

Form Scattered and Spiritual Gathering -- Research on Composition Techniques in Debussy's Prelude "Sails"

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Abstract: "Sail" is the second piece of "Twenty-Four Piano Preludes", and it is a work in the mature stage of Debussy's music creation. As the pioneering figure of Impressionism, Debussy's creations have great innovation and personality compared to traditional ones. This paper takes "Sail" as the research object, analyzes its melody, structure, mode and harmony from the perspective of music analysis, and then explores the innovation and impressionism style in Debussy's creation.

Keywords: sail; structure; impressionism; Debussy; composition technique

At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, influenced by the artistic style and aesthetic ideas of Impressionist painting and Symbolist Mallarmé poetry, there was also a reform movement in the field of music. Some composers try to break through the shackles of the traditional major and minor key system, and prefer a "timbre" style of expression, paying attention to factors such as color harmony, short-form themes, fuzzy tones and variable textures. In music creation, it focuses on describing people's subjective impressions of the objective world, and uses vague, suggestive and metaphorical musical expression techniques to reflect the fleeting changes in light and color in nature. Debussy is a pioneer of the Impressionist genre. He used wind, water, light and shadow in nature as objects for his creation to express his love for nature and life. He also seeks creative inspiration from some well-known poetry and painting works of art, breaks the routine, and conducts bold and innovative experiments on factors such as harmony, melody, texture, and orchestration to create special timbre and sound effects. Different from traditional composition techniques, Debussy's impressionistic music focuses on the expression of sensory feelings and the sound of various musical elements themselves. His music is the visible sound, the audible scenery, and the smell. Bright, palpable color.

"The Sail" is a well-known work in Debussy's Prelude, which embodies many features of the Impressionist style. Debussy published it with the word "Voiles" at the end of the song, which in French means sail or yarn.[1] This piece is based on the diatonic scale, with pentatonic passages inserted in the middle, and continuous tones throughout the whole piece. The discrete tonal colors present a hazy and distant sound effect. This article will specifically analyze the application of non-traditional composition techniques in this piece.

1. Thematic Analysis

The work "Sail" is mainly composed of three layers of independent materials, namely theme I, theme II and continuous tone.

Sections 1-6 of the piece are Theme I, which is based on the diatonic scale, with upbeats entering, and a parallel major third in the treble part (Example 1). The major third in the vertical direction and the major second in the horizontal direction are the basic interval relationships in the diatonic scale. The theme can be divided into two parts: the first part first descends and then jumps up an octave, and stops at $\sharp F$ and $\flat B$. Although $\sharp F$ and $\flat B$ are related to the fourth degree, their sound degree is minus a fourth, which is a major third. Equal intervals, the emphasis is still on the relationship of the major third interval; the second part still repeats the first part, but the melody progress has been on a downward trend, and stops at C and E, forming a pause similar to a stable termination. The rhythm is a combination of long and short lengths, showing the image of a sailboat swaying alone on the sea.

*Example 1: Theme I*

The upbeat sustain $\flat B$ in the fifth measure enters very low in the form of quarter-note and eighth-note jumps, forming another dimension. In traditional harmony, the sound effect produced by $\flat B$, C, and E is dissonant, but here Debussy makes the $\flat B$ sustain on upbeat and separated by two octaves, making the dissonance greatly Attenuated, it produces an ethereal haziness that fits Debussy's impressionistic conception of writing. In bars 7-14, Theme II appears in the middle voice in the form of octave repetition of a major second degree (Example 2), the first $\flat A$ - $\flat B$ -C major second rises to form a tritone motive, and then with Theme I The form is the same, this motive is repeated once, after reaching the E sound, it detours and descends, and finally stops on the $\flat A$ sound at the beginning, forming a complete phrase.

*Example 2: Theme II*

All three levels are not present until bar 10, and the soprano theme I appears in a reduced form, omitting the jump-up factor. The second part of theme a is repeated on the downbeat of bar 12, then theme I is still entered on the downbeat, and the reverse in bar 18 goes back to the beginning. Theme II is the repetition of the three-tone motive of the ascending major second in the form of an augmented parallel chord in the upper octave.

Bars 1-22 can be considered the first part of the piece, and the whole is based on the diatonic scale.

The theme I and theme II are respectively stated, and then modified and developed. The central tones of the three levels are also different. The sustained $\flat B$, the beginning and ending of theme I are all on E, and the beginning and ending of theme II are both $\flat A$. The materials and center tones of the three levels all show the characteristics of counterpoint.

