

The Development and Synthesis of Foundational Ideas in Four Debussy Préludes

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ABSTRACT

This study examines specific themes, called foundational ideas, in four of Claude Debussy's Préludes. The works selected for study are "Voiles," "Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest," "La cathédrale engloutie," and "La danse de Puck." Each piece contains three or four foundational ideas which are presented as discrete pieces, then developed, and finally form a previously unforeseen synthesized whole. The two general conditions for the synthesis of foundational ideas are (a) the presence of common tones and (b) the occurrence of foundational ideas either simultaneously or consecutively. Each of the four preludes also has a programmatic aspect, and I use these aspects to help shape my analyses and interpret the development of the foundational ideas.