

Beyond Debussy and Ravel:  
Impressionism in the Early Advanced Short Piano Works of  
Selected European and American Composers

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## ABSTRACT

Musical Impressionism has been most significantly reflected through the works of Claude Debussy (1862-1918) and Maurice Ravel (1875-1937). These two key figures exhibit the essence of this art and their piano music remains substantial, influential, and frequently assigned and played today. Nevertheless, from a pedagogical perspective, important factors required in achieving a successful performance of Debussy and Ravel's piano music—delicate tone production, independent voicing, complicated rhythm, sensitive pedaling, and a knowledgeable view of Impressionism—are musically and technically beyond the limit of early advanced students.

This study provides a collection of short piano pieces by nine lesser-known European and American composers—Edward MacDowell (1861-1908), Charles Griffes (1884-1920), Marion Bauer (1887-1955), Cyril Scott (1879-1970), Arnold Bax (1883-1953), Selim Palmgren (1878-1951), Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936), Jacques Ibert (1890-1962) and Federico Mompou (1893-1987). They were influenced by impressionistic aesthetics or composed at one time in an impressionistic manner over a span of their lifetimes and their music provides a bridge to the more advanced impressionistic pieces of Debussy and Ravel for early advanced students.

These composers' selected short piano pieces display richly colored sonority through the use of impressionistic techniques such as non-functional harmony (parallel chords and free modulation), exotic setting (e.g. modality,

pentatonic and whole-tone scales), ostinato figures, bell-sound imitation, and extended texture. Moreover, personal interpretive elements, such as poetic and folklore references, were incorporated in some piano works of MacDowell, Griffes, Bauer, Scott, and Bax; among them MacDowell and Bax were particularly inspired by Celtic and Nordic materials. Mompou infused Spanish folklores in his individual naïve style.

Most importantly, these selected short piano pieces are approachable and attractive to early advanced pianists. These works, as well as other largely undiscovered impressionistic piano character pieces, ought to be a great source of preliminary repertoire as preparation for the music of Debussy and Ravel.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Impressionism, with its origins in art and literature, found a means of expression in music, most significantly through the compositions of Claude Debussy (1862-1918), and later those of another important French impressionistic figure, Maurice Ravel (1875-1937). From a pedagogical perspective, most of Debussy and Ravel's piano works are suitable for musically and technically advanced, mature students. In the *Repertoire Guide* of the Arizona Study Program issued by the Arizona State Music Teachers Association, none of Debussy's piano works is labeled lower than Advanced (level 9-12), with the exception of *Le Petit Nègre* (Late Intermediate, level 7-8). The same labeling applies for Ravel's listed piano works—all categorized as Advanced (levels 9 to 12).<sup>1</sup>

Playing the piano music of Debussy and Ravel requires well-tempered musicianship, masterful piano technique, deep interpretive thought, and a thorough understanding of the style. Maurice Dumesnil's statement in *How to Teach and Play Debussy* indicates an important element that cannot be missing when playing Debussy:

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<sup>1</sup> The Arizona Study Program is a twelve-year graded course of study developed by the Arizona State Music Teachers Association to provide for the development of musical performance, technique and theory. ASP levels are established by expert opinion of experienced professionals in the field. See <http://www.phoenixmusicteachers.org/azsp.html> (accessed October 10, 2010).

...a more elusive, delicate and poetic way of treating the keyboard must also be evolved, without which the understanding and execution of Debussy would never become an open book.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, Dumesnil suggests that a Debussy performer needs to be first equipped in the accepted fundamentals of technique, which will serve as the background of knowledge afterwards.<sup>3</sup> From there, a mature pianist should know when and how to modify his or her exquisite technique to fulfill the sound images encountered in the music of Debussy and Ravel.

### Purpose of Study

Regrettably, many students encounter musical Impressionism first in the music of Debussy and Ravel, well before becoming mature and well-trained pianists capable of playing and interpreting impressionistic music appropriately. Debussy's *Children's Corner*, *Le Petit Nègre* and the famous *La fille aux cheveux de lin* are probably the most common impressionistic entry pieces for students today. Disregarding *Le Petit Nègre*, which is not very impressionistic in character, there are indeed some good pieces for late intermediate or early advanced players in *Children's Corner* such as "Jimbo's Lullaby" and "The Little Shepherd." However, other pieces in the set may not be very appropriate for an introduction to impressionistic repertoire. For instance, although in a repetitive pattern, "The Snow is Dancing" is challenging because of its light and equal staccatos imitating

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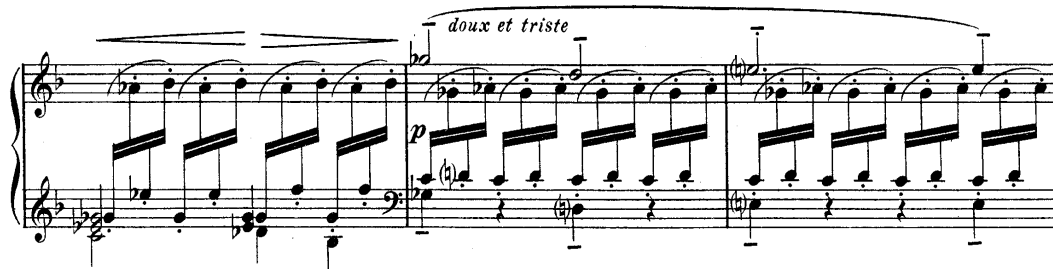
<sup>2</sup> Maurice Dumesnil, *How to Play and Teach Debussy* (New York: Schroeder & Gunther, 1932), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

gently falling snowflakes (example 1.1), delicate voicing (example 1.2), and complicated three against four polyrhythms toward the end of the piece (example 1.3). The rest of the pieces in *Children’s Corner*, “Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum,” “Serenade of the Doll,” and “Golliwogg’s Cakewalk” all require experienced fingers to play fast running passages, complex rhythms and constantly changing dynamics and articulations.



Ex. 1.1 Claude Debussy, *Children’s Corner*, “The Snow is Dancing”, mm. 4-6<sup>4</sup>



Ex. 1.2 Claude Debussy, *Children’s Corner*, “The Snow is Dancing”, mm. 22-24

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<sup>4</sup> Claude Debussy, *Children’s Corner*, “The Snow is Dancing” (Paris: Durand & Fils, 1908), mm. 4-9, in *International Music Score Library Project*, [http://imslp.org/wiki/Children’s\\_Corner\\_\(Debussy,\\_Claude\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Children’s_Corner_(Debussy,_Claude)) (accessed December 8, 2010). All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.



Ex. 1.3 Claude Debussy, *Children's Corner*, “The Snow is Dancing”, mm. 34-36

One of the most recorded and famous pieces by Debussy, *La fille aux cheveux de lin* (The Girl with the Flaxen Hair) is not a good option for entry-level students either. Six flats, constantly syncopated rhythm, serene paints of tone color, and delicate phrasing mark this piece for much more experienced pianists.



Ex. 1.4 Claude Debussy, *Preludes Livre II*, “La fille aux cheveux de lin”, mm. 20-25<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Claude Debussy, *Preludes Livre II*, *La fille aux cheveux de lin*, “The Girl with the Flaxen Hair” (Paris: Durand & Cie., 1910), mm. 1-2, in *International Music Score Library Project*, [http://imslp.org/wiki/Preludes\\_\(Book\\_2\)\\_](http://imslp.org/wiki/Preludes_(Book_2)_) (Debussy,

According to the examples cited above, I believe that the assigned impressionistic piano repertoire for today's students reveals the existence of a "black hole" in the instructional trajectory from early advanced playing to the playing of standard impressionistic repertoire. This lacuna encompasses not only the missing part of the preparatory impressionistic repertoire and exposure to a wide variety of composers, but also students' missing abilities in terms of appreciation of style, acquaintance with the required techniques, and knowledge of interpretation.

Hence, my purpose in this study is to "fill the black hole" by highlighting pieces that can effectively introduce Impressionism to early advanced students, thereby preparing them for the more advanced works of Debussy and Ravel. My goal is to reveal the works of several composers who were influenced by the impressionistic aesthetic and wrote at one time in an impressionistic style. However, because of the enormous body of impressionistic repertoire, only selected European and American composers will be discussed in this paper, namely (in chronological order): Edward MacDowell (1861-1908), Selim Palmgren (1878-1951), Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936), Cyril Scott (1879-1970), Arnold Bax (1883-1953), Charles Griffes (1884-1920), Marion Bauer (1887-1955), Jacques Ibert (1890-1962), and Federico Mompou (1893-1987).

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Claude) (accessed October 15, 2010). All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.

Although they originated from different nationalities in the United States and Europe, the above composers' lives all spanned a period from the 1860s to the 1980s. Coupled with social, political, and economic changes, these one hundred and twenty years encompassed a range of extremely varied styles in the history of music. Late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century styles —such as Post-romanticism, Nationalism, Impressionism, Serialism, Neoclassicism, Eclecticism, Minimalism and many more—were to a certain extent influential to these nine composers and their musical output. For instance, under the dominance of Germanic Romanticism in the second half of the nineteenth century, most of the above composers headed to Western Europe (mostly France and Germany) for further musical training. In general, their rooted romantic musical language, along with their individual personalities and talent in music, were incorporated with other elements such as folklore melodies, impressionistic approaches, improvisatory elements, and even more experimental abstract writings.

In this paper, I highlight only the impressionistic characteristics in the selected early advanced short piano works of these nine composers. Among these compositions, specific impressionistic traits are examined and discussed in depth. We know that Debussy and the French musical idiom had an enormous impact in many countries and among many composers abroad in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to various extents these nine composers were also influenced. For example, Edward MacDowell and Cyril Scott were contemporaries of Debussy. Federico Mompou was a pupil of Isidor Philipp



(1863-1958), a fellow student and lifelong friend of Debussy at the Paris Conservatory who was also considered the leading authority on Debussy's piano music after Debussy's death.<sup>6</sup> Marion Bauer and Jacques Ibert even studied with the same master—André Gedalge (1856-1926)—who was also the teacher of Ravel, Arthur Honegger (1892-1955) and Darius Milhaud (1892-1974), a new generation of composers in France. Although cultivated by musical tradition and authentic Germanic and French musical discipline, these nine composers were not enslaved by a restricted style; and each of them maintained an individual voice within the realm of Impressionism.

The nine composers discussed in this study are grouped by chapters according to their parallels to one another regarding nationality, biographical background, overall compositional styles and noted characteristics in the music. In addition to this introductory chapter and the conclusion, the paper is divided into another three chapters—"Three American Legends: Edward MacDowell, Charles Griffes, and Marion Bauer," "Across the North Atlantic: Cyril Scott, Arnold Bax, and Selim Palmgren," and "Impressionism in Eclecticism: Ottorino Respighi, Jacques Ibert, and Federico Mompou."

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<sup>6</sup> Denine M. LeBlanc, "The Life and Work of Isidor Philipp" (D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1989), 21-22, in *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, <http://www.proquest.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu> (accessed November 24, 2010).

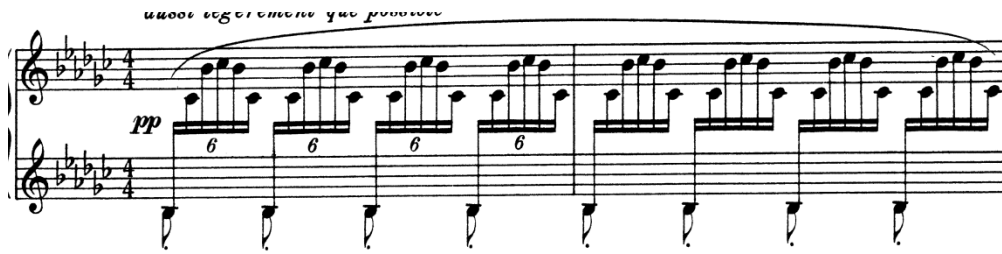
## The Challenges of Playing the Music of Debussy and Ravel

To illustrate the need of exploring a great variety of impressionistic piano repertoire by the composers cited above, I believe that it is necessary to discuss in detail several characteristics of the music of Debussy and Ravel. These characteristics include some of the pianistic, technical and musical factors that make playing the music of Debussy and Ravel challenging. This discussion will also provide a general guide for students in interpreting impressionistic piano music appropriately.

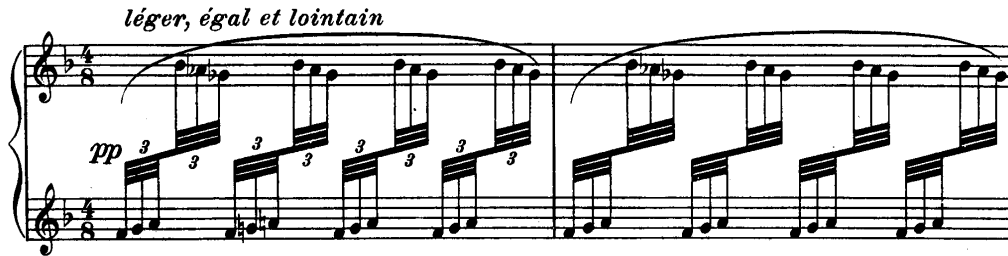
First, playing *pianissimo* (or even softer) in background passages. For example, in the opening measures of “Le vent dans la plaine” (The Wind on the Plain) and “Feux d’artifices” (Fireworks) in Debussy’s *Preludes* (examples 1.5 and 1.6), groups of patterned notes marked *pianissimo* abound. Here, “a close attack is necessary, with extremely quick and light motion of the finger tips.”<sup>7</sup> It is important to avoid making this type of passage sound like an exercise. Also, in a repeated pattern, overly mechanistic articulation would cause a monotonous sound. Keeping the appropriate lightness of touch and a good balance between independent fingers and rotated wrists is a challenge for pianists.

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<sup>7</sup> Dumesnil, *How to Play and Teach Debussy*, 22.



Ex. 1.5 Claude Debussy, *Preludes Livre I*, “Le vent dans la plaine”, mm.1-2



Ex. 1.6 Claude Debussy, *Preludes Livre II*, “Feux d’artifices”, mm.1-2

The same applies to the case of Ravel’s *Jeux d’eau* (Fountains). In example 1.7, groups of patterned notes alternate between hands while the other hand plays the pentatonic-like melody. This requires skillful control over the voicing of the main melody and soft background passages, especially in mm. 19-20, where the right hand plays the seconds in an extended hand position. In addition, a *pianissimo* background passage may also appear in the form of chords, shown in example 1.8.

Ex. 1.7 Maurice Ravel, *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 19-22<sup>8</sup>


Ex. 1.8 Maurice Ravel, *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 7-8

Second, the voicing gains even more importance in bringing out a particular tone from an extended texture in music. This type of writing is particularly common throughout Debussy and Ravel's piano works. Dumesnil actually provided a series of methods to help students master this technique as

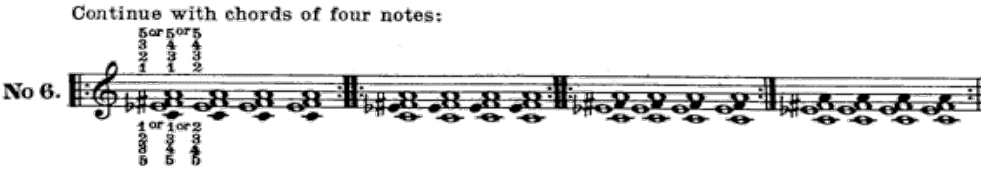
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<sup>8</sup> Maurice Ravel, *Jeux d'eau* (Fountains) (Mineola: Dover, 1986), mm. 19-22, in *International Music Score Library Project*, [http://imslp.org/wiki/Jeux\\_d'Eau\\_\(Ravel,\\_Maurice\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Jeux_d'Eau_(Ravel,_Maurice)) (accessed 15 October 2010). All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.


shown below in examples nos. 5-8 from his book.<sup>9</sup> The exercise begins with a C major triad and gradually progresses to thicker chords with different voices highlighted in each. Finally, chords are played in a longer succession with varied levels of dynamics and voicing.

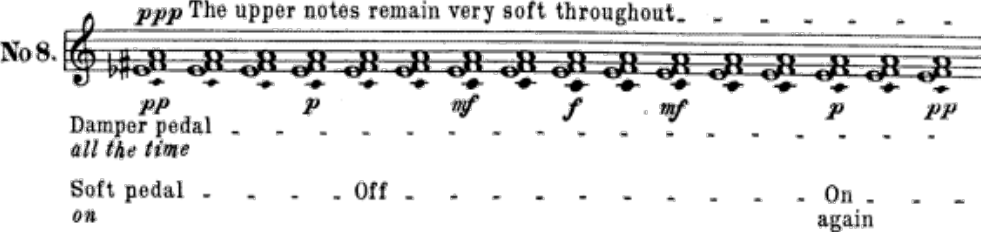
No 5. 

Continue with chords of four notes:

No 6. 

Then, chords of five notes:

No 7. 

No 8. 

*ppp* The upper notes remain very soft throughout.

Damper pedal *all the time*

Soft pedal *on* - - - Off - - - On *again*

Ex. 1.9 Maurice Dumesnil’s suggested practice method for voicing

Voicing challenges in Debussy’s music vary—from intervals to lush chords, mostly in the top voice but sometimes in the bass or inner voice—but all require well-trained techniques established through patient practice. Example 1.10 shows the opening theme of major thirds in “Voiles.” Marked “*très doux*” (very

<sup>9</sup> Dumesnil, *How to Play and Teach Debussy*, 10.

soft), the top voice should be projected clearly and delicately. Example 1.11 displays a direct application of Dumesnil’s suggested practice method in the first five measures of “Danseuses de Delphes” (Dancers of Delphi). In a chordal texture of six voices, the pianist must emphasize the melody in the middle voice in mm. 1-2, and then the melody on the top in mm. 3-5. Further in the third measure of “Cloches à travers les feuilles” (Bells Through the Leaves) (see example 1.12), three voices of the whole-tone scale proceed simultaneously (the fourth voice of a whole-tone scale in the bass is not initiated until m. 5) with specific articulation markings (*marcato*, *tenuto*, *staccato* within *legato*, and solely *legato*), which demands precise coordination between hands. Each voice must be played clearly and gently. All these examples exhibit the technical difficulty in the piano music of Debussy.



Ex. 1.10 Claude Debussy, *Preludes Livre I*, “Voiles”, mm.1-2



Ex. 1.11 Claude Debussy, *Preludes Livre I*, “Danseuses de Delphes”, mm.1-7

Ex. 1.12 Claude Debussy, *Image II*, “Cloches à travers les feuilles”, mm. 1-3<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Claude Debussy, *Image II*, “Cloches a travers les feuilles“ (Bells Through the Leaves) (Paris: Durand & Fils, 1908), mm. 1-3, in *International Music Score Library Project*, [http://imslp.org/wiki/Images\\_\(2eme\\_Serie\)\\_ \(Debussy,\\_Claude\)](http://imslp.org/wiki/Images_(2eme_Serie)_ (Debussy,_Claude)) (accessed 15 October 2010). All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.

Tone production plays an extremely important role in interpreting impressionistic music. To create liquid, homogeneous tone and texture, the damper pedal undoubtedly serves as the most effective “tone modifier.” Therefore, the third substantial skill for Debussy and Ravel performers is the pedaling. Unfortunately, pedaling has always been an issue for pianists in playing Debussy, for Debussy himself very rarely gave indications of pedaling throughout his own works. This lack of guidance from the composer makes it difficult for pianists to produce the ideal sound, which is described by Dumesnil:

He [Debussy] limited himself to a few mentions of ‘les deux pedales’ (the two pedals), and his indications of the damper pedal alone, are exceptionally scarce. Most of his compositions have none at all. And, unfortunately for the students, this applies to many pieces where they would be most necessary for those not thoroughly familiarized with his style.<sup>11</sup>

Although there are some general pedaling principles to follow when playing Debussy and Ravel’s pieces as well as other impressionistic music, achieving successful pedaling effects is more closely linked to the players’ sensitivity to sonority. Sensitive ears will lead to certain subtle ways of pedal usage, which helps produce charming *pianissimo* and tonal effects.

One of the most common examples can be found in passages with a sustained chords carried through for several measures. Unlike Debussy’s “Prelude” of *Pour le piano* where the long-lasting A minor bass tone is sustained with the sostenuto pedal in the opening section, flutter pedaling is effective in “La

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<sup>11</sup> Dumesnil, *How to Play and Teach Debussy*, 12.



Cathédrale engloutie” (The Engulfed Cathedral). The damper pedal needs to be wisely manipulated through a slightly shaking and quickly lifting ankle action to avoid over-mixing the sound, while still carrying the desired chords. Thus in m. 2 and m. 4, as shown in example 1.13, the damper pedal can be slightly changed by lifting only one-fifth of an inch or so. In this way, the G chord is continued and the exotic tone color preserved from the previous measures (m. 1 and m. 3) is blended into the sonority. Also in m. 6, although literally the G major/E minor chord is not needed, the pianist should avoid suppressing the string vibration with a sudden change of damper pedal.<sup>12</sup>

Ex. 1.13 Claude Debussy, *Preludes Livre I*, “La Cathédrale engloutie”, mm.1-7

Moreover, all of this subtle usage of pedals must be coupled with “indirect” and “caressing” touch on the keys. Dumesnil called this type of touch the

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<sup>12</sup> The same effect can be achieved by playing more on sustained chords, but less on others in example 1.13.

