

Claude DEBUSSY CENTENARY EDITION 2018

XII FEUX
D'ARTIFICE

P R E L U D E S b o o k I I



Piano Practical Editions
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Claude DEBUSSY 1862 - 1918

XII FEUX D'ARTIFICE

PRELUDES BOOK III

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

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

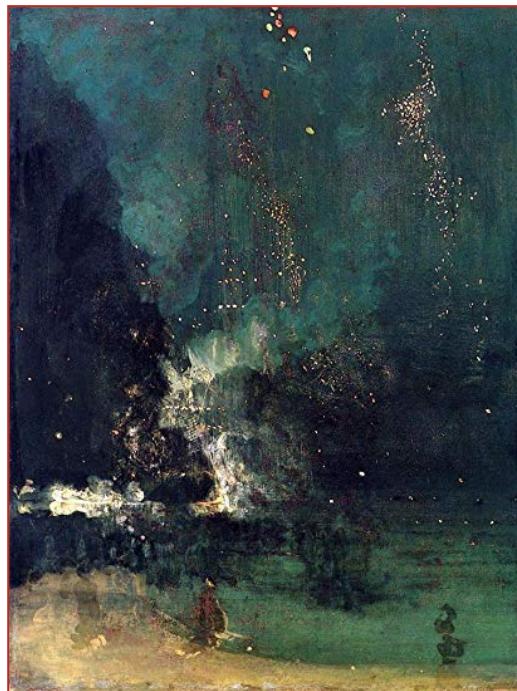
The last of these 24 *préludes*, is also the most technically challenging — fireworks over the Seine and fireworks at the keyboard. Debussy rarely tries to imitate Lisztian pyrotechnics but here he succeeds in writing a dazzling virtuoso display piece to end the set.

Bastille day revellers in Paris provide the backdrop for rockets, firecrackers, sparklers and explosions in the night sky, as the audience quietly waits in anticipation of a complex harmonic wonderworld of extreme

dynamics and dissonance, giving voice to breathtaking light. The prelude appropriately concludes with a soft and brief quotation from *La Marseillaise* in polyphony with a final utterance of the principal motif.

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

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



Nocturne in Black and Gold
The Falling Rocket*
James McNeill Whistler

* Completed in 1875 — "scatters stars through the impenetrable darkness of the night." It is very probable that Debussy saw and admired this work exhibited in Paris around 1900; he was enchanted by the artist's pure style and seduced by the aesthetic of illusion, in which the exquisite becomes the evanescent.

Modérément animé

XII

m.d.

6

pp

m.s.

léger, égal et lointain

Musical score for measures 3 and 5. The score consists of two systems of four staves each. The top staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. The bottom staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. Measure 3 starts with a single note followed by a measure of sixteenth-note patterns. Measure 5 starts with a single note followed by a measure of sixteenth-note patterns. The music is divided by vertical bar lines.

Musical score for measures 8^{va}-1 and 8^{va}-2. The score consists of two systems of four staves each. The top staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. The bottom staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. Measure 8^{va}-1 starts with a single note followed by a measure of sixteenth-note patterns. Measure 8^{va}-2 starts with a single note followed by a measure of sixteenth-note patterns. The music is divided by vertical bar lines.

Musical score for measures 7 and 8. The score consists of two systems of four staves each. The top staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. The bottom staff has a bass clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. Measure 7 starts with a single note followed by a measure of sixteenth-note patterns. Measure 8 starts with a single note followed by a measure of sixteenth-note patterns. The music is divided by vertical bar lines. The bass staff in measure 8 includes a dynamic marking *pp*.

8va -

9

v

v

8va

11 *sempre pp*

en se rapprochant peu à peu

8va

13

*molto crescendo**8va*

15 *molto crescendo*

8va - - - - 1
m.s. *m.d.*

ff *right hand glissando*

17 *p* *più p*

8vb - - - - 1

20 *pp* 6

cre - - - - -

22

scen - - - - - do - - - - -

8va - - - - -

23

(8va) - - - - - 1

f 14 *m.d.*

sotto *m.s.* *m.s.*

8va - - - - - 1

8va - - - - -

(8va) - - - - -

8va - - - - -

27

f

très en dehors

8va - - - - -

29

f

28

8va - - - - -

8va - - - - -

31

f

28

2

ff

30

10

48

3

48

8va - - - - -

8va - - - - -

31

f

38

3

5

Musical score for piano, page 10, measures 32-35. The score consists of two staves. The left staff uses a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time (indicated by '3'). The right staff uses a bass clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time (indicated by '8'). Measure 32 starts with a sixteenth-note grace note followed by eighth notes. Measures 33 and 34 continue this pattern. Measure 35 begins with a sixteenth-note grace note followed by eighth notes, with a measure repeat sign and a repeat ending bracket above the staff.

A musical score for piano, page 33. The top staff (treble clef) has a dynamic marking of *p*. The bottom staff (bass clef) has a dynamic marking of *m.d.* (mezzo-forte). The music consists of two measures. In the first measure, the treble staff has sixteenth-note patterns with grace notes, and the bass staff has sustained notes with fermatas. In the second measure, the dynamics change to *p* and the bass staff continues with sustained notes and fermatas. The score is set against a background of horizontal lines.

p

34

più p

Musical score for piano, page 15, measures 35-36. The score consists of two staves. The upper staff uses a treble clef and has a dynamic marking of **f**. It features a series of eighth-note chords. The lower staff uses a bass clef and shows sustained notes. Measure 35 ends with a fermata over the bass note. Measure 36 begins with a dynamic of **p**.

