



Claude DEBUSSY  
CENTENARY EDITION 2018

I I V O I L E S

*P R E L U D E S* b o o k 1



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Musical Health Warning : please be aware that these editions are definitely not urtext and should be consulted together with a traditional version. They have been devised purely to help solve musical and technical problems at the piano.

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# Claude DEBUSSY 1862 - 1918

## II VOILES

### PRELUDES BOOK I

"I believe more and more that music in its essence is not a thing that can be poured into a rigorous and traditional mould. It is made of colours and rhythmical beats. Music is a mysterious mathematical process whose elements partake of infinity, capturing mysterious relations between nature and the imagination".

— **Claude Debussy**

The strong influence of French piano music is surely identified with Chopin and Debussy who share a unique position as masters of an exceptional instrument; through an extensive affinity with the sustaining pedal they each created a personal language conceived to communicate their work with the greatest authenticity.

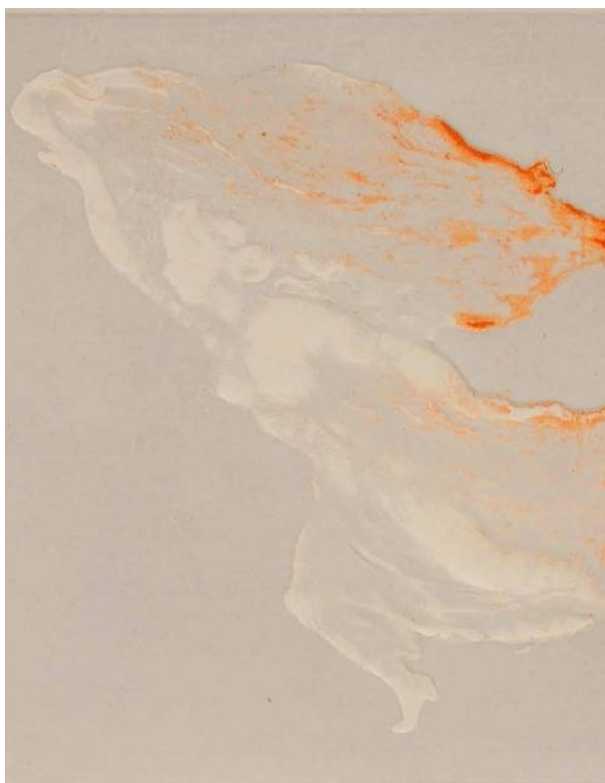
Much has been said about the motif of descending thirds and the typical whole tone scale, so essential in Debussy's "impressionist" music. I personally love the the oriental theme, especially when it returns in the treble accompanied with quasi-glissandi over the B<sup>b</sup> pedal point.

Here is a truly original work, full of character and ethereal mystery, ambiguous both in title and content. I believe the *voiles* are in fact veils, possibly inspired by an American dancer (Loïe Fuller), who used shrouds and unusual lighting to produce imaginative visual effects. "Sails" are also a possible

translation, moving us across calm waters into an atmospheric world which is difficult to describe with mere words.

During the course of this centenary year Piano Practical Editions has become a creative and critical working publication. I always felt there were too many bar lines in this prelude and present the music in 4/4 time underlining the long melodic lines and broad feeling of timelessness. I have suggested some fingering in spite of this quotation by the composer : "*Absence of fingering is an excellent*

*exercise, negating musicians' perverse desire to completely dismiss the composer's (and editor's), and thereby vindicating words of eternal wisdom: 'If you want something done well, do it yourself'". Let us seek our own fingering!*



Modéré

[♩ = 88]  
( dans un rythme sans rigueur et caressant )

**II**

*p* très doux

*p* *più p*

*m.d.*

*pp*

*expressif*

*toujours pp*

*très doux*

*pp*

Musical score system 1, measures 9-10. Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 9 starts with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. Measure 10 features a crescendo leading to a piano (*p*) dynamic. The bass line consists of sustained chords and single notes.

Musical score system 2, measures 11-12. Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 11 starts with a piano (*pp*) dynamic. Measure 12 features a *très souple* (very flexible) marking and a piano (*pp*) dynamic. The bass line includes a *basso continuo* line with a flat sign.

Musical score system 3, measures 13-14. Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 13 includes a yellow highlight on a melodic phrase. Measure 14 features a *cédez* (yield) marking, a piano (*pp*) dynamic, and a double bar line followed by *a tempo*. The bass line includes a *basso continuo* line with a flat sign.

Musical score system 4, measures 15-16. Treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 15 includes fingerings 2, 1, and 3. Measure 16 features a piano (*p*) dynamic. The bass line includes a *basso continuo* line with a flat sign and a 4-measure rest.

cédez - - - - // a tempo

16 *p* *m.s.* *pp* 2

18 2 *pp*

serrez - - - - // cédez - - - - //

20 4 *p* *m.s.* *m.d.* 3 4

en animant

22 *p* *m.d.* *m.s.* *mf* 4

Musical score for measures 22-23. The piece is in a key with three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor) and a common time signature. Measure 22 features a piano (*p*) dynamic. Measure 23 begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic, marked *8va* (octave up), and includes a forte (*f*) dynamic. The score includes fingering numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4.

emporté - - - - // cédez - - - - // très retenu - - - -

Musical score for measures 23-24. Measure 23 continues with *mf* and *f* dynamics, marked *molto*. Measure 24 features piano (*p*) and *più p* dynamics. The score includes fingering numbers 1, 3, and 4.

Musical score for measures 24-25. Measure 24 features *pp* and *più pp* dynamics. Measure 25 begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The score includes fingering numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4.

au mouvement

Musical score for measures 25-26. Measure 25 features a piano (*pp*) dynamic. Measure 26 includes a glissando instruction: *comme un très léger glissando*. The score includes fingering numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4.

*doucement en dehors*

*m.s.*

Musical score for measures 26-27. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line features a long melisma marked *m.s.* (mezza voce) with a slur over the notes. The piano accompaniment consists of a treble and bass clef with a 7-measure rest at the beginning of each line, followed by a series of eighth notes in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

Musical score for measures 27-28. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line continues the melisma with a slur. The piano accompaniment continues with eighth notes in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

Musical score for measure 28. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a slur over the notes. The piano accompaniment features a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking and includes chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

Musical score for measure 29. The system includes a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line has a slur over the notes. The piano accompaniment features a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking and includes chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

très apaisé et très atténué jusqu'à la fin

30 *più pp*

31

32

*Red.*

33



(...Voiles )



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## Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & vocabulary

### Duration: 4'25

- In the first book of Preludes, the composer indicated metronome speeds in brackets, and once wrote: "as a rose which might only last for one morning, a metronome speed might only work for one bar." Might this explain why there are no metronome speeds in the second book?
- **32-33** Debussy's pedal indication here is curious as the entire work requires a virtually continuous use of the pedal. I personally like to change the pedal at each repetition of the bass G<sup>b</sup>.

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dans un rythme sans rigueur et caressant	<i>with a yielding and caressing pulse</i>
très doux	<i>very gentle</i>
très souple	<i>very flexible</i>
cédez	<i>slow down</i>
serrez	<i>accelerate</i>
en animant	<i>animating</i>
emporté	<i>exalted</i>
retenu	<i>held back</i>
comme un très léger glissando	<i>like a very light glissando</i>
doucement en dehors	<i>gently in relief</i>
très apaisé et très atténué jusqu'à la fin	<i>very calm and very muted until the end</i>