“progressive attack.” It starts with a high-held hand close to the piano lid, which is gradually brought down as the wiping motion continues.<sup>13</sup>

To conclude, all the examples above help illustrate the required techniques needed to play Debussy and Ravel—the technique to produce soft and smooth background passages, the technique to bring out the prominent melody from different voices, and the technique to manipulate the pedals and keys in achieving infinitesimal delicacy of tone effect. Hence, the difficulty of cultivating a real impressionistic interpreter who masters the music of Debussy and Ravel is clearly seen.

#### The Origin of Impressionism and Its Reflection in Music

Before introducing the music of the nine composers in this study, it is necessary to mention the origin of Impressionism briefly. The term “Impressionism” was first coined by the French critic Louis Leroy in his description of the key work of Claude Monet (1840-1926), *Lever du soleil* (Impression, Sunrise), shown in the exhibition in 1874. The work was so typical that it led Monet’s contemporaries to develop a particular style of painting: loose brush strokes, depiction of light, subtle scale of nuance and landscape-oriented subjects. As Monet explained, “Landscape is nothing but an impression.” The

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 13.

concept of impressionism emphasizes human perception of a subject, rather than outline and details.<sup>14</sup>

This unique art form was soon infused into music. Since music is essentially abstract, it was very appropriate in conveying the indirectness of Impressionism. *Grove Music* author Jann Pasler supplies useful terminology: In musical “Impressionism” most narrowly found in the music of Debussy and other composers who were influenced by him, composers attempted to “explore the fleeting moment and the mystery of life,” which led them to seek “musical equivalents” for nature scenes, such as reflected light on water, sunlight through the leaves, fountains, clouds, fog, wind, night, and landscapes.<sup>15</sup> As a result, the piano became one of the favorite media for impressionistic composers: its damper pedal allowed strings to vibrate freely and create sustained harmonies and overtones, giving an atmosphere of distance and mystery in the music.

To reflect the expression and imagery on the piano through this impressionistic musical language, composers were fond of using new additive chord combinations—chords of the ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth were substituted for tonal triads or seventh chords. In this way the center of tonality was weakened, which reflects the original idea in art of avoiding sharp contours.

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<sup>14</sup> Richard Smith, "Impressionism," in *The Oxford Companion to Music*, edited by Alison Latham, *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e3397> (accessed November 23, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Jann Pasler, "Impressionism," in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/50026> (accessed March 20, 2011).

Further, sequences of major seconds, unresolved and parallel chords, and octaves filled with fourths and fifths also helped create a sense of ambiguity in the music. Extended tremolos, the use of ostinato and pedal point (usually resulting in an extended texture of three-staff notation), and a variety of rhythmic densities were used to achieve an intangible atmosphere. Furthermore, composers sometimes infused exotic sonority by adopting modes, whole-tone scales, pentatonic scales, and extreme chromatic settings in the music.

Pasler commented that the original concept of Impressionism in art was to focus on “not new realities but new perceptions.” Debussy later explained that the “unexpected charm” of music was derived not so much from the chords or timbres themselves—already found in the music of many romantic figures such as Frederic Chopin, Franz Liszt, and Richard Wagner—but from “the rigorous choice of what precedes and what follows.”<sup>16</sup> Although the impressionistic sound of these nine composers’ music is based on the use of compositional techniques similar to those mentioned above, the charm of their music does not rely on these techniques. This is why I found it exciting to explore additional impressionistic piano pieces for early advanced pianists. The evocative moods, personal language and refreshing sounds of these nine composers deserve our attention and have much to offer students and listeners as precursors to the music of Debussy and Ravel.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

CHAPTER 2  
THREE AMERICAN LEGENDS:  
EDWARD MACDOWELL, CHARLES GRIFFES, AND  
MARION BAUER

Edward MacDowell (1861-1908) was one of the first American composers to earn an international reputation. His music is noteworthy for its delicate tones, vivid musical language, and profound philosophy throughout one hundred and fifteen piano miniatures in nineteen sets. Mentioning Edward MacDowell when one talks about the history of American classical music in the nineteenth century is essential.

The late nineteenth century was the era of nationalism, which brought American composers to the question of what American music should be. To line up with Americanism, for example, composers such as Henry Gilbert (1868-1928) adopted African American tunes, Indian musical themes, and ragtime into his compositions. Louis Gottschalk (1829-1869), an American piano virtuoso, also incorporated American vernacular materials such as plantation melodies and Creole dances in his music.<sup>17</sup> During the era, however, MacDowell insisted that

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<sup>17</sup> Lorenzo Candelaria and Daniel Kingman, *American Music: A Panorama* (Belmont, CA: Thomson Schirmer, 2007), 288, 295.

the composer's artistic personality—rather than a self-consciously “American” theme—was the key to a high-quality composition.<sup>18</sup>

Hence, MacDowell was distinguished from his contemporaries, the Second New England School, because of his extraordinary use of color and natural imagery that exceeded European traditional gestures.<sup>19</sup> The fact that he peppered his later piano miniatures with impressionistic elements is remarkable if we understand MacDowell's style from this contemporary perspective.

#### Edward MacDowell: An American Tone Poet

MacDowell's musical language was rooted deeply in European Romanticism. He was influenced by Franz Liszt (1811-1886) and Richard Wagner (1813-1883), two leading composers of the late nineteenth century. However, I would like to stress not the late romantic characteristics but the impressionistic elements in MacDowell's piano works. As a schoolmate with Claude Debussy while studying at the Paris Conservatoire in France, MacDowell's musical style was described by Neil Leonard: “Like the impressionist's style his was economical, not giving the full details, only

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<sup>18</sup> Peggy Marie Walton, “The Music of Charles T. Griffes; Harbinger of American Art Music's Transition into the Modern Age” (M.M. thesis, Rice University, 1988), 14-21, in *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, <http://proquest.umi.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu> (accessed April 13, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> John Warthen Struble, *The History of American Classical Music: MacDowell through Minimalism* (New York: Facts on File, 1995), 33-38; the members of the Second New England School (e.g., George Chadwick, Arthur Foote, and Amy Beach) were all born around of the time of the Civil War (1861-65) and all committed to the musical style of the European Romantic tradition.

rendering evocative bits and allowing the listener to do the rest.”<sup>20</sup> In agreement with some music scholars who call him an “American Tone Poet,” I believe that it is MacDowell’s sensitive, descriptive, picturesque musical language that make up the most essential spirit of “being impressionistic.”

Moreover, as a famous concert pianist of his time, MacDowell’s playing exhibited an impressionistic sensibility. T. P. Currier, MacDowell’s friend, once recalled MacDowell’s style:

His playing... was distinctly impressionistic. When listening to him ... the lingering impression was of a Monet-like tone-painting.... sounded under his hands vague, far off, floating in space.... Delicate chord-groups, like his melodies, floated in air... At the piano MacDowell was a poet-musician. He was no merely [sic] note-player . . . He was the same teller of exquisite poems, the same impressionistic tone-painter, that he was at his desk.<sup>21</sup>

#### Charles Griffes: The American Impressionist

Interestingly, approximately two decades later, another American composer, Charles Griffes (1884-1920), also cultivated a distinctive musical style of sensitivity and originality. Griffes was a unique American composer who lived in a period in which nationalism was gaining more strength and American indigenous music became one of the main interests for many American classical

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<sup>20</sup> Neil Leonard, “Edward MacDowell and the Realists,” *American Quarterly* 18 (summer 1966): 180, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2711180> (accessed April 8, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> T. P. Currier, “MacDowell as I Knew Him,” *American Quarterly* 1 (January 1915): 30, <http://gateway.proquest.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu> (accessed April 8, 2009).

music composers.<sup>22</sup> Griffes was neither interested in American thematic materials nor faithful to the European musical tradition advocated by his predecessors. He was fascinated by impressionistic and non-Western sounds, and thus he was, like MacDowell, dubbed an American impressionist.

Although it is incomplete to state that Griffes's style is solely impressionistic (later in his life Griffes composed more avant-garde works, such as *Three Preludes*), impressionism was undoubtedly compatible with his personality. Marion Bauer (the next composer to be discussed) wrote some profound words about Griffes in memory of his thirty-six-year life in "Charles T. Griffes as I Remember Him." Bauer praised not only MacDowell's significance in American classical music, but also the distinctive personality in Griffes's music:

His compositions for piano are regarded as the most important American contribution in that field after MacDowell. MacDowell celebrated New England Landscape with a poetic, romantic touch. Born a generation later, Griffes, after having traversed what might be called his "German period", presented subjects reflecting the impressionism and delicate treatment of the French school with the sure hand of a creator in search of "the new, the great unfound."<sup>23</sup>

The years 1911 to 1916 represented Griffes's impressionistic period, during which he had a keen interest in impressionistic techniques such as whole-

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<sup>22</sup> Nicholas Tawa, *Mainstream Music of Early Twentieth Century America: The Composers, Their Terms, and Their Works* (London: Greenwood Press, 1992), 103.

<sup>23</sup> Marion Baur, "Charles T. Griffes as I Remember Him," *Musical Quarterly* 29 (July 1943): 355.



tone scales, pentatonic scales, bitonality, parallelism, and ostinato figures.<sup>24</sup> Composed from 1915 to 1916, *Roman Sketches*, Op.7 marked the zenith of Griffes's impressionistic piano works. *Roman Sketches* contains four homophonic short pieces, respectively titled "The White Peacock," "Night Fall," "The Fountain of the Acqua Paola," and "Clouds." Two years before the completion of *Roman Sketches*, Griffes also composed *Three Tone-Pictures*, Op. 5 and *Fantasy Pieces*, Op. 6 in his impressionistic period.

#### Marion Bauer: An American Female Modernist

Born as the youngest child of a French Jewish immigrant family, Marion Bauer's (1887-1955) musical style is essentially French. Bauer's French heritage and her studies in Paris resulted in a noticeably impressionistic flavor in her compositions.

Living in the same age as MacDowell and Griffes, while American music was in a period of turbulence searching for its identity and the meaning of the "New Music," Bauer was, in Nancy Stewart's words, "in many ways a person in the right place at the right time."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, her outstanding accomplishments

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<sup>24</sup> Donna K. Anderson, *Charles T. Griffes: A Life in Music* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 187.

<sup>25</sup> Nancy Louise Stewart, "The Solo Piano Music of Marion Bauer" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1990), 2, in *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, <http://proquest.umi.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu> (accessed June 9, 2010).

often made her the only female present among a group of men. Bauer played many different roles in her life:

She was a respected university teacher, a popular lecturer in many forums, a composer whose works were frequently performed, a participant and leader in many of the most influential musical organizations of her day, and an active author of books, articles and reviews.<sup>26</sup>

Like MacDowell and Griffes, Bauer displayed a preference for grouping her short piano character pieces into various sets. Among her thirty-two piano miniatures in eight sets, pictorial titles are dominant. Early works include *In the Country* (“At the Crossroad,” “In the Market Place,” “The Village Gossips,” and “The Trysting Hour”), *Three Impressions* (“The Tide,” “Druids,” and “Vision”), and a highly crafted set, *From the New Hampshire Woods* (“White Birches,” “Indian Pipes,” and “Pine Trees”), which was composed during Bauer’s stay at MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire.

### Biographical Parallels

In addition to their sharing of impressionistic approaches, MacDowell, Griffes, and Bauer also had biographical parallels. MacDowell and Griffes were both born in New York; Bauer moved to New York shortly after her early childhood spent in Washington, D.C.. The three composers all followed the trend of the late 1800s and pursued musical education in Europe. MacDowell’s European experience started in 1876, when his family decided to send him to

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

France for further studies. After three years of study at the Paris Conservatory, MacDowell went to the Frankfurt Conservatory in Germany from 1879 to 1881, and then lived in Germany until 1888.

Griffes furthered his musical education at the Stern Conservatory in Berlin in 1903, and stayed there for four years. Bauer's experiences during her Paris stay beginning in 1906 helped to shape her French-oriented musical essence. As with Griffes, Bauer later spent two years (1910-1911) in Berlin studying composition with Paul Ertel. After a couple years in New York, Bauer followed MacDowell's footsteps and received further musical training at the Paris Conservatory from 1923 to 1926 with André Gedalge, who was also the teacher of Ravel, Milhaud, Honegger, and Ibert. These three years "marked a turning point in her compositional style from a tonal to a post-tonal idiom."<sup>27</sup> *Three Impressions* and *From the New Hampshire Woods* show Bauer's tonal style with impressionistic harmony. *Quietude* and *Turbulence*, composed in 1924, display Bauer's departure from tonality.<sup>28</sup>

MacDowell and Griffes were both amateur poets, and among their short piano works they often placed prefatory poems between pieces. Two piano collections from MacDowell's earlier works, *Six Idylls After Goethe*, Op.28 and

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<sup>27</sup> Ellie M. Hisama, *Gendering Musical Modernism: the Music of Ruth Crawford, Marion Bauer, and Miriam Gideon* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 5.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

*Six Poems After Heine*, Op.31, marked the first time he used the poetry of a single author to act as a unifying thread.<sup>29</sup> In these two collections, MacDowell adopted poetry from the respective poets and translated verses from German to English for the American editions. Later in *Les Orientals*, Op.37, he gained inspiration from the French verse of Victor Hugo.<sup>30</sup> Starting with *Sea Pieces*, Op.55 and continuing with *Fireside Tales*, Op.61 and *New England Idylls*, Op.62, MacDowell created his own motto for almost every piece.

Griffes held an interest in literature and poetry of all kinds throughout his lifetime. His dependency on poetry showed in his piano works, too. As one example, Edward Maisel, who wrote the first definitive biography on Griffes, described the compositional process of “The White Peacock” from *Roman Sketches*, Op. 7; as follows:

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<sup>29</sup> Francis Brancaleone, “The Short Piano Works of Edward MacDowell” (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1982), 117, in *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, <http://proquest.umi.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu> (accessed February 5, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

The theme had formed itself... But it must have early associated itself with the peacock image, for he kept Fiona Macleod's poem, *The White Peacock*, on his piano all the while he composed the theme.... "Fiona Macleod" was the pseudonym under which William Sharp, the mystical Scoto-Celtic writer, gave voice to the "half a woman" that he sensed in himself... For Griffes, William Sharp was an inevitable affinity.<sup>31</sup>

In other words, Griffes's homosexuality, first reported by Maisel, created a close connection with the homosexual poet William Sharp (1855-1905).

Surprisingly, according to Maisel, heterosexual MacDowell had also written to William Sharp in 1902. MacDowell said to William Sharp in his letter, "My dear Madam, your words have been a most powerful incentive to me in my music."<sup>32</sup>

MacDowell and Griffes were not only drawn to the same poet, they were also similar in personality. John Struble drew attention to one similarity. He states, "Both men were extraordinarily, even morbidly, sensitive individuals by temperament."<sup>33</sup> Both were generally shy in front of people. In addition, MacDowell and Griffes both died prematurely in their middle ages.

Although Bauer was not devoted to writing poetry, some of her piano miniatures do seem to exhibit poetic inspiration. Her most successful programmatic works, *Three Impressions* and *From the New Hampshire Woods*,

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<sup>31</sup> Edward Maisel, *Charles T. Griffes: The Life of an American Composer* (New York: Alfred. A. Knopf, 1943), 154.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Struble, *The History of American Classical Music*, 40.

are piano sets with three individual short pieces in each. All six pieces bear poetic quotation from various poets, such as John Gould Fletcher (1886-1950), William Rose Benét (1886-1950), and some anonymous ones. Furthermore, these introductory poems actually provide musical imagery corresponding to the important thematic materials in music.

### Impressionistic Approaches

In addition to the biographical parallels mentioned above, the three American composers were closely linked to each other in terms of compositional treatment in their impressionistic style of short piano works. As a result, instead of introducing them individually, in the following paragraphs I discuss these pieces by categorizing them into different compositional traits shared by MacDowell, Griffes, and Bauer.

#### 1. Dynamic Markings

All showed their sensitivity and delicacy through the use of a wide range of dynamics in music, especially from *p* and softer. In some of their pieces, dynamics reached *pppp*. Examples of *pppp* are shown in MacDowell's "From a German Forest" (*Fireside Tales*, Op. 61, No. 3, the final measure) and "Mid-Winter" (*New England Idyls*, Op. 62, No. 2, m. 37). In Bauer's "Indian Pipes," *ppp* appears twice for the pedal tones D and G (*From the New Hampshire Woods*, m.29 and m.33). The same dynamic marking is also displayed throughout Griffes's *Three Tone-Pictures*. All these examples suggest the similar delicate atmosphere that is created in their short piano works.

It is good for early advanced pianists to deal with these extremes of soft dynamics in the early stages of their experience in musical Impressionism. Executing a caressing touch on the keys and gentle arm movement in these pieces will equip early advanced players for more sensitive tone production. This ability also helps them achieve the ideal vague and intimate sound needed in impressionistic music.

## 2. Chromaticism

All three composers displayed chromatically saturated passages in their piano works. Example 2.1 shows a continuous use of chromatic secondary seventh chords in “Of Salamanders” from *Fireside Tales*, Op. 61.



Ex. 2.1 Edward MacDowell, *Fireside Tales*, Op. 61, No. 4, “Of Salamanders,” mm. 26-28<sup>34</sup>

Chromaticism figures prominently in most of Griffes’s piano works. In fact, Renato Fabbro states, “the impressionistic works are his most chromatic.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Edward MacDowell, *Fireside Tales*, Op. 61, No. 4, “Of Salamanders” (New York: Dover Publications, 1990), mm. 26-28. All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.

<sup>35</sup> Renato Sergio Febbro, “The Stylistic Traits of Charles Griffes’s Piano Music: Roman Sketches, Op.7 and Piano Sonata” (D.M.A. diss., Rice University,

*Roman Sketches* and *Three Tone-Pictures* are the two piano sets that feature Griffes’s chromatic language most extensively; yet, the former is not appropriate to discuss here because its four pieces all exceed the capability of early advanced pianists. “The Vale of Dreams”, the second piece in *Three Tone-Pictures*, exhibits a chromatically shaped theme right in the beginning (see example 2.2). Another example, shown in example 2.3, suggests the whirling night winds through the chromatic figures in both hands in “The Night Winds.”

Ex. 2.2 Charles Griffes, *Three Tone-Pictures*, Op. 5, No. 2, “The Vale of Dreams,” mm. 1-8<sup>36</sup>

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2001), 12, in *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, <http://proquest.umi.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu> (accessed February 25, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> Charles Griffes, *Three Tone-Pictures*, Op. 5, No. 2, “The Vale of Dreams” (New York: G. Schirmer, 1915), mm. 1-8, in *International Music Score Library Project*, [http://imslp.org/wiki/3\\_Tone-Pictures,\\_Op.5\\_%28Griffes,\\_](http://imslp.org/wiki/3_Tone-Pictures,_Op.5_%28Griffes,_)



The image shows two systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system includes a piano introduction with a 'cresc.' marking and a 'Ped.' symbol. The main section begins with a 'molto cresc.' marking and a 'Ped.' symbol. The score includes various musical notations such as dynamics (m.s., m.d., f), articulation (accents), and fingerings (1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

Ex. 2.3 Charles Griffes, *Three Tone-Pictures*, Op. 5, No. 3, “The Night Winds,”  
mm. 10-11

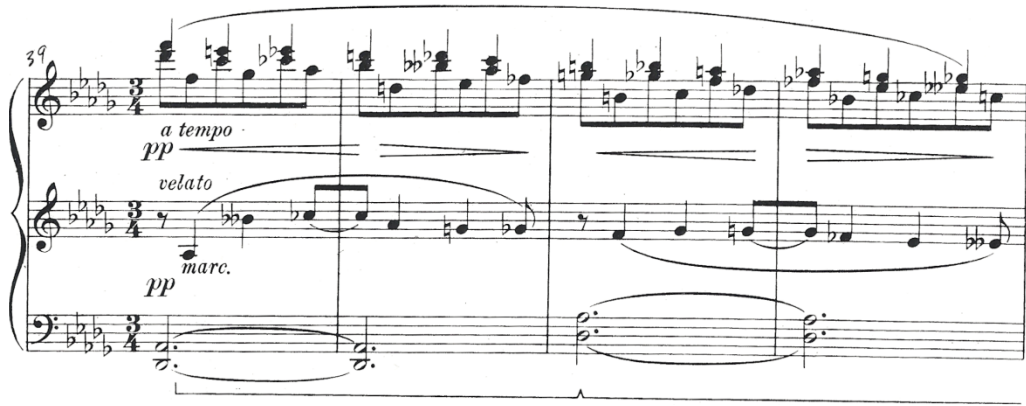
Chromaticism somehow is significant in Bauer’s piano works. She displays frequent use of chromatic lines, sometimes as melody and sometimes in parallel chords. In almost all of the six pieces among Bauer’s *Three Impressions* and *From the New Hampshire Woods*, the composer employed descending chromatic lines, which are often “buried in the texture of music, combined with long pedal tones to establish tonality.”<sup>37</sup> One of the many examples is shown in the middle section of “White Birches,” the first piece in *From the New Hampshire*

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Charles\_Tomlinson%29 (accessed February 9, 2011). All subsequent examples from this musical work are from this source.

