Claude DEBUSSY CENTENARY EDITION 2018

XII MINSTRELS

PRELUDES book 1



<u>iano Practica</u>l Editions

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

Please send comments and error reports to Ray Alston : contact@pianopracticaleditions.com

Claude DEBUSSY 1862 - 1918

XII MINSTRELS PRELUDES BOOK I

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

traditional mould. It is made of colours and rhythmical beats. Music is a mysterious mathematical process whose elements partake of infinity, capturing mysterious relations between nature and the imagination". — Claude Debussy

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

The composer must have seen Minstrel* shows in Paris and possibly when he visited

English south coast music halls. This final prelude from book 1 captures their exuberance, often imitating banjo, cornet and drums — a sympathetic tableau of exotic art from the USA. I love the final bars with clowns running offstage in a mock chaotic exit.

Featuring "modern" rhythm and harmony, with cutting dissonance Debussy has transformed their music into

an ironic caricature, a style which certainly influenced Bartók, Stravinsky and Poulenc.

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 and an alternative key-signature.

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!

Les MARIONNETTES MINSTRELS

LES MARIONETTES MINSTRELS c.1890

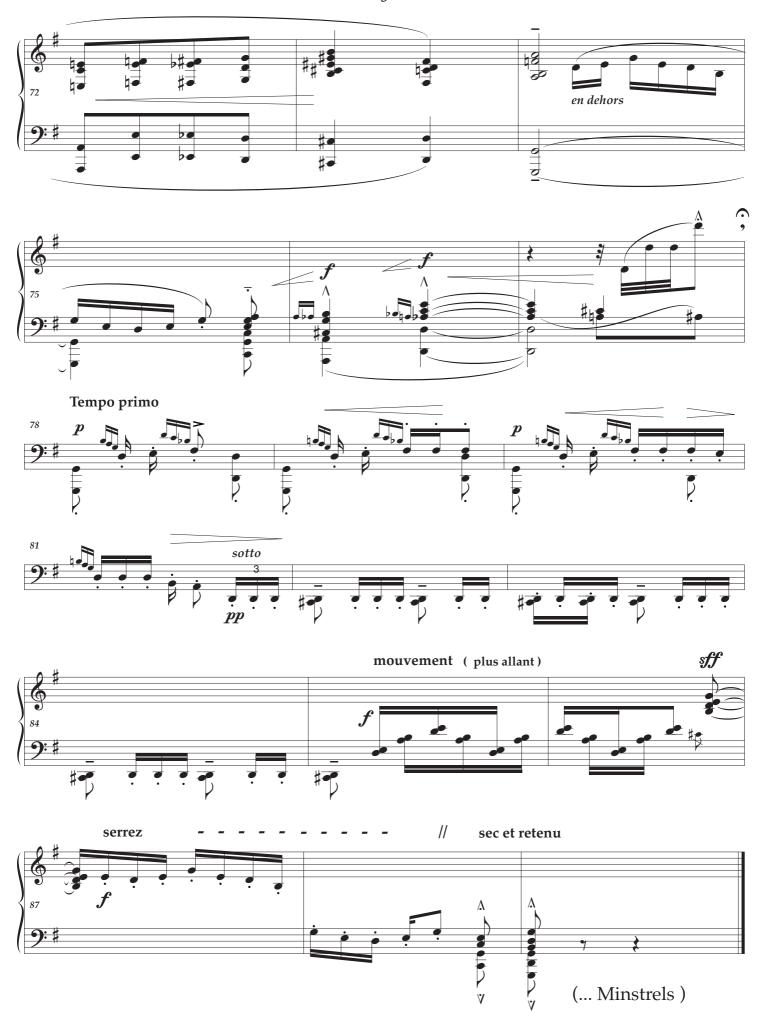
* American entertainers who exotically performed in blackface, wearing tails, top hats and bow ties, featuring quirky dance steps such the cake-walk, burlesque, slapstick and comedy sketches — vaudeville acts such as tap dancing, acrobatics and juggling.











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Appendix

Comments, afterthoughts & French vocabulary

Duration: 2'30

- In the first book of Preludes, the composer indicated metronome speeds in brackets, and once wrote: "as a rose which might only last for one morning, a metronome speed might only work for one bar." Might this explain why there are no metronome speeds in the second book? Debussy does not suggest a metronome speed for this prelude.
- **grace notes :** Playing these on the beat will inevitably make this witty and sarcastic music sound out of time, thus furthering the wishes of the composer.
- 26-31 presented in E

nerveux et avec humour lively (capricious) and with humour les "gruppetti" sur le temps the grace notes start on the beat

cédez holding back

un peu plus allant a little quicker très détaché very detached

en cédant holding back

moqueur ironic

quasi tambouro like a side-drum

en dehors in relief serrez accelerate

sec et retenu crisp and held back