According to the characteristics of the respective sound areas and melody forms of the three levels, combined with the artistic conception of Debussy's title, the continuous sound is like a deep sea below, the circuitous form of the middle theme II is like a undulating sea surface, and the combination of the rhythm of theme I is The swaying sailboat presents the image of a small sail fluttering on the dark blue sea as a whole.

Different melodic material appears in the upbeat of bar 22, this material is not a new factor, but a metamorphic development that extends some of the features of Theme I and Theme II. At the same time, the dotted rhythm pattern of D-C- $\sharp F$ -C appears in the middle part, and another important interval relationship of the diatonic scale, the tritone (C- $\sharp F$), appears here; Dynamic and static contrast.



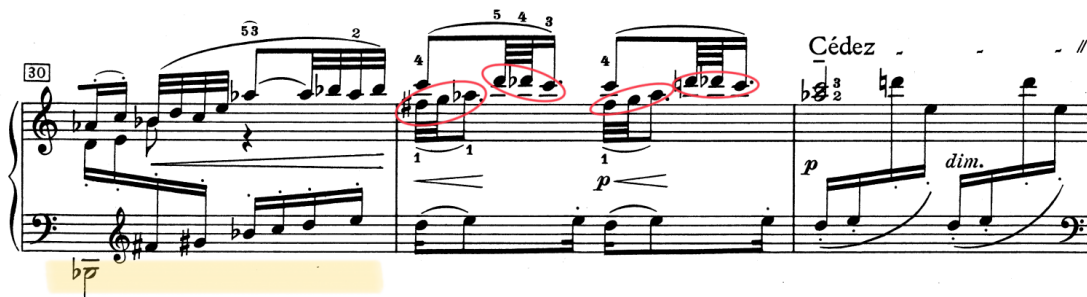
Example 3: The melodic form here is characteristic of the detour of Theme II, and the $\sharp F$ - $\flat B$ interval is taken from Theme I.



Example 4: change of theme I

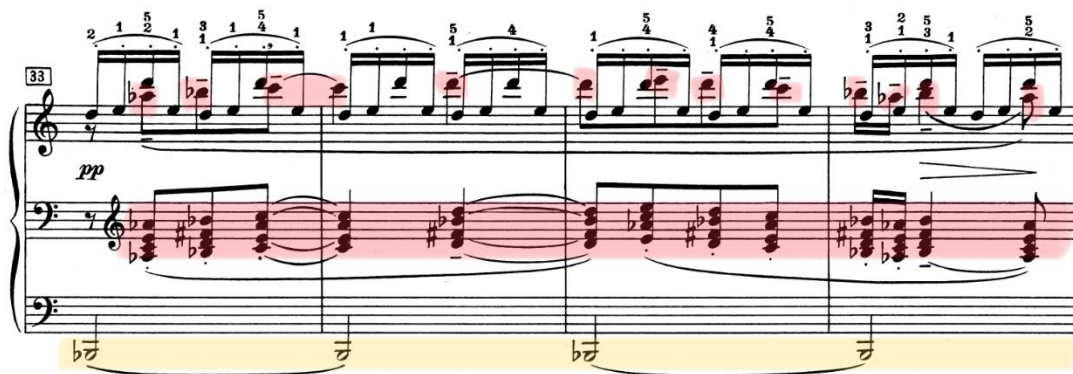
Here is the change of theme I. While expanding downwards, it has the devious features of theme II, and finally falls on the sounds of E and bA. Therefore, this paragraph is a fusion of the two themes.

Sections 28-32 are still the expansion of the theme, emphasizing the relationship between the major second and the major third, and the backbone sounds are all on the $\flat A$ - $\flat B$ -C tritone motive of Theme II. The diatonic ascending material appears in the middle voice. The 31st bar reaches the first climax of the whole piece, introducing a very important chromatic factor (the only one in the whole piece, the minor second interval relationship is an important feature of the traditional tonality and has a tendency, which implies the following pentatonic passages), and the two counterpoint melodies in the high register form a mirror-imitation relationship (Example 5).