<sup>37</sup> Stewart, “The Solo Piano Music of Marion Bauer,” 101-02.

*Woods*. In example 2.4, the extensive staves display chromatic lines not only in the top descending parallel thirds, but also in the inner voice. Besides, as one of the typical impressionistic traits, there is a D-flat /A-flat pedal point in the bass.



Ex. 2.4 Marion Bauer, *From the New Hampshire Woods*, Op. 12, No. 1, “White Birches,” mm. 39-42<sup>38</sup>

Bauer’s typical use of extreme chromaticism is also displayed in the first eight measures in “Indian Pipes.” Although the piece begins with a key signature of one sharp, the tonal center is obscure and not confirmed until m. 9. As in example 2.5, simultaneously there are four descending chromatic lines detected, respectively in the soprano (G, F-sharp, F-natural, E-natural), alto (E-flat, D, C-sharp, C-natural), tenor (A, A-flat, G, F-sharp), and bass (C-sharp, C-natural, B, B-flat, A and continuously). The only static line is the pedal tone D at the very

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<sup>38</sup> Marion Bauer, *From the New Hampshire Woods*, Op. 12, No. 1, “White Birches” (New York: G. Schirmer, 1922), mm. 39-42. All subsequent examples from this musical work are from this source.

bottom, which indicates the dominant of the coming key, G minor in m. 9.

The image shows a piano score for 'Indian Pipes' by Marion Bauer, measures 1-11. The score is in 3/4 time and G major. It features two systems of music. The first system (measures 1-8) is marked 'Piano' and 'pp'. The second system (measures 9-11) is marked 'slentando' and 'Scherzando' with a tempo of quarter note = 100. The music consists of two voices: an upper voice with a descending chromatic line and a lower voice with a more complex, irregular rhythm. The key signature changes to G minor in measure 9.

Ex. 2.5 Marion Bauer, *From the New Hampshire Woods*, No. 12, No. 2, “Indian Pipes,” mm. 1-11

### 3. Rhythmic Complexity

Furthermore, example 2.4 also shows Bauer’s use of irregular rhythm in her music. Sounding almost like a misplaced melody, the inner voice starts off on the downbeat, resulting in a hemiola-like rhythmic complexity. It is quite challenging to make the two chromatic melodies heard: one from the top of descending parallel thirds and one from the counterpart-like inner voice. Hence, when teaching this particular passage, the teacher should point out the rhythmic fun and work on the balanced tones between two hands.

Another example of rhythmic irregularity in Bauer’s music is seen in “Pine Trees,” the third piece of *From the New Hampshire Woods*. The opening in “Pine Trees” is much like the opening in “White Birches.” Here in example 2.6,

the irregular 5/4 meter in the beginning suggests an intention to obscure any sense of downbeats, which also create an atmosphere of surging and uncertainty.<sup>39</sup>



Ex. 2.6 Marion Bauer, *From the New Hampshire Woods*, Op. 12, No. 3 “Pine Trees,” mm. 1-2

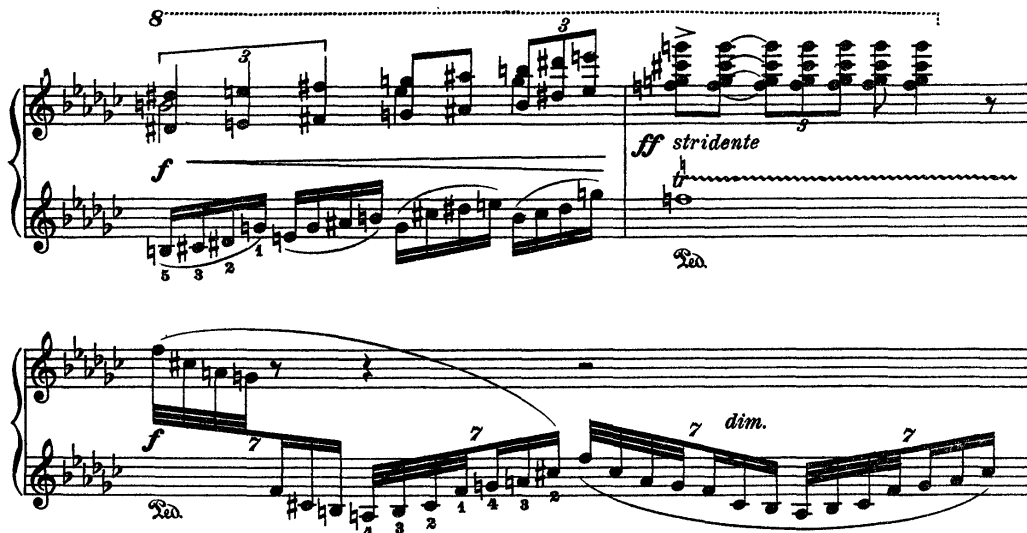
In Griffes’s piano music rhythmic complexity increases especially after his early Germanic works. In examples 2.7 and 2.8, Griffes displays the complexity through different combinations of various rhythmic figures. Especially in “The Night Winds” (see example 2.8), the increasingly intensive polyrhythmic pattern in the right hand (m. 19) indeed helps the performer to achieve the climax in m. 20 with an effective burst. Admittedly, these two passages exhibit a certain degree of rhythmic difficulty coupled with tricky fingering and extended hand positions. However, they also provide an opportunity for early advanced players to be challenged by irregular groupings of rhythm as well as different rhythmic combinations between two hands. Similar or even more complicated examples will be encountered later in pieces by Debussy and Ravel.

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<sup>39</sup> Stewart, “The Solo Piano Music of Marion Bauer,” 120.



Ex. 2.7 Charles Griffes, *Three Tone-Pictures*, Op. 5, No. 1, “The Lake at Evening,”  
mm. 36-39



Ex. 2.8 Charles Griffes, *Three Tone-Pictures*, “The Night Winds,” mm. 19-21

MacDowell was fond of creating rhythmic complexity by adding irregular or rapid ornamented notes in the left hand, which fight against the balanced phrasing of right-hand melody. Example 2.9 displays MacDowell’s typical use of complex rhythm in “Of Salamanders.”

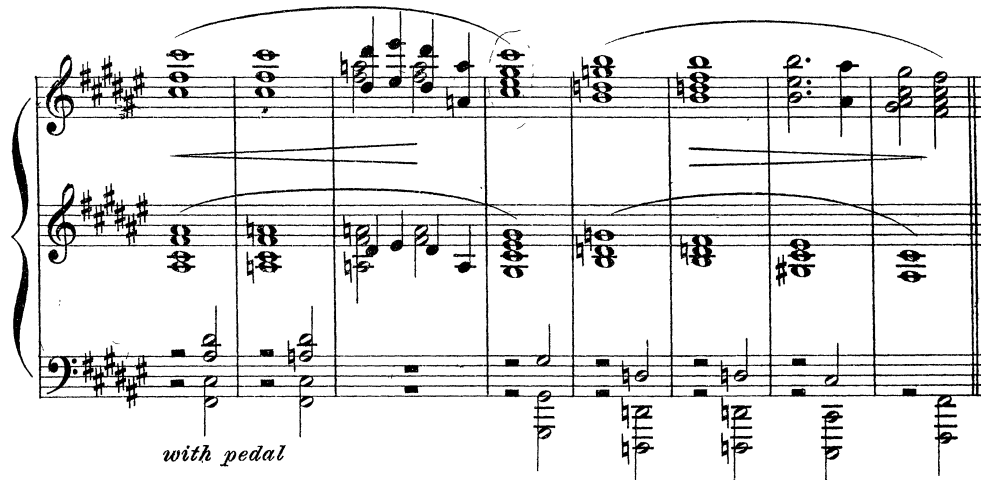


Ex. 2.9 Edward MacDowell, *Fireside Tales*, “Of Salamanders,” mm. 19-22

#### 4. Extended Texture

An extended texture of lush chords and pedal point is one of the most evident characteristics of impressionistic piano music. The pedagogical value of assigning these types of pieces is abundant. First, students can explore the keyboard on a much larger scale. Second, they can be introduced to reading three stave notation—a skill which is transferable to the frequently more complex layouts of music by Debussy and Ravel. Third, an extended texture of lush chords and pedal point upgrades a piece of music acoustically, which makes early advanced players sound richer and feel fulfilled. This texture can be detected in MacDowell’s most impressionistic-like piano pieces in examples 2.10-12, “To a Water Lily” (*Woodland Sketches*, Op. 51, No. 6) and “In Deep Woods” (*New England Idyls*, Op. 62, No. 5), Griffes’s “The Night Winds” (*Three Tone-Pictures*,

Op. 5, No. 3), and Bauer's "White Birches" (*From the New Hampshire Woods*, No. 1).



Ex. 2.10 Edward MacDowell, *Woodland Sketches*, Op.51, No. 6, "To a Water Lily," mm. 9-16<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Edward MacDowell, *Woodland Sketches*, Op. 51, No. 6, "To a Water Lily" (New York: Dover Publications, 1990), mm. 9-16. All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.

A musical score for piano, consisting of three staves (treble, middle, and bass clefs). The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The score shows six measures. The top staff features a melodic line with eighth-note patterns, marked with *pp* and *ppp*. The middle staff contains chords and arpeggiated figures, with a *pp* dynamic. The bottom staff has a bass line with chords and arpeggios, marked with *ppp*. There are several slurs and dynamic markings throughout the passage.

Ex. 2.11 Edward MacDowell, *New England Idylls*, Op. 62, No. 5, “In Deep Woods,” mm. 31-36<sup>41</sup>

A musical score for piano, consisting of three staves (treble, middle, and bass clefs). The key signature has three flats (Bb, Eb, and Ab). The score shows four measures. The top staff has a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in the second measure, marked with *ppp* and *ritenuto*. The middle staff has chords and arpeggios, marked with *ppp*. The bottom staff has a bass line with chords and arpeggios, marked with *ppp*. There are several slurs and dynamic markings throughout the passage.

Ex. 2.12 Charles Griffes, *Three Tone-Pictures*, “The Night Winds,” mm. 39-43

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<sup>41</sup> Edward MacDowell, *New England Idylls*, Op.62, No. 5, “In Deep Woods” (New York: Dover Publications, 1990), mm. 31-36. All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.



## 5. Tritone Effect

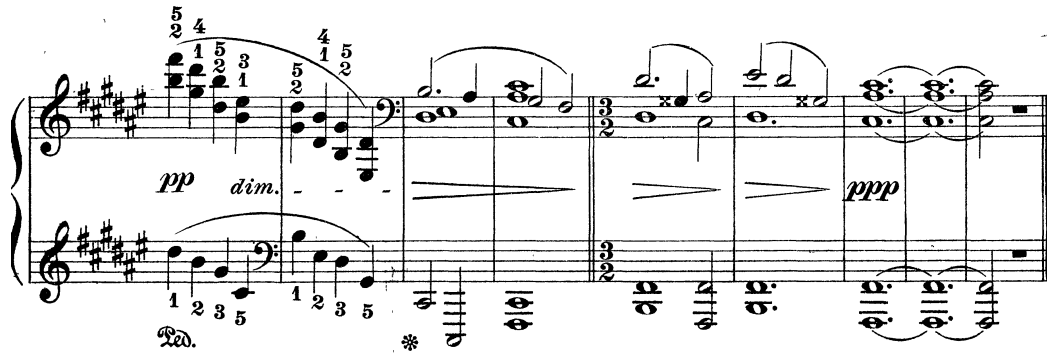
The whole-tone scale is undoubtedly a unique characteristic of impressionistic sonority. Among the piano music of these three composers, the use of whole-tone scales indeed exists, mostly heard in Griffes's works. I would like to draw more attention to a main component of the whole-tone scale, a compositional approach I will call the "tritone effect," which I found in many places in the music of all three composers.

"To a Water Lily" was described as "the first of the compositions by MacDowell that leans toward almost impressionistic sonority and mood."<sup>42</sup> Lawrence Gilman, a highly respected MacDowell scholar compliments this piece on its "delicacy of perception, intensity of vision, and perfection of accomplishment," which made "To a Water Lily" more than just a miniature work, but a remarkable piece of lyrical impressionism.<sup>43</sup> At the end of the codetta in "To a Water Lily" (see example 2.13, mm. 51-55), there is a reminiscence of the questioning theme in the middle section, which adopted the raised second (G-double sharp) to create tritone sonority. In my opinion, it is MacDowell's tritone effect that makes up the essential part of impressionistic sound heard in some of his short piano pieces.

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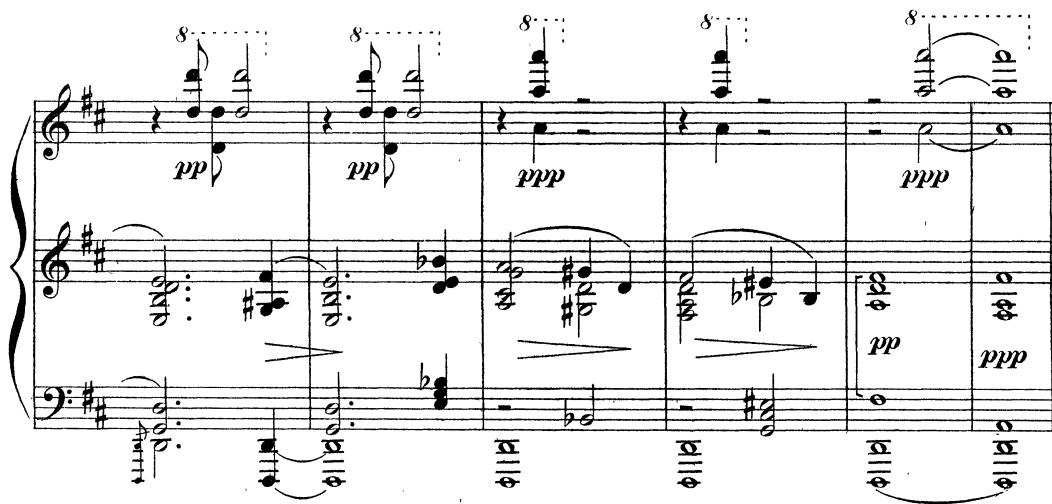
<sup>42</sup> Brancaleone, "The Short Piano Works of Edward MacDowell," 218.

<sup>43</sup> Lawrence Gilman, *Edward MacDowell: A Study* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1969), 138.



Ex. 2.13 Edward MacDowell, *Woodland Sketches*, “To a Water Lily,” mm. 47-55

More examples show MacDowell’s love of the “tritone effect.” “In Deep Woods” is the fifth piece in MacDowell’s *New England Idylls*, Op. 62. Starting from the mysterious introduction, mm. 1-10, the harmony is uncertain. A descending half-step motive permeates the entire piece. The harmonic uncertainty is resolved shortly in the following D major section. In example 2.14, a high-registered bell sound is added to the deep tonic pedal in D. Meanwhile, in the ending measures, the tritone effect appears, recalling the same interval in the opening theme.



Ex. 2.14 Edward MacDowell, *New England Idylls*, “In Deep Woods,” mm. 31-36

“Of Salamanders” is a unique piece among *Fireside Tales*, Op. 61 as well as among MacDowell’s entire collection of short piano compositions. The uniqueness stems not from any special compositional techniques in this piece, but from its extreme delicacy. Marked “As delicately as possible” in the beginning, MacDowell created the slithering image of a salamander, a scaleless, lizard-like animal, which can be also described as “a mythological reptile or a spirit, which is supposed to live in fire.”<sup>44</sup> Although MacDowell did not write a prefatory poem for this particular piece, we can trace his idea of the “Salamanders” to what Marian MacDowell (Edward’s wife) said in her *Random Notes*:

We used to sit by the open fire in the Hillcrest music room watching... with fascination the flames as they rushed up the chimney. More than once MacDowell laughingly referred to the sparks as salamanders, those imaginary little animals who are supposed to make their home in the flames, and it was this sudden, quick motion of the sparks that was in his mind as he wrote the composition.<sup>45</sup>

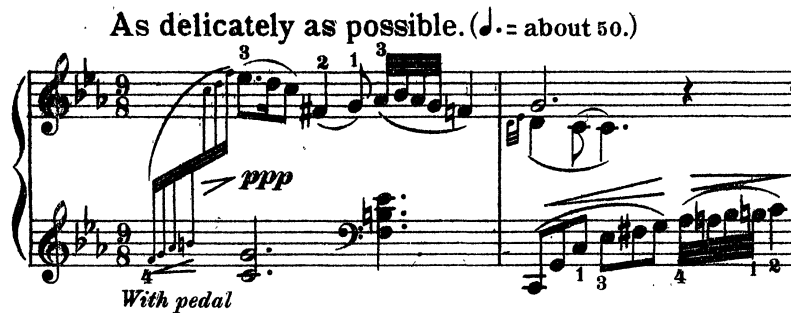
The tritone effect is highlighted throughout the piece. In the key of C minor, F#, a tritone away from C, appears consistently from the first measure. “Of Salamander” was among one of MacDowell’s best-loved pieces. Indeed, he

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<sup>44</sup> Brancalone, “The Short Piano Works of Edward MacDowell,” 246.

<sup>45</sup> Marian MacDowell, *Random Notes on Edward MacDowell and his Music* (Boston: Arthur P. Schmidt, 1950), 22-24.

inscribed the opening measure of this piece on his portrait, and later gave it to Mr. Elkin, a friend and publisher in London.<sup>46</sup>



Ex. 2.15 Edward MacDowell, *Fireside Tales*, “Of Salamanders,” mm. 1-2

Some scholars regard “A Haunted House” as MacDowell’s “Sunken Cathedral,” a prelude written by Debussy in 1910 for piano solo.<sup>47</sup> Like the somber chords heard in the beginning of Debussy’s “Sunken Cathedral,” “A Haunted House” begins with a series of chords that lack thirds (see example 2.16). Among series of diminished-seventh chords, MacDowell’s tritone effect is displayed in a condensed way within only two measures. In these two measures (see example 2.17), the continuity of tritones helps to establish harmonic tension in the first section. After a long passage of thick seventh chords, in contrast the middle section moves away from the imagery of darkness and turns to a new section full of impressionistic atmosphere. Example 2.18 shows the initial

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<sup>46</sup> John Fielder Porte, *Edward MacDowell, A Great American Tone Poet: His Life and Music* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1922), 150.

<sup>47</sup> Brancaleone, “The Short Piano Works of Edward MacDowell,” 248.

measure of this section, which consists of an altered pentatonic scale: A, B, C#, E, F.

“Of Salamanders” and “A Haunted House” are wonderfully colorful and evocative for the imaginations of young early advanced pianists. Their picturesque titles, coupled with the variety of writing, the atmosphere, and the pianism, are all appealing factors for rising pianists.

Mysteriously. ( $\text{♩} = \text{about } 46.$ )

*pp* very dark and sombre

With two pedals

Ex. 2.16 Edward MacDowell, *Fireside Tales*, Op. 61, No. 5, “A Haunted House,”  
mm. 1-3

*p*

increase

Ex. 2.17 Edward MacDowell, *Fireside Tales*, “A Haunted House,” mm. 18-19

*the accompaniment as soft as possible*

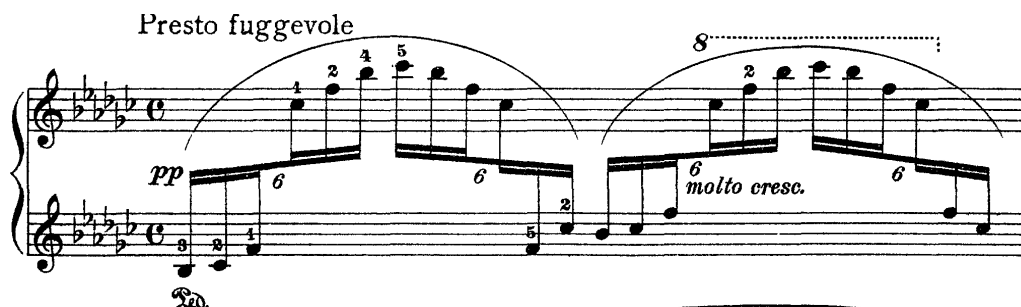
*ppp*

*the theme very marked yet smooth and lithe  
with two pedals*

Ex. 2.18 Edward MacDowell, *Fireside Tales*, “A Haunted House,” m. 28

The tritone effect in Griffes’s music is reflected through his frequent use of whole tone sonority. This characteristic is evident in “The Night Winds,” which is also the piece that shows Griffes’s first pervasive use of impressionistic harmony. In the beginning of the piece (see example 2.19), rapidly whirling arpeggio-like patterns with added minor seconds (C-flat) suggest the “mystic wind,” which is described in the prefatory poem of this piece. The mysterious sonority may be attributable to the tritonal interval from C-flat to F.

But when the night  
 Had thrown her pall  
 Upon that spot,  
 As upon all,  
 And the mystic wind went by  
 Murmuring in melody,  
 Then—ah then—I would awake  
 To the tenor of the lone lake.



