

The Masters Series Concerts (2011-12)

Sundays* at 3:00pm, at Studio Hollywood (*unless otherwise noted)

Programs, Notes & Seating charts for reservations available at: www.studio-hollywood.com

Alan Murray, piano

Program	Date
Chopin – The Piano Music	
the Etudes (& sel. Nocturnes & Mazurkas)	Oct 2 the Scherzos “ Oct 30
the Preludes “ “	Oct 9 the Sonatas “ Nov 6
the Polonaises “ “	Oct 16 the Impromptus “ Nov 19 *
the Ballades “ “	Oct 23 the Waltzes “ Dec 3 *
Introduction & Rondo, Fantasy, Berceuse, Barcarolle, Andante Spianato & Grande Polonaise Dec 17 *	
Schumann – The Piano Music	
Fantasy, Arabeske, Carnaval	Nov 13
Kreisleriana, Toccata, Blumenstück, Symphonic Etudes	Nov 20
Faschingsschwank aus Wien (Carnival of Vienna), Kinderszenen (Scenes fr Childhood), Romances	Nov 27
Sonata #1 in F-sharp minor, Novellette #1, Davidsbündlertänze	Dec 4
Sonata #2 in G minor, Waldszenen, Papillons (“Butterflies”), Humoreske	Dec 11
Sonata #3 in F minor (“Concerto w/o Orchestra”), Fantasiestücke, Gesänge der Frühe, Novellette #2	Dec 18
The French & Spanish Masters	
Ravel – The Piano Music	
Gaspard de la Nuit, Jeux d’eau, Sonatine, Pavane, Valses Nobles et Sentimentales, ...	Jan 8
Le Tombeau de Couperin, Sérénade Grottesque, Menuet-Haydn, Menuet Antique, Miroirs, ...	Jan 15
Debussy – The Piano Music	
the Etudes, l’Isle joyeuse, Estampes, ...	Jan 22
the Preludes (Books I & II)	Feb 5
Images, Children’s Corner, Suite Bergamasque, Pour le Piano, Arabesques, Danse, Masques, ...	Feb 12
Granados – Goyescas , El Pelele	Albéniz – Iberia , Navarra Feb 19 & Mar 4
Beethoven – The 32 Sonatas & Diabelli Variations (1wk Series; M-F at 8:00pm; S/S at 3:00)	
(1) Sonatas #1-4 Mar 18 (5) Sonatas #22-26 (d) Mar 22	
(2) Sonatas #5-10 (a) Mar 19 (6) Sonatas #27-29 (e) Mar 23	
(3) Sonatas #11-15 (b) Mar 20 (7) Sonatas #30-32 Mar 24	
(4) Sonatas #16-21 (c) Mar 21 (8) Diabelli Variations Mar 25	
a) ‘Pathétique’ b) ‘Moonlight’, ‘Pastorale’ c) ‘Tempest’, ‘Waldstein’ d) ‘Appassionata’, ‘Les Adieux’ e) ‘Hammerklavier’	
J.S. Bach – The Keyboard Music (1-week Series, Apr 7-14; Mon-Fri at 8:00pm; Sat/Sun at 3:00pm)	
(1) Chromatic Fantasy/Ital. Concerto/Inventions Apr 7 (5) Engl & French Sts, Partita #4/WTC25-32 Apr 11	
(2) Engl & French Suites & Partita #1/WTC1-8 Apr 8 (6) Engl & French Sts & Partita #5/WTC33-40 Apr 12	
(3) Engl & French Suites & Partita #2/WTC9-16 Apr 9 (7) Engl & French Sts & Partita #6/WTC41-48 Apr 13	
(4) Engl & French Suites & Partita #3/WTC17-24 Apr 10 (8) The Goldberg Variations Apr 14	
Brahms, Schubert & Liszt – The Major Works	
Brahms – Handel Variations & Fugue, Paganini Variations / Schubert – Sonata in A minor (D845)	Apr 22
Brahms – Sonata No. 3 in F minor / Schubert – Sonata in G, «Wanderer» Fantasy	Apr 29
Schubert – The Late Piano Sonatas: in C minor, A major, B-flat major (Op. Posth.)	May 6
Liszt – Sonata in B minor, S. del Petrarca, Vallée d’Obermann, Mephisto Waltz, Au bord d’une source	May 13
The Transcendental Etudes, Après une lecture de Dante, Hungarian & Spanish Rhapsodies, ...	May 20
The Russian & Eastern European Masters – The Major Works	
Rachmaninoff – the Preludes	May 27
Rachmaninoff – the Etudes-Tableaux & Moments Musicaux / Balakirev – Islamey	Jun 3
Rachmaninoff – the Sonatas (No. 1 in D minor; No. 2 in B-flat minor) / Szymanowski – Metopes	Jun 10
Prokofiev – Sonata No. 6 / Scriabin – Sonata No. 2 / Berg – Sonata / Janacek – Sonata 1X1905	Jun 17
Prokofiev – Sonata No. 7 / Scriabin – Sonata Nos 4&5 / Medtner – Sonata / Stravinsky – Petrouchka	Jun 30 *
Prokofiev – Sonata No. 8 / Mussorgsky – Pictures at an Exhibition / Bartók – Out of Doors	Jun 24
American Masterpieces	
Gershwin Rhapsody in Blue, Barber Sonata, ... - Jul 1 Works by Ives , Copland , Carter , Bolcom , others - Jul 8	