Example 5: Bars 30-32

Bars 33-37, the complete reproduction of the theme II phrase (Example 6), appears as an augmented parallel chord, which appears to be a non-strict progression, with inversions in it, but the triplet in the diatonic scale. The superimposed chords are augmented triads, and the inversion of augmented triads does not change the internal structure of the chord, so this group of chords are strictly parallel chords of the diatonic scale. In addition to the same melodic line above, the D,E octave ornate decorative pattern (which appears in bar 32) is also used.



Example 6: the complete reproduction of the theme II phrase

In bars 38-41, on the background of the sustained bass, the two ends of the treble chord pattern form a counterpoint structure, the outer melody is the changing development of bars 22-28, and the inner is the three-tone motive of Theme II. And the upper part of the sustained sound is contrasted with the reverse, and there is also a hidden $\sharp F$ sound sustained factor inside. Bar 41 falls on the $\flat A$ note, which is the beginning note of both themes and the end note of Theme II, which, as can be seen, remains unified in development and contrast.

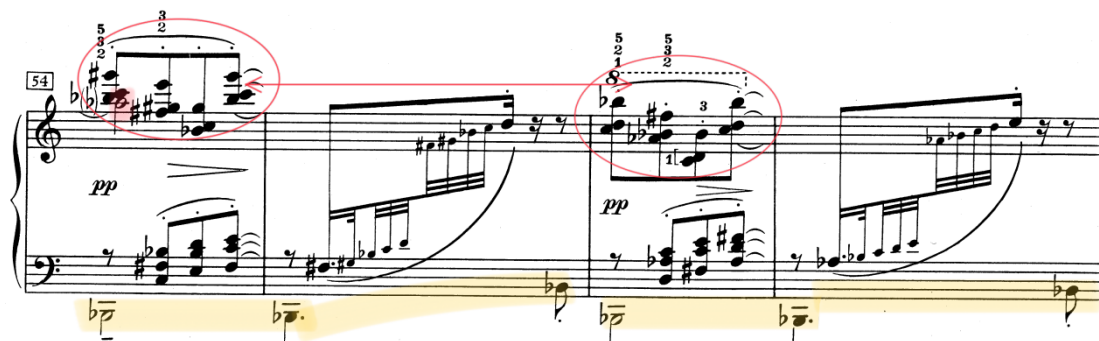
In bars 42-47, the scale of this melody is $\flat E-\flat G-\flat A-\flat B-\flat D$, which is the eastern $\flat E$ feather mode (Example 7), and the $\flat B$ sustained tone fits perfectly into this passage. This passage is characterized by a fast-running, long-breathed pattern, with an emphasis on the minor third descending in the high register. The upbeat of bar 43 and bar 44 appear in the bass part of a parallel fifth that is not allowed in traditional, and, bars 45-47 appear $\flat B \flat D \flat A-\flat E G \flat B$ in the vertical direction, similar to the traditional harmonies to the main The continuous sound $\flat B$ is also changed from a half note to a jumping eighth note.

The insertion of the pentatonic passages contrasts with the preceding diatonic passages, producing strange changes in colour.



Example 7: the pentatonic passages

At the end of the 48th bar, it returns to the whole tone stage. Sustaining here combines all the rhythm patterns that have appeared before, but also uses a new rhythm pattern dotted quarter note. The inner voice uses the diatonic ascending factor, which can be seen as early as bar 29; the dotted rhythm of the upper voice is a feature of Theme I. The first two bars are the introduction of the reproduction of Theme II. In the 50th bar, the theme is reproduced in a single melody in the high part. It can be seen that the sound area of Theme II of the whole piece continues to increase. Bar 54 uses a non-superimposed seventh and second chord, which seems to be a new material, but after analysis, it is found that the horizontal emphasis is on the major third interval, and the same material in bar 56 emphasizes the diminished chord. The interval of fourths, here again reflects the characteristic of equal intervals in Theme I (Example 8). Theme I is fully reproduced, and the middle part is a variation of the three-tone motive of Theme II, incorporating a major third interval. The music finally stops on the two notes C and E, echoing the beginning and the end.



Example 8: Bars 54-57

2. Structural Analysis

The work "Sail" breaks through the constraints of traditional tonal music and uses various innovative writing methods. Therefore, when analyzing the structure, it cannot be characterized according to the traditional tonal harmony method, but must be integrated with various factors. , analyze it from different angles.

2.1 Triregional Structure

The reason why we use triregional Structure rather than triregional Structure here is because Debussy's music is not triregional Structure or triregional Structure in the traditional sense. The three-part feature is: presentation-expansion/insertion-reproduction. The three parts of the work "Sail" are also different from different angles.