Ex. 2.19 Charles Griffes, *Three Tone Pictures*, “The Night Winds,” m. 1

Bauer seemed to enjoy using the same effect in her pieces. In the beginning of “White Birches” (see example 2.20), the composer depicts the whispery tree leaves with a series of floating triplets in which its filled intervals, the tritones and fourths, along with the syncopated top melody, result in an uncertain, anxious atmosphere. Written by William Rose Benét (1886-1950), the prefatory poem below also illustrates the setting of this piece:

What is the meaning of their secret gleaming,  
 What language is in their leaves, that glitter and whisper  
 Where the ghostly birches glimmer under the moon?

Ex. 2.20 Marion Bauer, *From the New Hampshire Woods*, “White Birches,” mm.

1-4

## 6. Other Impressionistic Characteristics

“White Birches” also displays Bauer’s use of perfect fourth and fifth. Preceded by a four-measure crescendo in a sudden change of new tonality with no sharps and no flats (mm. 53-56), the section of perfect fourths and fifths (see example 2.21) reaches the strongest dynamics (*f*) in the whole piece. This section also acts as a transition in preparing for the previous D-flat tonal center.

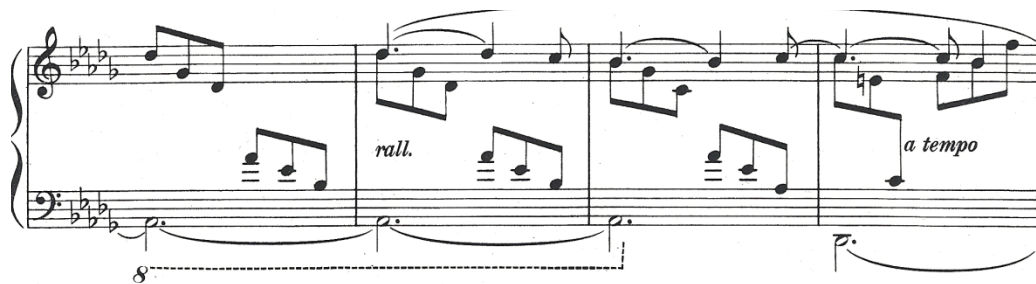


The image displays three systems of musical notation for piano, likely from a score by Marion Bauer. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef.

- System 1:** Features a *cresc.* (crescendo) instruction. The right hand plays a melodic line with chords, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment.
- System 2:** Starts with a measure number '57'. It includes *f accel.* (f marcato) and *-stretto* (ritardando) markings. The right hand has a more active, rhythmic part, and the left hand continues with chords.
- System 3:** Includes *a tempo* and *p subito* (piano subito) markings. The right hand has a melodic line, and the left hand has a bass line. A *8va bassa* (8va bassa) instruction is present at the end of the system.

Ex. 2.21 Marion Bauer, *From the New Hampshire Woods*, “White Birches,” mm. 53-65

These octaves filled with perfect fourths and fifths not only provide a sense of exotic harmonic flavor, but also play a role in enharmonic modulation. As a transitional section, notes in m. 61 (C-sharp, F-sharp and C-sharp in the right hand; G-sharp in the left hand) are enharmonic to the notes in m. 65 (D-flat, G-flat and D-flat in the right hand; A-flat in the left hand). Further in m. 69 (see example 2.22), the tonal center is finally settled in D-flat as the pedal point goes from the dominant (A-flat) to the tonic (D-flat).



Ex. 2.22 Marion Bauer, *From the New Hampshire Woods*, “White Birches,” mm. 66-69

Bauer dedicated the second piece in the *New Hampshire* set, “Indian Pipes,” to Mrs. Edward MacDowell; the work was composed during visits to the MacDowell Colony, an artist residency site founded in 1907 by the MacDowell couple in Peterborough, New Hampshire. It is evident from the title of the set that Bauer’s inspiration was gained from the setting of the colony. The piece starts with a prefatory poem with no author given:

After the rain,  
 Down in the woods,  
 Through last year’s moss  
 The ghostly Indian Pipes  
 Lift up their heads...  
 Mysterious!  
 Transcendent!!

As mentioned earlier, the first eight measures of “Indian Pipe” are in a key with one sharp, an introduction with an extremely chromatic progression and uncertain tonality, and it soon emerges in G minor. Starting from the G minor section, the flavor of impressionism is apparent through Bauer’s use of augmented triads and fragments of the whole tone scale. Example 2.23 shows the A-flat augmented triad in the right hand, with the new tonal pedal tone G in the bass;

later in m. 14, the inner voice (G, F, D-flat) in the left hand suggests a fragment of the whole tone scale. The most significant example (see example 2.24), a series of descending major thirds (A, F, C-sharp) can be first found in mm. 24-25, later in mm. 29-30, and finally toward the end of the piece in mm. 70-73, which acts as a reminiscence of a calling Indian pipe.



Ex. 2.23 Marion Bauer, *From the New Hampshire Woods*, “Indian Pipes,” mm.

12-14



Ex. 3.24 Marion Bauer, *From the New Hampshire Woods*, “Indian Pipes,” mm.

23-26

Augmented triad usage is also evident in Griffes’s “The Lake at Evening,” the first piece in *Three Tone-Pictures*, Op. 5. The most prevailing motive in the piece is the ostinato figure in the left hand, a combination of two eighth notes and

one quarter note. This motive depicts “lapping water sound” at the lake as it is suggested in the prefatory poetic lines by William Butler Yeats (1865-1939):

...for always....  
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds  
by the shore

Coupled with this nonstop fluid ostinato figure, an augmented-triad outlined theme is introduced in m. 3 (see example 2.25). Toward the end of the piece, this figure is moved to a higher register, and the augmented-triad theme is relocated to the left hand. Indeed, the augmented sonority is enriched by added notes at the end. In mm. 62-67 of example 2.26, first is an F augmented triad with an added sixth (D), which is resolved to an A major triad with an added sixth (F-sharp).

Ex. 2.25 Charles Griffes, *Three Tone- Pictures*, “The Lake at Evening,” mm. 1-5

Ex. 2.26 Charles Griffes, *Three Tone- Pictures*, “The Lake at Evening,” mm. 57-67

All the featured literary references in Bauer’s “White Birches” and “Indian Pipes” as well as Griffes’s “The Lake at Evening” and “The Night Winds,” are perfect examples that show students how a composer integrates poetic inspiration into music. These prefatory lines not only help illustrate the suggestive atmosphere of each piece, but also set free students’ imaginations to go beyond the descriptive words. As it is known that art and literature are both precursors of music during the impressionistic movement, assigning these pieces provides an opportunity for young pianists to obtain a more thorough view of Impressionism.

## Summary

After tracing MacDowell, Griffes, and Bauer's compositional traits and impressionistic approaches through these selected short piano works, we can see many subtle parallels among these three American composers in various aspects. First, they all composed short piano works with poetic inspiration, and with pictorial titles of natural imagery or vivid subjects. Second, their musical language was extraordinary for their times.

MacDowell outshone his contemporaries with the remarkable sense of colors that permeated his music, and also contributed to a romantic sentimental style with impressionistic elements. Twenty years later, Griffes established a mature impressionistic style in his most productive years of piano compositions. Around the same time, Bauer was an outstanding female composer and pianist, writing highly artistically crafted short piano pieces with impressionistic inspiration. Moreover, we can detect their shared compositional techniques—such as increasing rhythmic complexity, chromatic language, tonal ambiguity, tritone sonority, and the use of lush chords and pedal point—among their impressionistic piano miniatures.

These wonderful pieces will certainly add more variety to the existing impressionistic piano repertoire for early advanced pianists. None of the pieces discussed above is technically demanding, perhaps with the exceptions of Griffes's "Vale of Dreams" and the middle passage (less than twenty measures) of Bauer's "White Birches." The difficulty in "Vale of Dreams" lies in its constant

accidentals, which makes note reading particularly challenging. As demonstrated in example 2.4, the middle section of “White Birches” shows difficulties in challenging rhythm, dependent voicing, and chromatic progression, yet it is still accessible through skillful pedal usage and patient practice.

Today, this music is seldom heard. The majority of MacDowell’s and Griffes’s short piano pieces are neither assigned to young players nor performed by professionals. Moreover, Bauer’s short piano works are not even circulating today. H. Wiley Hitchcock’s comment below, written in reference to MacDowell, can easily be applied to all three composers:

. . . for decades they have been given to fledgling pianists as ‘teaching pieces’. We have thus tended to forget the essential shapeliness of each set, as we have tended to lose sight of the precision of craftsmanship in the separate compositions, and their remarkably instantaneous evocation of mood.<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps it is time for us to rediscover piano works by these three American legends, as well as the music of many other American composers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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<sup>48</sup> H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Edward MacDowell: Piano Piece* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), introduction.

CHAPTER 3  
ACROSS THE NORTH ATLANTIC:  
CYRIL SCOTT, ARNOLD BAX AND  
SELIM PALMGREN

Moving from the United States to England, where Cyril Scott (1879-1970) and Arnold Bax (1883-1953) originated, the musical scene did not evolve significantly the turbulent age from the mid-nineteenth century to the turn of the twentieth century. As documented, the British Empire had for many years failed to provide a secure environment for nationwide musical development in terms of musicians' employment, school music education and "direction of a native style."<sup>49</sup> Although music did play an important role in Britain's social entertainment, especially in London, music of highly artistic value was not cultivated in a progressive way. In other words, professional musical events were only affordable and acceptable to the upper class, and sadly the composers and performers of concert programs were mostly foreign musicians, not native British. The middle class especially thrived in the so-called "parlor piano" setting. These informal musical gatherings became a social symbol that the middle class could afford.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Jamie Lucia Del Priore, "An Analysis of the Piano Sonata no. 2 in G of Arnold Bax" (D.M.A. diss., Arizona State University, 2002), 1, in *ProQuest Dissertations Thesis*, <http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu> (accessed January 20, 2011).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.



As a result, English piano music gradually fell into decay by the 1850s, showing a recession after the golden age of the London Piano School (1790-1830) led by Muzio Clementi (1752-1832), Jan Ladislav Dussek (1760-1812), John Field (1782-1837), and other composers.<sup>51</sup> Public solo piano recitals were rarely held; instead, the audience seemed to prefer mixed program concerts with various instrumental combinations. Concert pianists were usually the composers themselves, and repertoire such as piano sonatas were considered too serious and long-winded in a recital. Fortunately, through the demonstration of Frédéric Chopin and Clara Schumann, who gave public solo piano concerts in England respectively in 1848 and 1867-1888, a more serious perspective on piano music was gradually cultivated. Lisa Hardy described the musical scene in England by the 1860s: "...pianists were more likely to be interpreters than composers, and proper concert venues began to replace salons." In addition, performing from memory became a new trend.<sup>52</sup>

In the 1880s, the so-called "English Musical Renaissance" sprang up in the late Victorian and Edwardian era. London continued to lead in piano manufacturing; high quality piano music by native composers was given more attention; and most importantly, in Hardy's words, "... the English started to

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<sup>51</sup> Lisa Hardy, *The British Piano Sonata 1870-1945* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2001), 1-2.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

realize that musical success could be a source of national pride....”<sup>53</sup> Living during this time of change, Cyril Scott and Arnold Bax, along with other highly influential British composers such as Edward Elgar (1857-1934), Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), and Gustav Holst (1874-1934) were helping to bridge the gap between late Romantic music and twentieth-century modern music in England. Throughout this period of renaissance, the British musical climate fluctuated and was influenced by many factors, including Russian Nationalism, the music of Scriabin, and French Impressionism.

#### Cyril Scott and Impressionism

Cyril Scott placed himself in an extraordinarily significant position in the development of English music before World War I. His music displayed an intention of breaking away from prevailing Germanic conservatism.<sup>54</sup> Hence, Eugene Goossen (1921-1997), an American art critic and historian, dubbed him “the father of modern British music.” Regarding Scott’s modernist characteristics in music, how he was described aligns perfectly with the scope of Impressionism:

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 68.

To a large extent his [Scott's] harmonies are not functional or directional, but rather static. In addition, Scott often put more emphasis on creating interest through effects of color or atmosphere rather than via melody.<sup>55</sup>

As a composer, pianist, and writer, Scott introduced a French flavor to his distinctive musical style. While still a teenager studying in Frankfurt, Germany, Scott met Stefan George (1868-1933), a noted poet who was associated with Symbolism, one of the most important concepts tied to the impressionistic movement. Their long friendship was influential to Scott's own poetic output as well as his early musical style.<sup>56</sup> Scott referred to his early style as "Pre-Raphaelite," which was similar to Impressionism.<sup>57</sup> This style originated from the shared traits of a group of composers, the "Frankfurt group," in which Scott was a member during his stay in Germany.<sup>58</sup> Influenced by the "Frankfurt group," Scott established his writing style with the frequent use of parallel harmonies, fourths and sixths, and chromatic excursions. He also displayed a rich flavor of exoticism

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<sup>55</sup> Laurie J. Sampsel, *Cyril Scott: A Bio-Bibliography* (London: Greenwood Press, 2000), 8.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 10

<sup>58</sup> Cyril Scott studied in Frankfurt with Iwan Knorr (1853-1916) and his fellow composition students included Percy Grainger (1882-1961), Norman O'Neill (1875-1934), Roger Quilter (1877-1953), and Balfour Gardiner (1877-1950), later becoming known as the "Frankfurt group." Their shared compositional traits were often referred to as "Pre-Raphaelite style."

in the piano works, mostly through his fondness for the pentatonic scale and the interval of a tritone.

Perhaps Scott's instinctive impressionistic texture in music was what earned him the name the "English Debussy." He certainly shared many similar impressionistic compositional traits with Debussy as mentioned above; nevertheless, their music sounds totally diverse. As Stephen Lloyd commented, "[T]he strongest link between the two [Scott and Debussy] was probably their shared love of cats!"<sup>59</sup> In my opinion, unlike Debussy who laid out his music through delicate nuance and tone color, Scott tended to be more straightforward in conveying a melodic theme through the direct use of impressionistic techniques. With an attempt to treat the twelve semitones equally, he often eschewed a tonal center and the key signature in a piece. In Hardy's words, "...his [Scott's] music was more dissonant than Debussy's."<sup>60</sup>

It was in 1902 that Scott first met Fauré, Ravel, and Debussy; he continued to have sporadic meetings with Debussy during the years between 1902 and 1913. Debussy's comment that "Cyril Scott is one of the rarest artists of the present generation," shown at the top of the score of Scott's *A Little Russian Suite*, indicates Scott's avant-garde compositional style.<sup>61</sup> He devoted himself to the

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<sup>59</sup> Stephen Lloyd, "The Ghost of a Smile," *Music and Musicians* 28 (September 1979): 20.

<sup>60</sup> Hardy, *The British Piano Sonata*, 59.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

trend of modern music through infusing various styles in his works, Impressionism among them, but elements found in jazz and popular music also occur. Scott's most successful character piece "Lotus Land," premiered in 1905, was particularly modern to listeners' ears at the time. It was the same year that Debussy published his first book of *Images* and Ravel completed *Miroirs*. Indeed, "Lotus Land" showcased an extraordinary sense of jazziness that was seldom heard in French music.

#### Cyril Scott's Impressionistic Short Piano Works

The majority of Scott's piano music can be categorized as character pieces. Parallel to what was discovered on the three American legends in the second chapter, many of Scott's works have pictorial titles and specific expression markings. His early character pieces greatly contributed to the establishment of Scott's career as some of them became very popular at the time.

The composer tended to group these piano miniatures in various sets, such as *Two Pierrot Pieces*, Op. 35, *Two Pieces*, Op. 47, *Summerland*, Op. 54, *Three Danses tristes*, Op. 74, *Miniatures for Pianoforte, Sketches, Five Poems, Moods, Impressions from the Jungle Book, Indian Suite, Little Waltzes*, Op. 58, and a large number of other piano works.<sup>62</sup>

Scott was among the most prolific composers in Britain during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; clearly, it would be an enormous project to

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<sup>62</sup> A list of Cyril Scott's complete works can be found on this website: <http://www.cyril.scott.net/Music.html> (accessed January 24, 2011).

examine all of his piano character pieces, well beyond the scope of the present study. These short piano works generally show three types of styles in Scott's music: some of them are based solely on Romanticism; some of them feature impressionistic characteristics; and some of them exhibit the composer's talent in writing abstract music with dissonant sonority and complicated rhythms. In the following paragraphs, I focus on discussing Scott's impressionistic-style short piano pieces that are suitable for early advanced pianists.

1. "Lotus Land," Op. 47, No. 1

Published in 1905, "Lotus Land" and "Columbine" are the two pieces in Scott's *Two Piano Pieces*, Op. 47. "Lotus Land" was perhaps his most celebrated character piece. It was premiered by Percy Grainger in 1905, and has been arranged and recorded more than any other of Scott's works.<sup>63</sup> "Lotus Land" depicts the Orient with penetrating pentatonic usage; this piece is in my opinion an ultimate exercise of pentatonic scale, which is present in the opening theme (mm. 1-12), in the arpeggio section (mm. 31-33), and in the glissandos sections (mm. 34-35 and 61-62).

The lovely opening theme contains more than just a plain appearance of the pentatonic scale; indeed, the composer enriched the Eastern flavor with accidentals and non-harmonic passing tones. Besides, Scott was such a colorist that he often used enharmonic harmonization to create a great variety of tone

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<sup>63</sup> Sampsel, *Cyril Scott: A Bio-Bibliography*, 7.

colors. In example 3.1, the original keynote E-flat is enharmonized to D-sharp in the bass in mm. 5 and 7, thus a surprising B thirteenth chord adds extraordinary charm to this passage.

The image displays two staves of musical notation for a piano piece. The top staff is labeled 'Piano' and 'Andante languido'. It begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a 'con pedale' instruction. The bass line features a sequence of chords, including a B thirteenth chord. The right hand has a melodic line with a fermata. The bottom staff continues the piece with a 'simile' instruction, showing a complex arpeggiated passage in the right hand and a bass line with chords.

Ex. 3.1 Cyril Scott, *Two Piano Pieces*, Op. 47, “Lotus Land,” mm. 1-7<sup>64</sup>

Both the arpeggio and glissando sections are more about a straight presentation of black-key pentatonic usage. Shown in examples 3.2 and 3.3, mm. 31-35 could be a challenging as well as enjoyable passage for students. The required stretchy hand position on black-key pentatonic arpeggios is not easy to handle. Fortunately, right after this part a grand black-key glissando follows, which is effective, showy, and not difficult at all, covering a wide range of the keyboard.

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<sup>64</sup> Cyril Scott, *Two Piano Pieces*, Op. 47, No. 1, “Lotus Land” (London: Elkin, 1905), mm. 1-7. All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.

Ex. 3.2 Cyril Scott, *Two Piano Pieces*, “Lotus Land,” mm. 31-33

Ex. 3.3 Cyril Scott, *Two Piano Pieces*, “Lotus Land,” mm. 34-35

Before the restatement of the opening theme in m. 44, pentatonic usage is briefly replaced with a whole-tone scale section, based on a parallel fifth progression in the bass. The piece ends quietly with an E-flat minor seventh chord.



The image displays three systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system shows a treble and bass staff with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The second system features a treble staff with a five-fingered arpeggiated figure and a bass staff with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The third system includes a treble staff with a five-fingered arpeggiated figure, a *ritard.* marking, and a seven-fingered arpeggiated figure, followed by a bass staff with an *espress.* marking and a *a tempo primo* instruction.

Ex. 3.4 Cyril Scott, *Two Piano Pieces*, “Lotus Land,” mm. 36-44

The success of Scott’s “Lotus Land” in 1905 and the subsequent years probably was due to its rich vocabulary of harmony and tone colors. In addition to the direct use of impressionistic techniques, as mentioned before, the jazziness in this piece shows Scott’s craftsmanship in blending sounds, including using numerous added chords (seventh, ninth, eleventh, and thirteenth chords) and exotic modes. “Lotus Land” is definitely a refreshing and appealing piece for early advanced pianists eager to try something special.

2. “A Song from the East,” Op. 54, No. 2

The second piece in *Summerland*, Op. 54, “A Song From the East” is another example that reflects Debussy’s Eastern influence on Scott. It is a lively

dance with direct use of oriental arabesque throughout. The melody is based on a D minor melodic scale in the beginning of the piece (mm. 1-7); then a lowered fifth (A-flat) is introduced in mm. 8-10 (see example 3.5).

Ex. 3.5 Cyril Scott, *Summerland*, Op. 54, No.2, “A Song from the East,” mm. 1-9<sup>65</sup>

The entire piece is roughly in an AA' structure, each section with the same two contrasting musical ideas. The second theme (mm. 13-20) is striking in

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<sup>65</sup> Cyril Scott, *Summerland*, Op. 54, No.2, “A Song from the East” (London: Elkin, 1907), mm. 1-9. All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.

sonority because of its parallel thirds in the higher registered melody and a new bass figure that alternates between an F ninth chord and an E-flat ninth chord in the beginning. Note that the same lowered fifth (A-flat) effect is also highlighted in m. 18 in the second theme. Overall, “A Song from the East” is a playful late intermediate/early advanced piece that exhibits Oriental charm from the perspective of Impressionism (see example. 3.6).