The Masters Series Concerts (2011/12)

at Studio Hollywood, Hastings-on-Hudson

Sunday, February 5, 2012 at 3:00pm

Claude Debussy – The Piano Music

The Preludes

Book I

- No. 1 – Danseuses de Delphes
- No. 2 – Voiles
- No. 3 – Le vent dans la plaine
- No. 4 – «Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l’air du soir»
- No. 5 – Les collines d’Anacapri
- No. 6 – Des pas sur la neige
- No. 7 – Ce qu’a vu le vent d’Ouest
- No. 8 – La fille aux cheveux de lin
- No. 9 – La sérénade interrompue
- No. 10 – La Cathédrale engloutie
- No. 11 – La danse de Puck
- No. 12 – Minstrels

Intermission

Book II

- No. 13 – Brouillards
- No. 14 – Feuilles mortes
- No. 15 – La Puerta del Vino
- No. 16 – «Les fées sont d’exquises danseuses»
- No. 17 – Bruyères
- No. 18 – «Général Lavine» - excentric
- No. 19 – La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune
- No. 20 – Ondine
- No. 21 – Hommage à S. Pickwick, Esq., P.P.M.P.C.
- No. 22 – Canope
- No. 23 – Les tierces alternées
- No. 24 – Feux d’artifice

Alan Murray, piano

The Masters Series Concerts (2011-12)

The **Masters Series Concerts (2011-12)** comprise a series of approximately 50 mostly Sunday afternoon programs at **Studio Hollywood** (www.studio-hollywood.com), spanning the cycles of piano music of most of the great composers for the instrument, from Bach and the Classical and Romantic masters, to great composers of the 20th Century. The programs are intended to provide guests with 1-2 hours of quality weekly listening in a contemplative setting, surrounded by the natural beauty that is visible from the recital hall. The performances are intended to be informal but well-prepared offerings, as an interim step toward full concert preparation.

Claude Debussy: The Preludes

In terms of their title and number, Debussy's **Préludes** are the French composer's tribute to his Polish predecessor Chopin, who - inspired by Bach - had brought unprecedented freedom to this musical form. That Debussy added his titles only at the end of each piece, at the moment when the music relapses into silence and induces a state of wistful rêverie in the listener, is no accident. Here we find an appropriate metaphor for the Baroque notion of the "prelude to" something else.

Preludes – Book I Debussy's first book of Preludes was published in Paris in April 1910. It seems likely that Debussy had been thinking of the project for two or three years, but the final elaboration of these twelve pieces took place within a two-month period. As usual with him, the printed order was different from the one in which they were composed.

