of this original conception.¹

Debussy's application of the theories of Impressionism in literature and art constituted the beginning of his second period. To achieve these results, he used unorthodox methods in his composition. Below are some of his characteristic innovations:

- I. The whole tone scale. Debussy did not originate this scale; it can be found in many works previous to his. However, he adapted it in his own way and used it to a better and more sensitive purpose. In addition, he saw its limitations and did not use it in its weaker capacities. Following Debussy in the use of this scale were d'Indy, Ravel, Dukas, and Florent Schmitt, adapting it to their own purposes.
- II. Church modes. Debussy and Satie used these at the same time, but neither was a pioneer in this study. Saint-Saens, Berlioz, Gounod, Massenet, Bruneau, d'Indy, and Fauré all had used modes in their compositions. Debussy used them in a more subtle and penetrating manner, not merely for a churchly atmosphere, but to attain a mood of gravity, mystery, and unearthly character. Nor did he limit himself to a liberal presentation

¹Hill, op. cit., p. 195

of this modal harmony; he sometimes blended it with "modern" harmony.

- III. The Oriental influence. At the Exposition of 1900, the music of Bali (the gamelin) was presented. It tremendously impressed Ravel and Debussy; they sat listening to it for hours each day. Its influence may be found in the oriental-like melodies and moods of their music.¹
- IV. Use of unorthodox harmony. He followed the leadership of Chabrier and Faure and built upon their findings a method of harmonic usage which indicated how a systematic advance in harmony could be made through a more liberal interpretation of harmonic principles.
- V. Experimentation in polytonality. Debussy explored the fascinating possibilities of polytonality, chords or melodies from two or more keys used simultaneously.
- VI. The cyclical principle. Debussy carried this through much of his music. It was often necessary to repeat sections to give the listener an opportunity to assimilate the novel treatment of harmony. His Printemps, L'après midi d'un Faune, and Fantasia for piano and orchestra are outstanding

¹Robert O'Connor, interview, May, 1948

examples.¹

In these innovations can be seen the numerous impressions made on Debussy, and the way in which he assimilated them into his own usage through his inherent individuality and progressiveness. In his works produced during this second period, Debussy succeeded in introducing subtle suggestion into music, and he "produced an altogether new speech which composers before him must have yearned to attain, but which reached rich expression only now for the first time."²

The third and last period in his career was an unfortunate one. Debussy was suffering from an incurable malady. This sickness did not stop his creation, but it did affect the originality and freshness shown in his earlier works. "We have the pathetic spectacle of a genius who is imitating himself; the style is forced and halting, and the message strangely derivative of his former great works."³

Debussy's use of the piano.

Debussy carried the application of impressionistic methods to various fields of musical composition. The one most enriched by his endeavor was that of piano literature. Content at the first with a style of relative conventional-ity, he gradually achieved a pianistic style of flexibility, brilliancy, and above all, of originality.

¹Hill, op. cit., pp. 202-209

²Ewen, op. cit., p. 58

³Ibid., p. 59

From the diverse standpoints of new technical figures, a fresh treatment of sonority through a distinctive use of the pedals and expressive effects, it was profoundly innovative. Debussy did not aspire to rival the orchestra with his piano, as did Liszt. He was content rather to respect its natural limitations. This did not prevent him from enriching the resources of the instrument along the lines of his self-imposed restrictions as no one had done since Chopin.¹

He did not need more than a single instrument to prove his ability for full, symphonic writing. His piano composition "reveals a colourist who, continuing the French tradition of picturesque music, has given to it a brilliance and a quality that surpass even the delightful works of composers like Couperin or Rameau."²

In 1903, Arthur Hervey wrote that Debussy was a "coming" man, a composer of individual talent, and Impressionist. Even in the eyes of his contemporaries, Debussy showed his genius, which is some measure of consolation in showing that he was not entirely misunderstood while still living. He was even then recognized as "a musician of very uncommon gifts."³

¹Hill, op. cit., p. 223

²Jean-Aubry, French Music of To-Day, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd., 1926), p. 82

³Hervey, op. cit., pp. 252-253

The "misunderstood" Debussy.

Many are the people who believe sincerely that Debussy had no form in his music, that he composed purely for the purpose of creating vague, sensuous emotions. Such quotations as the following, made by persons well-versed in music, are commonplace. Daniel Gregory Mason speaks of programmism and Impressionism, stating that Impressionism goes further than programmism. The listener might get tired of the program as well as the organic form, melody, development. . . .