Ex. 3.6 Cyril Scott, *Summerland*, “A Song from the East,” mm. 13-19

### 3. “Danse Nègre,” Op. 58, No. 5

Described as second in popularity to “Lotus Land” among Scott’s character pieces, “Danse Nègre” (Negro Dance) was published in 1908, three years after “Lotus Land.” Similar to the modern nature evoked in “Lotus Land,”

“Danse Nègre” was also considered “barbaric” in its time.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps because of its meandering harmonic progressions and bold expressions, the whole piece sounds more avant-garde than impressionistic despite being well apportioned with obvious impressionistic compositional techniques. It begins with 16<sup>th</sup> notes in perpetual motion throughout, which might call to mind Debussy’s “Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum.” Again, Scott displayed his fondness for pentatonic writing in the initial theme (C, D, E, G, A) in example 3.7.



Ex. 3.7 Cyril Scott, “Danse Nègre,” Op. 58, No. 5, mm. 3-5<sup>67</sup>

Below, example 3.8 shows another of Scott’s favorite traits of using the tritone (D to G-sharp, E to A-sharp, E-flat to A, F to B, and G-flat to C in right-hand melody). In the same passage, the composer adopted non-functional harmony through the use of parallel chords in the left hand with chromatic excursions. The last two measures in the same example display a condensed version that concludes the previous musical ideas.

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<sup>66</sup> Thomas Henry Darson, “The Solo Piano Work of Cyril Scott” (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1979), 135, in *ProQuest Dissertations & Thesis*, <http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu> (accessed January 20, 2011).

<sup>67</sup> Cyril Scott, “Danse Nègre” Op. 58, No. 5 (London: Elkin, 1908), mm. 3-5. All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.

Ex. 3.8 Cyril Scott, “Danse Nègre,” mm. 24-30

What proceeds immediately is that Scott restates the opening theme in a G-flat pentatonic scale. The *subito pp* couples with a shift to a higher register of the piano, mm. 31-33, to supply an effective contrast to the previous passage (see example 3.9). However, this G-flat thematic statement is soon succeeded by another chromatic excursion (mm. 34-39, partially shown in example 3.10), which is very similar to the previous tritone passage in example 3.8. Up to this point, Scott seemed to develop this work as an improvisatory sketch. Through this arbitrary placement of chromatic excursions, “Danse Nègre” is a perfect example of this composer’s typical nonfunctional harmonic writing.



Ex. 3.9 Cyril Scott, “Danse Nègre,” mm. 31-32

Not until m. 40 does the tonality settle on a surprisingly simple G dominant ninth chord that prepares the C major (or C pentatonic) theme in the very next measure (m. 41). After such a long journey of nonfunctional chromatic progression, contradictorily Scott set a prompt V-I device within two measures without any preciosity (see example 3.10). Although chromatic excursions still take place in the remainder of the piece after the big thematic recap, a fabulous coda concludes the piece based on a V-I progression (see example 3.11).

Ex. 3.10 Cyril Scott, “Danse Nègre,” mm. 37-42

Ex. 3.11 Cyril Scott, “Danse Nègre,” mm. 63-66

The three character pieces by Scott examined for this study all suggest oriental charm. These pieces reflect the fact that one of Scott’s most frequently adopted impressionistic techniques is pentatonicism; other common

impressionistic traits, such as the whole tone scale, bell sonority, and drone bass are also employed to a lesser extent. Exoticism seemed to provide an unfailing supply of inspiration to the composer. We do not know whether this was related to Scott's interests in "esoteric philosophies and nontraditional medicine," for which he was also regarded as a metaphysician.<sup>68</sup> Scott was especially known for his exotic writing, yet he had never been to the countries he wrote for. By any means, his musical exoticism embraces a large variety of indigenous colors and an evocative means of personal expression. Through playing his music introduced above, early advanced pianists are exposed to another window of Impressionism.

#### Arnold Bax and Impressionism

Self-described as a "brazen romantic," Arnold Bax often reflected his love of Chopin and Liszt in his piano music.<sup>69</sup> Lyrical elements such as Chopinesque shifting harmonies and ethereal texture, as well as Liszt-like orchestral writing with contrasting brilliance and power, all display the essential character in Bax's music. Bax's corpus of piano music consists of four bold and serious sonatas and a group of highly artistic character pieces; many of the latter were written in the gesture of Debussy and Scriabin. This similarity led scholars to frequently relate

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<sup>68</sup> Sampsel, *Cyril Scott: A Bio-Bibliography*, 2.

<sup>69</sup> R. H. Wallstien, "Bax Defines His Music," *Musical America* (17 July 1928): 9. In this article, Bax confessed, "As far as I know, the only new tendency in my style is but a modification of the manner in which I have always written. I am a brazen romantic, and could never have been and never shall be anything else. By this I meant that my music is the expression of my emotional states."



his music to impressionistic style. As Scott-Southerland commented, “With the exception of the sonatas and the toccata Bax’s piano music is expressly tone-poetical and impressionistic.”<sup>70</sup>

Bax’s early compositional life was closely tied to Ireland, where he often visited and drew many inspirations literarily and musically. Coupled with Bax’s love of nature and tranquil surroundings, influences from Irish landscape and literature, and materials from Nordic and Celtic traditions were all shown in his musical output. Bax immersed himself in the culture of Ireland so deeply that he incorporated Irish folklores in his music and set texts written by Irish writers in his vocal works. Aside from being a pianist and composer, Bax was incredibly fascinated with the literary works of Irish poet William Butler Yeats (1865-1939), which motivated Bax to publish poetry, short stories, and plays under the pseudonym of Dermot O’Byrne during his frequent visits to Ireland over many years.<sup>71</sup> In summary, Bax’s music includes many facets, to which Joseph Machlis gave an appropriate description: “Bax was a proponent of Celtic Romanticism, to which he added impressionistic elements and richly chromatic harmony.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Colin Scott-Sutherland, *Arnold Bax* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1973), 104-05.

<sup>71</sup> Del Priore, “An Analysis of the Piano Sonata no. 2 in G of Arnold Bax,” 15-16.

<sup>72</sup> Joseph Machlis, *Introductions to Contemporary Music* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1961), 316.

## Arnold Bax's Impressionistic Short Piano Works

### 1. *Nereid*

Written in 1916, *Nereid* is one of the several piano pieces that Bax dedicated to Harriet Cohen (1895-1967), a noted British female pianist who had an affair with Bax over forty years. Cohen probably premiered this piece in 1920; she later mentioned the work in her book, *Music's Handmaid*:

Bax has often told me that he considers his music to be directly derived from nature. When he wrote this piece... he had vaguely in mind some sort of water nymph of Greek mythological times.<sup>73</sup>

However, Bax said of this work that it is “nothing but tone-colour—changing effects of tone.” Whether an inspiration from Greek water nymph or a solely tone-painting effect, *Nereid* is a sophisticated work of Impressionism.

The entire piece is in a rough form of a theme and six variations (although unmarked). The opening theme consists of an improvisatory melody in the right hand and a continual syncopated eight-note figure in the left hand, which depicts the swaying waves on the ocean (see example 3.12).

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<sup>73</sup> Lewis Foreman, notes accompanying *Arnold Bax (1883-1953): Piano Works Vol. 1*, Naxos Music Library, <http://asu.naxosmusiclibrary.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/> (accessed January 28, 2011).

Delicate and floating. Easy tempo.

*p* clear and espressive

Ex. 3.12 Arnold Bax, *Nereid*, mm. 1-4<sup>74</sup>

The first theme and variation do not stay in the opening five sharps for long; soon in variations 2 and 3 (mm. 11-18; mm. 19-26) a new key of two flats commences without sufficient preparation. Indeed, the tonal center is rather vague in the entire piece; neither B major nor B-flat major is confirmed. Instead, through the use of inverted chords in the left hand syncopated figures, the dominants of both keys are more stressed in the bass, yet seldom get resolved. As shown in example 3.12, the beginning measures consist of nothing but an F-sharp based harmony (the dominant of B major) in the bass. Another example occurs in variation 2 (see example 3.13), and again the F (the dominant of B-flat major) in the bass seems noticeable.

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<sup>74</sup> Arnold Bax, *Nereid* (London: J. & W. Chester, 1916), mm. 1-4. All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.

3 *poco f* *espressivo*

Ex. 3.13 Arnold Bax, *Nereid*, mm. 11-14

After a few measures of instability in the bass, coupled with increasing complexity of chromaticism in both hands, in variation 3 the bass seems to settle on A for a while. Corresponding to the rocking bass figure, the harmony here wanders between an A major triad, a G-sharp augmented triad, and many other added-note chords. To my ears variation 3 (mm. 19-26) is the most impressionistic-sounding passage in the entire piece.

2 *poco*

*pp cresc. mf* *dim.*

Ex. 3.14 Arnold Bax, *Nereid*, mm. 19-22

The left hand syncopated figure is not interrupted throughout variations 1-3 until m. 27, where variation 4 begins. The texture of the piece becomes gradually thicker and gains more rhythmic complexity from the very beginning all the way to variation 4, which acts as a climax involving trios in the inner voice and triplets in the left hand. In addition to the original thematic melody in the top voice, another melody is added as a counterpart in the left hand figure. Marked with tenuto, the composer especially made a note to “mark the melody.” Because of the multi-voicing and rhythmic complexity, variation 4 (mm. 27-30) appears technically the most challenging in the entire piece (see example 3.15).

The upper part more prominent than the lower

The upper part more prominent than the lower

*a tempo*  
tr  
*poco f*  
mark the melody *pp*

*pp*  
tr  
*cresc.*  
tr  
tr

tr  
*f*  
*p*

Ex. 3.15 Arnold Bax, *Nereid*, mm. 26-31

Following the same gesture, variation 5 (mm. 31-36) prolongs the thickness and strength in music from the previous variation by presenting lush chords with full dynamics, suggesting the power of the immense ocean. Variation 6 (mm. 37-42) ends the piece. It begins with a restatement of the original theme and gradually dies away with the capricious groups of notes in quadruplet, septuplet, and decaplet (see example 3.16).

Ex. 3.16 Arnold Bax, *Nereid*, mm. 37-42

## 2. *The Maiden with the Daffodil*

This is another piece that was creatively inspired by Cohen in 1915:

In January 1915, at a tea-party at the Corders she [Cohen] appeared wearing as decoration a single daffodil, and Bax wrote almost overnight the piano piece *To a Maiden with a Daffodil* [*The Maiden with the Daffodil*] in tribute.<sup>75</sup>

Marked “Very moderate tempo, fresh and innocent,” the piece can be seen and heard as an ABCAB form. In line with *Nereid*, Bax demonstrated his favorite

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<sup>75</sup> Lewis Foreman, *Bax: A Composer and His Time* (Brookfield: Scolar Press, 1988), 129.

treatment of thematic development in this piece, in which he makes each thematic statement more complex and more distantly related to the original key. Two basic motives comprise the A section (mm.1-21): a chordal statement with a triplet (A1, see example 3.17) and a playful motive of mostly ascending fourths and fifths (A2, see example 3.18).



Ex. 3.17 Arnold Bax, *The Maiden with the Daffodil*, mm. 1-2<sup>76</sup>



Ex. 3.18 Arnold Bax, *The Maiden with the Daffodil*, mm. 2-3

Modulating from G major to A major, the B section (mm. 22-33, see example 3.19) also contains two thematic elements: a contrasting descending

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<sup>76</sup> Arnold Bax, *The Maiden with the Daffodil* (London: Joseph Williams, 1915), mm. 1-2. All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.



dotted- rhythm figure of thirds (B1) and a wandering dotted-rhythm figure of seconds (B2).

Ex. 3.19 Arnold Bax, *The Maiden with the Daffodil*, mm. 22-26

In the C section (mm. 34-48) Bax combined almost all the elements introduced above and presented them in a complicated texture. Shown in example 3.20, the extended texture and added polyrhythmic groups of notes on the top make this section the most impressionistic among the entire piece. Motives A1 and A2 become the melody in the left hand, and motive B2 is inlaid in the right hand polyrhythmic patterns (see example 3.20).

The image shows a musical score for Arnold Bax's 'The Maiden with the Daffodil', measures 34-37. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It features a complex piano texture with dense five-fingered runs in the right hand and more melodic lines in the left hand. Dynamics range from pianissimo (pp) to poco forte (poco f). The score is divided into two systems, with a measure rest (m.s.) in the second system. The first system includes dynamics *pp sempre* and *pp poco f*. The second system includes *p* and *poco f*. The right hand has five-fingered runs (5) and a triplet (3) in the second system. The left hand has a melodic line with a triplet (3) in the second system.

Ex. 3.20 Arnold Bax, *The Maiden with the Daffodil*, mm. 34-37

Piano music dominated the early years of Bax's career as he performed his own works in concert halls. His piano work is in general complicated, orchestrally oriented, and often replete with a great variety of rhythmic densities. His other impressionistic piano miniatures, such as *The Princess's Rose Garden*, *Apple Blossom Time*, *Lullaby*, *A Mountain Mood*, *A Country Tune*, and *A Hill Tune*, are all technically difficult and require mature interpretation. Even in the two pieces introduced above, *Nereid* and *The Maiden with the Daffodil*, a few passages may exceed the capability of younger pianists. Yet, early advanced players should

certainly not omit the music of an accomplished impressionist like Bax, especially these two pieces which serve as a great introduction to Bax's piano musical world.

### Biographical Similarities

Cyril Scott and Arnold Bax were two noticeable figures on the stage of musical Britain in their time. In the revolutionary climate of the English Musical Renaissance, both contributed to enrich native English music repertoire of high artistic value through their creative musical production. Scott was the "pioneer of British piano music" who developed his musical language through post Romanticism, French Impressionism, and Orientalism into his personal avant-garde style. Bax was essentially a nationalist who drew romantic chromatic harmony with impressionistic texture in music. In addition to their shared characteristics of employing impressionistic elements, some biographical similarities between the two composers are significant.

Scott and Bax were both among the most prolific British composers in writing piano works during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The total number of Scott's piano works written from 1903 to 1914 exceeds that of any other British composer as well as any other international figure, with the exception of Scriabin.<sup>77</sup> Bax was also a productive composer whose sixty-five solo piano pieces were second in quantity to those of John Field in his time.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Hardy, *The British Piano Sonata*, 68.

<sup>78</sup> Del Priore, "An Analysis of the Piano Sonata No. 2 in G of Arnold Bax," 1.

Second, both were remarkably talented pianists. Scott began contact with music when he was very young. As he remembered, “My mother told me that I could play the piano before I could talk.”<sup>79</sup> He was also a great improviser, who could easily create music in the style of Handel and Bach at the piano.<sup>80</sup> Bax did not begin formal musical training until he was fifteen; yet, prior to that he was able to play most piano sonatas by Beethoven as well as compose for piano.<sup>81</sup> As cited in his memoir, “It seems that I could always read printed music at the piano-stool with the same unthinking ease with which a man reads a book. I claim no merit in this. It is merely a natural gift, like thick hair or strong teeth.”<sup>82</sup>

As mentioned before, both Scott and Bax dabbled at literary writing. This is an interesting parallel to an American composer discussed in the previous chapter, Edward MacDowell, who also had a keen interest in literature. In particular, Scott and MacDowell, both alumni of the German Frankfurt Conservatory, sometimes wrote prefatory mottoes to accompany their works.

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<sup>79</sup> Sampsel, *Cyril Scott: A Bio-Bibliography*, 2.

<sup>80</sup> Hardy, *The British Piano Sonata*, 57.

<sup>81</sup> Del Priore, “An Analysis of the Piano Sonata no. 2 in G of Arnold Bax,” 10.

<sup>82</sup> Arnold Bax, *Farewell, My Youth* (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1943), 11-12.

Besides, the great quantity and popularity of their piano miniatures was a reflection of commercial demand and public taste in their time.<sup>83</sup>

Bax and MacDowell each wrote four piano sonatas. Indeed, the opening of Bax's third piano sonata was regarded as a reminiscence of MacDowell's *Eroica* Sonata.<sup>84</sup> Although their piano sonatas are not the object of this study, "MacDowell uses heroic and folk themes in a similar way to Bax."<sup>85</sup> This similarity is also reflected in some of both composers' short piano pieces, in which Celtic and Nordic influences are evident.

#### A Breeze of Impressionism in Selim Palmgren's Selected Piano Works

Finland cultivated Selim Palmgren's (1878-1951) astonishing sensitivity in music. Often nicknamed the "Finnish Chopin," Palmgren's musical languages were, like those of many other composers introduced in this study, settled in the tradition of Romanticism. As someone who lived in the age when Nationalism dominated Finnish music, Palmgren was not interested in writing music as national epic as much as other Finnish composers were (the most accomplished Finnish composer in this regard was Jean Sibelius).<sup>86</sup> Although Palmgren still contributed to the development of national Finnish music repertoire to a certain

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<sup>83</sup> Hardy, *The British Piano Sonata*, 61.

<sup>84</sup> Scott-Sutherland, *Arnold Bax*, 107.

<sup>85</sup> Hardy, *The British Piano Sonata*, 81.

<sup>86</sup> Kimmo Korhonen, "A Finnish Cosmopolite," *Finnish Music Quarterly* 1 (spring 2009): 34.

extent, his five piano concertos, including the most celebrated, No. 2 *Virta* (The River, 1913), particularly displayed in microcosm the evolution of Palmgren's styles: specifically, dissonant colored late-romantic sonority, added tones and augmented harmony, modality, tritone treatment, and impressionistic texture.<sup>87</sup> These compositional characteristics were also exhibited in Palmgren's piano character pieces, in which Palmgren especially showed his talent in depicting a scene with impressionistic elements. In fact, Palmgren was the first Finnish composer who wrote music in impressionistic style, shown as early as 1907-1908 during his stay in Italy and Berlin.<sup>88</sup> Ilkka Oramo commented on Palmgren's piano music:

Palmgren's music for the piano is distinguished by a real understanding of the instrument, a remarkable faculty for suggesting definite and widely contrasted moods and an agreeably proportionate mixture of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic invention.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Barbara Blanchard Hong, "The Five Piano Concertos of Selim Palmgren: A Finnish Nationalist Meets the Challenge of the Twentieth Century" (Ph.D. diss. Indiana University, 1992), abstract, in *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses*, <http://login.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu> (accessed January 31, 2011).

<sup>88</sup> Korhonen, "A Finnish Cosmopolite," 35.

<sup>89</sup> Ilkka Oramo, "Palmgren, Selim," in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/20779> (accessed March 8, 2011).

Indeed, many of Palmgren's piano works are no longer played and performed. Through the following discussion of some selected impressionistic short piano pieces by Palmgren, I hope that at least early advanced pianists will benefit from discovering these wonderful, evocative, and sophisticated masterpieces.

1. "May Night," Op. 27, No. 4

Perhaps the most famous impressionistic piano piece by Palmgren, "May Night," is selected from a set of seven pieces in *Spring*, Op. 27. Shown in examples 3.21 and 3.22, the piece suggests a calm and serene night in spring. Palmgren adopted numerous typical impressionistic techniques in this little masterpiece, including the whole tone scale (m. 8), parallel chords (m. 14), and nonfunctional harmony (m. 5).<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Maurice Hinson, ed., notes accompanying *Anthology of Impressionistic Piano Music: Intermediate to Early Advanced Works by 20 Composers* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred, 2004), 10.

Ex. 3.21 Selim Palmgren, *Spring*, Op. 27, No. 4, “May Night,” mm. 4-9<sup>91</sup>

Ex. 3.22 Selim Palmgren, *Spring*, “May Night,” mm. 14-15

2. “The Stars are Twinkling,” Op. 72, No. 1

A lovely miniature in a compact binary form, “The Stars are Twinkling” initiates Palmgren’s *Nocturne in Three Scenes*, Op. 72 published in 1922. Having five flats in the key signature, the piece is essentially in D-flat major but begins

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<sup>91</sup> Selim Palmgren, *Spring*, Op. 27, No. 4 “May Night” (Helsinki: A.E. Lindgren, 1912), mm. 4-9, in *International Music Score Library Project*, [http://imslp.org/wiki/7\\_Piano\\_Pieces,\\_Op.27\\_%28Palmgren,\\_Selim%29](http://imslp.org/wiki/7_Piano_Pieces,_Op.27_%28Palmgren,_Selim%29) (accessed January 31, 2011). All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.



with a quartal arpeggiated figure (D-flat, A-flat, and E-flat) in the high register. Even when the main melody in the left hand enters, a series of parallel inverted triads does not seem to reveal the tonality, and sounds pentatonic instead. In the following measures (mm. 8-13), the first confirmed cadence in this piece is indeed in F minor (mm. 11-12), and thus F minor concludes the A section (see examples 3.23 and 3.24).

**Andante, non troppo lento.**

Ex. 3.23 Selim Palmgren, *Nocturne in Three Scenes*, Op. 72, No. 1, “The Stars are Twinkling”, mm. 1-5<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Selim Palmgren, *Nocturne in Three Scenes*, Op. 72, “The Stars are Twinkling” (Helsinki-Helsingfors: R.E. Westerlund, 1922), mm. 1-5, in *International Music Score Library Project*, [http://imslp.org/wiki/Nocturne\\_in\\_Three\\_Scenes,\\_Op.72\\_%28Palmgren,\\_Selim%29](http://imslp.org/wiki/Nocturne_in_Three_Scenes,_Op.72_%28Palmgren,_Selim%29) (accessed January 31, 2011). All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a piano piece. Each system consists of a treble staff and a bass staff. The first system shows a melodic line in the right hand with a dynamic marking of *8* and a *(b)* marking above the final measure. The second system continues the melody and includes a *ten.* marking above the right hand and a *ped.* marking below the left hand. The third system concludes the piece with a double bar line and a *\** marking below the bass staff.

