Claude DEBUSSY
CENTENARY EDITION 2018

SUITE BERGAMASQUE

iv PASSEPIED
By 1890 Debussy was deeply involved in the poetry of Verlaine — “charmant masques et bergamasques quasi tristes sous leurs déguisements fantasques”¹. He once confided to Marguerite Long: “it is not the comédie italienne, but the tragic expression of existence.”

The suite was shelved for 15 years during which time his compositional technique and fame had developed and grown, and in 1905 he was persuaded to revise and publish the set of four pieces. Although it is open to conjecture how much was conceived earlier, we do know that the Passepied probably started life as a Pavane.

Unlike the Bergamasque, a clumsy rustic dance, this movement requires

“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 rhythmic beats. Music is a mysterious mathematical process whose elements partake of infinity, capturing mysterious relations between nature and the imagination”.

¹ Quotation mark 1
Three pieces published separately in 1903-04 may form a possible second Suite Bergamasque: Masques – d’un Cahier d’Esquisses and l’Isle Joyeuse … They are united in one volume by PPE, possibly for the first time, where their interconnection as a group can be readily appreciated.

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much delicacy of step and expression. The title seems to have no reference to a true passepied and some mystery surrounds the tempo description and choice of common time. Allegretto ma non troppo – what does that really mean? Fairly quick without excess? Generally performed as a typical fast movement to end the suite, a lively allegro alla breve seems most likely. Does passepied perhaps refer to the light use of our delicate feet at the pedals? Indeed a successful performance of this neo-classical work does require sensitive footwork! Whatever its origins and meaning, it makes a delightful (no pun intended) contrast to the ever popular Clair de Lune, which precedes it.

In addition to some suggested fingering, redistribution between the hands comes under close scrutiny to make certain passages easier or more persuasive.

1. beguiling masks and bergamasks feigning sorrow beneath their whimsical disguises
2. French court dance, adapted in the 16th century, found frequently in 18th-century French opera and ballet, also in baroque instrumental suites. Most examples are in triple time.

The metronome speed is editorial

9-10 editorial modification of time-signatures
13 absence of phrasing
17 possible misprint
26 G♯ semibreve
36-38 editorial modification of time-signatures
55-58 alto voice tenuto marks removed
62 possible misprint
102 f seems likely in view of the molto diminuendo at 104
106-109 editorial bass phrasing

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allegretto ma non troppo \( \text{[} \text{d} = 88 \text{]} \)

PASSEPIED
molto diminuendo

tempo primo

legato

staccato
DEBUSSY
SUITE BERGAMASQUE
Passepied
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