

Claude DEBUSSY

CENTENARY EDITION 2018

IV LES FÉES

SONT D'ESQUISES

DANSEUSES

*PRELUDES book II*



Piano Practical Editions

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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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Ray Alston : [contact@pianopracticaleditions.com](mailto:contact@pianopracticaleditions.com)

# Claude DEBUSSY 1862 - 1918

## IV LES FÉES SONT D'ESQUISES DANSEUSES PRELUDES BOOK II

"I believe more and more that music in its essence is not a thing that can be poured into a precise 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.

In 1912 Debussy visited an exhibition in Paris of the famous book illustrator, Arthur Rackham; *Fairies are Exquisite Dancers* is based on one his illustrations for *Peter Pan*, a book which had been offered to his daughter Chouchou the previous Christmas. Notice especially the bespectacled spider playing the double bass and a grasshopper the clarinet to accompany the fairy's magical dance balancing on silk that must have been particularly strong!

After a charming, capricious and ephemeral introduction with diaphanous textures, spidery broken chords, trills and tremolos, the contrasting central section is an

expressive and *rubato* waltz. The following trill passages are truly Scriabinesque with a Brahms motif quotation from opus 39. The final bars feature a brief reference to Weber's *Oberon*.



**Fairies Are Exquisite Dancers**  
**Arthur Rackham**

To quote Michael Clark\*, "*Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses*" is a miniature masterpiece of descriptive music. These strong ties to former styles suggest that Debussy, a composer credited with breaking new ground, is in many ways continuing and expanding upon the Romantic tradition in his music.

During the course of this centenary year *Piano Practical Editions* has become a creative and critical working publication; in addition to a few suggestions of fingering, sostenuto pedal and hand disposition, you will find significant modifications to the general layout.

Here is an apt 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!

\* from "*Fleeting Fairy Footprints: Trails of Influence in a Debussy Prelude*" (2013).

Rapide et léger

*pp*

IV

5

4

*pp*

*m.d.*

*m.s.*

*sempre leggerissimo*

*p marqué*

7

*p*

10

*p*

*m.s.*

*tr*

13 *pp* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr* *tr* *m.d.* *p* *m.s.*

16 *m.s.* *p*

18 *pp* *p* *pp*

21

**rubato**

*mf*

*p* *m.d.*

*p*

*Sost. Ped*

8va

24

..\*..

**premier mouvement**

*pp*

*m.s.*

*m.d.*

*Cédez - - - - //*

28

3 4

**sans rigueur**

32

4 5 3

**a tempo**

*p* *expressif*

*pp*

*m.s.*

36

retenu - - - - // mouvement

40 *p* *m.s.* *p* *p*

44 *m.s.* *mf* *mf*

Cédez - - - -

48 *p* *m.s.* *mf* *p* *m.s.* *mf*

rubato - - - - // mouvement

50 *più p* *m.s.* *m.s.*

Cédez // mouvement

54 *pp* *m.d.* *p expressif* *m.s.*

58 *mf* *mf* *m.d. sotto*

62 *mf* *m.s. sopra* *diminuendo molto* *Cédez //*

mouvement (caressant)

65 *p* *léger*

en retenant

69 *mf* *tr* *m.d.* *m.s.* *sfz* *p* *più p* *doux et rêveur*

74 *tr* *marqué* *pp* *un peu en dehors* *pp*

79 *1* *2* *1*

Serrez

au mouvement (en retenant)

84 *tr* *m.d.* *m.s.* *sfz* *sfz* *sfz*



88 *p* *pp* *tr* *marqué* *pp*

94 *p*

**mouvement**

99 *pp*

102 *pp*

105 *pp*

Musical score for measures 105-106. The piece is in 3/4 time with a key signature of three flats. Measure 105 features a piano introduction with a *pp* dynamic. The right hand plays a melodic line with slurs, while the left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes.

107

Musical score for measure 107. The right hand continues with a melodic line, and the left hand plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

108

Musical score for measure 108. The right hand has a melodic line, and the left hand continues with eighth-note accompaniment.

110

Musical score for measure 110. The right hand has a melodic line, and the left hand continues with eighth-note accompaniment. A *Red.* (ritardando) marking is present at the end of the measure.

111

*8va*

*più pp*

*pp*

*p*

*Red.*

Musical score for measure 111. The right hand has a melodic line, and the left hand continues with eighth-note accompaniment. A *8va* marking is present above the first few notes. The dynamic starts as *più pp*, changes to *pp*, and then to *p* at the end. A *Red.* marking is present at the end of the measure.

116

*pp*

Musical score for measure 116. The right hand has a melodic line, and the left hand continues with eighth-note accompaniment. The dynamic is *pp*.

(... "Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses" )

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## Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & French vocabulary

**Duration: 3'20** (There is a beautiful studio recording in which Horowitz takes 3'10)

- In the first book of Preludes, the composer indicated some 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?
- The opening with minimum pedal is particularly effective
- **13-14** I offer this practical solution... if Debussy's septuplets prove impossible
- **16** G $\sharp$  missing from the original edition — probably a misprint
- **24-37** sostenuto pedal editorial suggestion
- **106-110** presented in 3/4

marqué	<i>marked</i>
cédez	<i>slow down</i>
sans rigueur	<i>with rhythmic freedom</i>
retenu	<i>ritardando</i>
en retenant	<i>held back</i>
doux et rêveur	<i>gentle and dreamy</i>
un peu en dehors	<i>a little in relief</i>

