

Music, Somatics, and Transformation: My Personal Journey through the 24 Debussy Préludes and Yoga

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

Faculty of Music
University of Toronto

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2014

Abstract

Three subject areas, music, Somatics, and transformation, were investigated to glean an understanding of how the researcher's personal experience has been transformed through repertoire study of the 24 Debussy Préludes and yoga practice. This research employed Anderson's Intuitive Inquiry approach.

The study of the cultural and artistic climate of Debussy's era was the researcher's starting point to comprehending the composer's sources of inspiration. A perusal of Debussy's piano output and specific literature on the 24 Préludes was made to gain familiarity with the extra-musical associations in the subtitles of these compositions. From this foundation, the researcher proceeded with a personal exploration of Debussy's non-music inspirations and examined how such knowledge could be incorporated into formation of her own musical interpretation.

To study the manifold layers of this transformational process, the researcher narrated a self-reflection on her musical, physical, and psychological experiences of preparing eight Debussy Préludes for performance. The researcher observed how a musical focal point came into existence during her musical, pianistic, and performance preparation of each of these eight pieces. Three sound recordings of *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*, *Bruyères*, and *Ondine* from the researcher's past recitals were analyzed to report the transformation from one performance to another in the projection of her musical conception through tempi, dynamics, textures, phrasing, harmony, characters, and tonal imagery.

By observing her experience of hearing past executions, the researcher gave an account of how her attitude of music listening has changed. A further analysis of these same three Préludes by three different artists was given to relate the researcher's experience of hearing and comprehending unfamiliar musical interpretations from a new perspective.

Through her score study, enrichment of personal experience, introspection, and recording analyses, the researcher elucidated her personal process of musical maturation, structural comprehension, and artistic realization of the Debussy Préludes.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my infinite gratitude to Dr. Midori Koga, my supervisor, for inspiring me to always find new ways of learning. Working with her in the past ten years has planted the seeds of this research journey. Her willingness to give her time so generously and her commitment to provide great assistance has been most treasured and appreciated.

I would like to offer my special thanks to Dr. Lori-Anne Dolloff, my co-supervisor, for her invaluable guidance in the art of writing. I am particularly grateful to Professor Marietta Orlov, my mentor, for the formation of my musicianship in the last twelve years and for watching over my development in the past two decades.

To Drs. Lisa Withers and James Parker, I am most appreciative of the great opportunity of having them as the external appraiser and committee members of my final oral examination. Their insight and knowledge generated stimulating topics for our discussion and provided possibilities for my future musical, somatic, and personal learning direction.

I wish to thank all my family members and every single person who has helped me to learn and grow as a human being.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Figures	ix
Prélude	ix
1 Introduction: My Journey Through Music, Somatics, and Transformation.....	1
1.1 My Story – What I Sought in My Musical Study	1
1.2 Context – Where My Journey Began with the 24 Debussy Préludes, Somatics, and My Process of Transformation.....	1
1.2.1 Music – From Debussy’s Aesthetic Views to My Personal Search.....	1
1.2.2 Somatics – My Development of Body-Mind Awareness	2
1.2.3 Transformation – Formulating My Process of Transformation Through Music and Somatics	5
1.3 Contemplating the Research Scope and Content	5
1.3.1 Music, Debussy, and 24 Préludes	5
1.3.2 Somatics and the Tools of Body-Mind Awareness and Introspection.....	6
1.3.3 Academic Research on Personal Transformation	6
1.4 My Research Question and Sub Questions.....	6
1.5 Description of General Resources and Related Knowledge Fields	7
1.6 General Construction of this Dissertation.....	7
2 Literature Review: Music, Somatics, and Transformation	10
2.1 Music – Historical, Cultural, and Artistic Landscapes around Claude Debussy	10
2.1.1 Specialized Treatises: Debussy in the Milieu of Symbolism and Ineffability of Sensory Experiences	12
2.1.2 Exhaustive Research Sources: Lockspeiser, Lesure, and Nectoux	13
2.2 Somatics	15
2.2.1 Inception, Overview, and Application	15

2.2.2	One Branch of Somatic Education: Yoga	16
2.3	Transformation.....	17
2.3.1	Teacher Education	18
2.3.2	Transpersonal Psychology	19
3	Methodology	21
3.1	Formulating My Research Content.....	21
3.2	Finding a Research Structure	21
4	Initial Cycle of Research Intentions and Interpretative Lenses	24
4.1	Claude Debussy’s Piano Music in the History and Evolution of Keyboard Literature	24
4.1.1	Interpretative Suggestions by Debussy’s Contemporary Pianists	25
4.1.2	Ongoing Investigation of Debussy’s Piano Works.....	26
4.1.3	Debussy in the Context of Keyboard Music Tradition	26
4.2	Debussy’s Twenty-Four Préludes and Their Extra-Musical Associations	27
4.2.1	Foreign Places.....	28
4.2.2	Illustrations of Fairyland by Arthur Rackham	29
4.2.3	Portraits of Nature.....	31
4.2.4	Clowns and Caricatures	32
4.2.5	Antiquity and Enigma.....	33
4.2.6	Poetry	34
4.2.7	Musical Arabesque.....	37
4.2.8	Legend and National Festivities.....	38
4.2.9	Historical Recordings of 24 Debussy Préludes.....	38
5	Transformative Cycle.....	40
5.1	From Concept to Application – Internalizing the Extra-Musical Associations in 24 Debussy Préludes	40
5.1.1	Travels to Foreign Places: <i>Les collines d’Anacapri, La Puerta del Vino, La sérénade interrompue</i>	40

5.1.2	Pilgrimage to Fairyland with Arthur Rackham: <i>La danse de Puck, Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses, Ondine</i>	43
5.1.3	Portraits of Nature through the Mind's Eye: <i>Le vent dans la plaine, Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest, Voiles, Brouillards, Feuilles mortes, Des pas sur la neige, Bruyères</i>	46
5.1.4	Through the Lens of Clowns and Caricatures: <i>Minstrels, General Lavine-eccentric, Hommage à S. Pickwick, Esq. P.P.M.P.C.</i>	49
5.1.5	Enigma and Antiquity, Remembrance of Life and Symbol of Eternity: <i>La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune, Canope, Danseuses de Delphes</i>	50
5.1.6	Resonance of Sound, Memory, and Image in Poetry: " <i>Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir, La fille aux cheveux de lin</i>	53
5.1.7	Musical Arabesque: <i>Les tierces alternées</i>	55
5.1.8	Legend and Festivities: <i>La Cathédrale engloutie, Feux d'Artifice</i>	55
6	Emerging Themes from Transformative Cycle.....	58
6.1	From Personal Experience to Knowledge – Externalizing Somatic Transformation of Body-Mind Awareness in 8 Debussy Préludes.....	58
6.1.1	Foreign Places – Getting Started.....	60
6.1.2	Fairyland with Illustrations by Rackham – Airborne Peter Pan	62
6.1.3	Portraits of Nature – Seeking My Focal Point of a Musical Experience	63
6.1.4	Clowns and Caricatures – Caprice and Astonishment.....	65
6.1.5	Antiquity and Enigma – Terpsichorean Sculpture.....	67
6.1.6	Poetry – Resonance and Atmosphere	68
6.1.7	Musical Arabesque – Tracing the Thirds.....	70
6.1.8	National Festivities – Blaze and Blast	72
7	Developing New Interpretative Lenses.....	74
7.1	New Principles Learned from Listening to Performance Recordings and Analyses of <i>Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest, Bruyères, and Ondine</i>	74
7.1.1	Listening to Myself – Expectation, Surprise, and Realization.....	75
7.1.2	Listening to Other Artists – How Do I Comprehend Their Musical Imagery?	93
8	Conclusion: What I Learned from This Journey.....	100

8.1 My Story	100
8.2 Discussion and Comparison between Initial and New Interpretative Lenses	100
8.3 Summary of My Transformative Journey	102
9 Postlude	104
References	105

List of Figures

Figure 6.1	The chromatic embellishment above the resonance of a 9 th chord	61
Figure 6.2	The swaying habanera rhythm being abruptly interrupted by a motif one octave below	61
Figure 6.3	The suggestive characterization of chivalry and allurement	61
Figure 6.4	The beginning of this 28-bar long trill and the entrances of resonant layers below	63
Figure 6.5	The suggestive resonance of E flat	64
Figure 6.6	The 8 th -note chords with dry staccato	66
Figure 6.7	Transition from rhythmic angularity to silence, fermata, and a surprise	66
Figure 6.8	The feeling of procession between the quarter-note chords	68
Figure 6.9	The solitary opening with my imaginary harmonic support and the long chords providing the time for transition	69
Figure 6.10	The 3 ^{rds} in alternation	71
Figure 6.11	The fortissimo fireworks	72
Figure 6.12	The pianissimo sparks	72
Figure 7.1	The transition from an arpeggiated tidal wave to a pianissimo low F sharp	77
Figure 7.2	Another transition with agogic effect	78
Figure 7.3	Approaching the second stormy peak	78
Figure 7.4	The third climax	79
Figure 7.5	Elastic tempo surprises at the end	80

Figure 7.6	The dynamic changes at lightning speed	81
Figure 7.7	The first climax	83
Figure 7.8	The texture of multiple layers	84
Figure 7.9	Projecting the different layers with tonal colours	85
Figure 7.10	The entrance to the middle section	85
Figure 7.11	The playful melodic filaments	86
Figure 7.12	The end of the middle section	87
Figure 7.13	A cadence with harmonic surprise in octave displacement	88
Figure 7.14	The undulating rhythm	89
Figure 7.15	The hemiola and dancing ripples	90
Figure 7.16	The menacing undercurrents in hemiola	90
Figure 7.17	The whimsical motifs	91
Figure 7.18	The whispering breeze, wavelets, and melancholic melodic figure	92
Figure 7.19	The memory of Ondine in ripples and light reflection	93

Prélude – My Experience of an Altered State of Sensory Perception

Tantric Hatha Yoga Practice and the Changes in My Sensory Experience

Between the autumn of 2011 and the summer of 2012, Yoganand Michael Carroll, a Pranakriya master-level teacher from the Tantric Hatha Yoga tradition, conducted a weekend yoga retreat and an Advanced Pranayama workshop in Richmond Hill, Ontario. I participated in both sessions. During these sessions, my energy level, sensory experience, and mental and emotional processing underwent noticeable changes.

During the days of intensive practice in the weekend yoga retreat in late November, 2011, I experienced significant fluctuation in my energy level and changes in my sleeping and eating patterns, as well as uncontrollable waves of strong emotional upheaval and release. For some days after the yoga retreat, I kept feeling charged with energy, went about the daily routine with heightened perception and sensitivity, and had a different awareness of my body during both yoga practice and daily life.

In the Advanced Pranayama workshop in early June, 2012, Yoganand introduced us to the historical context, subsequent evolution, contemporary modification and application, and techniques of Tantric Hatha Yoga. To enlarge our capacity for fully experiencing life, the techniques of Asana (postures), Shatkarma/Shatkriya (purification of energy channels), and Pranayama (activation of energy flows) are practiced to purify and strengthen our physical body and develop the witnessing mind. In this workshop, we practiced various techniques of purification and energy activation in combination with postures. Under Yoganand's guidance, we had the opportunity to learn these techniques, experience their effects on our physical, mental, and emotional bodies, and offer each other support and feedback by sharing our experiences.

The Changes in My Musical Experience After My Yoga Practice

After three days of intensive practice in the Pranayama workshop, my body started making adjustments to the rising level of internal energy, the sensation of churning emotions, and the heightened state of sensory perception. On the third evening of this workshop, I had a rehearsal with a clarinetist. When we were playing Schumann *Fantasiestück* opus 73 no.1 and Bartók *Roumanian Folk Dances* (Sz 56), I had a very confused sensory experience. I had distinct sensations in how the fingers and hands felt on the piano, how the music sounded to my ears, and how the sounds were mentally processed in my system. I managed to play and work on the pieces with the clarinetist, but my perception of the physical movement and sensory feedback felt slightly blurred. It was like looking around with a magnifying glass. The objects have not changed, but the details and contrasts in the brightness of the colours and sense of proportions were enhanced and different from usual.

On the fourth and last morning of the workshop, I picked up *Bruyères* from the second book of Debussy *Préludes*. Again, the experience of playing was different. My fingers and hands moved through the sounds with heightened sensitivity, the vibration of music resonated differently within me, the sense of timing between the notes expanded, and new details in the harmony, phrasing, and acoustic effects of the piece revealed themselves to my perception.

When I mentioned this experience to Yoganand, he was not at all surprised. In the Tantric Hatha Yoga practice, Yoganand explained, students experience a heightened state of consciousness and sensory perception when their energy rises above the habitual level. In our daily life, we experience many energy levels. In order to function with steadiness and obtain a desirable lifestyle, all of us look for a comfortable energy level and try to maintain it. During yoga practice, when one's energy rises above the habitual level, one's comfort zone begins to shake and dissolve.

Both episodes of music playing were instances of exception. In *Bruyères*, my new energy level brought me to perceive and experience the music in a different way. In that state of dissolution, I found myself seeing, smelling, hearing, tasting, and feeling everything differently.

This musical experience, Yoganand explained, would be equivocal to a situation where two people of similar energy levels converse and understand each other perfectly, but their dialogues

sound like complete gibberish to others. What sounds harmonious to one group can sound noisy to another. When we raise our energy enough to expand beyond the habitual level, we also develop the capacity to experience, understand, and accept a wider scope of human experiences from various energy levels.

At that point of my life, I have been an avid yoga practitioner for five years. This experience of music playing in such an altered state of sensory experience was overwhelming and at the same time, intriguing to me. Can such a singular instance of out-of-ordinary impression be an end in itself, or something worthy of further investigation? Is there any tangible connection between altering my sensory perception and enhancing my musical experience in any discernible aspect?

When I asked Yoganand, he looked at me and said, “what do you think?” I replied that I had no experience and therefore, I did not know what to think. He smiled and said, “go ahead and find out.”

1 Introduction: My Journey Through Music, Somatics, and Transformation

1.1 My Story – What I Sought in My Musical Study

From my recollection of piano lesson content at the University of Toronto between 2007 and 2010, there was a gradual shift of focus from developing technical and interpretive skills to entering the performance mode of spontaneity. After Mrs. Orlov and I established the structural and pianistic foundation in each piece, we usually continued the working sessions with the following comment, “this sounds very well prepared and carefully practiced; now, we will switch from practice to performance mode so you can experience the next level of spontaneity, artistry, and freedom”.