Danseuses de Delphes (Delphic Dancers) provides a beginning that is wholly characteristic of Debussy, who liked to lead the listener gently from the material world to the immaterial, even spiritual, one of the composer's imagining, using for this purpose a religious tone. The air of mystery here is enhanced by the burial of the principal line in the middle of the opening chords, from which it emerges in the third bar. According to one of Debussy's biographers, the title refers to a sculpture of three dancers in the Louvre. The title **Voiles (Sails or Veils)** continues to be the subject of debate. Edgard Varèse said they were the veils of the dancer Loie Fuller, and Debussy himself said the piece "is not a photograph of the beach". But he could be mischievously misleading about such things. Either way, there are connotations of floating and billowing, brought out by Debussy's use of the vague and undirected whole-tone scales, and a clear link to the action of the wind in the third prelude, **Le Vent dans la plaine (The Wind on the Plain)**. This is a reference to a pair of lines by 18th century poet C.S. Favart, "*Le vent dans la plaine / Suspend son haleine*" (The wind on the plain / holds its breath), which Debussy had quoted as an epigraph in another work. In all three of these opening preludes the note B is predominant. But from here onwards, the tonal perspective begins to open out, in preparation for a parallel opening out of sensibility. For the moment, though, this still remains private. As in the previous prelude, the title "**Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir (Sounds and Scents Swirl in the Evening Air)**" looks back to one of Debussy's early songs, here to a line from Baudelaire's "*Harmonies du soir*", which he had set to music in 1889. There are no direct quotations from the song, but Debussy manages to capture the effect of the poem's complex scheme of repetitions which, like the sounds and scents, seem to turn in upon themselves by manipulating a limited number of intervals, to evoke a heady, hermetically sealed atmosphere. Into this, **Les collines d'Anacapri (The Hills of Anacapri)** bursts with an explosion of Mediterranean light and color, and in the central section the public "popular" element makes its first appearance, in the form of a pseudo-Neapolitan folksong. Debussy's *pudeur* immediately reasserts itself in the next piece, **Des pas sur la neige (Footprints in the Snow)**, whose halting *ostinato* rhythm "*should sound like a melancholy, frozen landscape*". This piece continues further along the same path of his opera *Pelleas et Melisande*. The next two preludes return to specific literary models for their inspiration. **Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest (What the West Wind has Seen)** refers to Hans Christian Andersen's story *The Garden of Paradise*, in which the four winds are sent out and return to tell of what they saw, and possibly also to Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*, which Debussy had read in French translation some 25 years earlier. **La fille aux cheveux de lin (The Girl with the Flaxen Hair)** describes a damsel of pre-Raphaelite aspect, with long eyelashes, gentle curls and cherry lips. Debussy originally notated the piece in B-flat major, only later transposing it so that the opening arabesque lies on the black keys. No direct literary source has been found for **La sérénade interrompue (The Interrupted Serenade)**, but it follows Debussy's habitual concept, where things Spanish were concerned, of writing on two interlocking planes: here, the private world of the serenade is twice interrupted by public strumming noises, borrowed from Debussy's own *Ibéria*. In contrast, **La Cathédrale engoutie (The Sunken Cathedral)** returns to the unified, quasi-religious vision of the first prelude, though

on a much larger scale. Debussy may have known of the Breton legend of the drowned *City of Ys* from a number of sources, including Lalo's opera *Le Roi d'Ys*. Debussy's prelude, with its ghostly bells and chanting, may even be heard as an epilogue to Lalo's opera, which ends with the city's submersion. **La danse de Puck (Puck's Dance)** is the only reference in Debussy's piano output to Shakespeare, one of his favorite writers. This prelude celebrates the great dramatist's ability to blend the magical and the poetic with the common touch. Finally, **Minstrels (Minstrels)** is a wholly public piece, inspired by a group of red-jacketed musicians playing saxophones and guitars who paraded through the streets of Eastbourne in 1905, when Debussy was there orchestrating *La mer*. Here he not so much blends the vulgar and the poetic, as finds poetry within vulgarity.

