



Debussy Project

Between Music and Painting

by **Roberto Russo**

The **Debussy Project** is based on the union between music and visual arts, and moves from the great artistic value of Debussy's music, so full of connections with literature, poetry, painting. That gave his music the title of "impressionist", according with the great artistic movement born in France at the end of the XIX century. But this is only one of the artistic movements near to Debussy's style. In fact he was also influenced by other great painting currents, as well as by philosophy and literature, by northern legends and mediterranean history, by ancient cultures (Greece, Egypt) and various cultures of the far East (China, Japan, Giava Island, etc.). All those elements have had a great incidence on Debussy production. From a musical point of view, it is characterized by the "esachordal system" (that's based on six notes instead of seven), and from a philosophic and esthetic one by a so great sense of freedom, naturalness and ambiguity, in which both measure, harmony and musical form lost their value and significate, at least those they had had for so many century in the past.

Speaking of Debussy inspiration, almost all his pieces was born on the "pretext" of something coming from different sources, sometimes joined to historic-geografic elements, and to that charming word of symbols, in particular those of water, air, night, dream and of female figure. Great importance have had in Debussy's thought the symbols of water, both as the most important element for life, and for the great influence the sea had on him (he always told his dream was to be a seaman!). The same strenght have had the symbols of air, so tied to the origin of the music itself (that many musicologist call "primitivismus" in Debussy's music) and, of course, to the Greek myths, so important for him. We could tell the same for the other symbolic elements but, perhaps, the most important is a particular combination between them. It is impossible, in fact, to find one piece of Debussy enterely devoted to one of them, unique and separated from other. Some exemple:

Voiles "Voiles" (second Prelude of the first book) – Sea elements ("voiles" can be "sails"), female elements

("voiles" can be also be "veils") and air elements (the wind moving the sails).

Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest "Ce qu'a vu le vent s'Ouest" (seventh Prelude of the first book) – Air elements together with the inspiration coming from literature (*The Garden of Paradis* by Hans Christian Andersen).

La danse de Puck (eleventh Prelude of the first book) – Nothern Legends elements (Puck is a goblin of the woods), elements from literature (Puck is one of the character of Shakespeare's *Dream of Midsummer Night*).

So, the most important goal of the **Debussy Project** is to emphasize those elements surrounding Debussy's art, through the performance of one of his most important work, the **Préludes**, joined to the exhibition of painting works (in that case watercolours panels) devoted to them. Debussy himself was highly attracted by the coupling of music and visual art. In fact, he had a great admiration for impressionist painters, "Fauve" painting movement, symbolists, as well as for the photography, which took his first steps in the same period of Debussy's artistic production.

I'm developping the idea with painting, but I'm also interested to tie music to photograph, an other experiment of sure interest!

My personal interest on Debussy is based on a natural attraction towards this author, that began in my first years of conservatory. The power of his music and the greatness of the French *fin du siècle* made me always happy to play his pieces, an extraordinary experience of cultural search which is also an important search in myself.