From the late 1990s up to the time of my doctoral study, I have been pondering over the meaning of spontaneity and freedom in my musical performance. I wondered how such an experience would feel. Could it be a matter of more contrast in the dynamics, speeds, emotions, and expressiveness in the acoustic effects? Could it mean that I needed more emotional and musical sensitivity to listen and play differently on stage? What would it be like to play without caution? How could I maintain my concentration level during performances? How could I enter the atmosphere and character of the music and take artistic risks without falling apart? How could I be spontaneous and steady at the same time?

1.2 Context – Where My Journey Began with the 24 Debussy Préludes, Somatics, and My Process of Transformation

With such puzzling questions in mind, I began my Doctoral Program of Musical Arts. Selecting suitable piano repertoire for what I needed to learn at that moment, my teacher and I decided on the 24 Debussy Préludes. Since such an undertaking was of great stimulation to me in its wealth of artistic inspiration and musical challenge, it planted the seeds for forming a dissertation topic that would allow me to examine my process of learning and performing these compositions.

1.2.1 Music – From Debussy’s Aesthetic Views to My Personal Search

When I began my study of the Debussy Préludes, my musical reading was accompanied by my perusal of the literature of Debussy studies. In the volume of Jarocinski (1976), I came across a

passage from Debussy's 1887 correspondences, in which he spoke about the compositional process of his orchestral work, *Printemps*. The composer's views on his musical creativity and extra-musical inspiration astounded me and invited me re-visit them repeatedly:

I have decided to create a work in a very special colour which will give rise to as many sensations as possible. It is entitled *Printemps* – not Spring in its descriptive sense, but seen from a human angle. I would like to express the slow and painful genesis of objects and living creatures in nature, followed by an upsurge of expansion and development culminating, as it were, in the overwhelming joy of being born again to a new life. (Jarocinski, 1976, p. 12)

When Debussy spoke of seeing spring from a human angle, was he not speaking from his personal, sensory, and emotional experiences, which were transformed into the composer's creative impetus? When I studied and performed Debussy's opuses, could my attitude and approach to re-creating the music from his imagination be influenced by Debussy's artistic intentions? If a composer such as Debussy engaged his life experience as an integral part of his creative entity, I wondered if I, as a performer, could also consider the process of studying music as a possibility of my life enrichment? While studying and performing a composition, could my personal experience affect my musical experience and vice versa? From Debussy's writings about music, such possibilities appeared to exist. Resonating with such artistic aspirations and questions, I continued my musical and personal journey.

1.2.2 Somatics – My Development of Body-Mind Awareness

While I was examining the transformation in my musical study and performance of 24 Debussy Préludes, I also started viewing my personal life in a new light and noticed a track of general transformation. Seeing how my research of the extra-musical associations in the 24 Debussy Préludes has enriched my personal and musical experiences, I became interested in reflecting on other events of change and their impact on my life. Looking for ways to discern and comprehend the recurrent patterns in my musical and personal experience became fascinating to me.

As a very young adolescent from Taiwan, I first came to North America when my family immigrated to Canada in 1992. It was my first complete change of social, cultural, and musical

environments and customs. As I encountered dissimilar social contexts and clashing values from familiar and unfamiliar conditions, I was sometimes confused, frustrated, but not left without help. My continuation of musical studies, as well as most of my interactions with new friends and teachers, was of great assistance to my adjustment to my new environment. While learning new skills and making contacts with people from various places and backgrounds, my earlier habits in thinking and action began to transform. With patience, time, and experience, my adaptability increased steadily. Gradually, I started to acquire tools for developing my musical and personal independence in life.

1.2.2.1 Seeking tools for body-mind balance

From 2006 to 2008, I was finishing a Master Degree in Music and entering the Doctoral program of Music Arts at the University of Toronto. It was a period of perpetual fluctuation in my life to gain my personal and musical independence. As I underwent this transition, my mind was in turmoil of conflicting emotions and my body experienced much strain. From the voice lessons that I took during that period, I realized that my abdomen was habitually tight. Any emotional agitation that I experienced at the time was accompanied by stomach cramps. When I sought help from the Counselling and Psychological Services at the University of Toronto, I learned that my emotions, whether desirable or not, could not be resolved without my first step of acknowledging them. Feelings of anger, fear, and loss, especially when ignored or suppressed, piled up in my mind. At the same time, my body accumulated rigidity. Noticing this body-mind condition, I wanted to search for tools to unleash my physical tension and manage my emotions. I began reading Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*, a suggestion of Mrs. Orlov. Meanwhile, I started attending classes of Hatha Yoga to stretch my body and relax my mind.

1.2.2.2 Surprise, reaction, and adjustment: first hot yoga experience and subsequent development

In 2007, I started practicing hot yoga. With a minimum temperature of 32°C, vaporizers, and a 90-minute flow of Hatha Yoga postures, I was astounded to experience a tremendous release of muscular tension. I felt the adjustments that my muscular, cardiovascular, and respiratory systems were making in this particular condition of yoga practice. During the postures to stretch the abdomen and chest, these muscle groups in my body, previously desensitized and involuntarily contracted, regained sensitivity and felt very intense sensations at first. As I

learned to incorporate breathing techniques into my posture flows, these tight muscles slowly began to lengthen and relax.

While my body learned to soften, my mind experienced momentary relief from its constant inquietude. Led by curiosity, I increased the frequency of my yoga practice to gain more familiarity with this new state of mind and body. When facing my daily life issues, having experienced this body-mind state helped me to be more aware of my feelings and thoughts. By the spring of 2008, I settled into a routine of daily yoga practice.

1.2.2.3 Deeper yoga experience: immersion in diverse yoga traditions, Vedantic (Sivananda) and Tantric (Pranakriya)

From 2011 to 2013, I had the opportunity to experience yoga immersions in both Vedantic and Tantric traditions. Originating from the same historical, cultural, and geographic contexts, these two yoga traditions developed different philosophies and techniques for procuring the body-mind balance.

In 2011, I joined the Karma Yoga Program at the Sivananda Ashram Yoga Retreat in the Bahamas and stayed there for nine days. Our group activities of meditation, hymn-chanting, Hatha Yoga practice, and assorted chores filled our schedule from 6 am to 10 pm every day. While I enjoyed meeting and interacting with people from different continents, this complete change of life-style was a pleasant diversion to me. Far removed from my daily life in Canada, my body was stimulated by the intense yoga practice and physical labour, my head was free from my everyday concerns, and I was content to do what was assigned to me.

Shortly after my stay at the ashram in the Bahamas, I started attending the Pranakriya Yoga Teacher Training Program in Canada. Ranging from sessions of three-and-a-half to four-and-a-half days, the courses are practice-based and investigated the origin, historical evolution, and modern applications of yoga study. The focal points of this yoga program are self-study and contextualization. I was introduced to the Hatha Yoga techniques that are used to induce physical sensations and mental reflection in the practitioners. When desiring to apply this freshly acquired experience to our daily life, we participants were reminded to take our individual life demands into consideration. I found this approach more applicable to my day-to-

day life. To discover how to adapt and integrate such new knowledge with my familiar life patterns was where my personal growth was heading.

1.2.2.4 Experience, awareness, and knowledge: what I have learnt from my somatic study

Based on first-person experience, yoga study is a branch of the multidisciplinary somatic education. From 2007 to 2014, my yoga practice has led me to examine my feelings and thoughts in my life routine, develop my awareness in the body-mind connection, and apply such knowledge for gaining further understanding of myself and developing additional tools for my personal and musical transformation.

1.2.3 Transformation – Formulating My Process of Transformation Through Music and Somatics

With my repertoire study of the 24 Debussy Préludes and yoga practice of developing body-mind awareness underway, I started to hear and sense a general change in how I gleaned an understanding of the music, which reflected on my approach to piano practice and performance. I found this development exhilarating. I took the next step to seek out academic research tools to put my process of transformation in words and narrate this personal journey.

Following the suggestions from several yoga teachers and my dissertation supervisor, I began to investigate the existing research works on somatic education and its application in other fields. It led me to explore such related fields as health and wellness, humanistic psychology, and education.

1.3 Contemplating the Research Scope and Content

In this dissertation, the study of my personal experience stands at the centre of my research interest. Radiating from this focal point, I examined the related fields of knowledge and considered various approaches. Divided into three subject areas, such thoughts are described below.

1.3.1 Music, Debussy, and 24 Préludes

How do I form an understanding of the non-musical references implied by the subtitles to these Préludes? How do I assimilate the knowledge imparted by the existing literature on such a

topic? Which extra-musical elements do I find to be of benefits for creating a musical comprehension of the 24 Debussy Préludes? How do I create a personal experience of such non-musical inspirations as suggested by Debussy in the Prélude subtitles? How do I internalize my personal experience and connect this knowledge to form a musical interpretation of these compositions?

1.3.2 Somatics and the Tools of Body-Mind Awareness and Introspection

How do I use the somatic tool of body-mind awareness in a challenging music learning experience? How does introspection help me to understand the physical, mental, and musical elements involved in such an instance? How do I inhibit the instinctive emotional response to stylistic uncertainty, technical difficulty, and mental resistance, which happens during my musical study and piano practice? After having a “flow experience” (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984, p. 261) during my performance of the Préludes, how do I reflect on such occurrence to gain a conscious awareness of the interaction between the participating musical, mental, and physical components?

1.3.3 Academic Research on Personal Transformation

Can my subjective personal experience be validated by a research process? In which context does such validation occur? Which fields of study have models of such research approaches? Which research methods allow the researcher’s experience to be examined and incorporated into the research content and structure?

1.4 My Research Question and Sub Questions

After pondering over the diverse areas of knowledge pursuit as pertaining to my research interest, I have formulated one research question and three auxiliary issues below:

In my music learning process, how have the 24 Debussy Préludes and Somatics transformed my experience in musical performance?

Does such a transformation manifest itself in my performance of this repertoire? Is there a correlation between the musical components, non-musical inspiration, and somatic tools in my

music learning experience? How can my musical and somatic transformation be documented in an academic research format?

1.5 Description of General Resources and Related Knowledge Fields

In order to formulate a sensible response to an inquiry of this complexity, resources from the following areas have been consulted: Debussy's historical and cultural background, his piano works and the 24 Préludes, Somatics, and the research approaches for studying the transformational aspect of individual human experience in the fields of education and humanistic psychology.

1.6 General Construction of this Dissertation

Here is a brief layout of the chapters, as well as an overview of how the content is organized by three subject areas with a sense of temporal progression.

The layout of this dissertation opens with narrative Prélude and closes with reflective Postlude. In Prélude, a description of a musical experience during yoga retreat depicts the somatic and musical circumstance of a particular period in my learning journey. In the light of my transformational process, Postlude responds to the questions from Prélude and proposes possibilities for future research projects.

Chapter 1 opens with a short story about my quest in musical study, which is followed by a description of the musical, somatic, and transformational context of my personal travel. The formation of my research question is introduced by an enumeration of my thoughts on the three related fields of knowledge pursuit. It is followed by a brief description of the research resources relevant to the 24 Debussy Préludes, Somatics, and academic research on human experience.

After introducing the general topic areas as pertaining to this dissertation, Chapter 2 presents a literature review. It consists of the existing works that depict the cultural and artistic climate of Debussy's lifetime, as well as related research in the field of somatic education and the academic research approaches in humanistic psychology, teacher education practices, and transpersonal psychology.

Following the current methodology chapter, Chapter 4 presents an overview of the texts that I consulted to begin my study of the 24 Debussy Préludes and their extra-musical inspirations in the context of Debussy's piano works and keyboard literature development. According to their enigmatic subtitles, the Préludes are divided into eight thematic categories of foreign places, illustrations of fairyland by Arthur Rackham, portraits of nature, clowns and caricatures, antiquity and enigma, poetry, musical arabesque, and legend and national festivities. The existing resources on such sources of inspiration to Debussy are related in that order. Historical sound recordings of these Préludes are included as a possible source of research material for this dissertation. To conclude this chapter, an observation is given to describe how such information played a role in forming a starting point for my personal journey of these Debussy piano works. It provides the initial interpretative lenses to the first half of this transformational study.

Chapter 5 describes how I enriched my personal experience to internalize the non-musical references and form a personal comprehension of the 24 Debussy Préludes. Organized in the same thematic categories as Chapter 4, an account is given about how enriching my personal experience instigated my new musical understanding of Debussy's score. Comparisons between my non-musical associations and musical elements in these Préludes are made to demonstrate how they elucidate one another in forming my musical interpretation.

Chapter 6 uses the somatic tools of body-mind awareness and self-reflection, which I have learned from yoga practice, to examine my process of studying and performing eight Debussy Préludes: *La Puerta del Vino*, "*Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses*," *Bruyères*, *General Lavine-eccentric*, *Danseuses de Delphes*, *La fille aux cheveux de lin*, *Les tierces alternées*, and *Feux d'Artifices*. Arranged in the same order of eight categories as Chapters 4 and 5, the musical and pianistic challenge, or artistic gratification of each Prélude is narrated. Examples of specific piano lessons are given to contrast the earlier moments of learning new musical concepts under Mrs. Orlov's tutelage with the later instants of becoming able to apply such knowledge independently. Accompanied by a report of my physical sensation, search for musical solution, and the application of such tools, this chapter employs the technique of self-reflection to glean an understanding of how my transformational process from studying a score to forming an artistic interpretation occurs.

In Chapter 7, a second set of interpretative lenses materialize from my experience of listening to my recital recordings from 2008 to 2012 and other artists' renderings of *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*, *Bruyères*, and *Ondine*. Details from these sound recordings are examined and analyzed to observe my changes from one performance to another, as well as my reaction upon first hearing them. Subsequently, my listening experience of other pianists' performances of the same three Préludes is described to relate how my attitude and response to hearing other artistic interpretation has altered. This transformation in my way of listening happened through the process of studying the 24 Debussy Préludes, learning to observe my body-mind states, searching for musical explanations, arriving at a level of artistic interpretation in my performance of these pieces, and listening to my past recital recordings.

Musical excerpts are included in Chapters 6 and 7. They provide specific examples to clarify the discussions about musical elements, extra-musical references, and somatic observation in the above mentioned chapters.

In Chapter 8, a comparison between the initial and new interpretative lenses is presented to survey my transformational process and sum up this episode in my self-examination. This dissertation is designed and written with the intention of studying and comprehending my personal experience. The voice of writing is subjective. General statements of objective value are by no means implied in the content of this research.