Better to give them simply a title, as vague and elusive as possible, and foster the mood of day-dreaming thus suggested by avoiding all definite melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic features in the music, while enhancing its purely sensuous charm to the utmost degree possible. Such, carried out with extraordinary talent, is the artistic creed of Debussy. Just as programmism appeals from music to association, impressionism appeals to sentiment, to fancy, and to the phantasmagoric reveries upon which they are ever so ready to embark.¹

Léon Kerst, the morning after the premiere of Pelléas et Mélisande, wrote:

All I heard--for even when you don't understand a thing you can't go to the theatre without hearing something--well, all I heard was a series of harmonized sounds--I don't say harmonious--which succeeded one another, uninterruptedly, without a single phrase, a single motif, a single accent, a single form, a single outline. And to this accompaniment, unnecessary singers drone out words, a kind of long drawn-out monotonous recitative,

¹Daniel Gregory Mason, Contemporary Composers (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1918), pp. 15-16

unbearable, moribund!¹

These statements can be refuted in more than one way. However, did it never occur to these men that the standard of performance might have something to do with the acceptability of a work? Can an interpreter adequately perform a work until he has completely absorbed all of its meanings and subtleties, its style of composition? Certainly not. The first presentations of the works of Debussy were inaccurate in many ways: time value, actual notes, phrasing, resolutions, et cetera. The lapse of time since these first performances has served well. Present day artists have had an opportunity to assimilate the innovations of Debussy. They have studied his theories and understand the combinations of harmony and melody at that time unfamiliar to those outside the Impressionist circle. Now, the artist has an understanding of the work he is interpreting, and consequently gives the listener a much better idea of the composition as the composer wished it.

Also to be considered is the listener. Suddenly confronted with new tonalities, dissonances, form, he instinctively dislikes anything to which his ear is not accustomed. The surmounting of this problem is the most difficult process connected with the acceptance of new music. This tendency may be overcome by education or by

¹Ewen, op. cit., p. 58

the lapse of time. The latter is the process by which recognition is gained from the general public. In 1735, Voltaire wrote to Thiriot, à propos of Rameau's music, "I believe that in the end the taste for Rameau will prevail in proportion to the nation's progress in musical knowledge. The ear improves little by little. In the course of three of four generations a change comes to the acoustic organs of a nation."¹ This statement receives support in a more recent quotation from a volume published in 1905 by M. Camille Mauclair. He remarks in this Idées Vivantes that,

Recent works have demonstrated that the education of the eye and the ear has been gradual and progressive: contemporary music has developed the auditory faculties to a tenfold degree compared with those which served the hearers of the old chorales, and science. . . . proves to us that we shall soon perceive colours considered imperceptible up to the present by the human retina. . . . M. Debussy's music is a sonorous impressionism, and M. Monet's paintings are fugues of colour.²

However, Debussy himself has expressed his theories, and in his writings one outstanding principle recurs. It is based on "a sincere love of music and a constant zeal for artistic independence and rejuvenation." This deep instinct in Debussy was: "a passionate belief in the

¹Liebich, op. cit., p. 9

²Ibid.

destiny of French national art."¹ The present-day acceptance of Debussy's music by musician and listener alike seems to justify this feeling as well as the needed improvement of performance and appreciation thereof.

Any one who is accustomed or addicted to strong colors and violent contrasts, with no sense of delicate suggestion, refinement, or spirituality, will have no affinity with Debussy's "typical, original harmonies, fluid rhythm, free chord combinations, and elastic, flowing melodies."² In spite of these characteristics, Debussy's music was not without "form".

"Form" in Debussy's music.