First of all, from the use of theme motivation, subsections 1-22 are statements and simple combination changes of theme I and theme II, which can be considered as a in the structural header; although subsections 23-32 are two themes The fusion of , but the changes are relatively large, which can be regarded as b; the 33-41 bars completely reproduce the melody of theme II, which can be regarded as a1; the above is the first part, which is an irregularly reproduced three-segment structure. Sections 42-47 are pentatonic passages, which can be regarded as interludes; sections 48-64 reproduce the theme II first, and then the theme I, with symmetry. The diatonic ascending factor used in the middle also comes from the b-section in the first part, which can be considered as the reproduction part, which is in line with the three-part feature.

From the point of view of mode, bars 1-41 are based on the diatonic mode and can be regarded as the first part; bars 42-47 are pentatonic paragraphs, which can be regarded as insertions; bars 48-64 return to The whole tone falls, which can be regarded as reproduction, and conforms to the three-part feature.

According to the above analysis, it can be divided into the following structure (Figure 1):

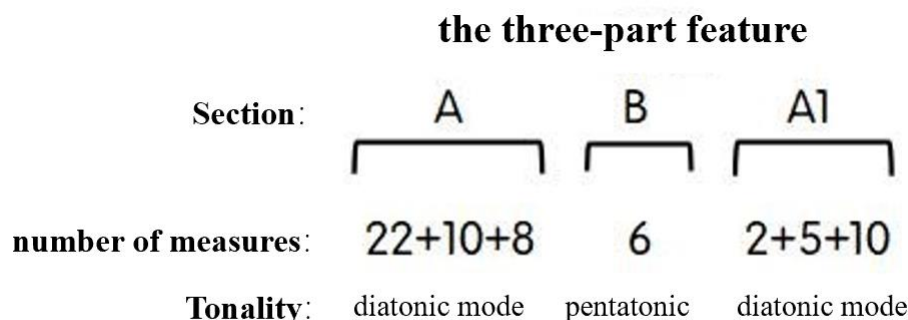


Figure 1: the three-part feature

From the perspective of the rhythm form of the continuous tone that runs through the whole piece, the rhythm of bars 1-20 is in the form of jumping quarter notes and eighth notes; bars 21-43 are in the form of long breath half notes; Go back to the eighth note, and it's in throbbing form until the end. Although the rhythm in the front and the end is not exactly the same, but from the overall characteristics, the form of the continuous tone of the whole piece is dynamic-static-dynamic, tight-loose-tight, which also reflects the three-part feature.[5]

2.2 Convoluted

Convolution is a horizontal development of trilogy. In the previous analysis of this piece, most of the pieces were divided into three parts: diatonic, pentatonic, and diatonic based on the use of the diatonic and pentatonic scales. After repeating and changing each theme in the whole piece, the author found that the theme I except the beginning and the end of the piece is a complete repetition of the phrase, and other paragraphs are the use of cuts or changes, and the beginning can be regarded as the introduction and the end of the piece. While Theme II is repeated three times in its entirety, the melody line of the phrase does not change, although each repetition changes in the texture of the music. According to the development of the two themes in the whole piece, the structure of the piece can be divided into five short rondo forms,

the structure is as follows (Figure 2):

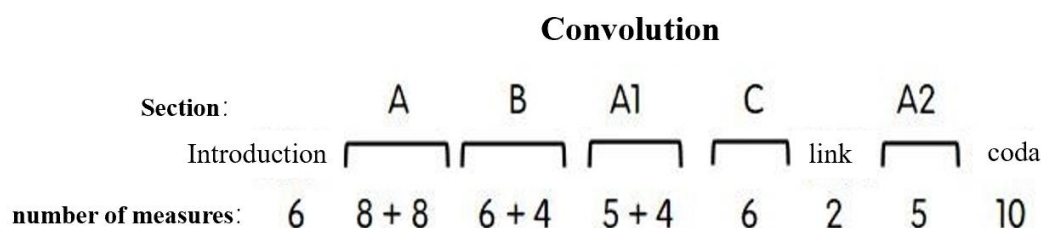


Figure 2: Convolution

2.3 Dichotomy

As a way of expressing the "natural structural state"[2], dichotomous structures generally exist in all levels of musical structure and in various types of musical works. Dichotomy is a concrete manifestation of the principles of echo, symmetry, and the golden section.