2 Literature Review: Music, Somatics, and Transformation

For the research intention of this dissertation, literature from three fields of knowledge has been examined: music, Somatics, and transformation. The works of reference in each field have been chosen according to their relevance to the content of this dissertation.

The musical literature inspects the musical, literary, artistic, and cultural influences in the formative decades of Claude Debussy's life. The writings about Somatics trace the inception of this discipline and one of its main spheres of work, yoga. The transformation portion surveys the studies of personal experiences in teacher education practices and transpersonal psychology.

In the following sections, an overview of each knowledge area is given and accompanied by selected volumes ranging from general information to specialized topics.

2.1 Music – Historical, Cultural, and Artistic Landscapes around Claude Debussy

Claude Debussy (1862-1918) was one of the most outstanding and enigmatic composers in the history and development of French music. His musical output is closely associated with the fin de siècle movements in literature, fine arts, and temporal arts.

In the early 1880s, Debussy's lifelong study of literature began with the perusal of 19th century Parnassian and Pre-Raphaelite poetry at the home of the Vasnier family. His travels to Russia, Italy, and Germany, as well as the visits to the Exposition Universelle of 1889 in Paris, brought young Debussy to hear music from different traditions and periods. After returning from Villa Medici, Rome, in 1887, his attendance at Mallarmé's famous weekly gatherings, les mardis de la rue de Rome, helped Debussy make acquaintances and friendships with such symbolist writers as Paul Verlaine (1844-96), Jules Laforgue (1860-87), Henri de Régnier (1864-1936), and Pierre Louÿs (1870-1925), as well as painters like James McNeil Whistler (1834-1903) and Odilon Redon (1840-1916). In the 1890s, Debussy's nocturnal visits to Reynolds' bar and conversations with clowns, jockeys, and dancers from Nouveau Cirque provided him with as much human material to study as seeing a theatre production of *Pelléas et Mélisande*, a symbolist play by Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949). The keen sensibility to beauty made Debussy equally

appreciative of such scenic views from Eastbourne, British seaside resort, in 1905 and the woodblock print, *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, of Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), which Debussy chose for the cover of the 1905 edition of his orchestral work, *La mer*.

Such integration of diversified experiences and creative originality makes the investigations of Debussy's personal, musical, and artistic lives indivisible. General biographical sources about Debussy's life, artistic formation, and musical compositions have been published by French, British, and American music scholars since 1909. The first memoir was written by Louis Laloy (1874-1944), French musicologist, writer, sinologist, and friend of Debussy. Other notably concise biographies include *Claude Debussy* of 1930 by Maurice Boucher, *Claude Debussy et son temps* (Debussy: His Life and Works) of 1933 by Léon Vallas, *Debussy* of 1936 by Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy: Man and Artist* of 1937 by Oscar Thompson, *Debussy* of 1949 by Rollo Myers, and *Debussy: Musician of France* of 1956 by Victor I. Seroff to name but a few. As a point of departure, these chronicles provide background information about Debussy's time, character, circle of friends, creative production, and interests in literature, arts, and other subjects.

Another angle to glean clues about Debussy's personality and aesthetic ideas can be found in his writings as music critic for *La Revue blanche* and *Gil Blas*, as well as his personal correspondences with families, colleagues, and friends. Éditions Gallimard published a compilation of Debussy's articles and interview records in the volume of 1987, *Monsieur Croche*. In 2005, the same publisher brought out the tome, *Correspondance: 1872-1918* of Debussy. This availability of the composer's personal writings has provided musicologists and Debussy specialists with invaluable resources to create new interpretative lenses for their research.

In the next sections, specialized and exhaustive writings about the cultural, aesthetic, and philosophical climate of Debussy's era are enumerated. Since many areas of scrutiny, namely arts, literature, and Debussy's compositions, are shared by these authors, the volumes are instead divided by the different focuses of musicological studies and introduced accordingly.

2.1.1 Specialized Treatises: Debussy in the Milieu of Symbolism and Ineffability of Sensory Experiences

Debussy's affinity for literature and his life-long collaboration with writers is closely examined in the volume of 1966 by Stefan Jarocinski (1912-80), *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*. Eminent Polish musicologist, Jarocinski studied also in France and was recognized for his seminal works on Debussy. Between 1962 and 1971, he collaborated with such French colleagues as Jacques Chailley (1910-99) and François Lesure (1923-2001) on various Debussy projects. Studying the artistic, aesthetic, and philosophical movements of Debussy's time, Jarocinski (1976) made an inquiry about the innate power of music not as representation, but suggestion. Illuminating the difference between Symbolism and Impressionism in the historical developments of European culture, Jarocinski elucidated Debussy's artistic inclination and opuses in the context of the 19th century symbolist movement.

Resonating with Jarocinski's viewpoint, Vladimir Jankélévitch (1903-85) distinguished music from painting as "the temporal order of auditive sensations" versus "the visual order of spatial coexistence" (Jarocinski, 1976, p. viii). Jankélévitch was a French musicologist and philosopher from the lineage of Henri Bergson (1859-1941), whose studies of intuition, experience, and perception of reality contributed significantly to the tradition of process philosophy. Bergson's principles can be discerned in Jankélévitch's philosophical discussions about the phenomena of transience, mystery, and psychology in Debussy's compositions. In *La vie et la mort dans la musique de Debussy* of 1968 and *Debussy et le mystère de l'instant* of 1976, Jankélévitch contemplated and expounded on the eloquence of Debussy's music to express the ineffable.

In the publication of 2009, *L'ascolto di Debussy: La recezione come strumento di analisi* (Hearing Debussy: Aural reception as a tool of analysis), Andrea Malvano, Italian musicologist, examined how Debussy's music surprised the early 20th century audience and challenged their auditory receptivity and scope of imagination. From genesis to critical responses, three of Debussy's orchestral works, *Nocturnes* of 1900, *La mer* of 1905, and *Ibéria* of 1910 from *Images pour orchestre* are scrutinized. To give an example of Debussy's opinion on an ideal music listening experience, Malvano (2009) cited the composer's own words, "It would be enough that Music compels people to *listen*" (p. 15). From a letter of 1901 that Debussy (2005) wrote to Paul Dukas, this thought is continued:

Music would only have to make people listen, despite themselves and regardless of their trivial daily worries, that they be incapable of expressing anything resembling an opinion, that they should no longer be free to recognize their grey and dull faces, and that they think to have dreamt momentarily of a chimerical and therefore, unreachable land. (p. 586)

2.1.2 Exhaustive Research Sources: Lockspeiser, Lesure, and Nectoux

From the list of iconographic works on Debussy, three tomes have been consulted for an in-depth study of Debussy's epoch and music. These are *Debussy: His life and mind* in two volumes of 1962 and 1965 by Edward Lockspeiser (1905-73), *Claude Debussy: Biographie critique* of 2003 by François Lesure, and *Harmonie en bleu et or: Debussy, la musique et les arts* of 2005 by Jean-Michel Nectoux. Accompanying Debussy's musical development with descriptions of historical and artistic events, these scholars created portraits of Debussy's cultural surroundings and aesthetic sensibility. Musical, literary, and artistic personages from Debussy's circle are depicted to shed light on the creative influences and inspirations around him.

Considered one of the most authoritative English scholars on French music, Edward Lockspeiser's landmark documentation of Debussy's art and personal life reconstructs the historical, psychological, and cultural context of Debussy the musician and man. In his introduction to the first volume of *Debussy: His life and mind*, Lockspeiser (1962) stated his research intention candidly:

I do not believe that one can approach the art of Debussy as an isolated musical phenomenon. It belongs as much to the history of literature and the visual arts as, specifically, to the history of music, and it plays a part, too, in contemporary psychological thought. In my view it is the hinterland of Debussy's world that is most likely to illuminate his mind. (pp. xv-xvi)

Employing similar methodology as Lockspeiser for gathering factual information, Lesure (2003) delved into the composer's correspondence, both personal and professional, for a systematic reconstruction of Debussy's life and development. This biography examines the origins and public reception of Debussy's music not only in the composer's context, but also according to contemporary musicians who were esteemed for their interpretation of these opuses in performance. Amongst his numerous scholarly activities, Lesure, French musicologist and

historian, was also responsible for founding Centre de Documentation Claude Debussy in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France, in 1972, organizing a catalogue of Debussy's compositions in 1977, and directing the Durand edition of *Oeuvres Complètes de Claude Debussy* from 1985 to 2001.

Having completed his musicological studies under the supervision of Vladimir Jankélévitch in 1980, Jean-Michel Nectoux currently serves as a member of Institut de Recherche sur le Patrimoine Musical en France (part of Centre National de Recherche Scientifique) and Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art in Paris, assistant music director at Radio France, and curator at Musée d'Orsay, where he is responsible for organizing concerts and interdisciplinary exhibitions. In one of his volumes that examine the connections between music and arts in the symbolist era, *Harmonie en bleu et or: Debussy, la musique et les arts*, Nectoux (2005) relates what is known to be Debussy's affinity for arts and states this research question, "Which visual works attracted Claude Debussy and were, directly or indirectly, his origin of musical and acoustic transposition" (p. 11)? Through an elaborate investigation and analysis of all available sources, Nectoux proceeds with a narrative of the formation of Debussy's personal and artistic taste.

The wealth of literature in investigation of Debussy's cultural and historical milieu is also indicative of the necessity to hear his compositions in light of the extra-musical influences with which Debussy was associated. In Chapter 4, I include a survey of existing works on Debussy's piano opuses and twenty-four Préludes, the latter being the central topic of my personal research and performance study, to present my initial cycle of research intentions and interpretative lenses.

The remaining sections of the current chapter will examine related research materials in the fields of Somatics and personal experience studies in teacher education practices and transpersonal psychology. What I learned in hatha yoga practice, a branch of somatic education, has been instrumental in enhancing my concentration and developing body-mind awareness during my journey through the musical performances of Debussy the Préludes. The academic fields of psychology and education were where I found research models of transformative studies and a methodological model that appeared the most suitable for this dissertation.

2.2 Somatics

The term, “Somatics” (Johnson, 1995, p. 341), was first coined in 1976 by American philosopher and holistic health educator, Thomas Hanna (1928-90). The etymological root of Somatics is *soma*, σῶμα in Greek, which means the body “as distinguished from the mind or psyche” (Mosby, 2009, p. 1729). Somatics is the study of interaction and integration of body and mind, as well as how it affects our overall health condition. It encompasses the field of holistic self-study, “mind-body integration disciplines” (Criswell, 1995, p. xviii), and therapeutic treatments.

2.2.1 Inception, Overview, and Application

Hanna was an American existential philosopher, researcher, and practitioner of body-mind integration. In his three volumes, *Bodies in revolt: A primer in somatic thinking* of 1970, *The body of life: Creating new pathways for sensory awareness and fluid movement* of 1979, and *Somatics: Reawakening the mind's control of movement, flexibility, and health* of 1988, the historical and philosophical origins, theoretical rationale, and practical techniques of Somatics have been crystallized.

Somatics and its concept of holistic self-study come from the field of experiential and practice-based learning. Hanna explained that, “Somatics is the field which studies the *soma*: namely the body as perceived from within by first-person perception” (Johnson, 1995, p. 341). First-person perception is an observation of what a person experiences from within. Third-person viewpoint is an examination of a person from without. Feeling from within and seeing from without give two completely different categories of knowledge. Somatics makes use of first-person perception and studies one’s personal, physical, and emotion experience.

From Moshe Feldenkrais, Hanna received extensive training in Functional Integration and Awareness Through Movement Exercises between 1973 and 1978. With Eleanor Criswell, Hanna cofounded the Humanistic Psychology Institute, now Saybrook University, in San Francisco in 1969 and the Novato Institute for Somatic Research and Training in California in 1975, where Hanna developed Somatic Exercises. At the Novato Institute, where Eleanor Criswell-Hanna has served as director since 1990, a three-year training course of Hanna Somatic Education continues to be offered to this day.

Fascinated by how mental states and physical conditions work interdependently in constructing human living experience in one's psycho-physical system, Hanna remarked that, "all human conscious and unconscious experience is physiological" (Hanna, 1980, p. 182). Focusing on the interrelation between body and mind in the function and structure of human beings, Somatic Exercises are, "specific procedures for making changes in the sensory-motor areas of the brain in order to maintain internal control of the muscle system" (Hanna, 1988, p. 93).

Somatics embraces the practices of yoga, Feldenkrais' Functional Integration, Alexander Technique, biofeedback training, Rolf's Structural Integration, and Gindler's *Arbeit am Menschen* (Human Work). In the field of health care, psychosomatic approach is "the interdisciplinary or holistic study of physical and mental disease from a biologic, psychosocial, and sociocultural point of view" (Mosby, 2009, p. 1545).

The multidisciplinary body of somatic educators includes physicians, psychiatrists, body workers, chiropractors, massage therapists, somatic therapists, physical therapists, yoga therapists, dance therapists, martial artists, physical educators, and "biofeedback" technicians (Criswell, 1995, p. xviii). With a wide variety of methods and techniques, somatic educators share the common goals of helping people cultivate conscious awareness in the body and mind, as well as improve the quality of human living.

2.2.2 One Branch of Somatic Education: Yoga

One of the somatic disciplines, yoga, came into existence in the 6th century BC. In Sanskrit, yoga means union. It studies various approaches to experiencing the union of mind and body. In yoga, various methods and techniques have been developed over the millennia for practicing and cultivating the development of human individuality and personal growth.

Criswell Hanna (1989), psychologist, yoga therapist, pioneer in biofeedback, and founder of Equine Hanna Somatics, describes the six pathways to mind-body integration in yoga practice as, "hatha, raja, jnana, karma, and bhakti yoga" (p. 4). For the purpose of developing human consciousness, hatha yoga purifies and strengthens the body, raja yoga disciplines the mind, jnana yoga seeks true knowledge, karma yoga practices selfless action, and bhakti yoga surrenders to divinity and devotional love. All six yogic paths are grounded in the belief that true learning comes from personal experience and not from intellectual inference, which is

echoed in the Hindu teaching, “All our knowledge is based upon experience” (Swami Vivekananda, 1982, p. 7). By studying one’s personal experience and observing one’s behaviour, one acquires consciousness, concentration, and a unique way of understanding and living life.