Ex. 3.24 Selim Palmgren, *Nocturne in Three Scenes*, “The Stars are Twinkling,”  
mm. 6-13

The opening of the B section is rather similar to the one in the A section, yet the emphasis on A-flat (the dominant of D-flat) in the bass pre-broadcasts the arrival of D-flat major. Passing through a few chromatic colored decorative chords, D-flat major is finally defined in mm. 19-20a (see example 3.25). The brief codetta (mm. 20b-25) is based on the same quartal arpeggiated figure in the right hand and the D-flat major arpeggio in the left hand.

Ex. 3.25 Selim Palmgren, *Nocturne in Three Scenes*, “The Stars are Twinkling,”  
mm. 15-20

3. “Dawn”, Op. 72, No. 3

The finale in *Nocturne in Three Scenes*, “Dawn,” is a perfect piece for students to work on *rubato* in phrasing and flexibility in expression. It is a short, ingenious work that embraces a wide range of moods, from misty to luminous and from fearful to passionate. In a gesture of absolute Romanticism, the entire piece consists of numerous *libero*, *cadenza-like* passages, constant *crescendo* and *decrescendo*, and extensive rolling chords. At the same time, its impressionistic atmosphere is remarkable; for example, the piece begins with a fascinating passage full of augmented sonority (see example 3.26).

Ex. 3.26 Selim Palmgren, *Nocturne in Three Scenes*, Op. 72, No.3, “Dawn,” mm.

1-2

In example 3.27, an episode displays all the technical characteristics mentioned above, with many “events” occurring in a brief passage of only ten measures. This two-page piece seems to be a great fit for young pianists to exercise flexibility in expression as well as to fulfill their desire for pianistic virtuosity.

Ex. 3.27 Selim Palmgren, *Nocturne in Three Scenes*, “Dawn,” mm. 7-16

A “Finnish Cosmopolite,” Selim Palmgren was part of the Finnish Nationalism movement, yet he was closely tied to a more international outlook in which his musical creativity was cultivated from the many places he resided, including Italy, Berlin, Stockholm (Sweden), Copenhagen (Denmark), and the United States during the 1920s. Palmgren’s most “international” music was found on his piano works, which achieved great popularity in many other countries outside Finland.<sup>93</sup> Among the pieces such as “May Night,” “The Stars are Twinkling,” and “Dawn,” impressionistic writing is undoubtedly the most distinctive feature. Palmgren also wrote some other wonderful short piano pieces with great impressionistic evocation, such as “Dragonfly,” Op. 27, No. 3 from *Spring* and “Moonlight,” Op. 54, No.2 from *Three Piano Pieces*. However, these are technically more difficult; I would suggest them as subsequent materials after a preliminary understanding of Palmgren’s musical language is gained in the pieces discussed in this chapter.

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<sup>93</sup> Korhonen, “A Finnish Cosmopolite,” 32, 35.

CHAPTER 4  
IMPRESSIONISM IN ECLECTICISM:  
OTTORINO RESPIGHI, JACQUES IBERT, AND  
FEDERICO MOMPOU

Italy, France, and Spain—it seems unreasonable to make a sudden connection between Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936), Jacques Ibert (1890-1962), and Federico Mompou (1893-1987) in a single chapter. Indeed, the key to linking these three composers together is in the essence of their musical writing, which presents different forms of eclectic style. More specifically, eclecticism is shown in the music of Ottorino Respighi through the elements derived from various musical periods; in Jacques Ibert through the variety of different musical genres he employs; and in Federico Mompou through the influences of an enormous group of composers. In short, none of their musical styles can be attached to a particular category, thus scholars often refer them as eclectics.

Interestingly, impressionistic writing appeared significantly behind overall eclecticism in their piano works. Through discussion of the three composers' impressionistic piano works from the standpoint of eclecticism, we can see how impressionism was infused into music derived from different cultures. For example, Respighi's Italian patriotism shows to a certain extent in his music,<sup>94</sup> although his "Notturmo" mostly mirrors Chopinesque romanticism and pre-

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<sup>94</sup> Lee G. Barrow, *Ottorino Respighi (1879-1936): An Annotated Bibliography* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004), v-vi.

impressionistic harmony. Cultivated from the French idiom, Ibert's music is noted for its wide range of styles and often displays a juxtaposition of tenderness and the burlesque. Catalan inspiration undoubtedly influences a certain amount of Mompou's musical output, and he is also affected by Parisian experience and the music of Erik Satie. From this point of view, music of Respighi, Ibert, and Mompou indeed provides a refreshing sound to the existing impressionistic piano repertoire.

### Ottorino Respighi and Eclecticism

Ottorino Respighi's (1879-1936) most celebrated musical genre is probably his orchestral work, especially *Roman Trilogy* ("Pines of Rome," "Fountains of Rome," and "Roman Festivals"), which has been recorded nearly one hundred times and is still frequently heard on concert stages today.<sup>95</sup> His piano works, however, remain seldom mentioned and played. In the absence of twentieth century avant-garde compositional skills, interestingly, Respighi's musical language indeed exhibits a time-oriented form of eclecticism, in which "he brought influences to his piano works from all major periods of music history—Middle Ages, Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and Impressionism."<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., v.

<sup>96</sup> Nathan Andrew Hess, "Eclecticism in the Piano Works of Ottorino Respighi" (D.M.A. diss., University of Cincinnati, 2005), abstract, in *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, <http://www.proquest.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu> (accessed November 24, 2010).

At the turn of the twentieth century, composers' interest in restoring music from the past reached its zenith. This concept was further reinforced in Italy because of a group called *La Generazione dell' Ottanta*, translated as "the generation of the 1880s," in which Respighi participated.<sup>97</sup> The main belief of *La Generazione dell' Ottanta* was to fight against German Romanticism and against the prevalence of Italian operas, especially those written by Puccini and Verdi. As a result, instead of operas, composers of the group often concentrated on writing instrumental music.<sup>98</sup>

Because Italy had long been a center of European music, members of *La Generazione dell' Ottanta* were devoted to revitalizing the treasure of Italian tradition from the past and at the same time reinforcing a sense of Nationalism in Italian culture.<sup>99</sup> All the factors mentioned above, along with the increasing popularity of Debussy in Italy during World War I, contributed to Respighi's musical style of eclecticism.

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<sup>97</sup> In addition to Respighi, the other principal members of *La Generazione dell' Ottanta* were Franco Alfano, Alfredo Casella, Gian Francesco Malipiero, and Ildebrando Pizzetti.

<sup>98</sup> Their compositions were based on the tradition of Italian instrumental music established by Arcangelo Corelli, Domenico Scarlatti, Antonio Vivaldi, and Giuseppe Tartini.

<sup>99</sup> Hess, "Eclecticism in the Piano Works of Ottorino Respighi," 13.



“Notturmo” from *Six Pieces for Piano*

Written in 1903-1905, Respighi’s *Six Pieces for Piano* offer a perfect example of his eclectic musical views and personal characteristics in six individual pieces. Although they do not carry picturesque titles, the six pieces—respectively entitled “Valse Caressante,” “Canone,” “Notturmo,” “Minuetto,” “Studio,” and “Intermezzo-Serenata”—suggest a sense of Neoclassicism in terms of using the forms such as “canon” and “minuet.” Here, the adoption of ancient musical forms also foreshadows what Ravel did in his *Le Tombeau de Couperin*.<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, speaking of impressionistic aspects, the third piece of the set, “Notturmo,” is perhaps one of the earliest examples in Respighi’s piano music that illustrates impressionistic approaches.

In Nathan Andrew Hess’s opinion, “Notturmo” is reminiscent of the characteristics of Chopin and Debussy because of its tranquil nature. Hess also makes a further example by comparing Respighi’s “Notturmo” (see example 4.1) with Chopin’s *Nocturne in D-flat Major*, Op. 27, No. 2 (see example 4.2), stressing how both composers use the same broken-chord figure to act as a pedal point and prolongation of the tonic triad, with the lyrical main melody presented

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<sup>100</sup> Written in 1914-1917, Ravel’s *Le Tombeau de Couperin* is a piano set with six movements: “Prelude,” “Fugue,” “Forlane,” “Rigaudon,” “Menuet,” and “Toccata.”

above. The only difference is that in “Noturno” the main melody is split between two hands.<sup>101</sup>

The image displays a musical score for Ottorino Respighi's "Notturmo" from his "Six Pieces for Piano". The score is written for piano and is in 12/8 time, marked "Lento. (m. m. ♩ = 50)". The key signature is three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor). The score is divided into five systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system includes the instruction "dolce" and a dynamic marking of "p". The music features a main melody that is split between the two hands, with the right hand playing a series of chords and the left hand playing a more active line. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Ex. 4.1 Ottorino Respighi, *Six Pieces for Piano*, “Notturmo,” mm. 1-10<sup>102</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Hess, “Eclecticism in the Piano Works of Ottorino Respighi,” 40.

Ex. 4.2 Frederic Chopin, *Nocturne in D-flat Major*, Op. 27, No. 2, mm. 1-6<sup>103</sup>

Another similarity between these two nocturnes is the use of raised notes to enrich the exotic color in the piece. In mm. 7-8 of Respighi's "Notturmo," there is a raised second (A-natural) found and later resolved to B-flat in m. 9. In m. 5 of Chopin's Nocturne, a raised fifth (A-natural) is treated in the same way, resolving to B-flat in m. 6.<sup>104</sup>

Regarding the many parallels between the Chopin and Respighi nocturnes, Hess's opinion is in a way in line with Maurice Hinson's comment in the preface of the *Anthology of Impressionistic Piano Music*:

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<sup>102</sup> Ottorino Respighi, *Six Pieces For Piano*, "Notturmo" (Milwaukee, WI: G. Schirmer, 1986), mm. 1-8. All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.

<sup>103</sup> Frederic Chopin, *Nocturne*, Op. 27, No.2 (Columbia, SC: Richard Johnson, 2010), mm. 1-6, in *International Music Score Library*, [http://imslp.org/wiki/Nocturnes,\\_Op.27\\_%28Chopin,\\_Frederic%29](http://imslp.org/wiki/Nocturnes,_Op.27_%28Chopin,_Frederic%29) (accessed 18 January 2011). All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.

<sup>104</sup> Hess, "Eclecticism in the Piano Works of Ottorino Respighi," 40.

The earliest example of a consistent leaning toward an Impressionistic aesthetic is found in Chopin's music. Impressionistic composers came to favor many harmonic techniques used earlier by Chopin... Chopin used various elements of folk music in his melodies... Techniques such as Chopin's frequent use of added-note chords... are other examples of Chopin's harmonic contributions that led to the development of Impressionistic harmony. Chopin was among the most influential pre-Impressionist and the earliest piano composer for whose works Debussy expressed unqualified admiration.<sup>105</sup>

Hinson also regarded Edvard Grieg (1843-1907) as one of the pre-impressionists in the anthology. Indeed, Grieg's "Notturmo" (Op. 54, No. 4) displays some resemblance to Respighi's "Notturmo." Bearing the same title and the similar nature of serenity, both nocturnos exhibit the mixture of extreme romanticism and an evocative mood of impressionistic style. In Grieg's "Notturmo" (see example 4.3), the use of blended ninth and eleventh chords in the *piu mosso* section (mm. 21-26), and the charm of imitating a singing nightingale in the right hand trio (mm. 18-19)—both suggest an impressionistic manner. In Respighi's "Notturmo" (see example 4.1), one of the most evident impressionistic characteristics is the use of pentatonic scale (G-flat, A-flat, B-flat, D-flat, and E-flat) in the beginning of the piece, which lasts until an A-natural appears in m.7.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Maurice Hinson, ed., foreword accompanying *Anthology of Impressionistic Piano Music: Intermediate to Early Advanced Works by 20 Composers* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., 2004), 3.

<sup>106</sup> Hess, "Eclecticism in the Piano Works of Ottorino Respighi," 40.

Ex. 4.3 Edvard Grieg, *Lyric Pieces* Op. 54, No. 4, “Notturmo,” mm. 18-23<sup>107</sup>

By tracing the pedal points throughout Respighi’s “Notturmo,” one can easily follow the shifts of tonal center. The original tonality of G-flat major is quite stable until m. 10, then slowly changed to E-flat minor (mm. 11-18). Starting from m. 19, and reinforcing in m. 22 and m. 25, the tonality gradually arrives to D-flat major. In particular, with the increasing pace of harmonic changes, mm. 30-32 (see example 4.4) introduces a series of descending musical patterns, providing a touch of impressionistic-like water reflection imagery. With an almost chromatic descending line on the top (B-flat, B-double flat, A-flat, G-flat, F, and E-natural), the tonal center is finally defined by the arrival of F minor: V to i in mm. 33-34.

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<sup>107</sup> Edvard Grieg, *Lyric Pieces* Op. 54, No. 4, “Notturmo” (Leipzig: C.F. Peters, 1891), in *International Music Score Library Project*, [http://imslp.org/wiki/Lyric\\_Pieces,\\_Op.54\\_%28Grieg,\\_Edvard%29](http://imslp.org/wiki/Lyric_Pieces,_Op.54_%28Grieg,_Edvard%29) (accessed February 2, 2011).

Ex. 4.4 Ottorino Respighi, *Six Piano Pieces*, “Notturmo,” mm. 29-34

The rest of the piece is pretty much in the gesture of Romanticism. In mm. 41-42 (see example 4.5), a Chopinesque cadenza leads to the original theme in G-flat major. In mm. 50-51, a barcarolle-like beautiful monologue also infuses a sense of improvisatory style immediately before the end.

Ex. 4.5 Ottorino Respighi, *Six Piano Pieces*, “Notturmo,” m.41

Respighi’s “Notturmo” is a wonderful selection that allows advanced students to discover sophisticated tone color via frequent changing harmony

throughout the piece. Admittedly, the piece might not perfectly fit early advanced players because of the use of extended hand positions and constantly shifting chords with unpredictable accidentals, especially in the middle section.

Nevertheless, this piece demonstrates an example of pre-impressionistic writing that enables early advanced players to experience impressionistic flavor on the basis of familiar romantic musical language and expression. In addition to its impressionistic sound, the atmosphere of salon music provides students a sense of freshness beyond the standard repertoire of Chopin.

#### Jacques Ibert as an Eclectic

Jacques Ibert (1890-1962) was a French composer whose music represented a notable eclectic style that “combines the progressive Impressionist mechanisms of Debussy and Ravel with the Neoclassicism being explored by Stravinsky, creating music that is witty and humorous, yet crisp and graceful.”<sup>108</sup> In other words, Ibert did not devote himself to any specifically preferable genre of his time, thus his music embraces a vast variety of forms and moods.

In addition to composing for a considerable diversity of musical genres, Ibert’s works resemble the styles of many other major composers. This is perhaps the other way to relate Ibert with eclecticism, which is in a sense similar to

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<sup>108</sup> Program notes (2010) accompanying *Trois pièces brèves*, in *The Music Tour Bus*, <http://www.themusicbustour.org/2010/04/trois-pieces-breves-2/> (accessed November 23, 2010).

Federico Mompou. Alexander Laederich described Ibert's abundant musical inspirations:

Evidence of the influence of other composers, even quotations, are found right across his output: the Debussian imprint in *Persée et Andromède*, the homage to Dukas in *La Ballade de la geôle de Reading*, his admiration for Roussel in the *Ouverture de fête* and the Bartók quotation in the *Symphonie concertante*.<sup>109</sup>

Ibert was probably best known for his orchestral works and instrumental pieces for unusual combinations, such as *Escapes* and *Divertissement*. Written in 1921-22, *Escapes* is a three-movement orchestral tone poem with a strong flavor of the Mediterranean; completed in 1928, *Divertissement* is a seven-movement work for chamber orchestra that was originally a suite based on material from incidental music. In addition, *Trois pièces brèves* (1930) for woodwind quintet, *Concerto for Flute* (1934), and *Concerto for Saxophone* (1935), are all among his best loved works. Ibert's diverse musical production also includes seven operas, five ballets, film music, and choral, chamber, and instrumental works. Speaking of Ibert's piano works, the most celebrated one is the piano suite *Histoire*, which is examined closely later in this chapter.

Born in Paris, Ibert lived in the center of a Parisian circle. Through his uncle Adolph Albert and aunt René Vert, Ibert was introduced to a group of painters and artists in his adolescence. It was in 1900 that Ibert met Claude Monet (1840-1926), along with other artists including Camille Pissaro (1830-1903), Paul

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<sup>109</sup> Alexandra Laederich, "Ibert, Jacques," in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13675> (accessed March 8, 2011).



Signac (1863-1935), and Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901). The experience helped Ibert not only increase his appreciation for other artistic areas such as painting, poetry, and theatre, but also cultivate an authentic French style and impressionistic aesthetic in music.<sup>110</sup> Henri Dutilleux (b. 1916), a contemporary composer of Ibert, described Ibert's musical style:

Of all our composers, Jacques Ibert is certainly the most authentically French... The art of Jacques Ibert escapes the test of time because he is, above all things, essentially classic in form. But what imagination in order, what fantasy in balance, what sensibility in restraint...<sup>111</sup>

Ibert entered the Paris Conservatory in 1910, where he had three teachers who influenced him profoundly: Émile Pessard (1843-1917), André Gedalge (1856-1926), and Paul Vidal (1863-1931). Pessard and Vidal were winners of the Prix de Rome respectively in 1866 and 1883, and Gedalge and Vidal were both students of Jules Massenet (1842 –1912). These three professors, due to their long residency at the Paris Conservatory, were “teachers to a great number of well-known French composers and therefore exerted an enormous influence on the music of their time.”<sup>112</sup> It was in Gedalge's class that Ibert began to establish

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<sup>110</sup> Quoted in Rebecca Cook Miller, “The *Melodies* of Jacques Ibert: A Survey and Performer's Guide to Thirteen Selected Songs for Voice with Piano Accompaniment” (D.M.A. diss., University of Kentucky, 2008), 15-16, in *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses*, <http://www.proquest.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu> (accessed November 25, 2010). Original French texts translated by Rebecca Cook Miller.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

lifelong friendships with Darius Milhaud (1892-1974) and Arthur Honegger (1892-1955); they were often called “Group of Three” although Ibert was not a member of Les Six, as were Milhaud and Honegger. Following his teachers’ steps, Ibert won the Prix de Rome in 1919 while in his late 20s.

### *Histoires*

Ibert’s *Histoires* (Stories) is a suite of ten compact movements with charming descriptive titles. These ten impressionistic pieces draw an immediate connection to Debussy’s preludes, especially in the way in which the composer presented each piece’s title. Debussy placed descriptive titles at the end of each prelude, suggesting that the composer meant for the music to be heard first.

Following the same logic, titles of *Histoire* were also located at the end of each piece, providing vivid musical imagery, namely, “La meneuse de tortues d’or” (The Leader of the Golden Tortoises), “Le petit âne blanc” (The Little White Donkey), “Le vieux mendiant” (The Old Beggar), “A Giddy Girl,” “Dans la maison triste” (In the Sad House), “Le palais abandonné” (The Abandoned Palace), “Bajo la mesa” (Under the Table), “La cage de cristal” (The Crystal Cage), “La marchande d’eau fraiche” (The Fresh Water Seller), and “Le cortège de Balkis” (The Procession of Balkis).

Composed in 1922, Ibert later arranged five pieces in *Histoire* for one piano four hands, which is another option for teachers to add variety in piano lessons. With moderate difficulty in music, *Histoire* is a perfect collection for late intermediate and early advanced pianists. Especially through the composer’s

talent for blending transparent and brightly shaped musical ideas in snapshot settings, students thus get to be familiarized with Ibert's typical musical style—a mixture of Neoclassicism and Impressionism, tingled with a sense of humor. As simple as “La meneuse de tortues d'or” (The Leader of the Golden Tortoises) and “Le vieux mendiant” (The Old Beggar), both pieces feature a calm, melancholic melody in the right hand with slowly moving, sometimes static chordal accompaniment in the left hand.

Shown in example 4.6, “La meneuse de tortues d'or” starts with a Dorian tune, accompanied by a large number of seventh chords and parallel inverted triads in the beginning A section (mm. 1-35). Starting from the transition between the A and B sections (mm. 21-35), the sparse chords are gradually replaced with a contrapuntal-like monologue (mm. 36-39), present alone as an important motive later in mm. 60-64 (see example 4.7) in the B section. The piece ends with three majestic chords in the coda (mm. 73-89).

