



Lesson 9 Debussy (part 1)

Debussy and poetry: The Decadents at Café(カフェ)in Paris

Claud Debussy 1862 – 1918

Debussy's music marked a series of attacks on the traditional language of the 19th century. He did not accept the stereotyped harmonic procedures of the 19th century.

His methods were designed academically and not academically to draw the sense of tonality.

Debussy's mind challenged the traditional orchestral usage of instruments.



At Luzancy, 1893. Paris

We will see how Debussy changed traditional harmonic methods. How did Debussy come to reach new territories of sound?

Early Period

He was born in a poverty-stricken suburb of Paris. His parents was quite poor and modest. Debussy was a gifted pianist and showed his talent by the age of nine. He was encouraged by Madame Mauté de Fleurville, who was associated with Frédéric Chopin.

Debussy's youth was spent in circumstances of great turbulence such as Paris commune. His father was arrested during this event.

The Franco-Prussian War フランスとドイツの対立、鮮明化, フランス敗北 ドイツ帝国

Prussian chancellor [Otto von Bismarck](#) provoked the French into declaring war insisting an alliance of southern German states with the North German Confederation. (ビスマルクによるドイツ統一への動き)。The French capital Paris fell on 28 January 1871. The German states proclaimed their union as the [German Empire](#) under the Prussian king [Wilhelm I](#) and Chancellor Bismarck. They finally united Germany as a [nation-state](#) ([Austria](#) was excluded). Emperor Napoleon III was captured in September 1870, marked the end of the Second French Empire.



パリに入ったドイツ軍

Paris Commune(パリコミューン) 1871

Radical socialist, anti-religious, and revolutionary government. It ruled Paris from 18 March to 28 May 1871. The regular army finally removed an artillery(砲兵) park on [Montmartre](#) (モンマルトル) . (Debussy was living there.)

The Paris Conservatory 現パリ国立高等音楽院

In 1873 he entered the Paris Conservatory, where he studied the piano and composition.

During the long summer vacations at the Conservatory, he was asked by a Russian millionairess, Nadezhda Filaretovna von Meck, to play duets with her and with her children. He traveled with her throughout Europe.

Conservatoire de Paris

Founded in 1795. During Paris commune, it was used as a hospital. The leaders of the [Paris Commune](#) appointed [Francisco Salvador-Daniel](#) as the director. But he was shot and killed by the troops of the French Army. He was replaced by Ambroise Thomas. He was vigorously criticized by the students, notably [Claude Debussy](#). He did not like this school.



Life in Rome

He won in 1884 the prestigious award, the Grand Prix de Rome with his cantata *L'Enfant prodigue* (*The Prodigal Child*).



French academy at Rome. Prestigious place.

As a holder of the Grand Prix de Rome, Debussy spent three years at the [Villa Medici](#) Renaissance palace in Rome. That place was supposed to be ideal for artist with state scholarship. But he did not like that place and wanted to return to simpler and more familiar surroundings.

Wagnerian or not Wagnerian ?

The main musical influence in Debussy's work was the work of [Richard Wagner](#) and the Russian composers [Aleksandr Borodin](#) and [Modest Mussorgsky](#).

Wagner's leitmotif and his conception of *Gesamtkunstwerk* ("total art work") encouraged artists to refine their emotional responses and to exteriorize their hidden dream. Wagner pushed the sensuous ambitions of the Symbolist poets and the Impressionist painters.

Debussy was Wagnerian but later he became no-Wagnerian. Why?

Baudelaire 詩人でドビュッシーの友達 and Wagner

Baudelaire had no formal musical training. But he liked Weber and [Wagner's leitmotif](#).

Baudelaire studied essays about Wagner and formulated his impressions. Later, Baudelaire put them into his non-technical analysis of Wagner, on "Richard Wagner et Tannhäuser à Paris".

Baudelaire's reaction to music was passionate and psychological.

After attending three Wagner concerts in Paris in 1860, Baudelaire wrote to the composer: "I had a feeling of pride and joy in understanding, in being possessed, in being overwhelmed, a truly sensual pleasure like that of rising in the air." Baudelaire's writings contributed to the elevation of Wagner and to the cult of [Wagnerism](#) that swept Europe in the following decades.

There are many Wagnerian in Paris today.

Big change in 1889 Paris Exposition(パリ万博)

At the Exposition, Debussy first heard Javanese gamelan music, performed by an ensemble from Java. This influenced some of his later compositions. It made extensive use of pentatonic scales, ancient five-note scales in folk traditions from around the world, including from Japanese one.

"Poissons d'or"

Asian influences: we see sometimes underpinning a pentatonic melody partly coming from a Japanese flute melody 尺八 and Javanese gamelan music.