In the study of hatha yoga, which I practice, two traditional texts are universally consulted, *The Bhagavad Gītā* and *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. From the *Mahābhārata*, one of the major Sanskrit epics of ancient India, the *Bhagavad Gītā* describes the inner battle of Arjuna, Pāndava warrior, who hesitated just before starting the war between the Pāndava brothers and the Dhārtarāstras, their cousins who ruled the Kuruksetra kingdom in north central India. The discussion between Arjuna and Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Lord Vishnu and Arjuna’s teacher and charioteer, is an allegorical discourse on the philosophy and principles of yoga. On the other hand, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* is one of the classic texts on hatha yoga. This Sanskrit manual elucidates the science and techniques of hatha yoga in asana, pranayama, shatkarma, mudra, and bandha.

The esoteric style of writing in both books was in accordance with the nature of yogic study, which was designed to be practice-based instead of theory-based learning. Under the guidance of a knowledgeable teacher, these texts are best comprehended in the context of Hindu history, yoga tradition, and holistic self-study.

While Somatics is one of the practice-based disciplines to study individual experience, the documentation of personal experience and research on human transformation are conducted in the academic fields of humanistic psychology and teacher education. The following section will provide a brief overview of the general characteristics and intents of these research traditions.

2.3 Transformation

In the fields of academic research, humanistic psychology instigated a movement in the late 1950s to study person-centred themes such as self, individuality, self-actualization, personal growth, health, psychological freedom, experiential learning process, the development of human potential, creativity, and intrinsic motivation in human beings. Counteracting the dominating research focuses of the early 20th century, specifically behaviourism of Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936)

and psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), this humanistic movement in psychology acknowledged the need for studying humans as conscious and subjective beings. This person-centred approach validates the study of personal experience and helps people discover their feelings, observe their sensations, and cultivate individual ways of experiencing life.

In 1964, the first Conference of the American Association of Humanistic Psychology, now the Association of Humanistic Psychology, was held at Old Saybrook, Connecticut. Its founding members included Clark Moustakas (1923-2012), educational psychologist, Abraham Maslow (1908-70), humanistic psychologist, Rollo May (1909-94), existential psychologist, and Carl Rogers (1902-87), clinical psychologist. In humanistic psychology, unique experiences of human individuals are studied with the intention of exploring personalities, human potentialities, and how a person changes during the learning process. In his work of 1961, *On becoming a person: A therapist's view of psychotherapy*, Rogers examined how humanistic research results have become applicable in practical and theoretical fields of counselling, psychotherapy, sociology, and education.

2.3.1 Teacher Education

In the field of teacher education, reflection and study of the practice of teaching has become a potent alternative research tool since the early 1980s. As Allender (2007) pointed out in his survey of humanistic influences in educational research, *Humanistic research in self-study: A history of transformation*, John Dewey (1859-1952), in as early as 1938, began to contemplate the nature and conditions of education, as well as the interactive relationship between teachers and students in schooling activities.

In the early 20th century development of American educational paradigms, John Dewey and Edward Thorndike (1874-1949), psychologists and educational reformers, were prominent figures in shaping the fundamental ideologies of learning and teaching. Dewey was an active opponent of Thorndike, who systematically developed a science of education based on the observation of animal behaviourism. Thorndike's research findings have been instrumental in providing psychological basis for effective applications in the realms of "sociology, business, and professionalization" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxv). To counterbalance this movement of improving social productivity and efficiency, Dewey turned his attention to

humanizing education again and studying the continuity of teaching and learning experiences in contextual, spatial, and temporal sense.

With the intention of ameliorating the quality of teaching and improving the conditions of learning, generations of teachers and teacher educators have followed in Dewey's footsteps to work on their practice of experience acquisition and knowledge application in the profession of pedagogy. To glean an idea of the scope of such academic studies and practical applications, two texts from the comprehensive literature on educational research and academic methodologies have been consulted. These are *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices* (Part one, 2007) and *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research* (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The *International handbook of self-study of teaching and teacher education practices* presents thorough documentation of the historical background, development, topics of investigation, and application of practice and research in teacher education. On the other hand, *Narrative inquiry* is a methodology for studying experiences of learning and teaching. It describes its own content and definition as, "Narrative inquiry is an experience of the experience. It is people in relation studying with people in relation" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 189).

2.3.2 Transpersonal Psychology

Concurrent with the humanistic movement in educational practice and research, another branch of study in psychology came into existence in 1969. It was named transpersonal psychology by Abraham Maslow, a founding member of humanistic psychology, Anthony Sutich (1907-76), and Stanislav Grof in California. Inspired by Carl Jung (1875-1961), Swiss psychiatrist and psychotherapist, Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), English writer, William James (1842-1910), American philosopher and psychologist, and Carl Rogers, transpersonal psychology was defined as the study of humanity's highest potential, self-transcendental experience, or spirituality, in which the sense of identity extended beyond the individual to encompass wider aspects of human life and endeavours.

In 1975, Drs. Robert Frager and James Fadiman founded the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, now Sofia University, in California. At the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, integrative, holistic, and transformational learning paths have been studied by researchers and

scholars from the fields of psychology, psychotherapy, and education. Two core faculty members, Drs. Rosemarie Anderson and William Braud, co-authored volumes on transpersonal research methods in 1998 and 2011. In these books, Anderson and Braud outline qualitative and quantitative research methods that they have developed for their graduate students to study exceptional, psycho-spiritual, transpersonal, and transformational human experiences.

In Transforming self and others through research: Transpersonal research methods and skills for the human sciences and humanities (2011), Anderson relates her qualitative research method, the intuitive inquiry. Amongst her doctoral students who employed this methodology in their dissertations, Lynch (2002) and Manos (2007) studied the creative processes of poets, artists, and musicians, Hoffman (2003) studied personal storytelling as a collaborative art form and compassionate connection, and Dufrechou (2002) and Esbjorn (2003) studied the role of the body in experiencing deep emotions and psycho-spiritual development of women mystics.

In light of my dissertation content and related discussion topics, I decided to use Anderson's model of intuitive inquiry as my research methodology. The following chapter will present a modified format of intuitive inquiry to elucidate my personal study of how the extra-musical influences with which Debussy was associated and Somatics have transformed my musical experience of interpreting and performing the 24 Debussy Préludes.

3 Methodology

The methodology for this dissertation originated in my interest in piano repertoire study of the 24 Debussy Préludes. I performed them in selections and in their entirety as part of my three doctoral recitals at the University of Toronto in 2008 and 2009.

3.1 Formulating My Research Content

Intrigued by the subtitles of these Préludes, I began a personal investigation of their suggestive implications. This journey went from consulting numerous research volumes to creating my own understanding of these compositions, which included such procedures as enriching my life experience, searching for the connections between the musical content and extra-musical postscripts, and observing my musical experience of studying and performing this repertoire. During this learning process, I was curious to see how the various stages of such approach would influence the formation of my musical interpretation and performance experience.

Parallel to my musical exploration, in 2008, I also started to practice yoga, a branch of Somatics, which I continue to practice regularly to this day. I found it beneficial for my general musculoskeletal balance, emotional management, body-mind awareness, and cultivation of introspection. It has become an implement to review my daily activities and determine where additional options needed to be considered.

The combination of observing my music learning process and somatic practice made me desirous of finding a research method to scrutinize how such convergence of diverse disciplines would manifest itself in my experience of comprehending and performing the 24 Debussy Préludes. This research interest and content required a qualitative research method. A narrative approach was necessary for documenting and studying my personal experience.

3.2 Finding a Research Structure

Between 2011 and 2012, I looked over the existing theses and dissertations in the fields of Somatics, psychotherapy, education, sports, and performing arts. Examples of academic research in the area of somatic education and its application in psychotherapy included studies by Amodeo (1981), Raheem (1984), Dennehy (1987), Spencer (1987), Greenwell (1988), McLean

(1989), Smith (1991), Rowe (1994), Springer (1994), Heery (2003), and Magnussen (2003). Further research in Somatics and its application in sports has been presented by Haller (1988), in acting and drama by Amory (2010) and Smith (2010), in dance by Haas (1996), Fisher (1996), and Elkins (2007), and in music performance by Johnson (1987) and Lanzer (2008).

By chance, I came across a research methods book, *Transforming self and others through research: Transpersonal research methods and skills for the human sciences and humanities* (Anderson & Braud, 2011). Both authors were trained as experimental psychologists in the late 1960s and early 1970s. From decades of conducting research and teaching at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, now Sofia University, in California, Anderson and Braud have developed the transpersonal research methods of intuitive inquiry and integral inquiry, respectively, to provide supplementary research tools to their graduate students for studying transformational human experiences. The five cycles of interpretation in Anderson's intuitive inquiry structure captured my attention. I began to examine it more closely.

According to Anderson's design, the intuitive inquiry contains five basic cycles to encompass the various stages of development and transformation in a research process. Comparable to an introductory chapter in a standard research method, cycle one presents the research topic and question. Cycle two provides a literature review and establishes an initial set of interpretative lenses for the topic in question. Cycle three describes the data collected during the research. Cycle four offers a fresh set of interpretative lenses based on the new information that emerges from cycle three. Cycle five concludes the research process with a discussion and comparison between the initial and new interpretative lenses.

In their suggestions about developing complimentary transpersonal research skills, Anderson and Braud (2011) encourage the style of embodied writing, which calls forth each researcher's unique voice of writing. Anderson and Braud (2011) describe embodied writing as follows, "embodied writing portrays the lived experience of the body by conveying in words the finely textured experience of the human body" (p. 267). Their parting remarks to interested researchers can be seen below:

Know that the transpersonal approaches in Part 1 are invitations to explore and expand your research horizons and to practice these new approaches. You are invited to try them out and use and integrate these transpersonal approaches, or aspects of them, with other

research approaches in ways that help you become a more accomplished and versatile researcher. Take what works for you and leave the rest – perhaps for another time or, more likely, for use with a research topic that might otherwise escape your understanding. (Anderson & Braud, 2011, p. 14)

With such blessings from the developers of these transpersonal research approaches, I extracted some fundamental elements from the intuitive inquiry to form a research structure that accommodated the purpose and content of my dissertation. The five cycles of the intuitive inquiry have been modified and enlarged to become a methodology that comprises Prélude, eight chapters, and Postlude.

The following chapter will present my initial cycle of research intentions and interpretative lenses with an overview of the existing research resources on Debussy piano literature and the 24 Préludes.

4 Initial Cycle of Research Intentions and Interpretative Lenses

4.1 Claude Debussy's Piano Music in the History and Evolution of Keyboard Literature

With Jean-Philippe Rameau, François Couperin, Frédéric Chopin, and Franz Liszt as his predecessors, Claude Debussy was a pianist composer whose output has revolutionized the outlook of twentieth-century keyboard music. From *Danse bohémienne* of 1880 to *Douze études* and *Élégie* of 1915, Debussy has composed for solo piano throughout his creative career. These opuses not only exemplify Debussy's lifelong search for inspirations and sonorities, but also represent the maturation of his artistry.

Since the publication of *Pour le piano* in 1901, Debussy's keyboard works have been a subject of admiration and controversy amongst generations of audience, pianists, theorists, and musicologists. Debussy's compositions manifest his acute perception of musical and non-musical influences, as well as his ability to synthesize these diverse sources to form a unique musical idiom. When amateur and professional musicians come across these pieces, their spectrum of knowledge and imagination is challenged and stimulated. Many ask questions about how to listen to, understand, and interpret Debussy's music. Several have researched and volumes have been written to respond to such questions. Usually, the perusal of these resources has led to further questions.

After his attendance at the Paris Universal Exposition in 1889, how did occidental and oriental cultures converge on Debussy's genesis of *Estampes* of 1903? How did Paul Verlaine's poems, *Fêtes galantes*, of 1869, Jean-Antoine Watteau's painting, *L'Embarquement pour Cythère*, of 1717, and commedia dell'arte of 16th century Italian theatre provide literary and artistic stimulation for Debussy's *Suite bergamasque* of 1890, as well as for *L'Isle joyeuse* and *Masques* of 1904? In *Deux arabesques* of 1888 and the *Prélude, Les tierces alternées*, of 1911, how did Debussy convert a decorative motif, or intervallic cell to a central component of compositional structure?

The questions above are but a few that come to mind as I look over Debussy's opuses for keyboard. The following sections shall present an overview of existing literature about

Debussy's piano scores with suggestions for interpretation and performance preparation. These writings are divided into three categories: commentaries on Debussy's works by pianists of his time, further studies after 1990s about interpreting and performing Debussy's oeuvres, and general resources about Debussy's music in the context of keyboard repertoire development in the 19th and 20th century.

4.1.1 Interpretative Suggestions by Debussy's Contemporary Pianists

As Timbrell (1999) mentioned in his volume, *French Pianism: A Historical Perspective*, Marguerite Long (1874-1966), Alfred Cortot (1877-1962), and Élie Robert Schmitz (1889-1949) were amongst the first pianists and pedagogues to share their experiences with Debussy's piano compositions in print. They all came from the lineage of Antoine-François Marmontel (1816-1898), the head of piano department at the Conservatoire de Paris from 1848 to 1887 and the "grandfather of the French school" (Timbrell, 1999, p. 49) of piano playing. Marmontel's Conservatoire pupils included Georges Bizet, Vincent d'Indy, Debussy, Louis Diémer (1843-1919), Henri Fissot (1843-96), and Antonin Marmontel (1850-1907). Schmitz and Cortot were students of Diémer. Long studied with Fissot and Antonin Marmontel. From 1914 to 1917, Long also had the unique opportunity to work with Debussy on his piano oeuvres. All three pianists knew Debussy personally and were acknowledged as 20th century authorities on performing and teaching his piano works in various continents.

In the publications of Cortot (1932 and 1980), Schmitz (1966), and Long (1960), the authors demonstrate their knowledge and familiarity with the epoch, the composer, and his oeuvres. The French pianists, Cortot and Long, used poetic imagery to elucidate their understanding of Debussy's cosmos. These narratives are filled with evocative descriptions to draw the readers to Cortot and Long's worlds of musical, artistic, and sensory experiences. Schmitz (1966), a Franco-American pianist, provided formal analyses, extra-musical references, musical examples, and interpretive suggestions to help listeners and performers enter "a state of receptivity" (p. vii) for Debussy's works. Offering musical options and logical explanations, this approach helps readers create their own bases of comprehending and performing Debussy's music. In an earlier volume of 1935, *The Capture of Inspiration*, Schmitz published a methodology for forming musical interpretation and techniques of piano playing. From score reading to anatomical analysis of movement, a comprehensive study of this process is conducted.