Debussy's originality does not consist, as many have said, in the invention of new chords, but in the new use he makes of them. A composer cannot be great because he "invented" new harmonic elements; he must be able to make the novel elements "say something."³ This "say something" can be achieved only by adapting the music to some "form". There is a great variety of "form", and the choice is that

¹Léon Vallas, The Theories of Claude Debussy, musicien français, trans. Maire O'Brien (London: Oxford University press, H. Milford, 1929), pp. viii-ix

²Liebich, op. cit., p. 11

³Rolland, op. cit., p. 242

of the composer. Debussy chose the most secure adaptation which would allow his musical language to reach the emotions it is intended to excite. "He obeys the French law of style which demands the maximum of expressiveness with the minimum of means."¹

Analysis of his works will reveal an amazing elaboration of detail, even in short pieces, while at the same time they are characterized by apparent simplicity and spontaneity of thought and treatment. His usual form is one of repetition, but it still does not interfere with Debussy's dislike of any posed or studied effect, and his taste for the simple and unconventional. Debussy himself wrote in 1913, "En règle générale, toutes les fois qu'on pense à compliquer une forme ou un sentiment, c'est qu'on ne sait plus ce qu'on veut dire."² Rather than have a piece published with the slightest defect in thought or form, he would wait patiently for the right inspiration.

This attention and circumspection, this reverential feeling for perfection, are salient characteristics of the composer's finished work. And to these special qualities are added transparent truthfulness, sincerity, and consistency of thought and opinion.³

¹Jean-Aubry, op. cit., p. 81

²André Coeuroy, Panorama de la musique contemporaine, (Paris: Éditions Kra, 1928), p. 109

³Liebich, op. cit., p. 11

The "naming" of Debussy's music.

Debussy was averse to making his music the exact reproduction of a certain subject. He found his own moods and feelings reflected in the verse of Verlaine, but his songs were not so much set reproductions of the poems as they were reflections of the poet's feelings or impressions. Debussy distilled their essence and then captured and protracted it into sound, producing works which should not need a title.¹

The piano Préludes, "taken as a whole, crown Debussy's maturity as a piano composer, and form a summary of the technical and expressive features of his idiom."² The titles are placed at the end of each Prélude. This is indicative of his attitude toward descriptive music. Originally the composer had no intention of giving titles to these preludes. They were submitted to the publisher as a collection of piano music, no more. However, at that time, the public was not ready to purchase just a "book of music" with no descriptive program. The publisher, Durand, insisted that Debussy give the pieces titles; and so, quite reluctantly, he delved back into his memory to find the

¹Liebich, op. cit., pp. 37, 57

²Hill, op. cit., p. 222

thing which had given him the inspiration to write each Prelude. Then he added the titles.¹

"To a man of wide outlook, impatient of all restraint, enamoured of the unconditional and the inexplicable, the labelling of his moods and the docketing of his intentions must at all times seem insufferable."²

Today, the public has progressed to the point where it will accept compositions without descriptive titles. What a shame that this could not have been true in the time of Debussy:

Debussy's signal expansion of harmonic horizons does not exist as an opportunity to confute the theorists, nor to serve the historian as the pretext for a systematic analysis of its features. This expansion is significant, it is true, in that it clears the technical background of music of much needless and encumbering 'scientific apparatus,' but it is chiefly valuable because it enabled the artist to widen the boundaries of musical utterance, to enrich its substance with new shades of emotion, and thus to enter fresh fields of musical thought. Moreover, this liberation not only affected Debussy, but also reacted directly upon his compatriots and successors throughout a considerable portion of the civilized musical world. Herein lies a vital feature of Debussy's intrinsic and historic import.³

¹Isidor Phillip, cited by Robert O'Connor in an interview, March, 1948

²Liebich, op. cit., p. 3
See also, Chapter I, p. 9 (Salazar, p. 145, 146)

³Hill, op. cit., pp. 206-207

Debussy the critic.

Claude Debussy was no lover of publicity. He never worried about the opinions of his music which were held by others, and he did not seek to advertise his theories. However, in his more mature years, he published some of his opinions. He was nearly forty when he became the musical critic for the Revue Blanche in 1901. His first contribution to this periodical contained the following statements: He determined to confine himself to "sincere impressions actually experienced," . . . "to discover in works the various impulses that gave them birth, and what they contain of inner life." He disapproved of the tendency of tearing down compositions in order to describe them.

'If people would only remember that as children they were forbidden to open the insides of dolls. . . . No: they still insist on sticking their aesthetic noses where they have no business. They no longer cut open the doll, perhaps; but they explain it, take it to pieces, and thus kill the mystery in cold blood. It is more convenient; moreover, it gives them something to talk about. Utter ignorance may excuse some, to be sure; but others, more vicious, do the harm with malice aforethought. Mediocrity must be defended at all costs, and those who undertake its defense can always rely on support.'¹

Debussy attempted in his criticisms to keep sight of the work Impressions; that is, to shut out prejudice, to keep away from arbitrary aesthetics. He was the champion of the progressives, trying to undermine the habit of

¹Vallas, op. cit., pp. 1-2

labelling those who shook off excess tradition with the name of symbolist or Impressionist.