A musical score page featuring two staves. The top staff is in treble clef, B-flat key signature, and common time. It begins with a dynamic 'f' and a melodic line consisting of eighth and sixteenth notes, some with grace notes. The bottom staff is in bass clef, B-flat key signature, and common time. It consists of a harmonic bass line with sustained notes. Measure numbers 36 and 1 are indicated at the start of each staff respectively.

37

17

4

1

6

8

6

8

38

più f

8va

4

8

4

8

39

ff

(*8va*)

4

8

4

8

40

molto diminuendo

m.d.

b

b

b

b

b

b

8va - - - ,

41

p
m.d.

p

p
m.s.

p

p

p

p

8va - - - ,

8va - - - ,

43

3

8va - - - ,

2

4/8

8va - - - ,

45

mf

f **3** **m.s.**

mf

8va - - - ,

scherzando
p subito

47

più p

49

poco crescendo

51

molto crescendo

f strident

53

pp

pp (laisser vibrer)

retenu

m.s. **m.d.**

55

mouvement (plus à l'aise)

sempre pp

57

volumineux

m.s.

58

59

les basses légères et harmonieuses

60

pp

rubato

8va -- -

61 pp right hand glissando

pp m.s.

8vb - 1

8va - - - ,

63 pp

pp

8vb - 1

8va - - - ,

pp

8vb - 1

8va -

doux et harmonieux (molto rubato)

(8va) - - - - - 3

65 pp

m.s.

8vb -

8va - - - - -

66 pp

8vb -

incisif et rapide

67 *f* 6 *ff* *quasi cadenza* *m.s.* *m.s.*

(8va) *pp* *p*

loco *f* *8va*

69 *pp* *f*

(8va) *pp*

70 *pp*

71 *pp*

incisif

72

f

più f

mouvement

pp subito

8va - - - - -

74

pp

76

p

p

77

p

crescendo

79 *molto crescendo*

mouvement élargi

éclatant

81 *f* *m.d.*

3

6 8

6 8

8vb---

8vb-----

più f

6 8

4 8

p subito

6 8

4 8

84 *f*

4 8

f

4 8

8vb---

8vb-----

più f e crescendo

86

6 8

Musical score for orchestra, page 14, measures 87-88. The score consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef, 6/8 time, and dynamic ff. It features sixteenth-note patterns with grace notes and slurs. The bottom staff is in bass clef, 6/8 time, and dynamic ff. It shows sustained notes and rhythmic patterns. Measure 87 ends with a repeat sign and begins measure 88.

8va *ff*

plus lent

89 *glissandi*

mf m.d.

p

più p

très retenu pp m.d.

The musical score consists of four staves. The top staff is in treble clef, 2/8 time, with dynamic *ff*. The second staff is also in treble clef, with dynamic *glissandi*. The third staff is in bass clef, 4/8 time, with dynamic *mf m.d.*. The bottom staff is in bass clef, 2/8 time, with dynamic *p*. The score includes performance instructions *plus lent*, *più p*, and *très retenu pp m.d.*. Measure numbers 89 and 88 are indicated.

Musical score for piano, page 10, measures 96-97. The score consists of three staves: treble, bass, and a lower staff. The key signature is one flat. Measure 96 starts with a treble note followed by two rests. The bass staff has a dynamic of *p*. Measure 97 begins with a bass note, followed by a treble note with a dynamic of *pp*, a bass note with a dynamic of *p*, and a treble note with a dynamic of *p*. The bass staff has a dynamic of *p*.

(... Feux d'artifice)

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Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & French vocabulary

Duration: 5'

- In the first book of Preludes, the composer indicated some metronome speeds in brackets, and once wrote: "*as a rose which might only last for one morning, a metronome speed might only work for one bar.*" Might this explain why there are no metronome speeds in the second book?
- **1-16** I have reversed the hands for this tricky opening, thereby gaining a millisecond for the impending leaps, and enabling continuity of the accompaniment in **7 & 9**
- **17** Black key glissandos can be painful... try using all four nails simultaneously (excluding the thumb); play the first note with the other hand — the greater the nail angle, the louder it will sound.
- **37** LH accompaniment slightly modified
- **38** the time signature 5/8 here — surely a misprint
- **41-43** It is unclear whether to play the RH grace notes before the beat; at the 4th beat of **42** it certainly allows more time.
- **52** Debussy has confusingly written the LH as dotted notes
- **61-64** these pianissimo glissandos will certainly respond to the technique described in **17**
- **76-80** the final LH demisemiquaver (diamond notehead) can be omitted
- **83** The time signature is mysteriously missing here, and the value of the unique rest seems inaccurate.
- **86** the original time signature of 2/8 seems impossible — compare with **72**
- **98** by slightly delaying the final treble "Marseillaise" E, it is possible to keep the bass tremolo going without interruption

modérément animé	<i>fairly animated</i>
léger, égal et lointain	<i>light, even and from afar</i>
marqué	<i>marked</i>
en se rapprochant peu à peu	<i>gradually becoming nearer</i>
très en dehors	<i>much in relief</i>
strident	<i>piercing</i>
laisser vibrer	<i>keep the pedal on</i>
plus à l'aise	<i>more calm</i>
volubile	<i>flowing, fluent</i>
les basses légères et harmonieuses	<i>the bass light and harmonious</i>
doux	<i>gentle</i>
incisif et rapide	<i>cutting and rapid</i>
mouvement élargi	<i>broader tempo</i>
éclatant	<i>spectacular</i>
très retenu	<i>seriously held back</i>
encore plus lent	<i>even slower tempo</i>
de très loin	<i>very distant</i>
aussi léger et pp que possible	<i>as light and pp as possible</i>