Un peu allant

*p* Doux et mélancolique

Avec Pédales

*mf*

*p* Souple et gracieux

*pp*

Ex. 4.6. Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, “La meneuse de tortues d'or,” mm. 1-12<sup>113</sup>

*Diminuez*

Ex. 4.7. Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, “La meneuse de tortues d'or,” mm. 60-64

Marked *Lent*, the tonal center appears vague in the very beginning of “Le vieux mendiant.” With four sharps in the key signature, the opening melody actually consists of a C-sharp natural minor scale, but harmonized with a neutral,

<sup>113</sup> Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, “La meneuse de tortues d'or” (Paris: A. Leduc, 1922), mm. 1-12. All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.

functionally obscure chord in the bass. This chord (B, F-sharp, B, C-sharp) is similar to the dominant chord of E major, but with a tonic of C-sharp minor added (see example 4.8). It is after the repetition of the melody that a really sympathetic feeling is expressed by an A major chord in the bass (m. 12), a substitute for the original obscure harmonization. This is a subtly effective moment, but soon is replaced by the previous chord as well as an open G chord in m. 18 (see example 4.9).

Ex. 4.8 Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, “Le vieux mendiant,” mm. 1-8

Ex. 4.9 Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, “Le vieux mendiant,” mm. 18-21

Based on a pentatonic-like black-key hand position, “Le petit âne blanc” (The Little White Donkey) is a “delightful staccato study.” The title of the piece

came from a trip during which the composer met a small white donkey in Tunisia in 1922. The “hee-haws” of this creature are animatedly imitated through the off-key slurred pattern in this piece. “A Giddy Girl” bears the only English title in *Histoire*. The inspiration for this composition was drawn from a dance that Ibert had with an English girl. In the beginning, the playful, witty theme coupled with lively staccato and salon-style chords depict the girl’s laugh (see example 4.10). Besides, her fickle moods were reflected through the constantly changing tempos throughout the piece.<sup>114</sup> In a simple ABA’ structure, “A Giddy Girl” allows early advanced students to stretch the flexibility in tempo and dance with the composer in this capriccio music of a French flavor. Perhaps the two of the set that are colored with less impressionistic harmony, "Le petit âne blanc" and “A Giddy Girl,” are very successful character pieces overall. To ensure an exciting performance of these two pieces, students should be encouraged to free their imaginations and tell a story that is filled with adventures.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Maurice Hinson and Allison Nelson, ed., notes accompanying *Jacques Ibert: Histoire, For One Piano, Four Hands* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Co., 2005), 3.

<sup>115</sup> Celia Mae Bryant, “Teaching the Little White Donkey,” *Clavier* 12 (May-June 1970): 41.

**Allant**  
*(Dans un style de romance sentimentale anglaise)*  
*m. g.*

**Un peu retenu**  
*m. g.* **Au Mouvt**

**Un peu plus lent**

Ex. 4.10 Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, “A Giddy Girl,” mm. 1-10

"Dans la maison triste" (In the Sad House) and "Le palais abandonné" (The Abandoned Palace) feature the most distinctive impressionistic characteristics in *Histoire*. The first part of "Dans la maison triste" (mm. 1-6), indicated "lent et plaintif" (slow and plaintive), consists of a fairly dissonant disjunctive melody in the treble, chromatic chord progression in the middle, and a pedal tone C-sharp in the bass across the three-staff notation. The key signature suggests the key of C-sharp minor, although the tonal center is obscure in the upper two staves, the continuous bass C-sharp balances out the uncertainty (see example 4.11).



Ex. 4.11 Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, "Dans la maison triste," mm. 1-2

Marked "doux et berceur" (sweetly and soothing), the next part of the piece (mm. 7-10) is full of Debussyan and Ravellian harmonic colors. Its tender lullaby is harmonized with parallel chords in thirds, fourths, and fifths (see example 4.12). The ending episode (mm. 11-14) contains one staccato note over a deep, mysterious melody in the bass. It also displays one of the tonal conflicts through two tritones (A-sharp to E and C-sharp to G). The other conflict is shown in the debate between two possible tonics, E and C-sharp, which continue their appearances until the last moment without any solution (see example 4.13).



Ex. 4.12 Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, "Dans la maison triste," mm. 9-10



Un peu plus lent

ppp

pp Dououreux et sombre

8<sup>a</sup> bassa

ppp

8<sup>a</sup> bassa

Ex. 4.13 Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, "Dans la maison triste," mm. 11-14

“Le palais abandonné” (The Abandoned Palace) is essentially bitonal, one of the most frequently observed characteristics in impressionistic music. The entire piece displays the contrast between chorale-like progression and drifting impressionistic-sounding chords. The main melody is harmonized mostly in B minor, while the chimes move in parallel motion above (see example 4.14). This piece is a good selection for students to practice balanced control over various voices with different timbres, voicing out the top melody and echoing the distant-related chords in the misty background.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Hinson, *Anthology of Impressionistic Piano Music*, 9.

**Grave et soutenu**  
*ppp*

**En pressant un peu**  
*Très fluide*

Ex. 4.14 Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, “Le palais abandonné,” mm. 1-8

“Bajo la mesa” (Under the Table) features a spectacular Spanish dance. Its repetitive left hand pattern and the exotic syncopated right hand melody call to mind Debussy’s habanera-inspired prelude, “La puerta del vino” (The Gate of Wine), although “Bajo la mesa” is in a much simpler texture and flashier character (see examples 4.15 and 4.16). Following a Phrygian passage in mm. 16-21, the imitation of typical Spanish guitar technique is introduced in m. 22 (see example 4.17).

*En dehors*  
*p*  
*Cédez Au Mouvt*

Ex. 4.15 Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, “Bajo la mesa,” mm. 4-9

*p*  
 6  
 6  
 7

Ex. 4.16 Claude Debussy, *Preludes II*, “La puerta del vino,” mm. 14-16

The image shows three systems of musical notation for a piano piece. The first system is marked "Souple et très expressif" and "p". It features a melodic line in the right hand and a more rhythmic line in the left hand. The second system continues this texture. The third system is marked "Toujours dans le même mouvt" and "Très sec p", showing a change in texture with a more rhythmic, repetitive pattern in both hands.

Ex. 4.17 Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, “Bajo la mesa,” mm. 16-25

Shown in example 4.18, an innocent melody in the left hand coupled with lively crystalline triads in the right hand initiate the eighth piece of *Histoire* “La cage de cristal” (The Crystal Cage). Parallel seventh chords occupy most of the middle part of the piece. Starting from mm. 11-13 and reappearing in mm. 18-26, these chords indeed obscure the tonality. In contrast, starting from m. 18, a stable repeating tune in G major appears in the top voice. Simultaneously in m. 21, the opening left-hand childlike melody now is present yet again in the inner voice while the continual G major tune and parallel 7<sup>th</sup> chords continue (see example

4.19).

Un peu vite  
*mf*  
*Soutenu*  
*pp Léger*

Ex. 4.18 Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, “La cage de cristal,” mm. 1-6

Dim. et un peu retenu  
*f*  
Au Mouvt  
*p* Le thème en dehors

Ex. 4.19 Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, “La cage de cristal,” mm. 18-25

The opening figure of “La marchande d'eau fraiche” (The Fresh Water Seller) presents an interesting combination of contrary fourths and fifths alternating between two hands (see example 4.20). Its essence of depicting the flowing water meets the same quality in Debussy’s *Jardins sous la pluie* (Gardens in the Rain) in example 4.21.



Ex. 4.20 Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, “La marchande d'eau fraîche,” mm. 1-4



Ex. 4.21 Claude Debussy, *Estampes*, “Jardins sous la pluie,” mm. 1-3<sup>117</sup>

Shown in example 4.22, the interval of a fourth remains important in the later part of the piece through its development to parallel inverted triads.



Ex. 4.22 Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, “La marchande d'eau fraîche,” mm. 57-62

The title of “Le cortège de Balkis” (The Procession of Balkis) originated from a biblical story in which Balkis (The Muslim name of the Queen of Sheba)

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<sup>117</sup> Claude Debussy, *Estampes*, “Jardins sous la pluie” (Paris: Durand & Fils, 1903), mm. 1-3, in *International Music Score Library Project*, [http://imslp.org/wiki/Estampes\\_%28Debussy\\_%29\\_Claude%29](http://imslp.org/wiki/Estampes_%28Debussy_%29_Claude%29) (accessed January 18, 2011).

travelled in a tremendous procession to have an audience with King Solomon.<sup>118</sup>

Perhaps the most technically challenging among the ten pieces in *Histoire*, “Le cortège de Balkis” exhibits a large amount of pianistic variety based primarily on the dotted rhythmic musical figure, which also vividly depicts the majesty of Queen Balkis’s royal marching procession. The use of seventh chords, parallel fifths, and modal melody all suggest a brilliant impressionistic piece.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the piece "Le cortège de Balkis" by Jacques Ibert. The first system is marked "Dans un mouvement libre et brillant" and "mf". It features a treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 3/4 time signature. The melody is characterized by dotted rhythms and includes dynamic markings like "mf" and "f". The second system continues the piece with similar rhythmic patterns and includes a "Trit." marking. The third system is marked "Léger" and features a 2/4 time signature, with a key signature change to two flats. It includes a "Trit." marking and a circled "3" indicating a triplet.

Ex. 4.23 Jacques Ibert, *Histoire*, “Le cortège de Balkis,” mm. 1-8

In summary, Ibert’s *Histoires* is certainly an appealing collection for early advanced pianists. It is French-oriented, vividly imaged and often accompanied

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<sup>118</sup> Hinson and Nelson, *Jacques Ibert: Histoire, For One Piano, Four Hands*, 3.

by gentle humor. Many compositional techniques in *Histoire* also appear in Debussy's music. Finally, in line with Debussy's *Preludes* in which titles are placed at the end of each piece, Ibert's *Histoires* provides an excellent preparation for students before playing Debussy's *Preludes*.

Federico Mompou as an Eclectic:

Federico Mompou (1893-1987) was a Spanish Catalan composer and pianist best known for his piano and vocal works. Mompou is certainly not just a "Spanish" composer who wrote music in "Spanish" style, or simply adopted Spanish thematic materials in his compositions. Instead, the vast scope of his writings requires investigation of the influences that molded the composer's complicated musical style. Hence, Ann Zilkind, a noted Mompou scholar, commented, "The intermingling of styles in Mompou's music can best be described simply as eclectic."<sup>119</sup> In tracing the evolution of Mompou's style throughout his life, Zilkind suggests various composers who influenced Mompou, including Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1757), Antonio Soler (1729-1783), Robert Schumann (1810-1856), Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849), Franz Liszt (1811-1886), Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909), Enrique Granados (1867-1916), Manuel de Falla (1876-1946), Erik Satie (1866-1925), Claude Debussy, and Les Six.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Ann Zilkind, *A Study of Catalan Composer Federico Mompou's (1893-1987) Musica Callada* (New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002), preface.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, introduction; the members of Les Six include Georges Auric (1899-1983), Louis Durey (1888-1979), Arthur Honegger (1892-1955), Darius



In particular, the major influences on Mompou came from French Impressionism and Erik Satie. Mompou resided in Paris for a total of twenty-three years (1911-1914, 1921-1941); it is not too difficult to imagine that to a large degree the composer was immersed in a French-oriented musical style. Mompou's harmonic language was partially drawn from Debussy, for both composers seemed to eschew directional motion in musical tendency, preferring to present musical imagery on a rather static, pastel-like background. As noted earlier, "At times Mompou reminds one of Debussy, but of Debussy whose impressionistic vagueness has been carried to even more abstract harmonies, the essence of Mompou's musical vision."<sup>121</sup> Dubbed the "Spanish Debussy," Mompou once was asked about his own thought. He replied:

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Milhaud (1892-1974), Francis Poulenc (1888-1963) and Germaine Tailleferre (1892-1983).

<sup>121</sup> Pierre Huybregts, quoted in Joseph Thomas Rawlins and Alberto Hernandez-Banuchi, "Ferrerico Mompou: Catalonian Composer Magnifico," *The American Music Teacher* 56 (Dec 2006/Jan 2007): 35, <http://gateway.proquest.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu> (accessed November 29, 2010).

...I never composed like Debussy. Debussy created his own world-delicate work, a lot of pastel colors. I did the same. Debussy was attracted by ambiance. Debussy composed for two persons, not three. I compose only for one. I don't want to compose for great concert halls or for the virtuosity. It's just theme music, like the pastel colors of impressionists. They are just there for a small public. It's not so brilliant as other romantics.<sup>122</sup>

Mompou's confession actually reveals his personality of being introverted and enigmatic. During his life, Mompou was never eager to promote his music to the public.

On the other hand, Satie's influence was shown in Mompou's fondness for repeated figures, minimized forms, and an irresistible improvisatory nature permeating most of his piano works. With the exception of *Musica Callada* (Musical Silence), Mompou's most remarkable and extensive work based on the mystic poetry of St. John of the Cross,<sup>123</sup> Mompou is best regarded as a miniaturist. His piano miniatures are characterized by their lack of bar lines, key signatures, and cadences, resulting in a kind of incantatory sonority, which is also a reflection of the musical expression of his philosophy in primitivism.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Rawlins and Hernandez-Banuchi, "Federico Mompou: Catalanian Composer Magnifico," 35.

<sup>123</sup> Composed from 1959 to 1967, *Musica Callada* contains totally twenty-eight pieces in four volumes.

<sup>124</sup> Mompou especially espoused a simple "naive" approach in his overall musical writing. He called it "Primitivism," which produces unpretentious beauty in his music.

Mompou held a strong sense of melody in his music, in which the melodic line is rather simple and short, usually consisting of phrases of two or four measures. In addition, many of his melodies recalled Catalan folk tunes. In line with many of his Spanish predecessors who also studied in Paris, including Isaac Albéniz, Enrique Granados, and Manuel de Falla, Mompou indeed honorably cultivated his work in the tradition of Spanish music.<sup>125</sup>

Although Mompou's singularity seemed to isolate him from other Spanish composers of his time, Mompou is undoubtedly one of the greatest Spanish composers of the twentieth century.<sup>126</sup> His Catalan origin, along with the long-term impact of French style, cultivated Mompou's unique musical language, which makes it most appropriate to call him an eclectic.

#### *Scènes d'enfants*

Mompou's *Scènes d'enfants* (Children's Scenes) was composed between 1915 and 1918. The great success of *Scènes d'enfants* was endorsed in French critic Émile Vuillermoz's review, where he declared Mompou the only true disciple and successor to Claude Debussy.<sup>127</sup> Compared to the six vividly entitled pieces in Debussy's *Children's Corner* (1908), there are a total of five relatively

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<sup>125</sup> Rawlins and Hernandez-Banuchi, "Federico Mompou: Catalanian Composer Magnifico," 36.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>127</sup> Émile Vuillermoz (1878-1960), a prestigious French critic, was also an alumnus of the Paris Conservatory. He was a close friend of his senior classmate Maurice Ravel as well as being a Mompou sponsor.

short pieces in Mompou's set, namely, "Cris Dans La Rue" (Cries in the Street), "Jeux Sur La Plage" (Games on the Beach), "Jeu II" (Game II), "Jeu III" (Game III), and "Jeunes Filles Au Jardin" (Young Girls in the Garden).

*Scènes d'enfants* exhibits Mompou's most unique nature in his music—"a nostalgic return to simplicity and innocence"<sup>128</sup> with what Wilfrid Mellers described as "the magical encapsulation of childhood games."<sup>129</sup> These qualities have made *Scènes d'enfants* the most performed and best loved work among Mompou's entire piano collection. *Scènes d'enfants* could be termed a cyclic work because the returning theme in the last piece, "Jeunes Filles Au Jardin," appears earlier in the first piece, "Cris Dans La Rue." The recurring theme, along with the three *Jeux* pieces in the middle of the set, mark *Scènes d'enfants* as a symmetrical arch form.

The first piece in the set, "Cris Dans La Rue" (Cries on the Street), depicts the wild children's games based on chords richly filled with fourths and fifths. The second repeat of the opening theme is in *piano*, with an added syncopated

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<sup>128</sup> James William Sobaskie, "Book Reviews: Twentieth Century—'Le Jardin Retrouvé: The Music of Frederic Mompou' by Wilfrid Mellers," *Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association* 50 (December 1993): 596, <http://gateway.proquest.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu> (accessed November 29, 2010).

<sup>129</sup> Wilfrid Mellers, *Le Jardin Retrouvé* (York, U.K.: The Fairfax Press, 1987), 64.

drone on the open fifth of C. Mellers suggested that the theme sounds like “merrily chiming bells” or “inarticulate yells of birds” (see example 4.24).<sup>130</sup>

The image shows three systems of musical notation for a piano piece. Each system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The first system is marked with a dynamic of *s* (sforzando) and the word 'Gai' above the staff. The second system is marked with a dynamic of *p* (piano). The music features a drone on the open fifth of C in the bass line and a melodic line in the treble. The notation includes various rhythmic values, slurs, and articulation marks.

Ex. 4.24 Federico Mompou, *Scènes d'enfants*, “Cris Dans La Rue,” mm. 1-9<sup>131</sup>

The pedal tone of the open fifth on C soon shifts to the dominant-oriented circulation on G to D. The melody above the G-D drone, defined and pentatonic, is like a simple tune that children might whistle on the street (see example 4.25).<sup>132</sup> This lively and brief G-major round dance is followed by a new

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 65-66.

<sup>131</sup> Federico Mompou, *Scènes d'enfants*, “Cris Dans La Rue” (Paris: Salabert, 1921), mm. 1-9. All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.

<sup>132</sup> Mellers, *Le Jardin Retrouvé*, 66.

section—marked “Calme,” where a lovely tune is introduced. The tune is based on the Catalan song “La Filla del Marxant“ (The Merchant’s Daughter), which will reappear in a slightly modified version in the last piece of the set, “Jeunes Filles Au Jardin.”<sup>133</sup> This beautiful song does not last long, coupled with the original C-G pedal point and “occasional tingling dissonance” (mostly fourths and fifths) on an extra treble staff for only eighteen measures (see example 4.26).<sup>134</sup> Gradually, the opening theme resumes, yet in the misty “*Gai lointain*” background, suggesting that the playing children are running away from the street.



Ex. 4.25 Federico Mompou, *Scènes d'enfants*, “Cris Dans La Rue,” mm. 13-22

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<sup>133</sup> Jennifer Lee Hammill, “The Development of Compositional Style in the Piano Music of Federico Mompou” (D.M.A. diss., University of Washington, 1991), 7, in *ProQuest Dissertation and Thesis*, <http://www.proquest.com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu> (accessed December 1, 2010).

<sup>134</sup> Mellers, *Le Jardin Retrouvé*, 66.



Ex. 4.26 Federico Mompou, *Scènes d'enfants*, “Cris Dans La Rue,” mm. 29-40

Based on a very compact ABA structure, “Jeux Sur La Plage” (Games on the Beach) is similar to its previous piece through the frequent use of pentatonic pattern, ostinato figure, and chords filled with fourths and fifths. These characteristics are most evident in the B section, in which the main melody is simple enough as a chant surrounding first A, B, and C, and later D, E, F, and G (see example 4.27).



Ex. 4.27 Federico Mompou, *Scènes d'enfants*, “Jeux Sur La Plage,” the B section

The A section, labeled “*Cri*,” is made up of a G dominant seventh chord with a lowered second (A-flat) over a continuous note E (see example 4.28). It may draw an immediate connection to children’s yells or shouts when playing along the seashore; however, described in this way by Mellers—“might be the labour-cry of birth itself”—this piece indeed reveals a very unusual atmosphere.<sup>135</sup> Note that there are no dynamic markings in the entire piece; the only hints for expression are “*tranquillement*” and “*douloureux*” (painful, sorrowful) in the B section. Besides, among all the quintal and quartal chords, an unusual tritone (D to A-flat) that appears in the beginning and at the end of the piece seems to foreshadow the significant tritonal motive (G-sharp to D) in the next *Jeu*.



Ex. 4.28 Federico Mompou, *Scènes d'enfants*, “Jeux Sur La Plage,” the A section

The second *Jeu* starts with a theme based on a tritone G-sharp to D and a stepwise motive E to D over a foreshadowing chord (A-sharp, E, and G-sharp) in the bass (see example 4.29). This chord becomes the initial ostinato figure in the middle section of the piece, although later Mompou seems to make the bass figure

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<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.



ambiguous as it alternates between this chord and a G-sharp minor triad. Another noticeable impressionistic element is the partial whole tone scale in the right hand melody, coupled with the original tritonal motive (see example 4.30).



Ex. 4.29 Federico Mompou, *Scènes d'enfants*, “Jeu 2,” mm. 1-4



Ex. 4.30 Federico Mompou, *Scènes d'enfants*, “Jeu 2,” mm. 7-11

The stepwise motive (E to D) in “Jeu 2” becomes the *Cri* motive in the beginning of “Jeu 3.” Meanwhile, the motivic element of the tritone is prevailing; it appears with various pitches throughout the bass figure. The most chromatic among the three *Jeux*, “Jeu 3” is closely tied to its predecessors in terms of sharing the same rhythmic device (all grouped in three), the evident *Cri* and tritonal motives, and the ostinato bass (see examples. 4.31 and 4.32).