This piece is based on the diatonic mode, with pentatonic passages inserted in the middle. The diatonic scale is to divide an octave of 12 tones into six equal parts, and the adjacent tones are all major second degrees. In the 31st measure of the piece, there is a minor second progression, and it is the only time that a chromatic factor appears in the whole piece. This is the first small climax of the work, and the number of bars in which this chromatic factor appears is right in the middle of the entire work, dividing the music into two.

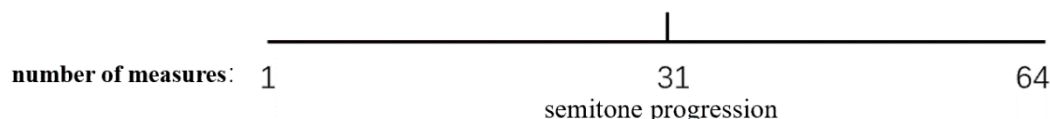


Figure 3: dichotomy, symmetry

The golden section[3] is an asymmetrical dichotomous structural form, and it is also the most important proportion in Debussy's proportion setting in his works. He uses this unbalanced and asymmetrical form to enhance the drama and tension of musical development.[4]

In the work "Sail", most of the dynamics of the whole song are based on *p* and *pp*, and the strongest strength is *mf*, which appears in the 44th bar of the pentatonic paragraph. There is also the ^bA of the third group of small characters of the second treble in the whole area (the highest note of the whole song is the D of the fourth group of small characters, which appears in the 22nd bar, but because it is the octave decoration form of the previous note, it is in the position of the pitch. The upper is secondary to the sub-treble). This measure happens to be approximately at the positive golden section point of the piece.

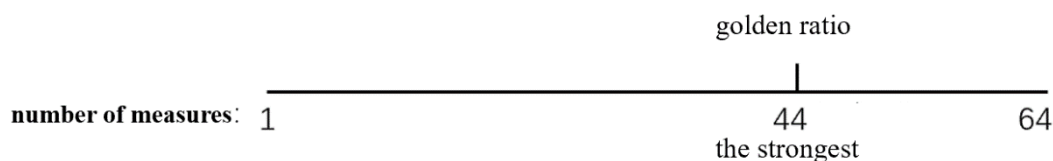


Figure 4: Dichotomy, golden ratio

2.4 Mosaic structure layout

In the article "On Impression Structure - Debussy's Musical Form and Its Structural Form", Professor Chen Guoquan once discussed the structure generation of Debussy's music, and proposed the structure generation method of "block collage". "The first state of 'block collage' is the continuous emergence and superposition of several short-sentence themes or several phonological textures." The "mosaic" structure referred to in this article is similar to the "block collage", but there are some differences. The "mosaic" structure is dominated by the mosaic between layers in the work "Sail".

In music before the twentieth century, especially in the classical period, the following structure was often used to organize music (Figure 5):



Figure 5: traditional structure organization

In the work "Sail", the "mosaic" structure is used (Fig. 6), which more reflects the nesting between layers.

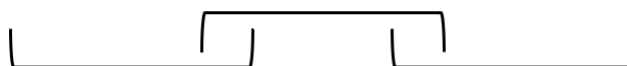


Figure 6: the "mosaic" structure

In the music, the theme I appears first, and when the theme I is the end, the sustaining tone factor has been superimposed below. Then, the theme II is superimposed on the top. Moreover, the rhythmic tripartite and mode tripartites of the sustained tone are not simultaneous in time. Before the end of the pentatonic passage, the sustained tone below has reproduced the beating eighth notes. This "mosaic" structure allows the music to remain unified despite the material differences.

It can be seen that under different perspectives, the division of music structure is also different. Based on the above structural analysis, the following table is obtained:

Tonality:	— diatonic mode — pentatonic — diatonic mode —	Three-part
Sustained tone:	Quaver, quarter note half note Quaver, quarter note	Three-part
Theme:	A B A1 C A2	Convolution
semitone progression:	31 semitone progression	Dichotomy, symmetry
Strength:	44 the strongest	Dichotomy, golden ratio

Figure 7: Structural alignment

3. Mode Harmony Analysis

3.1 The diatonic mode

This piece uses the most characteristic diatonic factor of Debussy's music. The diatonic scale has only sophomore, major and triadic intervals and their inversions, which results in no tonal tendency between tones. Each sound is independent of the others. This creates a sense of ambiguity in the sound of the music, which coincides with Debussy's impressionistic style.