Roberto Russo

The Music Work

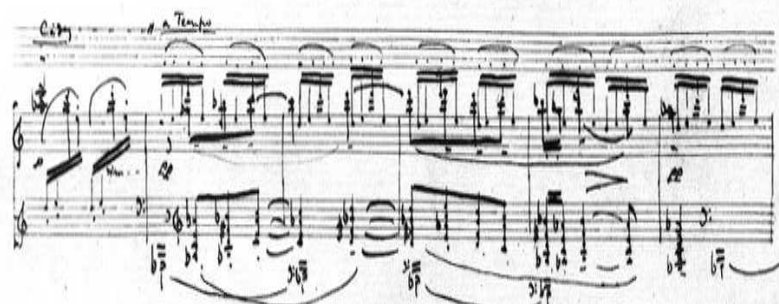
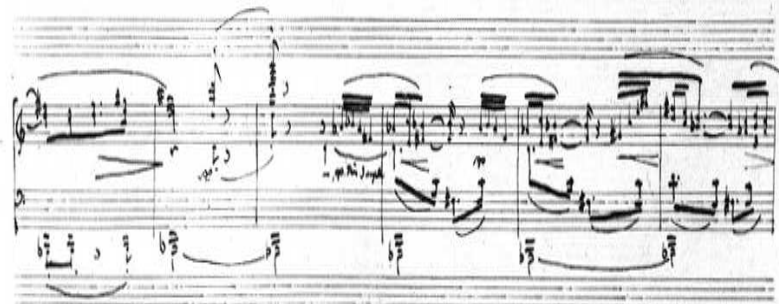
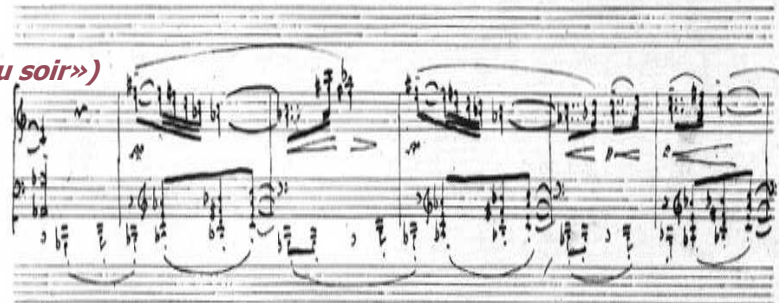
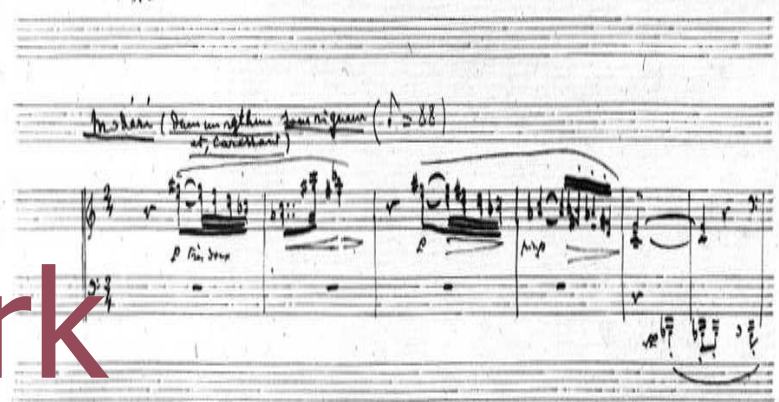
Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Préludes (First Book)

- (...Danseuses de Delphes)*
- (...Voiles)*
- (...Le Vent dans la plaine)*
- (...«Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir»)*
- (...Les collines d'Anacapri)*
- (...Des pas sur la neige)*
- (...Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest)*
- (...La fille aux cheveux de lin)*
- (...La sérénade interrompue)*
- (...La Cathédrale engloutie)*
- (...La danse de Puck)*
- (...Minstrels)*

Préludes (Second Book)

- (...Brouillards)*
- (...Feuilles mortes)*
- (...La puerta del vino)*
- (...Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses)*
- (...Bruyères)*
- (... "Générale Lavine" - excentric)*
- (...La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune)*
- (...Ondine)*
- (...Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C.)*
- (...Canope)*
- (...Les tierces alternées)*
- (...Feux d'artifice)*



The Artists

Roberto Russo

Italian pianist Roberto Russo began studying piano under his father, and later graduated *summa cum laude* with an honorable mention with pianist Giuseppe Maiorca. From there he continued his formal training in Firenze (Italy), Imola (Italy) and Geneva with Maria Tipo, where he obtained the *Diplôme de perfectionnement* at the *Conservatoire Supérieur*. Besides, he attended advanced courses in piano performing (with Jörg Demus, Alexander Lonquich, Gherard Oppitz, Fausto Zadra, Ricardo Quejejo), in Piano Duet (with Duo Moreno-Capelli), and German Lied (with Peter Schreier). In 1996 he won the 1st Prize at the *Ibla Grand Prize International Music Competition* and, one year later, the *Ibla European International Competition for Composers* with his *Preludes for Piano*.