4.1.2 Ongoing Investigation of Debussy's Piano Works

More than one hundred and fifty years after his birth, Debussy's compositions still prompt pianists to ask questions such as: "what is the secret of playing French music" (Howat, 2009, p. xiv)? As the distance and time increases between musicians of today and Debussy, this process of research recurs throughout generations of pianists and audience.

Drawing from his experience of performing, studying, and teaching French piano music in England and abroad, Paul Roberts presented Debussy's piano compositions in the historical context of visual, literary, cultural, and musical stimuli in his text of 1996. In the light of artistic influences of Debussy's era, Roberts (2001) wrote about "the relation of music and visual art" (p. xv) to help listeners glean ideas about Debussy's musical conception and tonal imagination.

German musicologist and a Life Research Associate at the University of Michigan's Institute for the Humanities, Siglind Bruhn examined the relation between music, visual images, and poetic elements of Debussy Préludes in her volume of 1997. This hermeneutic approach in analyzing musical, pictorial, and literary integrants weaves a web of associations and additional possibilities of interpreting these piano compositions.

In his book of 2009, Roy Howat, Scottish pianist, scholar, and one of the four editors of the piano section in *Oeuvres Complètes de Claude Debussy*, examined Debussy's piano works from the focal point of developing musical and textural comprehension. References from both musical and non-musical fields are provided to evoke "the composer's world of sound and feeling, and in the hope that we can hear and play the music with something of the inner fire that made the composers want to write it" (Howat, 2009, p. xiv). Howat's procedure of scrutinizing the mechanism of compositional structure and illuminating interpretive options for performance is evident also in his analytical work of 1983, *Debussy in Proportion*.

4.1.3 Debussy in the Context of Keyboard Music Tradition

Placing Debussy's works in the historical context of keyboard repertoire development, scholars have examined the piano opuses of those preceding and following him. An overview of 19th century French piano writing and 20th century keyboard literature evolution highlights the role of

Debussy's compositions in broadening the horizons of acoustics, instrumental idiom, and aesthetics in piano music.

In *Keyboard Music* of 1972, the essay by James Gibb, British pianist and teacher, surveys 19th century French piano oeuvres and composers of Debussy's predecessors and contemporaries. From César Franck (1822-90) to Camille Saint-Saëns (1835-1921), Georges Bizet (1838-75), Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-94), Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924), Vincent d'Indy (1851-1931), Paul Dukas (1865-1935), Erik Satie (1866-1925), Maurice Ravel (1875-1937), and others, Gibb's chapter gives a panorama of the French school of piano writing up till Debussy's time and beyond.

In his "personal study" (Burge, 2004, p. vii) of 20th century piano music and composers, David Burge wrote from his experience of performing, teaching, and advocating 20th century music in America and abroad. In this enumeration of the major 20th century composers and their piano publications between 1886 and 1986, Debussy and his works are presented first with explanations about how Debussy's output revolutionized and influenced the development of 20th century piano literature. Repertoire exploration of composers from North and South America, Europe, and Asia ensues.

In *Guide de la Musique de Piano et de Clavecin* of 1987, the article on Debussy by Harry Halbreich, Belgian musicologist, is a meticulous study of his keyboard works in their musical, structural, stylistic, and technical innovations. This volume is a comprehensive reference book on composers for keyboard instruments and their significant contributions to the development of piano literature. Another significant French reference work for piano repertoire study is Guy Sacre's two volumes of 1998, *La musique de piano: dictionnaire des compositeurs et des oeuvres*.

4.2 Debussy's Twenty-Four Préludes and Their Extra-Musical Associations

Composed between 1909 and 1913, the twenty-four piano Préludes are miniature masterpieces that display Debussy's ability to evoke imagery with sound and integrate symbolism with music. To give listeners and pianists a hint of extra-musical associations in these Préludes, Debussy took the unusual step of adding postscripts as subtitles.

According to Long (1960), the subtitles to the Préludes were added as an afterthought. Debussy often presented these suggestive captions to his wife, Emma Bardac, with whom he would finalize them. The atmosphere of mystery pervades the entire set. It is evident that Debussy intended to let music speak directly to listeners' imagination before he gave indication of its non-musical inspiration.

Such accompanying titles in the 24 Debussy Préludes can be arranged into 8 categories: foreign places, illustrations of fairyland by Arthur Rackham, portraits of nature, clowns and caricatures, antiquity and enigma, poetry, musical arabesque, and legend and national festivities. In the following sections, the existing literature of each category and related extra-musical association will be explored.

4.2.1 Foreign Places

From imagination and memory, Debussy's musical creation possesses the power to conjure up the life and spirit of foreign places. Although Debussy never set foot in Spain, his knowledge of Spain came from reading, paintings, folksongs, and traditional dances. Amongst his compositions with Spanish influence, two Préludes, *La Puerta del Vino* and *La sérénade interrompue*, depict an Andalusia of Debussy's vision.

In the records of Cortot (1932 and 1980), Schmitz (1966), Long (1960), Debussy's musical imagination was stimulated by a coloured postcard of El Puerta del Vino in the Alhambra palace in Granada, Spain. Upon receipt of this picture, his immediate remark was, "I will do something with that" (Cortot, 1932, pp.41-42). Puerta del Vino is known for the tax-free wine sold inside the portal around 1554, as well as being the connection between military and civil areas in the Alhambra.

Washington Irving (1783-1859), American writer and diplomat, wrote down his impression of the Alhambra in his travel journal of 1832, *Tales of the Alhambra*, "The peculiar charm of this old dreamy palace is its power of calling up vague reveries and picturing of the past, and thus clothing naked realities with illusions of the memory and the imaginations" (Irving, 1995, p. 94).

As the royal city of Moorish Spain from 889 to 1491, images of the Alhambra excite the mind and imagination with rich history, intriguing folklore, labyrinthine architecture, and the most magnificent decorative arts of the last Muslim court in Europe.

In as early as 1880, international travels with the family of Nadezhda von Meck, the famous benefactress of Tchaikovsky, brought 18-year-old Debussy to Italy. After winning the first grand prize of Prix de Rome in 1884, Debussy stayed intermittently in Italy from 1885 to 1887. The Prélude of 1909, *Les collines d'Anacari*, can be linked to the island of Capri in the Gulf of Naples, Italy, and its incomparable scenery.

In his autobiographical work of 1929, *The Story of San Michele*, Swedish doctor and master of Villa San Michele on Capri, Axel Munthe (1857-1949) gave a description of his first visit to Anacapri in 1875 and a panoramic view from there:

We were in Anacapri. The whole bay of Naples lay at our feet encircled by Ischia, Procida, the pine-clad Posilipo [*sic*], the glittering white line of Naples, Vesuvius with its rosy cloud of smoke, the Sorrento plain sheltered under Monte Sant'-Angelo and further away the Apennine mountains still covered with snow. (Munthe, 2004, p. 15)

Such scenic views could but charm and delight young Debussy's senses and leave an indelible impression on him. More than two decades later, Debussy's experience of Italian sojourns was crystallized in his composition, *Les collines d'Anacari*.

4.2.2 Illustrations of Fairyland by Arthur Rackham

A contemporary of Debussy, Arthur Rackham (1867-1939) was an English artist and best known for his illustrations of fairy tales, Edgar Allan Poe's stories, William Shakespeare's plays, and Richard Wagner's *Ring* cycle. By 1911, Rackham was already a favourite of Debussy and his daughter, Chouchou, and nicknamed "that old Rackham" (Roberts, 2001, p. 228).

The Prélude, *La danse de Puck*, can be connected to William Shakespeare's 16th century comedy play, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. An edition with illustrations by Rackham of this humorous drama appeared in 1908. According to Roberts (2001) and Bruhn (1997), Debussy was known to possess a copy of this work in his library.

Debussy's fondness of Puck was expressed in his 1903 article about adaptations of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for operas by Georges Hüe (1858-1948) and Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826), "this Puck (or Robin Goodfellow), cheerful vagabond of night, cunning and naughty, dear prankster, whose assistance can be invoked by calling 'Hobgoblin and good Puck'" (Debussy,

1987, p. 83). In *La danse de Puck*, the composer captures the spirit of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which is encapsulated in Puck's farewell speech, "If we shadows have offended, Think but this, and all is mended, That you have but slumber'd here While these visions did appear. And this weak and idle theme, No more yielding but a dream" (Shakespeare, 2003, p. 169).

In the records of Roberts (2001) and Bruhn (1997), Chouchou received a book from Debussy's friend, Robert Godet, as Christmas present in 1911. It was "probably *Peter Pan in Kensington Garden* by J. M. Barrie" (Roberts, 2001, p. 228) of 1906 with illustrations by Rackham. In 1912, Debussy conceived his musical portrait, "*Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses*," using a direct quotation from Barrie's text and Rackham's illustration as the caption for this Prélude.

Baby Peter Pan, birds, and fairies live on Bird's Island in the Serpentine, the magical area of Kensington Garden. From the birds, Peter Pan learns to have a glad heart and he makes a pipe of reeds to express his joy:

He used to sit by the shore of the island of an evening, practising the sough of the wind and the ripple of the water, and catching handfuls of the shine of the moon, and he put them all in his pipe and played them so beautifully that even the birds were deceived, and they would say to each other, 'Was that a fish leaping in the water or was it Peter playing leaping fish on his pipe?' (Barrie, 1975, p. 32)

Peter Pan is the fairies' orchestra for their great balls in the open air and, "The Fairies are exquisite dancers" (Barrie, 1975, p. 63).

In 1811, Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué (1777-1843), German writer, published his romantic novel, *Undine*. In the research of Robert (2001), an English adaptation of *Undine* with Rackham's drawings and colour plates appeared in 1909. In 1912, a French edition, *Ondine*, was published in Paris.

This novella inspired numerous adaptations for operas, instrumental music, ballets, films, literary works, paintings, and sculptures in the 19th and 20th centuries. In Debussy's musical fantasy, *Ondine*, a character portrait of Ondine is given: a water-spirit of sensuous whimsy and melancholic tenderness.

4.2.3 Portraits of Nature

Whether it was air, water, or greenery in the changing seasons, Debussy was able to wield these elemental forces with his imagination to create the *Préludes*, *Voiles*, *Le vent dans la plaine*, *Des pas sur la neige*, *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*, *Brouillards*, *Bruyères*, and *Feuilles mortes*.

In existing research literature of these *Préludes*, concrete explanations for the non-musical elements in these tableaux of nature and imagination are scarce. In the recollection of Long (1960), the *Prélude*, *Bruyères*, made Debussy, "smell the sea and the Celtic bushes that flourish under the great pine trees" (p. 111).

However, the inexplicable relation between "the infinite soul of nature and that of an individual" (Debussy, 1987, p. 84) is a recurrent theme for aesthetic contemplation in Debussy's writings. In an article of 1903, Debussy (1987) voiced his opinion about the eloquence of music, "Music is a mysterious mathematics whose elements bear a resemblance to the Infinity. It is responsible for the movements of water, the playful meanderings of the changing winds; nothing is more musical than a sunset" (p. 176).

Debussy was not alone in exploring the indefinable association that artists make between the external world and their inner world of perception and absorption. From the volume of 1857, *Les Fleurs du mal*, Charles Baudelaire (1821-67), French poet, shared his thoughts in the following strophes from this poem, *Correspondances*:

La Nature est un temple où de vivants piliers
Laisent parfois sortir de confuses paroles;
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.

Nature is a temple where living pillars sometimes allow confused words to escape; man passes there through forests of symbols that watch him with familiar glances.

Like long-drawn-out echoes mingled far away into a deep and shadowy unity, vast as darkness and light, scents, colours, and sounds answer one another. (Hartley, 1963, p.155)

In another article of 1903, Debussy (1987) described the role of music in the world of imagination and creativity as the following, “In fact, music alone has the power to evoke places to its liking the improbable places, the indubitable and chimerical world which shapes the mysterious poetry of nighttime, the countless anonymous sounds that come from the leaves caressed by moonbeams” (p. 84). Debussy’s thoughts on these topics give no direct answers to the precise meanings of subtitles of these *Préludes*, but indirectly invite readers, listeners, and musicians to use their imagination to create their own musical experience.

4.2.4 Clowns and Caricatures

In the *Préludes*, *Minstrels* and *General Lavine-eccentric*, Debussy revived the American comic troupes that toured Europe and became the new fashion in music-hall entertainment in the early 1900s. In their studies of *General Lavine-eccentric*, Roberts (2001) and Bruhn (1997) both refer to Schmitz’s description of Edward Lavine, one of the most famous American comedians in international vaudeville. In 1910, General Lavine’s performance at the Marigny Theatre in Paris included, “impersonations of a wooden puppet, tightrope walking, playing the piano with his toes, fighting a duel with himself, etc” (Bruhn, 1997, p. 118). In her session with the composer, Long (1960) recalled Debussy’s comment about the acrobatic musical figure at the opening of his own *Prélude* and General Lavine, “He was wooden” (p. 112)!

About *Minstrels*, Schmitz (1966) gave a description of the main features of American minstrel groups, “cake-walks, cornet solos, scratchy banjos and drums, a sentimental song, a few corny jokes, and feline dances” (p. 160). Stylized and exaggerated, ridiculous and yet humane, these two musical sketches reveal Debussy’s acute observation, shrewd humour, and discreet compassion.

Debussy’s *Prélude, Hommage à S. Pickwick, Esq., P.P.M.P.C.*, is the composer’s tribute to the first novel of Charles Dickens (1812-70), *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club, Containing a Faithful Record of the Perambulations, Perils, Travels, Adventures and Sporting Transactions of the Corresponding Members*. Also known as *The Pickwick Papers*, this work

was first issued in shilling installments before being published as a complete volume in 1837. While its full title lets out the content, *The Pickwick Papers* is a group of delightful sketches about 19th century English urban and rural life. Debussy's music accentuates the comical contrast between the pompous bearing, helpless mediocrity, and beaming benevolence in these character studies of human nature.