Preludes – Book II Debussy's second book of preludes was begun in 1911 and published in April 1913. Even some of Debussy's stoutest supporters expressed disappointment at the number of less striking pieces it contained. Of course, sequels are always hard to bring off, and Debussy seems to have made no particular effort to avoid areas he had already explored in Book I, such as Spain, fairies or popular entertainment. But the layout of the second book on three staves, instead of the two employed for Book I, shows that the composer was thinking in terms of different, possibly more orchestral, textures. Where *Voiles* expressed indecisiveness through whole-tone harmonies, the fog in **Brouillards (Mists)** is harmonically bolder, with the simultaneous sounding of chords a semitone apart (a sound his erstwhile supporters found hard to take, perhaps?). **Feuilles mortes (Dead Leaves)** recreates the world of *Des pas sur la neige*, again with bolder harmonies and relying less firmly on an *ostinato* rhythm, while the bipartite nature of Debussy's Spanish style is observed once more in **La Puerta del Vino (Wine Gate)** marked to be played "with brusque oppositions of extreme violence and passionate tenderness". Debussy had been sent a postcard showing the famous Moorish gate by the Alhambra in Granada. "**Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses (Fairies are Exquisite Dancers)**" derives from an illustration by Arthur Rackham to J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, which Debussy's daughter Chouchou had been sent as a New Year's present in 1912. A fairy dances on a single thread of a spider's web, partnered by a grasshopper, while a spider in the corner plays the cello. After the gentle strains of **Bruyères (Moors)**, from internal evidence possibly a piece he had had by him for some time "**Général Lavine**" – **excentric (General Lavine, eccentric)** strides on to the stage, "a comic juggler, half tramp and half warrior, but more tramp than warrior", as he was later described. He specialized in a peculiar jerky walk and in playing the piano with his toes. It was this piece, together with *Minstrels*, that shocked the straightlaced young Darius Milhaud, who thought that great composers should not demean themselves thus... The title **La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune (The Terrace for Moonlight Audiences)** was taken from a description in a French newspaper of the coronation festivities of George V as Emperor of India in December 1912. The final phrase in the original reads, "*au clair de lune*", which makes better sense, but Debussy's version is now hallowed by use. **Ondine (Undine)**, a less innocent figure than *La fille au cheveu de lin* (also placed seventh in this book), may again have been taken from a Rackham drawing. Certainly Debussy was aware of Ravel's more elaborate portrait of the water nymph in *Gaspard de la Nuit*, published in 1909, and was not afraid to court comparison. Debussy's love of things English, already demonstrated in the references to Shakespeare, Barrie, and Rackham, surfaces again in **Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C.**, complete with *God Save the King*. He was always amused by the English habit of putting letters after their name (these are said to stand for "*Perpetual President-Member, Pickwick Club*"), but in general he approved of the sense of order which he observed among the English of those days and which, in the final bars, triumphs effortlessly over the urchin's cheeky whistle. **Canope (Canopic Jar)** takes us back to the ancient Egyptian city of Canopus, famous for its funerary jars covered by lids in the form of the head of Osiris. Debussy kept two of these jars on his worktable. The piece is built round the opposition of "public", hieratic chords and "private" melismata, of the sort increasingly present in Debussy's later works. For the penultimate prelude in the book, he had been trying to write a "*Toomai des éléphants*", after Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book* (1894), but this proved impossible. Its replacement, **Les tierces alternées (Alternating Thirds)** seems out of keeping with the others. However, since Debussy insisted on the titles coming only *after* each piece, it could be seen as a kind of joke, rewarding our imaginative efforts with a bucket of cold, academic water. **Feux d'artifice (Fireworks)**, however, is the epitome of the public face of these preludes, behind which private thoughts are always present. Never before or since have the echoes of the *Marseillaise* sounded so poetic – and never, Debussy seems to say, is the artist so lonely as in the middle of a crowd.