His critical writings reveal his knowledge and respect of the old masters. He could not have arrived at his original method without having thoroughly studied the past. True, of the composers of his time, he was the least interested in the historical study of music. But his studies were guided by his own feelings, not by prescription of musicology. Like the old French masters, he had a soul "sensitive to the minutest harmonic vibrations." He possessed the "sense of the picturesque, the love of delicate polyphony, and a mode of expression varied in accordance with the inner direction of his feelings and not with the strict precepts of 'development'." ¹ He has written authoritatively and understandingly of the old masters.

The "influence" of Debussy.

There is, in French contemporary art, scarcely an intellect in which are more clearly gathered together, or graven in deeper relief, the qualities and characteristics most appropriate to our race. Works more strongly stamped with the impression of a French form of Excellence do not exist in literature, or in painting; and music, though revealing more than one valid effort to give free expression to our national spirit, could not put forth the manifestations of our

¹Jean-Aubry, op. cit., pp. 74-75

²Jean-Aubry, op. cit., pp. 69-70

essential qualities with greater clearness.¹

These characteristics were partly mental, and so French criticism was occupied for quite a time showing that it did not grasp the traditional aspect of Debussy's music.

He has freed French music from all the influences of German music. He was only one in the long movement toward French nationalism, but he was the most clear-seeing and sure-minded of the group. He did not compromise. Through him there has been a return of clear, delicate, expressive and emotional feeling; a return of intellectual quality and spirit.

If Fauré is credited with having begun the rebirth of French piano music, Debussy enlarged greatly on this beginning. Among French composers, his piano music embodies the "most genuine achievement since the days of Couperin and Rameau."² Add to this the fresh incentive toward piano composition given to Ravel, Dukas, Florent Schmitt, and others, and the influence of Debussy becomes unmistakable.

The consideration of the technical aspect of his work, with no thought of the work as a whole has belittled his achievements. The same thing happened to Impressionism in painting, in the consideration of the works of Monet and Renoir. Those most sincerely appreciative of the works of

¹Jean-Aubry, op. cit., pp. 69-70

²Hill, op. cit., pp. 223-224

Debussy were his contemporaries in writing and painting. To look at Debussy's music independently of the period in which it appeared is to receive a mistaken idea of the composer. This is the reason that his works today give more pleasure to the lover of all art than to the classic musician.¹

Debussy's last years were comparatively non-productive in any new principles, but this did not prevent the world from realizing that in him "music had possessed a most vital and unique personality, and France one of its greatest composers of all time."² All of modern music has been vitally influenced by Debussy. In 1908 was written:

So there are signs in this hurrying century of the speedy recognition of this near future for many French composers, prominent among whom stands Claude Debussy. This is not an age of giants. One no longer sights their herculean stature among the followers of any art. Yet in and out of the crowded precincts of music's territory some striking figures arrest the eye. Debussy walks solitary and apart. Down the path he has trodden none may closely follow. But some who are known not to be imitators, while recognizing his unique position, have set their faces in a similar direction and, keeping him in sight, proceed by other byways towards the same distant horizon. How far he may travel onwards, to what extent his migrations may lead those who watch his course, it is premature to prophesy. Like all pioneers, he is in advance of his age. In France an ever-increasing band of his admirers repudiate conjecture as to his merits and fame. Outside his native country his renown is steadily

¹Jean-Aubry, op. cit., pp. 87-88

²Ewen, op. cit., p. 59

increasing. His art, fast rooted in the soil of tradition, has put forth new shoots; it possesses therefore the best qualifications for ensuring endurance and long life.¹

¹Liebich, op. cit., pp. 88-89

CONCLUSION

This study of Impressionism has outlined its principal characteristics and its development. The latter has been traced through the schools of Franck and of Fauré, to its culmination in the work of Debussy. It has been shown, contrary to general belief, that Impressionist music is not vague in theory; that it has a solid foundation of form which stems from study of tradition and the classic masters.

The greatest work of the Impressionist school has been to carry forward the banner of progression. The Romantic school was dying; new life for the medium of music had to be found. The French spirit came to the fore and carried on its traditional trait of individuality and clearness of conception. Public taste in music went through a development, from opera and dramatic music, to instrumental or orchestral music, thence to the solo instrument capable of individualistic expression, the piano. The composers themselves began the more extensive use of this instrument.