4.2.5 Antiquity and Enigma

For non-musical inspiration for Debussy's mysterious Prélude, *La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune*, Cortot (1932), Schmitz (1966), Long (1960), Bruhn (1996), and Roberts (2001) located two literary sources. Pierre Loti (1850-1923), French novelist and naval officer, recorded his impressions of British India in the volume of 1903, *L'Inde sans les Anglais*, and one image was pinpointed, "the terraces for holding counsel in the moonlight" (Schmitz, 1966, p. 175). In his article of Decembre 1912, *Lettres des Indes*, in the newspaper *Le Temps*, René Puaux (1878-1937) described, "the festivities surrounding the coronation of King George V as Emperor of India ... the hall of victory, the hall of pleasure, the gardens of sultans, the terrace of moonlight audiences" (Bruhn, 1996, p. 49). In the writings of Cortot (1980) and Roberts (2001), a musical reference at the beginning of this Prélude was Debussy's adaptation of French folksong, *Au clair de la lune*.

The Prélude, *Canope*, is associated with ancient civilizations. A potent symbol in cities of the dead, "Canopic jars" (Schmitz, 1966, p. 182) are cinerary urns from Egyptian funerary rites and Etruscan necropolis. According to Long (1960), Debussy had a "Greek [*sic*] urn" (p. 115) as decoration on his desk.

In his travel journals of 1927, *Etruscan Places*, David Herbert Lawrence (1885-1930) recorded his experience of visiting Etruscan tombs, seeing artifacts, and contemplating their significance:

But one radical thing the Etruscan people never forgot ... and that was the mystery of the journey out of life, and into death; the death journey, and the sojourn in the afterlife. The wonder of their soul continued to play round the mystery of this journey and of this sojourn. In the tombs we see it, throes of wonder and vivid feeling throbbing over death. Man moves naked and glowing through the universe. Then comes death: he dives into the sea, he departs into the underworld. (Lawrence, 2007, p. 86)

In *Canope*, Debussy explores the enigma of eternity, where faint echoes of humankind ultimately repose.

Delphes, or Delphi, is an ancient city on the south-western spur of Mount Parnassus in central Greece. The sanctuary of Apollo and his oracle, the most important prophet in ancient Greece, has its home in Delphi. In the writings of Long (1960) and Roberts (2001), *Danseuses de Delphes* was a sculpture unearthed near the temple of Apollo in Delphi in 1894. It was exhibited in Paris from 1900 to 1930. In his *Prélude* of 1909, *Danseuses de Delphes*, Debussy's manipulation of sonority and rhythm creates a graceful processional dance and the illusion of serenity, timelessness, space, and mobility.

4.2.6 Poetry

The third line from Baudelaire's poem of 1857, *Harmonie du Soir*, was used by Debussy as the subtitle of his *Prélude* of 1910, "*Les sons et la parfums tournent dans l'air du soir*". In as early as 1890, Debussy already set the same poem to music for voice and piano in his song cycle of 1889, *Cinq Poèmes de Charles Baudelaire*. The complete text and English translation of *Harmonie du Soir*, can be found below:

Voici venir les temps où vibrant sur sa tige
 Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir;
 Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir;
 Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige!

Chaque fleur s'évapore ainsi qu'un encensoir;
 Le violon frémit comme un coeur qu'on afflige;
 Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertige!
 Le ciel est triste et beau comme un grand reposoir.

Le violon frémit comme un coeur qu'on afflige;
 Un coeur tendre, qui hait le néant vaste et noir!

Le ciel est triste et beau comme un grand reposoir;
 Le soleil s'est noyé dans son sang qui se fige.

Un coeur tendre, qui hait le néant vaste et noir,
 Du passé lumineux recueille tout vestige!
 Le soleil s'est noyé dans son sang qui se fige ...
 Ton souvenir en moi luit comme un ostensor!

Here comes the time when, vibrating on its stem, every flower fumes like a censer; noises and perfumes circle in the evening air; O melancholy waltz and languid vertigo!

Every flower fumes like a censer; the violin shudders like an afflicted heart; O melancholy waltz and languid vertigo! The sky is sad and beautiful like a vast station of the Cross.

The violin shudders like an afflicted heart, a tender heart that hates the great dark void! The sky is sad and beautiful like a vast station of the Cross; the sun is drowned in its own congealing blood.

A tender heart that hates the great dark void gathers up every remnant of the bright past! The sun is drowned in its own congealing blood ... Your memory shines within me like a monstrance! (Hartley, 1963, pp. 150-151)

The poem, *La fille aux cheveux de lin*, from Leconte de Lisle's (1818-94) *Poèmes antiques*, Chansons écossaises-no. IV of 1874 was set by Debussy to music in 1881 for his friend, Madame Vasnier, who was a beautiful amateur soprano. Almost three decades later, Debussy found new inspiration in the freshness and radiance of this Celtic tableau.

Sur la luzerne en fleur assise,
 Qui chante dans le frais matin?
 C'est la fille aux cheveux de lin,
 La belle aux lèvres de cerise.

L'amour, au clair soleil d'été,
Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Ta bouche a des couleurs divines,
Ma chère, et tente le baiser!
Sur l'herbe en fleur veux-tu causer,
Fille aux cils longs, aux boucles fines?

L'amour, au clair soleil d'été,
Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Ne dis pas non, fille cruelle!
Ne dis pas oui! J'entendrai mieux
Le long regard de tes grands yeux
Et ta bouche fine, ô ma belle!

Adieu les daims, adieu les lièvres
Et les rouges perdrix! Je veux
Baiser le blond de tes cheveux,
Presser la pourpre de tes lèvres!

L'amour, au clair soleil d'été,
Avec l'alouette a chanté.

Seated among the flowering alfalfa, who is singing in the cool morning? It is the girl with the flaxen hair, the beauty with the cherry lips.

Love, with the clear sun of summertime, has sung with the lark.

Your mouth, my dear, has divine hues and tempts kisses! Would you like to chat here on the flowering grass, you with the long eyelashes and delicate curls?

Love, with the clear sun of summertime, has sung with the lark.

Do not say no, cruel girl! Do not say yes! I would rather listen to the long look of your wide-open eyes and your delicate mouth, my lovely one!

Love, with the clear sun of summertime, has sung with the lark.

Farewell deer, farewell hares and russet partridges! I want to kiss the blond of your hair and press the purple of your lips!

Love, with the clear sun of summertime, has sung with the lark. (Cobb, 1994, pp. 32-33)

4.2.7 Musical Arabesque

In the *Prélude, Les tierces alternées*, Debussy weaves a fascinating musical tapestry out of fundamental harmonic building blocks, major and minor thirds. In an article of 1901, Debussy examined the musical arabesque in Johann Sebastian Bach's violin concerto in G and made the following remarks:

We find this almost impeccable « musical arabesque », or rather the fundamentals of « embellishment » that provide the basis for all forms of art. ... Bach's use of arabesque made it more supple and fluid. Despite the strict discipline imposed on Beauty by the great composer, it could move with such invigorating and free imagination, which still astonishes us to this day. ... In Bach's music, it is not the character of the melody that is

stirring, but its shape. Even more often, it is the simultaneous movement of several lines, meeting by chance or mutual consent, that thrills. (Debussy, 1987, p. 34)

4.2.8 Legend and National Festivities

The Prélude, *La Cathédrale engloutie*, is based on a legend from Brittany, France, of the engulfed Cathedral of Ys. Because of “the impiety of the inhabitants” (Schmitz, 1966, p. 155), this mythical monument was submerged between the 4th and 5th centuries and only allowed to rise and be seen at sunrise. Debussy’s musical conception of *La Cathédrale engloutie* evokes images of the calm surface of the sea and the majestic outline of the Gothic architecture, as well as echoes of distant chanting and bells.

In the final Prélude of the collection, *Feux d’artifice*, Debussy displayed his innovative pyrotechnics of tonal colours and pianistic virtuosity. The dazzling brilliance and splendid explosions in this musical celebration commemorates the French National Day, “July 14 of the people” (Cortot, 1980, p.67), also the first day of French Revolution in 1789. At the end of the Prélude, a faraway quotation of “Marseillaise” (Roberts, 2001, p. 186) concludes this festival of sounds.

4.2.9 Historical Recordings of 24 Debussy Préludes

After the inventions of phonograph in 1877 by Thomas Edison (1847-1931) and graphophone in 1887 by Alexander Graham Bell (1847-1922), commercial sound recordings of music became available and helped audience cross the borders of region and time. A historical recording is a tonal record of the past. Recording technology has also provided materials for studies pertaining to chronicles of musical experience in human history.

Selections of Debussy Préludes have been recorded by numerous artists since early 20th century. Amongst the aforementioned French pianists and pedagogues of Debussy’s time, Schmitz and Cortot have recorded the Préludes, all twenty-four and twelve, respectively. French pianist of the same era, Jacques Février (1900-79) also recorded the complete Debussy Préludes. Noteworthy is the recording of 24 Debussy Préludes by Walter Giesecking (1895-1956), French-born German pianist known for his immense concert repertoire of all German composers, 20th century Italian music, and works by Rachmaninoff, Ravel, and Debussy. Giesecking was the

most renowned student of Karl Leimer (1858-1944), whose pedagogic method was expounded in the book that he co-authored with Giesecking, *Piano Technique*.

After having surveyed such a rich collection of research resources, my personal experience of 24 Debussy Préludes was yet to start. The existing writings and recordings of scholars and musicians demonstrate their understanding of Debussy's aesthetics and opuses. Reading their words could but give me a starting point to think, search, and gain my own practical knowledge of both musical and non-musical contents of these compositions. The following chapter shall investigate and elaborate on my personal study of Debussy Préludes.

5 Transformative Cycle

5.1 From Concept to Application – Internalizing the Extra-Musical Associations in 24 Debussy Préludes

In September, 2007, when I first started learning the 24 Préludes of Claude Debussy, I became fascinated with these pieces and their cryptic subtitles. As I was studying the music, I was also investigating the extra-musical references, which the subtitles suggested, of this repertoire. While the number of Préludes grew in my pianistic study, the non-musical associations in this music took me on a parallel journey to explore the world that fascinated and stimulated Debussy.

From studying Debussy's musical text and its extra-musical inspirations, my personal experience was enriched and my scope of musical and non-musical imagination widened. What I came across in travelling, literature, arts, nature, and history became part of my musical interpretation of these Préludes. The sensory experience from the extra-musical aspect of Debussy Préludes entered my memory storage and came alive at the moment of performing these Préludes.

Music, sensations, and my personal experience of Debussy Préludes all blended together. Thoughts, images, gestures, and emotions dissolved into one another and emerged as purely musical impulses in my performances of these Préludes. My personal experience enabled me to internalize the non-musical associations in Debussy Préludes, which created a starting point for my understanding and interpretation of these Préludes to develop and evolve. With time and experience, it also became a tool to enhance my mental concentration and overall engagement during my musical performances.

In the following sections, the 24 Debussy Préludes are divided into eight categories of extra-musical associations. Each category is accompanied by a description of my personal experience and how it has transformed my musical comprehension and conception of each Prélude.

5.1.1 Travels to Foreign Places: *Les collines d'Anacapri, La Puerta del Vino, La sérénade interrompue*

In these three Préludes, *Les collines d'Anacapri* refers to the village and scenery of Anacapri in Capri, an island in southern Italy. *La Puerta del Vino* is a 13th century gate inside the royal city

of the Alhambra in southern Spain. *La sérénade interrompue* shows Spanish flair in its timbres and atmosphere, as well as melodic and rhythmic structure.

In the summer of 1998, I paid my first visit to Capri, Italy. I saw Monte Solaro, the rocky hills of Anacapri, which stretched all the way from the sea to the sky. When an afternoon thunderstorm descended upon the island, the sky turned black and the sea seemed to overflow. After twenty minutes of a violent downpour, the storm ceased as suddenly as it began. Bathed in glorious sunlight, the sky turned pure blue.

The opening of Debussy Prélude, *Les collines d'Anacapri*, brings the images of the brilliant sky, navy blue sea, and rugged hills of Capri to my mind's eye. Its joyous tarantella reminds me of the dancing waves under the hydrofoil from Naples to Capri. The lazy interlude, marked “*modéré et expressif*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 21), carries the scent of salty breeze. Whenever I play *Les collines d'Anacapri*, its undulating waves transport me back to Capri, the land of dazzling light and open space.

Prior to learning the two Préludes, *La Puerta del Vino* and *La sérénade interrompue*, my contact with Spain was limited. I heard about bullfighting and flamenco, read Don Quixote of Cervantes, saw artworks of Picasso, Dalí and Miró, listened to music of Albeniz and de Falla, and ate paella. However, these were disconnected pieces of an impression and wanting in personal meaning.

When I first read the Prélude, *La Puerta del Vino*, I was puzzled by Debussy's marking at the beginning, “*mouvement de Habanera avec de brusques oppositions d'extrême violence et de passionnée douceur*” (Debussy, 2007, p.70). I knew of Habanera as a dance, but why these oppositions of extreme violence and passionate sweetness? Some explanations came when I was watching a performance of *El sombrero de tres picos* (The three-cornered hat).

El sombrero de tres picos is a ballet commissioned by Sergei Diaghilev for the Ballets Russes, composed by Manuel de Falla, choreographed by Léonide Massine, and premiered in 1919. The sets and costumes are designed by Pablo Picasso. This ballet is based on a popular story about the social conflict between common people and the corrupted ruling class in 18th century Spain. De Falla's score and Massine's choreography incorporate elements of the Spanish folk dances and music from fandango, *seguidillas*, *farruca*, and jota. Picasso's elaborate costume designs

and vibrant palette are inspired by the 18th century figures and costumes in Francisco Goya's early paintings, *Tapestry Cartoons*, at Prado Museum in Madrid, Spain.

The two principal characters in *El sombrero de tres picos*, the miller and his wife, are representative of Spanish people and their tradition. They move and dance with breathtaking pride and grace. While the miller exhibits strength and gallantry, his wife is coquettish and charming. Many of the miller's commanding gestures are identical to a banderillero in bullfighting, the torero who pierces the bull with decorated darts. In Spanish culture, the bull is a symbol of violence and power, which can only be conquered and controlled by skilful maneuvers.

After having the experience of watching and listening to a reproduction of *El sombrero de tres picos* by Paris Opera Ballet (1994), my musical imagery in *La Puerta del Vino* began to include stylized dances of seduction and power, the sounds of castanet, and the vitality in the rhythmic foot stomping. Particularly memorable for me was how proud and erect the dancers held their torsos, the slight upward tilt of their chins, and their smiling eyes that were both mesmerizing and enticing.

In the summers of 2008 and 2009, I began to visit southern Spain. The scorching heat, the shining white walls of historical villages, the dark red colour of its land, and the burnt sunflower fields left indelible impressions in my memory. In the Andalusian town of Cordoba, the stone pavement collected so much heat during the day that it was still steaming after ten o'clock in the night. By contrast, the royal garden of the Alhambra, Generalife, was an oasis that provided water, vegetation, and shelter from the merciless heat.