3.2 The supporting role of continuous sound

From the above thematic analysis, we can see that the whole piece is based on the diatonic scale, with pentatonic passages inserted in the middle. In the structural analysis, the author regards the pentatonic passage as the interlude, and the interlude has little to do with the upper and lower passages in terms of

musical materials and tonality, especially the sound color of the pentatonic passage and diatonic phase of this piece. The contrast difference is bigger. The only unifying factor is the bB sustained tone. bB not only plays a role in the expression of the structure and image of the music, but also supports the pentatonic passages. The pentatonic passage is analyzed as the bE feather mode, and bB just forms a four-fifth relationship with bE , similar to the owner of the traditional major and minor tones, and the $^bB^bD^bA-^bE G^bB$ appearing in the longitudinal direction in bars 45-47. The progression also reflects the at this point. In addition, the beginning and end of theme I both have E sound, and E sound also appears in important positions many times in the development of the music, and the final ending sound is also on E sound. The relationship between bB and E is an augmented fourth. The fourth is exactly the middle tone of the diatonic scale, and the arrangement of the center tone is symmetrical (Example 9). It can be seen that Debussy thought carefully about the layout of his works.



Example 9: diatonic scale

3.3 Parallel chords

Parallel chords are also used in the music, such as the theme II tritone motive of augmented parallel chords in bars 15, 17, and 19; the progression of theme II phrases in bars 33-37; non-triads in bars 54 and 56. Degree superimposed parallel chords. These chords do not need to be prepared and resolved, and have no tendency to harmonic progression and tonal, and are highly independent, reflecting Debussy's innovation and breakthrough in harmonic tonal characteristics.

4. Conclusion

Debussy, as a composer who pioneered new music in the twentieth century, built a bridge between traditional music and modern music. In order to meet the needs of writing, he bases himself on tradition, tries hard to experiment with various new writing techniques, and seeks a new outlet for music. In terms of structure, the work "Sail" can be divided into different structures through different angles, and the combination of themes and motivations is more free and flexible, and it is no longer rigidly bound to the unified thinking of traditional music. It appears to be more "loose" in terms of materials, but there are unified factors controlling the whole song.

In Debussy's impressionistic music, chords are a major breakthrough in tradition. His innovations in harmonic techniques and expansion of tonality have endowed the traditional tonality with new vitality and appeal. In the musical works of the traditional major and minor key system, the progress of belonging to the master is emphasized, and the harmonic function and tonal tendency are emphasized. In the work "Sail", which is completely different from the tradition, the chords in the music are independent, and each chord is an independent individual, and does not need to depend on other chords to exist. The chords written by him break through the confinement of the traditional tonal and harmonic laws, focusing on the sound color of each chord itself, they all have an independent status, and together they form a wonderful sound painting. The tonality of this piece adopts the diatonic and pentatonic techniques, allowing multiple tonal centers to coexist, producing new colors in the confrontation of the tonal centers. Debussy's tonal expansion was not merely a compound experiment of tonal tones, and he believed that doubletonicity could achieve the acoustic effect he wanted to achieve in a piece of music. In Debussy's music, tonality has gradually lost its place. Other musical elements also become the basis for being able to control and divide the musical structure.

In the prelude, the use of non-traditional main and sustained tones plays a role in dividing the structure of the music and expressing a special meaning; the irregular rhythm destroys the traditional stress law, thereby forming a new rhythm; layered writing and multiple. The special color produced by the center of the individual tone; the refined use of the national rhythm... Debussy has traditionally created new ideas and opened up a new path. Debussy was against writing that restricted music to a certain pattern or rule, and he longed for the freedom of music. These works of the prelude fully reflect his point of view: the free use of chords that do not stick to the harmonic progression and tonal tendency, the innovative use of sustained tones, etc., but Debussy is not blindly anti-traditional innovation, he believes that: Music is not only this, or only that. His ideal musical beauty is to be based on the human senses, so that the

audience can be immersed in it unconsciously. If Beethoven's works can only be understood after careful analysis of the profound philosophy behind them, then Debussy's works are like paintings unfolding directly in front of his eyes, using musical notes as ink, depicting pictures of timeless colors. sight.

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