Since 1985 he performed as a soloist, in chamber music ensembles and orchestras for International Festival, Universities, and Concert Seasons in Argentina, Austria, Canada, England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, United States. His interpretation have been reviewed on Italian (*Amadeus, Il Resto del Carlino, La Nazione*) and International Press (*El Correo Español, El Diario Vasco, Südkurier, Arts Alive*). Besides they were acclaimed by important musicians (Domenico Bartolucci, Alan Gershwin, Edith Murano, Laszlo Gati, Michael Stimpson, Brenno Boccadoro) and have been recorded by *RAI Italian Radio, Radio Vaticana, Houston Public Radio, Radio Television Argentina, Radio Toscana Classica*. He also recorded one CD on the Prelude form in the XIX Century (2002), and participated to



a recording of Liszt's compositions performed on historic Steinway piano (2008). He collaborates with Canadian cellist Bridget Mac Rae, with english composer Michael Stimpson (of whom Roberto performed a number of premieres), and with Italian tenor Alessandro Maffucci. He he authors af musical works for piano, choir, voice and piano. His compositions have been performed in Argentina, France, Italy, Denmark, USA and Switzerland. Roberto his actually professor of Piano at the Music Conservatory of Cosenza (Italy).

Mario Russo

Mario Russo was born in Cosenza, Italy, where he lives and works. His father was a musician and his mother a teacher and poetess. All his life is based on art. His first aspiration as a pianist brings him, in the 60's, to a career as a music director of the regional centre of RAI (Italian Radio and Television), as well as an accomplished piano teacher at the music Conservatory of his town. In the meantime a deep feeling with painting and graphic begins.

He is completely self-taught painter, and he discovers his talent working for an architect studio. So, immediately and spontaneously he begins to express his art through colours and graphic, first with a figurative character (1960-1975) and then in a surrealist way (1976-1990). Starting from the last years of 90's, Mario Russo find such an integration between those two styles, which he's exploring, with a result of an interesting and charming production. For that he's gaining the attention of the most important critics of art, both in Italy and Europe. Most of his works, are oil-paintings and China-ink graphics, but he also devotes himself to water-colours, plates, pastels and drawings.