The Moorish influence, so beautiful and mysterious, was visible in the architecture, visual arts, and decorative arts of southern Spain. Strolling around the royal city of Alhambra and the Albaicín quarter of Granada was like taking a pathway into history. Muslims, Christians, and Gypsies all passed through Andalusia and left distinct footprints in the superimposed architectural features of this multicultural land.

After these travels, the Prélude, *La sérénade interrompue*, evoked a different image for me. This portrait of Spanish night life became embellished with my memory of the dry heat of daytime and the soothing coolness of night air. I could visualize a lonely guitarist playing his heart out in

the darkness and his pleading tunes being occasionally interrupted by the passing traffic, rowdy and indifferent.

A closer examination musical text of de Falla (1921) in *El sombrero de tres picos* revealed two *cante-jondo* songs. *Cante-jondo* is a gypsy vocal style of story-telling, frequently of serious subject matter, in flamenco music. In *El sombrero de tres picos*, these songs warn people, especially married couples, to lock their gates and beware of the watching devil. The thought of unknown calamities, fortune and misfortune, and the capricious unpredictability of life is characteristic of *cante-jondo*.

The discovery of this vocal style has changed my way of hearing and playing the melodic sections in *La sérénade interrompue* and *La Puerta del Vino*. This new dimension of interpretation drew my attention to the musical elements in these Préludes. The melismatic writing, fancy ornamentation, and sudden changes in musical effects and moods acquired different expressive possibilities in these Spanish miniatures. As I played and listened to the rich harmony, the dancing ostinato, the variety of timbres, and the contrasting segments that abruptly switch from one to another, these musical features became coloured with my personal experience and turned into vehicles for expression in my musical performances.

5.1.2 Pilgrimage to Fairyland with Arthur Rackham: *La danse de Puck, Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses," Ondine*

Contemporary with Claude Debussy, Arthur Rackham was one of the most eminent illustrators of his day. The subtitles of three Debussy Préludes guided me to read Rackham's illustrated copies of the following books: William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for *La danse de Puck*, James Matthew Barrie's *Peter Pan in Kensington Garden* for "*Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses*", and Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué's *Undine* for *Ondine*. From Rackham's visual characterization, these fairytale figures leap out of the pages and come alive. Puck dances to and fro between the worlds of fairies and humans, baby Peter Pan flies across the London sky when the grown-ups are asleep, and Ondine weeps human tears in the palace of water spirits.

Under Shakespeare's quill pen and Rackham's paintbrush, the music in Debussy's *La danse de Puck* takes possession of character, action, and life from Puck's world. As Puck skips merrily

around, chaos, intoxication, and enchantment is presented on the dream stage of midsummer night. Driven by passion and jealousy, humans quarrel and fairies bicker. From one dispute to another, Puck laughingly casts spells and makes amends with a smile.

At the beginning of *La danse de Puck*, Debussy's marking reads, "*capricieux et léger*" (Debussy, 2007, p. 48). How light are Puck's dancing steps? Why are there so many whimsical changes in the music? As I follow the development of drama on this midsummer night stage, the nature of emotions, so changeable and fleeting, becomes evident. Between the commanding calls from Oberon's horn, Puck turns Bottom into a donkey-head, confounds quarrelsome couples with love potion, leads everyone out of harm's way, and vanishes before dawn. Puck's cheerful spirit lends wings to his dancing feet in the music. His deeds inject compassion into the few expressive moments of the Prélude. The comedy in Puck's magical endeavours dominates *La danse de Puck*.

How do fairies dance in Debussy Prélude, "*Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses?*" Quoted by Debussy as the subtitle of this Prélude, Rackham's illustration gives us a visual image. Barrie's book, *Peter Pan in Kensington Garden*, provides the context.

When I think about Barrie's description of fairies' fancy-dress ball in *Peter Pan in Kensington Garden*, the music of "*Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses*" starts to make sense. From the opening bars, a sound-image of this magical event, so ethereal and luminous, is depicted. From the shimmering harmonic alternation between perfect, diminished, and augmented 5^{ths}, the swirling rhythmic figures of 32nd notes in quintuplets and septuplets, the floating trills, and Debussy's markings of "*rapide et léger*" and "*sempre leggierrissimo*" (Debussy, 2007, p. 76), I can visualize the gathering of lovely fairies after lock-out time in Kensington Garden.

How light fairies must be to balance and dance on a thread of cobweb! The twirling waltzes in "*Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses*" are sometimes interrupted by fairy dancers who cannot keep up with the accelerando in Peter Pan's music-making. They fall to the ground, lightly as leaves, and need to be revived with the juice of wallflower. The section of "*en retenant*" (Debussy, 2007, p. 81) reminds me of Peter Pan's visits to his sleeping mother, as well as his indecision in whether to stay with her or return to his fairy and bird friends in Kensington Garden. The 28-bar long trills create the sensation of being suspended in mid-air. The little

tune, marked “*doux et rêveur*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 81), sounds like the lullaby Peter plays on his pipe to wipe away his mother’s tears.

If reading *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* helps the merry wanderer of the night to come alive in *La danse de Puck*, the story, image, and music of “*Les fées sont d’exquises danseuses*” make my shoulders tingle with invisible wings. In the Romantic fairytale of *Undine*, the metamorphic nature of elemental force, water, is embodied in the central figure, Undine, a water sprite with a human soul.

In Fouqué’s story, Undine undergoes a remarkable character transformation. From a capricious and carefree nymph, Undine becomes the most reflective and loving woman after her union with Knight Huldbrand of Ringstetten. Rackham’s illustrations surround Undine with watery images of sparkling lake, laughing ripples, roaring waves, heartbreaking tears, and limpid stream of purity. The reverberation of Undine’s whimsical behaviour, bewitching charm, wondrous power, and mysterious identity can be heard in the Debussy Prélude, *Ondine*.

In *Ondine* (Debussy, 2007), how many ways there are in using augmented, major, and minor 2^{nds} to create musical effects of “*scherzando*” (p. 102), “*scintillant*” (p. 103), “*doux*” (p. 103), “*à l’aise*” (p. 104), “*léger*” (p. 104), “*expressif*” (p. 104), and “*mormorando*” (p. 106)! Debussy’s musical rendering of Undine becomes open to the interpretation of my imagination. In Debussy’s score, the 32nd-note cascading figure of “*scintillant*” (p. 103) can be a glittering drop of water. The lapping waves of “*à l’aise*” (p. 104) are possible companions to Undine while she tenderly attends to her human friends and family. The section beginning with “*mormorando*” (p. 106) and leading up to the towering surge of “*mouvement*” (p. 108) reminds me of Undine’s struggle between the human and fairy worlds. Willingly giving up her own happiness, Undine tries to shield her human family from the menacing billows of her obstinate guardian, Kühleborn. With Fouqué’s characterization and Rackham’s portrayal in mind, I can enter the sound world of *Ondine* with promptitude to catch Debussy’s allusions to the multiformity of water and Undine’s temperament.

5.1.3 Portraits of Nature through the Mind's Eye: *Le vent dans la plaine*, *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest*, *Voiles*, *Brouillards*, *Feuilles mortes*, *Des pas sur la neige*, *Bruyères*

The fantastic soundscapes in the Debussy Préludes, *Le vent dans la plaine*, *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*, *Voiles*, and *Brouillards*, are moulded by air and water, the elemental forces of nature. The Préludes of *Feuilles mortes*, *Des pas sur la neige*, and *Bruyères* are musical vignettes of changing seasons and solitary contemplation. As I was learning these Préludes, I had to search inwards for my past impressions of nature and reach out with my senses in realtime experience. What I saw, heard, smelled, and felt in my outdoor excursions became an integral part of my musical comprehension and interpretation of these compositions.

From my recollection of listening to air movement, it is possible to perceive the surrounding space, its scope, and the landscape. The whirling figure of minor 2nd and its inversion is present throughout the Prélude, *Le vent dans la plaine*. Starting with a B-flat pedal point and Debussy's marking, "*aussi légèrement que possible*" (Debussy, 2007, p.8), this figure twirls like a breeze frolicking in the field. The air current whistles as it brushes against branches and leaves. When the wind changes velocity and volume, it is accompanied by occasional strokes of lightning in G-flat and other major chords. How suddenly this far-away lightning slashes the sky! As the wind returns to the opening B-flat pedal point, it continues its open space travel, meets little resistance, and vanishes without a trace.

If it is possible to visualize lightning bolts in the forte middle section of *Le vent dans la plaine*, there are several groundbreaking cracks of thunder in *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*. In this Prélude, the west wind from the Atlantic coast stirs the ocean and unleashes its infernal forces. What can happen on the sea is completely open to the imagination. A wide variety of musical effects is created by using the chords of 7th, 9th, and 11th with altered 5th. The rumbling waves in 32nd-note arpeggio, marked "*animé et tumultueux*" (Debussy, 2007, p. 26), unveil the stormy stage. The lone vessel in pianissimo "*plaintif et lointain*" (p. 27) emerges and undertakes its perilous expedition. When the storm momentarily subsides at "*un peu retenu, piano mais en dehors et angoissé*" (p. 29), only muffled sounds of roaring ocean and distant thunders are audible. While no one knows when nature shall strike again, the tension is at its greatest.

In the two Debussy Préludes about wind, I have the sensation of becoming one with the moving air current. The buoyancy of *Le vent dans la plaine* takes me on a breezy adventure. With *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*, I experience the unpredictability of tempests and the full impact of turbulence.

The enigmatic Prélude, *Voiles*, gives a vague clue with its subtitle. In the opening, there are three layers in the musical texture: double 3^{rds} marked piano and “*très doux*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 4), low B-flat pedal point marked portato and pianissimo, and octaves marked pianissimo and “*expressif*” (p. 4). The use of whole-tone scale and augmented chords in this section liquifies the tonal polarity of tension and resolution. As I listen to the flowing movement of these layers, I can imagine air, fabric, water, and their free interaction with one another. With the markings of “*dans un rythme sans rigueur et caressant*” and “*très doux*” (p. 4), a gentle breeze in double 3^{rds} sighs. Accompanied by the murmuring surge in B-flat ostinato, a sailboat approaches from afar in solemn octaves. As the different musical elements come into contact with one another, they mingle and form one fluid motion that runs its course without constraints.

On foggy evenings, what I experience outdoors is an obliterated perception of distance, direction, and movement. Outlines of objects are blurred by air laden with moisture. Too light to descend in water drops and too heavy to evaporate, mist hovers in midair, obscures the senses, and kindles the imagination. In the Debussy Prélude, *Brouillards*, vapour is maintained in perfect suspension by the chromatic juxtaposition of chords. Marked “*extrêmement égal et léger*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 60), the 32nd-note quintuplets from the opening bar dampen the floating 8th-note chords. In the musical texture of this Prélude, the use of extreme registers also creates the impression of light and shadow. An occasional beam of light penetrates the void and highlights the boundless darkness all around, leaving me in isolated reflection.

How much sensory experience can be awakened by the Debussy Prélude, *Feuilles mortes*! When I play and listen to this Prélude, the image of autumn and the turning of life cycle come forth. As external activities quieten down, the inmost thoughts become discernible. From the opening of “*lent et mélancolique*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 66), Debussy’s use of 9th and 11th chords without perfect 5th creates a sonority that is both rich and hollow. How quietly the line of “*doucement soutenu et très expressif*” (p. 66) moves in solitude! While listening to the distant reverberation of 8th-note portato from outer registers, this lone voice sings in a whisper. From

“*un peu plus allant et plus gravement expressif*” (p. 67) to “*mouvement (dans le sentiment du début)*” (p. 69), the middle section gives an impression of inner world’s awakening during outer world’s hibernation. Memories and feelings surface from the past. When the mezzo forte triads arrive in 32nd-note triplet (p. 68), the brilliance of perfect 5th makes a sudden injection of energy into the harmonic colour. Is this aspiration and potentiality for the future and the next beginning?

While nature and its changes can be used for symbolizing human emotions and life, the Prélude of *Des pas sur la neige* presents a great contrast between the hard frozen landscape and the yearning of an aching heart. As requested by Debussy’s marking, “*ce rythme doit avoir la valeur sonore d’un fond de paysage triste et glacé*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 24), the ostinato motif around D pedal point paints the icy landscape throughout this Prélude. In this bleak image, the chilly air turns the snow on the ground into mini ice pellets. Except for the sound of footsteps and cracking snow, the outside world is still. The stillness of the physical world allows a voice of the emotional world, marked “*expressif et douloureux*” (p. 24), to be heard. From “*en animant surtout dans l’expression expressif et tendre*” to “*comme un tendre et triste regret*” (p. 25), Debussy builds an intensity of expression with the musical texture. How many versions of harmonization Debussy weaves around the D pedal point ostinato! As the heart speaks out, grief is expressed and pain soothed. Both in sound and silence, the multiple singing layers listen and respond to one another. Whether it is the barren wintry land or a soul’s unuttered thoughts, the silence in *Des pas sur la neige* is poignant and equally pregnant of meanings as sound.

If I experience desolation and iciness in *Des pas sur la neige*, the soft warmth from the Prélude, *Bruyères*, gently thaws me out. In *Bruyères*, Debussy’s use of 7th, 9th, 11th, and 13th chords facilitates the general harmonic progression. From measures 1 to 5, the opening phrase can be traced to two chords, dominant 13th and tonic of A-flat major. From A-flat major outer sections to B-flat major middle section of “*un peu animé*” and “*joyeux*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 86), the modulation travels seamlessly through a half diminished 7th chord, supertonic 7th of B-flat minor. Using subtraction, this chord makes its first appearance in bar 6 as G-flat major chord, lowered subtonic of A-flat major. Using addition, it becomes dominant 11th with minor 9th of B-flat major to return to the last A-flat major section of mezzo forte “*au mouvement*” (p. 87).

While the harmonic construction creates an atmosphere of “*calme_doucelement expressif*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 84) in *Bruyères*, the chords are so expanded that they envelope and blend into one another. The fluidity with which Debussy navigates the tonal colours creates a feeling of open space and glowing serenity. When I look at images of heather bush, I see nature in soft bloom. At the renewal of life cycle, Mother Nature listens to its vibration and watches its joyous growth. When I play and listen to *Bruyères*, I recall the experience of walking outside on early spring days. To hear birds chirping, to feel sunshine warming my face, to see evergreen shrubs reaching towards sunlight, and to smell spring in the air brings peace and joy to my heart. While the senses perceive changing seasons, the mind observes eternity, which resides in every corner and every moment of life.