Debussy ended the reform begun by Saint-Saëns, Lalo, Franck, and Fauré in his new mode of expression. Next to Debussy, Ravel is the principal representative of Impressionism, although his individual characteristics are not compatible with Impressionism in its purest sense. Impressionism has no truly representative heir. It has left only

its imprint on such composers as Dukas, Roussel, de Severac, and others. After these, Erik Satie, a friend of Debussy, began a movement which has broken down the rich Impressionist color and replaced it with a barren, cold type of "contemporary" spirit. The French novelist Cocteau described the movement thus: "After the music with the silk brush, the music with the axe."¹ Satie and his "Group of Six", in developing this radical style derived from Stravinsky and Schönberg, have nearly succeeded in placing Impressionism in the Romantic period. But Debussy's intention was for his music to be the negation of Romanticism, and lovers of Impressionism will continue to regard it as a progressive and independent school.

¹Apel, op. cit., p. 351

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Apel, Willi. *Harvard Dictionary of Music*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1944.
- Aubry, G. Jean-. *French Music of Today*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1926.
- Bauer, Marion, and Peyser, Ethel R. *Music Through the Ages*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1946.
- Bauer, Marion. *Twentieth Century Music*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1947.
- Bruneau, Alfred. *La musique française*. Paris: E. Fasquelle, 1901.
- Bruneau, Alfred. *Musiques de Russie et musiciens de France*. Paris: E. Fasquelle, 1903.
- Calvocoressi, Michel D. *Musicians Gallery; music and ballet in Paris and London*. London: Faber & Faber, Ltd., 1933.
- Cheney, Sheldon. *The Story of Modern Art*. New York: Viking Press, 1945.
- Coeuroy, André. *Panorama de la musique contemporaine*. Paris: Editions Kra, 1928.
- Craven, Thomas. *Men of Art*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1934.
- Dumesnil, Maurice. *Claude Debussy, master of dreams*. New York: I. Washburn, 1940.
- Ewen, David. *Composers of Today*. New York: H. W. Wilson Co., 1934.
- Ewen, David (ed.). *From Bach to Stravinsky; the history of music by its foremost critics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1933.
- Hendelson, William, and Zucker, Paul (eds.). *The Music Lovers' Almanac*. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc. 1943

- Hervey, Arthur. French Music in the XIXth Century. Translated by Edwin Evans. London: Grant Richards; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1903.
- Hill, Edward Burlingame. Modern French Music. Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1924.
- Indy, Vincent d'. Cesar Franck. Translated by Rosa Newmarch. London: John Lane Co., 1929.
- Koechlin, Charles. Gabriel Faure. Translated by Leslie Orry. London: Dennis Dobson Ltd., 1945.
- Lang, Paul Henry. Music in Western Civilization. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1941.
- Liebich, Louise. Claude-Achille Debussy. London: J. Lane; New York: J. Lane Co., 1908.
- Lockspeiser, Edward. Debussy. London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1936.
- Mason, Daniel Gregory. Contemporary Composers. Macmillan Co., New York, 1918.
- Mason, Daniel Gregory. From Grieg to Brahms. New York: Macmillan Co., 1912.
- Pannain, Guido. Modern Composers. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1933.
- Pater, Walter. The Renaissance; Studies in Art and Poetry. London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1924.
- Rolland, Romain. Musicians of Today. Translated by Mary Blaiklock. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1915.
- Salazar, Adolfo. Music in Our Time. Translated by Isabel Pope. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1946.
- Shera, Frank Henry. Debussy and Ravel. London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1927.
- Thompson, Oscar (ed.). The International Cyclopedia of Music and Musicians. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1939.
- Vallas, Leon. Claude Debussy; His Life and Works. Translated by Maire and Grace O'Brien. London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1933.

Vallas, Leon. The Theories of Claude Debussy, musicien
français. Translated by Maire O'Brien. London:
Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1929.

van der Berg, Henri J. (ed.). The Music Lovers Calendar.
Volume II, number 1. December, 1906. Urbana, Illinois:
School of Music, University of Illinois, 1906.

Wier, Albert E. (ed.). The Macmillan Encyclopedia of
Music and Musicians. New York: Macmillan Co., 1938.