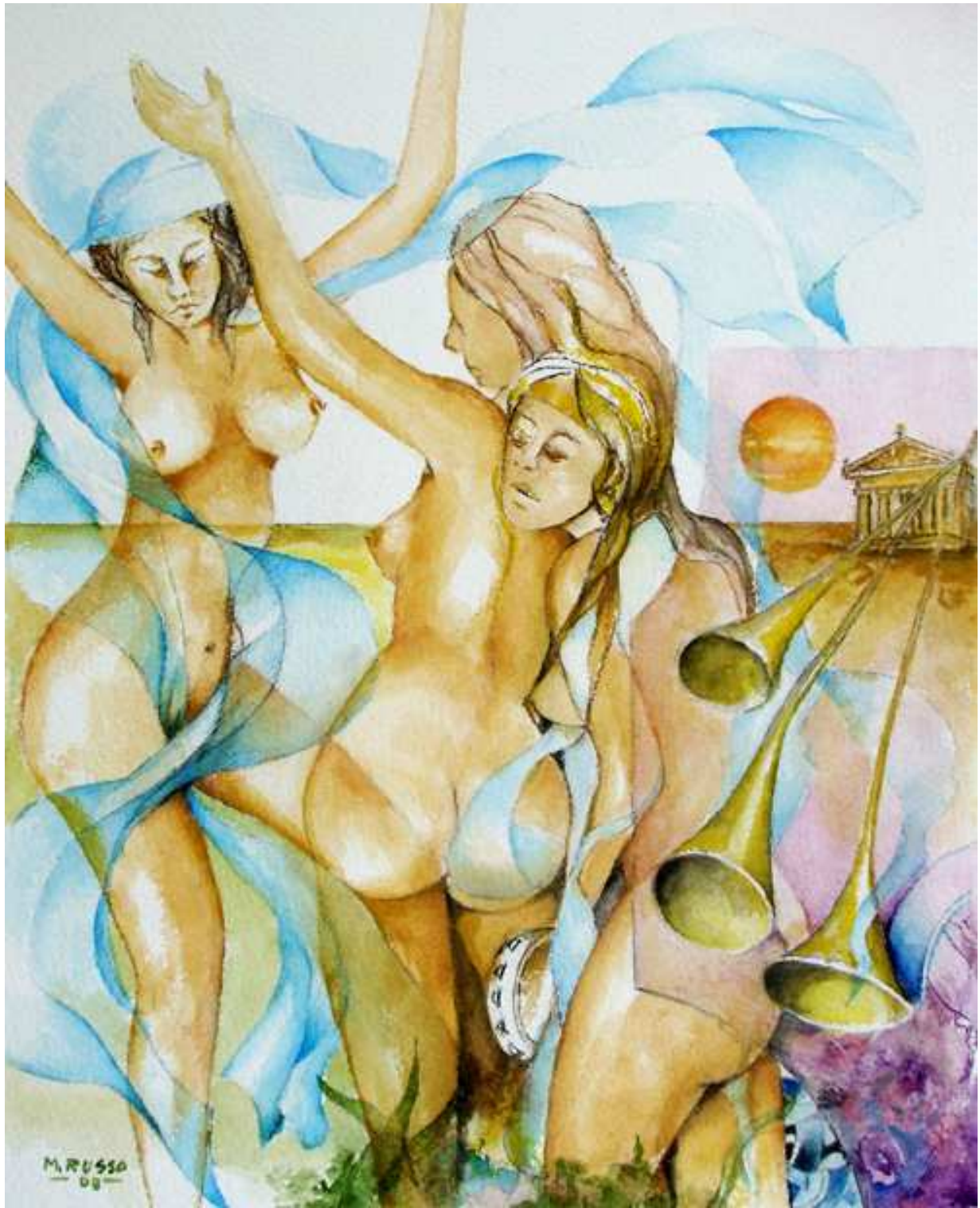


Russo's works token part in several exhibitions in Italy, Spain, France, America, New Zeland and Japan, always highly acclaimed by public and critic.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for the first system of a piece. The title "Lent et grave" is written at the top, followed by the tempo marking "(♩ = 44)". The score is written on six systems of five-line staves, each containing a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The music is characterized by complex, layered textures with many notes beamed together, creating a dense and intricate sound. The notation includes various rhythmic values, accidentals, and dynamic markings. The overall style is highly detailed and expressive, typical of Debussy's late Romantic or Impressionist period.

(...Danseuses de Delphes)

Claude Debussy



(...Danseuses de Delphes)

Mario Russo
watercolor - cm. 30 x 40 – 2008

Moderament Andante

(...la Sérénade interrompue)

Claude Debussy



(...la Sérénade interrompue)

Mario Russo
watercolor - cm. 30 x 40 – 2008

moderé - toujours et avec humour

The image shows a handwritten musical score for piano, consisting of seven systems of staves. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a 2/4 time signature, and various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The score is written in ink on aged paper. The first system is marked 'moderé - toujours et avec humour'. The second system has the instruction 'Cela... modé' above it. The third system has 'Cela... modé (un peu allant)' above it. The fourth system has '(modéré)' written below it. The fifth system has 'rém.' written below it. The sixth system has 'rém.' written below it. The seventh system has 'rém.' written below it. The score concludes with a double bar line and a fermata.

(...Minstrels)

Claude Debussy



(...Minstrels)

Mario Russo
watercolor - cm. 30 x 40 – 2008