Javanese house
(ジャワ)



ガムラン

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2937xfl_kKI



Poetry and music

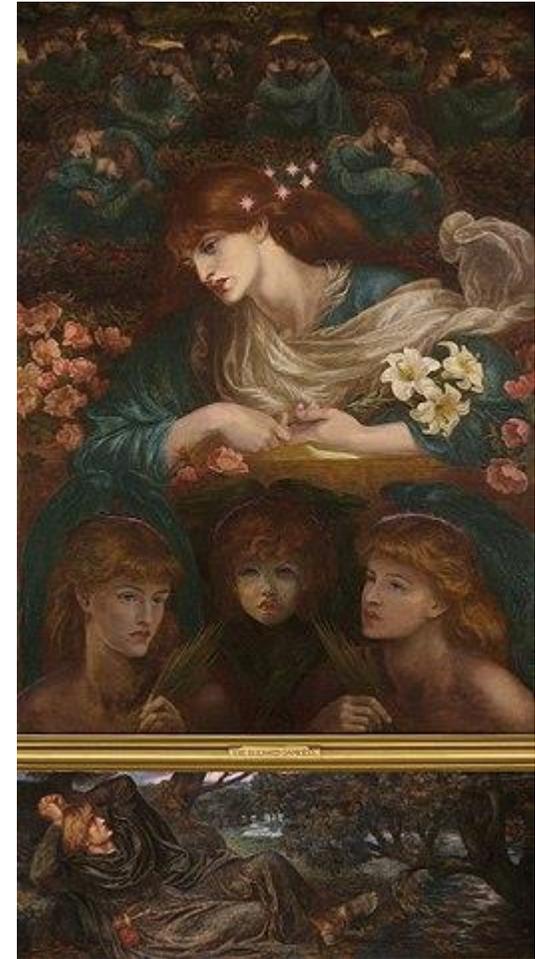
In the world of classical music, it became difficult for composers to have their new music.

Debussy was interested in the **symbolist movement** and took inspiration from a poem of **Stéphane Mallarmé (マラルメ)** for his *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894).

Prior to that, Debussy wrote a new type of music, Cantata La demoiselle élue. This was inspired by the poem “The Blessed Damozel” (1850) by Pre-Raphaelite poet and Dante Gabriel Rossetti.

Symbolism 象徴主義 難解です。

1870年頃のフランスとベルギー、ロシアに起きた文学運動および芸術運動。「象徴主義」という語は、1886年「象徴主義宣言」詩人ジャン・モレアスが、「象徴」(symbole: サンボると読む)という語を使用。抽象的な観念とそれを表現するべきイマージュを「一緒に投げて」その間に、なんらかの類比関係を打ち立てようと望む方法。



Claude Debussy - La demoiselle élue.
Cantata: “a new type of feminine beauty” in 1888.

The Decadents

Debussy was closely tied with the Symbolist (象徴主義) circle in Paris. In the early 1890s, Debussy regularly attended the mardis (Tuesday) gatherings of the poet **Stéphane Mallarmé**, along with poets **Paul Verlaine**, **Arthur Rimbaud**, and painters and intellectuals. They are called a **group** “The Decadents”. Debussy met them often at Café in Paris.

Symbolist poetry became an essential source of inspiration for Debussy's music. One of his orchestral works, **Prélude à “L'après-midi d'un faune”** (Prelude to “The Afternoon of a Faun”) is based on Mallarmé's prose poem “L'après-midi d'un faune.”

Mallarmé was reluctant to use his poetry to other area such as music. But he was ultimately impressed by the Prelude when Debussy invited him to the premiere in 1894.

In Mallarmé's poem, a faun (a man with the legs of a goat) contemplates a memory, or possibly a dream, he encountered two nymphs in the forest on a warm, lazy afternoon. The faun plays his pan-pipes, but, his music fails to capture the nymphs, he abandons his pursuits to a sleep filled with dreams and visions.

牧神の午後への前奏曲
"夏の昼下がり、好色な**牧神**が昼寝のまどろみの中で官能的な夢に耽る"という内容で、牧神の象徴である「**パンの笛**」をイメージする楽器として**フルート**が重要な役割を担っている。

New “post-tonal” ways: Image (イメージ), intangible realm

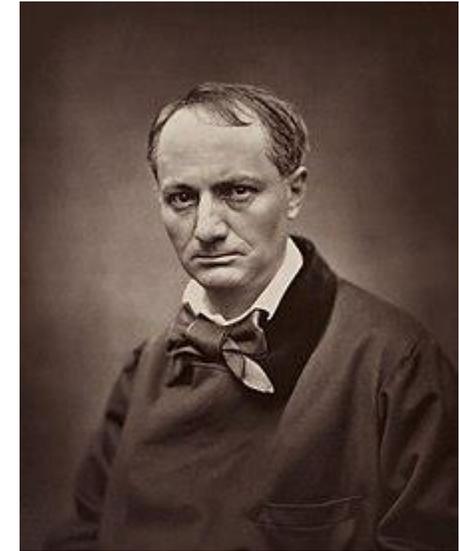
Symbolists favored dreams, visions, and the power of the imagination. They were interested not in representing or describing reality, but in exploring the intangible and inexpressible truths behind external appearances.

Symbolist poetry is typically introspective and suggestive, leaving meanings open-ended – the tonal and structural ambiguity of Debussy’s music.

For the Symbolist movement, music represented the ideal medium for expressing realm of the intangible, suggesting multiple and psychological states rather than speaking specific concepts or narratives.

Images (Book 1)- Reflets Dans L'eau
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hyiu7fBUk7o>

Preludio nº 4 Les sons et les parfums (音と香)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAfeDxMMOMA>



Charles Baudelaire

Imagery of the sense of smell and of fragrances, which is used to evoke feelings of nostalgia and past intimacy

Image, Preludeから何か一曲（ピアノ版、オーケストラ版）感想を送って下さい。Describe your imagination.