Ex. 4.31 Federico Mompou, *Scènes d'enfants*, “Jeu 3,” *Cri* and the tritonal motive



Ex. 4.32 Federico Mompou, *Scènes d'enfants*, “Jeu 3,” the tritonal motive and the ostinato bass

Throughout the three *Jeux*, the consistent use of ostinato bass figures might suggest the swaying waves of the seas, which is consistent with the beach surroundings evoked in the title.<sup>136</sup> In addition to the bass pattern, the tritone permeates as an important motivic element. In “Jeux Sur La Place,” the tritonal motive D to A-flat is more obscure, hidden in the inner voice of the opening theme; in “Jeu 2,” the tritonal motive (G-sharp to D) is presented as early as in the

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<sup>136</sup> Hammill, “The Development of Compositional Style in the Piano Music of Federico Mompou,” 9.

beginning of the piece, passing through almost the entire piece. Finally in “Jeu 3,” the tritonal motive is everywhere—its first appearance is B-flat to E and later it is transformed to different pitches in the chromatic bass progression. Moreover, Mompou employed very similar emotional layouts for these three *Jeux*: *Cri* in the opening theme, an imitation of children’s squeals, and *triste* or *douloureux* at the return or right before the return.

“Jeunes Filles Au Jardin” (Young Girls in the Garden) starts with a bell-like motive, ringing from a distance. The musical device of bell imitation was one of Mompou’s most remarkable trademarks, appearing as early as in Mompou’s first published piano piece, *Cants magics* (Magic Chants), in 1920. The composer’s obsession with bell-like sonority might originate from Mompou’s maternal grandfather, a bell-maker who inherited the profession from family members dating to the 1400s. Mompou even worked briefly in his grandfather’s bell factory in Barcelona, where he gained the ability to tune his ears to subtle sounds of bells.<sup>137</sup> His unique harmony in music, an imitation of bell sounds, is sometimes described as “metallic” chord in reviews or program notes.

As shown in example 4.33, the first appearance of the bell theme consists of two tritones in a chord (A-flat to D and E to B-flat).

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<sup>137</sup> Rawlins and Hernandez-Banuchi, “Federico Mompou: Catalanian Composer Magnifico,” 35.



Ex. 4.33 Federico Mompou, *Scènes d'enfants*, “Jeunes Filles Au Jardin”

The introduction is followed by an evocative section with quasi-Satie short phrases in which Mompou employed many quintal chords and parallel fourths, creating an exquisitely impressionistic sonority (see example 4.34). After the second appearance of the bell theme, the cyclic melody proceeds. That melody is a slightly modified version of “La Filla del Marxant” (see example 4.35). Interestingly, Mellers regarded this final piece of the set as a hint of “growing up and the sexuality inherent in the process,” while the previous four pieces are “about childhood’s eternal present.”<sup>138</sup> “Jeunes Filles Au Jardin” is indeed an extremely intimate and charming masterwork that stands out from the rest of the pieces in *Scènes d'enfants*.



Ex. 4.34 Federico Mompou, *Scènes d'enfants*, “Jeunes Filles Au Jardin”

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<sup>138</sup> Mellers, *Le Jardin Retrouvé*, 70.

The image shows a page of musical notation for the piece 'Jeunes Filles Au Jardin' from the collection 'Scènes d'enfants' by Federico Mompou. The score is written for piano and voice. It consists of three systems of music. The first system includes a vocal line with the lyrics 'Chantez avec la fraicheur de l'herbe humide'. The piano accompaniment features a complex, rhythmic texture with many chords and intervals, characteristic of Mompou's style. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score is marked with various performance instructions and fingering numbers.

Ex. 4.35 Federico Mompou, *Scènes d'enfants*, “Jeunes Filles Au Jardin”

In summary, in Mompou’s *Scènes d'enfants* the composer successfully presents a picture with the minimum of means and a maximum of effect. Through the careful examination above, we can see that Mompou employed many impressionistic characteristics throughout this set, including ostinato figures, bell sonorities, tritone effects, modes, fragments of pentatonic, whole-tone scales, and many chords filled with fourths and fifths. From a pedagogical view, these five compact pieces provide an appropriate source for early advanced players who first encounter the musical world of Mompou. However, the philosophies of primitivism and mysticism, that the composer believed in and reflected through his music, might be difficult for young players to understand thoroughly. Nevertheless, the simple texture and uncomplicated technique in *Scènes d'enfants*

and his many other piano works, all result of his intimate and naive musical style, enable young pianists to experience the basic impressionistic expression through this genuine masterpiece.

### *Impresiones Intimas*

Composed between 1911 and 1914, Mompou's Op. 1 *Impresiones Intimas* (Intimate Impressions) is a set of nine miniatures published in 1920, the same year as Mompou's first published work *Cans magics* (Magic Chants). These pieces present a wide range of moods, including a mixture of adult melancholy and childlike innocence. The composer claimed that he gained inspirations from Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924); yet, the influences of Debussy and Ravel are evident, even in some of the descriptive titles: "Pajaro Triste" (Sorrowful Bird), "La Barca" (The Boat), "Cuna" (Cradle), "Secreto" (Secret), and "Gitano" (Gypsy).<sup>139</sup> These are the titles of the fifth to the ninth pieces in the set. The first four pieces in the set were written without any pictorial titles and bear only tempo or expression markings ("Lento cantabile espressivo," "Andante," "Gracioso," and "Agitato").

Despite the first four pieces with no descriptive titles, "Cuna" (Cradle) might be the most impressionistic of the five pieces. With the mood of a tender lullaby, it starts with a slow-rocking berceuse tempo in 12/8. The main melody in A Lydian is gently placed on the swaying bass figure. Beginning with a "Debussyan dominant ninth of C" in m. 4, the following phrase commences a

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<sup>139</sup> Rawlins and Hernandez-Banuchi, "Federico Mompou: Catalanian Composer Magnifico," 38.

series of falling sixth sequences (see example 4.36). Mellers further describes the second appearance of falling sixths that succeeds another ninth chord, a climax of emotional outburst in mm. 9-10 (see example 4.37), as “of almost Ravellian opulence.”<sup>140</sup>

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a piano piece. Each system consists of a treble and bass clef staff. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The second system features a fortissimo (*sf*) dynamic marking. The third system includes a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic marking and a crescendo (*cres.*) leading to a 'do' note. The music is characterized by falling sixth sequences in the bass line.

Ex. 4.36 Federic Mompou, *Impresiones Intimas*, “Cuna,” mm. 1-6<sup>141</sup>

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a piano piece. Each system consists of a treble and bass clef staff. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The second system features a fortissimo (*f*) dynamic marking. The third system includes a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The music is characterized by falling sixth sequences in the bass line.

<sup>140</sup> Mellers, *Le Jardin Retrouvé*, 32.

<sup>141</sup> Federico Mompou, *Impresiones Intimas*, “Cuna” (Union Musical Espanola: Madrid, 1959), mm. 1-6. All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.

Ex. 4.37 Frederic Mompou, *Impresiones Intimas*, “Cuna,” mm. 9-11

“Cuna” is a wonderful piece that shows Debussyian and Ravellian characters in Mompou’s refreshing setting. Although the extended hand position in left-hand berceuse figures and right-hand chords might create difficulties and tension for students, pedal usage compromises the task. Besides, the phrases are generally based on the same sequences, which makes it easy for early advanced players to follow in terms of phrase structure and harmonic scheme.

The title of “Pajaro Triste” might call to mind a parallel with Ravel’s “Oiseaux Tristes” from *Miroirs* (1905). As an example that the composer showed a response from his real life in music, Mompou actually meant to depict a caged bird, his father’s “goldfinch with great hopes for its singing abilities.” Sadly the imprisoned creature only sings three notes, the opening motive of the piece, E, C-sharp, and D-sharp shown in example 4.39.<sup>142</sup>



Ex. 4.38 Federico Mompou, *Impresiones Intimas*, “Pajaro Triste,” mm. 1-3

In summary, Mompou’s *Impresiones Intimas* provides a wonderful variety of moods for pianists. Although exhibiting a more complex harmonic language,

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<sup>142</sup> Hammill, “The Development of Compositional Style in the Piano Music of Federico Mompou,” 6.



pieces in this set are slim and melodies are repetitive (as in *Scènes d'enfants*), which enables students to sketch the general musical scheme easily. Yet, when compared to *Scènes d'enfants*, the pieces with descriptive titles especially show a greater degree of intimacy and require personal interpretations.

### *Charmes*

Written in 1920-21, *Charmes* (Magic Spell) is a set of six pieces that reflects Mompou's mysterious belief in Primitivism through its titles. All portray various kinds of psychological states. The six pieces are respectively entitled "...pour endormir la souffrance" (to put suffering to sleep), "...pour pénétrer les âmes" (to penetrate souls), "...pour inspirer l'amour" (to inspire love), ...pour les guérisons" (for healings), "...pour évoquer l'image du passé" (to invoke the past), and "...pour appeler la joie" (to call joy). In general, the composer shows a newer compositional treatment in *Charmes*, where "harmonic tensions rise throughout the entire piece to a final resolution" through a variation-like procedure, which is not much seen in *Scènes d'enfants* and *Impresiones Intimas*.<sup>143</sup> Still based on Mompou's typical compositional techniques—repetitive patterns, ostinato, and tritonal motives—most of the six pieces in the set generate their opening motives with gradual harmonic tensions and greater complexities to be resolved at the very end.

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 32.

In “...pour endormir la souffrance” (to put suffering to sleep), the harmonic evolution occurs in the four statements of a five-measure theme. The first two statements are simply repetitions. Starting from the third one in m. 12, the theme is arranged with a different voicing, although the bass harmony is still present as a tritone-filled (E-flat to A) half-diminished seventh chord. Unpredictably, midway through in m. 15 the bass drops to F and B-flat, the dominant to the tonic in the key of the piece B-flat major. Up to this point, the harmonic tension, created at first by the stubborn appearance of G in the bass throughout the first three thematic statements, is finally eased and “brought to sleep,” as the programmatic title of the piece suggests. Although the non-harmonic tone G no longer appears in the bass, we can still see the composer’s intention of making an added sixth to the existing B-flat major triad as he hides the G in the inner voice from the dramatic moment (m. 15) all the way to the end of the piece (see example 4. 39).<sup>144</sup>




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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 32-33.



Ex. 4.39 Frederic Mompou, *Charmes*, “...pour endormir la souffrance,” mm. 7-18<sup>145</sup>

Following the same concept, the second piece, “...pour pénétrer les âmes” (to penetrate souls), begins with six statements of a five-note theme, each with added notes on the theme, which produces thicker and thicker texture (see example 4.40). The fourth piece, “...pour les guérisons” (for healings), is in a sense of funeral march. Its dotted rhythm theme appears three times: the harmonic tensions are created by a more intensively dissonant interval (B-flat to F-sharp) in the second thematic appearance (see example 4.41), and different tonality in the third thematic appearance. And the fifth piece of *Charmes*, “...pour évoquer

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<sup>145</sup> Federico Mompou, *Charmes*, “...pour endormir la souffrance” (to put suffering to sleep) (Paris: Max Eschig, 1925), mm. 7-18. All subsequent examples of this musical work are from this source.

l'image du passé" (to invoke the past), consists of three and one-half thematic statements with a dreamy arpeggiated accompaniment (see example 4.42). Although the thematic melody remains the same throughout the piece, the accompaniment is reformatted in the last statement, which also exhibits a harmonic extension from the additive middle section (mm. 13-21). In this central episode, the parallel chords in the right hand and the open fifth sonority in the left hand call to mind a Debussyian quality (see example 4.43).

Ex. 4.40 Federico Mompou, *Charmes*, "...pour pénétrer les âmes," the first two thematic statements

Ex. 4.41 Federico Mompou, *Charmes*, “...pour les guérisons,” the second thematic statement

Ex. 4.42 Federico Mompou, *Charmes*, “...pour évoquer l'image du passé,” mm. 1-6, the first thematic statement

Ex. 4.43 Federico Mompou, *Charmes*, “...pour évoquer l'image du passé,” mm. 13-25, the middle section and the partial third thematic statement

In contrast to the slow paced and motivically well-designed three pieces in *Charmes* mentioned above, the third and the sixth pieces, “...pour inspirer l'amour” (to inspire love) and “...pour appeler la joie” (to call joy), are especially in a more lively mood and simpler structure. “...pour inspirer l'amour” features Mompou’s most seen ABA form among his short piano works. The opening theme contains an appealing impressionistic sounding arpeggio and a Mixolydian melody with a flat sixth (see example 4.44). Besides displaying a Satie-like sedate nature in the outer sections, the middle episode evokes a bell-ringing sonority,

which again exhibits one of Mompou's favorite compositional traits (see example 4.45).

Ex. 4.44 Federico Mompou, *Charmes*, "...pour inspirer l'amour," mm. 1-9

Ex. 4.45 Frederic Mompou, *Charmes*, "...pour inspirer l'amour," mm. 15-20

The last piece of *Charmes*, “...pour appeler la joie” (to call joy), is clearly structured in an ABCA’ form. A childlike playful tune initiates the piece; its recurring note A, however, does not suggest the tonality because of the cadential note C-sharp in this brief introduction. The C-sharp forecasts the new key of C-sharp major in the following B section. In the first half of the B section, a slurred motive is emphasized by the tonic and dominant (G-sharp) in the key of C-sharp. Later in the second half, however, coupled with the appearance of accidentals B-natural and A natural (see example 4.46), the G-sharp is replaced with F-sharp (the dominant of B minor), which reveals another tonal shift to B minor in the C section (see example 4.47).

At the end of the piece, the opening animated tune returns in a more stable tonal flow, this time because of its new harmonic setting. As for all the important pitches in the entire piece, the new bass contains a G-sharp, C-sharp (the dominant and the tonic of C-sharp major), F-sharp and finally lands on B (the dominant and the tonic of B minor) (see example 4.48). Interestingly, in Mompou’s overall simple musical nature he places exquisite, and in a way complicated, design of motives and pitches in “...pour appeler la joie,” where in each section motivic materials generate the next musical idea.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 37-38.



Ex. 4.46 Federico Mompou, *Charmes*, “...pour appeler la joie,” the opening theme and the first 16 measures of the B section

Ex. 4.47 Federico Mompou, *Charmes*, “...pour appeler la joie,” the C section



Ex. 4.48 Federico Mompou, *Charmes*, “...pour appeler la joie,” the A’ section

Mompou’s piano music undoubtedly has much to offer to early advanced players as well as professional pianists. Mompou leads us to another window of Impressionism, in which his musical expression is unique and personal.

Especially in *Scènes d'enfants*, *Impresiones Intimas*, and *Charms*, through the composer’s consistency of adopting minimized forms, repetitive figures, simple textures, and uncomplicated techniques, Mompou interpreters thus could be more concentrated on expressing music itself—the music of insight and profundity.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Debussy and Ravel are the two key composers who dominate the repertoire selection in impressionistic piano music today. As discussed in the introductory chapter, their piano music is substantial, influential and essential, yet demands masterful techniques, mature interpretation and well-tempered musicianship. From a pedagogical point of view, a large amount of precursory repertoire is needed in preparing a well-trained impressionistic pianist and interpreter. Therefore, the main purpose of this study was to explore those impressionistic piano character pieces which are technically and musically appropriate for early advanced players, and, to introduce a variety of pieces which are often overlooked by teachers when searching for impressionistic repertoire for their students.

This study focused on nine European and American composers—Edward MacDowell, Charles Griffes, Marion Bauer, Cyril Scott, Arnold Bax, Selim Palmgren, Ottorino Respighi, Jacques Ibert, and Federico Mompou—whose selected short piano works are replete with impressionistic sonority, and offer many appealing aspects to early advanced students. Nevertheless, some passages in these works still exhibit difficulties that exceed the capability of early advanced students. Hence, in the conclusion of this study, it is necessary to prioritize the pieces discussed in the previous chapters so that young pianists will be able to approach them progressively.

Pieces such as Scott's "A Song from the East", Selim's "May Night", Ibert's "The Leader of the Golden Tortoises", "The Old Beggar", "A Sad House", and "An Abandoned Palace", and Mompou's entire *Scènes d'enfants* are in my opinion the most approachable pieces. They are all compact in length (no more than three pages), simple in texture and composed with only one or two thematic materials. Besides, all express either solely oriental flavor ("A Song from the East") or misty impressionistic atmosphere.

Others pieces like Scott's "Danse Nègre" and "Lotus Land", Selim's "Dawn" and Griffes's "The Night Winds" are wonderful choices for those early advanced players who would like to fulfill their desire for pianistic virtuosity. The setting of these pieces is generally more complicated, and they bear dramatic expressions and freely improvisatory passages such as cadenza-like monologue, dazzling rapid-note episodes and extended arpeggiated chords with effective pedaling. Although displaying a certain degree of technical difficulty, these pieces are pianistically well designed. Whether in C major ("Danse Nègre") or in a key of six flats ("Lotus Land" and "The Night Winds"), no awkward hand positions or unidiomatic writing is shown in these works.

Another group of pieces in this study—MacDowell's "Of Salamanders", "To a Water Lily" and "In Deep Woods", Palmgren's "The Stars are Twinkling" and Mompou's *Impresiones Intimas* and *Charms*—requires deep thoughts and intimate interpretation. They are technically not demanding; yet they require detailed instructions for students on delicate tone production and imaginative

thoughts on the titles of these pieces, which are generally related to nature scenes or psychological states (*Charms*). Depending upon students' different personalities, these pieces are perhaps more suitable for sensitive, emotionally more mature students.

The last group of pieces is the most challenging to early advanced pianists. Although these pieces are not technically unreasonable throughout, some passages in them indeed demand masterly skills and exquisite musicianship. In the middle part of Bax's *Nereid*, the sudden thickened texture requires skillful voicing over four melodies simultaneously. Besides, the complicated rhythmic subdivisions, independence of each line, and pedaling issues present considerable challenges. A similar setting appears in the middle section of Respighi's "Notturmo." Its constantly shifting harmony is reflected in a series of extended rolling chords; moreover the melodic line is placed on the top of these chords with irregularly syncopated rhythm. Also in the middle part of Bauer's "The White Birches," three-staff notation introduces a tricky hemiola-like melody in the inner voice, which is juxtaposed with another chromatic line on the top.

In addition to the piano miniatures introduced in this paper, further studies of other great composers and their impressionistic piano music are recommended. For instances, Mompou's contemporaries, a group of Spanish composers who also received musical training in Paris—Enrique Granados (1867-1916), Manuel de Falla (1876-1946), and Joaquín Turina (1882-1949)—produced a large number of Spanish nationalist piano works, some of which were peppered with

impressionistic flavors. Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959) was to a certain extent influenced by French style and impressionistic harmony when introduced to the music of Debussy, Satie and Milhaud in 1917. Villa-Lobos's Latin American origin, along with his richly colored harmonic language, ought to be a fascinating source of repertoire for early advanced players. Karol Szymanowski (1882-1937) was a Polish composer and pianist whose compositions also drew inspiration from the Impressionism of Debussy and Ravel. Although Szymanowski wrote quite a few piano pieces, his fame never kept abreast of his senior countryman, Frédéric Chopin, a Polish musical giant in the center of the European stage. As a result, many of Szymanowski's piano pieces appear unfamiliar and seldom played today. Alexander Tcherepnin (1899-1977), a Russian composer and pianist, was also inspired by Chinese music during his stay in China from 1934 to 1937. The eastern flavor in some of his piano pieces also makes his music sound impressionistic. Moreover, the musical language of the English composer Frederick Delius (1862–1934) often drew parallels to that of Debussy. Delius was also immersed in the French culture for a long period of time during his residency in Paris. The majority of Delius's impressionistic characteristics is found in his symphonies and orchestral works. Although the composer only contributed a small amount of repertoire for piano, these works remain undiscovered and welcome to further investigation of impressionistic evidence.

I am hopeful that this study, coupled with other further researches into the composers suggested above, will not only enrich our awareness of the existing impressionistic piano repertoire, but also benefit today's young pianists in reaching a more thorough perspective and understanding of impressionistic music. However, it is important to acknowledge one major obstacle I have encountered in the course of my research. Musical scores of some of the nine composers in this study are not readily available, and it has been virtually impossible to obtain entire collections of their piano works. For example, many of Bauer's piano pieces are not circulating, and in contrast to the enormous body of Scott's piano output, only a small number of pieces could be found electronically or over interlibrary loan. Among the nine composers, the works and related studies of MacDowell, Griffes, and Mompou are the most completely documented. The availability of Ibert's and Palmgren's piano pieces is limited and much of the related research exists only in French or Finnish.

Edited by Maurice Hinson and published by Alfred, *Anthology of Impressionistic Piano Music* is perhaps the most recent and pedagogically organized collection for late intermediate and early advanced pianists that I found during the course of my research. This anthology provides an overview of the historical development of Impressionism, a brief description of each composer (including Debussy, Ravel and other pre-impressionistic or post-impressionistic figures) and their selected works, along with suggestive fingering and pedal usage. This anthology certainly serves as a good starting tool in teaching impressionistic

piano music, however, it is not extensive enough. A more comprehensive anthology of impressionistic piano music, which includes many more graded impressionistic piano pieces as well as an exhaustive performance guide and recording, is needed.

Hopefully my selection of piano pieces in this study will incite a spirit of exploration for today's early advanced pianists as they encounter impressionistic piano music. These wonderful, lesser known, but colorful and artistic piano character pieces certainly deserve more of our attention, and they are in need of being taught and performed much more frequently. Meanwhile, largely-unknown "buried treasures" still remain in the repertoire of impressionistic piano music, awaiting us to discover, interpret, and perform.



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APPENDIX A  
SCORE REFERENCE IN MUSICAL EXAMPLES

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