5.1.4 Through the Lens of Clowns and Caricatures: *Minstrels*, *General Lavine-eccentric*, *Hommage à S. Pickwick, Esq. P.P.M.P.C.*

When I watch clowns and ludicrous shows, it always brings up mixed feelings. Under the masks of ridicule and exaggeration, references to common personality traits and real-life situations can constantly be found. From Pierrot and Harlequin in Italian *commedia dell’arte*, blackface in American minstrel shows, to Till Eulenspiegel in Richard Strauss’ tone poem, *Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche* (Till Eulenspiegel’s Merry Pranks) (Celibidache, 2007), the portraits of these stereotypes and their clashes with various circumstances are always striking.

The Prélude, *Minstrels*, is a collage of comic character sketches, dancing, singing, and acrobatic tricks from mid-19th century America. An imaginary clown opens the stage and chuckles to himself in the “*gruppetti*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 54) ornamentation. With added major 2^{nds}, the rotating 16th-note figure, marked “*très détaché*” (p. 54), makes a few playful somersaults around the tonic chord of G major. Seven bars later, a brass band, marked forte and staccato with dynamic accents, suddenly jumps in and takes the spotlight. As I play *Minstrels* and listen to the surprising changes from one skit to another, my senses are delighted. The abrupt switches of characters and moods mirror the frivolities of life and laugh with good humour and compassion.

In the Prélude, *General Lavine-eccentric*, General Lavine makes a dramatic entrance with acrobatic turns in 32nd-note ornamentation around middle C, dominant of F major. When C resolves into tonic of F major, a pianissimo cakewalk starts. I can imagine General Lavine discreetly exploring his surroundings, being startled by the *sforzato* forte chords, resuming his

dance, breaking into a strut, crescendoing into exclamations of forte chords, and smilingly relaxing back to the F tonal centre with a sigh of relief. In the middle section, General Lavine digresses from F major and takes a wrong turn to A-flat, dominant of D-flat major. After wandering about in puzzlement, he finds a way back to F major. The manneristic characterization of General Lavine draws us as audience into his microcosm, where I become immersed in his story and momentarily forget myself as an outsider.

What can sound more British than a quotation of its anthem at the beginning of Debussy *Prélude, Hommage à S. Pickwick, Esq., P.P.M.P.C.*? This *Prélude* is a wonderful musical caricature of Samuel Pickwick, the central figure of *The Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens (1994) and an embodiment of benevolence, pomposity, and incompetence. Led by the club founder and perpetual president himself, members of the Pickwick Club go out into the world to enlarge their spheres of observation, advance their assiduous learning, and diffuse their prodigious knowledge. After the grand opening, the dotted 16th-note rhythm sets off, amiably and spiritedly, on an adventurous expedition. From “*retenu*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 111) to “*animez peu à peu*” (p. 112), I can hear these folks tirelessly ploughing through their enterprise. From “*animez peu à peu*” (p. 112) all the way to pianissimo “*lointain et léger*” (p. 114), I watch them making one foolish blunder after another. Witnessing such a display of good intention, perseverance, and absurdity, I cannot help smiling and sympathizing with these familiar human characteristics.

5.1.5 Enigma and Antiquity, Remembrance of Life and Symbol of Eternity: *La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune, Canope, Danseuses de Delphes*

The extra-musical associations in the two *Préludes*, *Canope* and *Danseuses de Delphes*, can be traced to the ancient civilizations of Etruria and Greece, respectively. While my imagination can be directed to Etruscan artefacts in *Canope* and Greek statues in *Danseuses de Delphes*, the *Prélude, La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune*, makes no definitive reference to any existing time, place, or subject. Whether the reference may be oriental, occidental, or fictional, what these three *Préludes* do share is their evocation of mystic celebrations and bygone cultures.

My experience with theatrical representation of antiquity and ritual began with watching a reproduction of *Le Sacre du printemps* by Mariinsky Orchestra and Ballet (2009). With scenario, sets, and costumes designed by Nicolas Roerich, the 1913 version of *Le Sacre du*

printemps is an artistic collaboration of Igor Stravinsky's music and Vaslav Nijinsky's choreography. Set in the time of ancient Slavs, *Le Sacre du printemps* is a series of pagan rituals to unite the energy between earth and sky, offer tributes to the sun god, and guarantee the survival of the tribe. Reconstructed by Millicent Hodson and Kenneth Archer, *Le Sacre du printemps* has returned to the stage of live performance since 1987.

Before seeing a reconstructed production, I was familiar with *Le Sacre du printemps* as an orchestral work. However, the experience of hearing Stravinsky's score, following the primal and relentless dances, and seeing the picturesque costumes in 2010 was beyond what I could have imagined from the music alone. The terrific impression of vitality, destiny, and inevitability was magnified hundredfold by the multi-sensory representation. With the sensation of actuality, the combination of sound, movement, and scenery made powerful impacts on my senses, emotions, and mind.

In *Le Sacre du printemps*, the music shapes the course of ritualistic action from the first number, *Les augures printaniers*, to the last, *Danse sacrale (l'élue)*, and gives impetus to the movement and character of each dance. On the contrary, premiered also in 1913, the Prélude, *La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune*, gives an impression of a solemn, timeless, mysterious, and silent ritual. The incorporeal parallel 7th chords, marked pianissimo and portato, sets the stage for a procession in *La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune*. Based on B diminished 7th chord with chromatic turns, the 32-note octatonic scale creates a view of moonlight through the shadow of leaves. Vibrating like distant and invisible bells, the dotted half-note on low C-sharp and portato 8th-note octaves, marked “*un peu en dehors*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 96), summon worshippers to join a ceremonious dance. Instead of visualizing actual movement with the music of *La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune*, a feeling of ritual without sound, dance without motion, and body without flesh is evoked. Can music convey the atmosphere of stillness, the sound of silence, the feeling of infinite space, and the reverberation of enchantment?

My extra-musical experience in the Prélude, *Canope*, started with a photograph of Etruscan cinerary urn and brought me to the direct experience of visiting the National Etruscan Museum at Villa Giulia in Rome, Italy, and Etruscan necropolis in Cerveteri and Tarquinia in central Italy. Stepping inside a necropolis, a city of the dead, I had a feeling of entering a world of the unknown as a continuation, not as an end. Inside some tombs, the interior space had the layout

of living quarters, the walls were covered with beautiful frescoes, and daily-life objects of practical and aesthetic values were present to accompany the departed on the journey of eternity. After these visits, my musical experience of *Canope* began to acquire different dimensions.

In the Prélude of *Canope*, the tonal scheme can be loosely constructed around three chords: tonic, subdominant, and subtonic of D Aeolian mode. The opening section, “*très clame et doucement triste*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 115), weaves a harmonic melody in pianissimo quarter-note chords around the resonance of D minor triad. Familiar harmonic colours of major and minor triads are shrouded in ambiguous progressions and unresolved 9th chords. For me, this tonal effect is analogous to the mystery of afterlife. From a familiar beginning, the development of both music and human lives reaches past recorded knowledge. Out of the harmonics from chords related to G minor, subdominant of D, two chromatic ornaments materialize. One circles around dominant 7th of G minor in triplet 8th notes. The other dances inside tonic 13th of G minor in 16th and 8th notes. As I listen to the indirect resolution of these 7th and 13th chords, a feeling of attentive quiescence is perceivable in the air. The closing section, “*1^{er} mouvement – retenue – plus lent – très lent*” (p. 117), brings back the harmonic melody in D from the beginning. The Prélude finishes on an open-ended subtonic 9th of D with the marking, “*très doux et très expressif*” (p. 117). Does hope for the future change our experience of the present? As the final and unfinished ornament dissolves in the sustained 9th chord, the present moment merges into the timeless continuum of existence.

The Prélude of *Danseuses de Delphes* and its reference to Delphi in Greece bring to my mind the temple of Apollo and his oracle, the medium between mortals and divinity, as well as plastic arts of ancient Greece. When an opportunity of seeing ancient Greek sculpture arose in 2008, I went to Reggio Calabria in southern Italy to visit Museo Nazionale della Magna Grecia. Two full-size Greek bronzes of bearded warriors from 460-430 BCE, the Bronzi di Riace (Riace Bronzes), are the most prized collection in this museum.

When I saw these statues, I was amazed by how animate and mobile they appeared in a motionless state. In the bronzes, the impression of harmonious realism came from a combination of seeing the angle of the turning head, following the direction of the gaze, watching the position of the limbs and the twist in the torso, and looking at the shape and connection of muscle groups.

In my mind, these sculptures captured the sensation of active energy and the feeling of movement in stillness.

After the exposure to these Greek masterpieces, it is possible to listen to the Prélude of *Danseuses de Delphes* with the idea of a musical sculpture. Aural perspective is created by the multi-layered sound structure at the beginning. One layer consists of “*doux et soutenu*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 2) quarter-note chords in portato, the second layer dances in solemn dotted rhythm with legato major and minor 2^{nds}, and “*lent et grave*” (p. 2) octaves in portato set the pace for this ceremonious procession. Centred at B-flat major triad, the reminder of tonic is gently brought forth by dominant of B-flat. As the ceremony proceeds, the quarter-note chords become rhythmically displaced, the tonal layers exchange registers, and altered chords frequently blur the harmonic expectancy. Despite the tendency to wander about other tonal spheres, the music keeps circling back to dominant of B-flat, thus keeping the tonal centre unmoved throughout the Prélude.

5.1.6 Resonance of Sound, Memory, and Image in Poetry: “*Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l’air du soir*,” *La fille aux cheveux de lin*

In the Préludes of “*Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l’air du soir*” and *La fille aux cheveux de lin*, Debussy’s reference to literature, another branch of his lifelong interests, is evident. “*Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l’air du soir*” is a quotation from *Harmonie du Soir*, a poem in Charles Baudelaire’s volume of *Les Fleurs du mal*. *La fille aux cheveux de lin* is a poem from “Chansons Écossaises” (Scottish Songs) in Charles Marie René Leconte de Lisle’s *Poèmes antiques*.

In the poem of Baudelaire (Hartley, 1963), *Harmonie du Soir*, emotions and memories are evoked by descriptions of sensory experience. Intoxicating fragrance of flowers, sobbing sounds from a violin, and striking colours of sunset and evening sky awaken the memory of past encounters and heartaches. By repeating the second and fourth lines of each stanza and inserting them as the first and third lines of the following stanza, the interlocking form reveals increasingly intimate and personal feeling as the poem continues. In this spiral structure, familiar images revolve around new apparitions. Together, they create a vortex of sensations and thoughts.

With Baudelaire's poetry in mind, my musical experience of examining Debussy's score, playing, and listening to "*les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir*" becomes enriched with word painting and imagery. Debussy's time signature at the beginning, 3/4 interspersed with 5/4, reminds me of sounds and scents waltzing languorously in evening air. The first two elongated bars in 5/4, as well as the low A pedal point in hemiola from bar 3 to 8, create a gentle swaying motion with elastic pulse. Marked "*harmonieux et souple*" (Debussy, 2007, p. 15), the 8th-note figure slowly dances around quarter-note chords in perfect 4^{ths}. The combination of dominant, diminished, and half-diminished 7th chords circles in chromaticism. The overall tonal outline rotates around opening and closing A major sections and middle A-flat major section of "*plus lent – en animant – cédez – rubato – serrez – rubato*" (p. 16). With all these rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic turning figurations, the familiar intervals of 4th and 3^{rds} acquire completely new sounds and expressions in the Prélude of "*Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir.*"

In the poem of Leconte de Lisle (Cobb, 1994), *La fille aux cheveux de lin*, the beauty of nature is blended with the image of the girl with flaxen hair. Through the portrayal of an outdoor summer morning, plants and animals, the beloved girl's flaxen hair and inviting cherry lips, and the expressive look in her eyes, the feeling of love is expressed. Instead of communicating love by declarations and vows, Leconte de Lisle's poem creates an experience of full immersion of what the lover hears, sees, and feels. By entering the lover's world, the reader can share the delight he takes in the companionship of nature and his beloved.

With intervals of major and minor 3^{rds}, a sinuous and ribbon-like melodic figure unveils the harmonic atmosphere of the Prélude, *La fille aux cheveux de lin*. In the time signature of 3/4, the rhythmic combination of 16th and 8th notes gently sets the music in motion with the marking, "*sans rigueur*" (Debussy, 2007, p. 34). Centred in the tonality of G-flat major, the chords of tonic, submediant, subdominant, and supertonic move seamlessly in and out of one another. Intervals of 3^{rds} permeate both melodic design and harmonic progression in *La fille aux cheveux de lin*. Evading definite cadences, supertonic 11th and tonic chords are employed in forming modal resolution for closing the first and last sections in G-flat major, as well as for moving through the E-flat major middle section, marked "*un peu animé*" (p. 34). Further than creating an effect of openness, serenity, delicacy, and blissfulness, the overall fluidity in this Prélude

reminds me of the harmonious integration of sensory experience and emotional sentiments in Leconte de Lisle's poem.

5.1.7 Musical Arabesque: *Les tierces alternées*

My direct experience with arabesque patterns in Islamic art came from seeing surface decorative arts inside Moorish architectures of the Mezquita de Córdoba (Great Mosque of Cordoba) and the royal palace of Alhambra in Spain. The most intricate ornamental patterns evolve from simple motifs like foliage, fruits, flowers, flames, stars, geometric shapes, and interlacing lines. Such purity of structural components stimulates artists to explore infinite possibilities of expression in each element and bring them to fruition.

Based on major and minor 3^{rds}, the Prélude of *Les tierces alternées* is a kaleidoscopic musical puzzle. With the exception of simultaneous C major 3^{rds} in the third last bar, the sound units of major and minor 3^{rds} are played by alternating hands throughout this Prélude. In the time signature of 2/4, the rhythmic variety in these alternating 3^{rds} includes common note values of quarter, 8th, 16th, triplet 8th, and dotted 8th. Stepwise movement between alternating 3^{rds}, like the trill figure between right and left hands at “*un peu plus animé*” (Debussy, 2007, p.118), is inverted and creates sonority of 9th chords at the beginning, “*modérément animé*” (p. 118), and in the middle section, “*doux et lié*” (p. 122). From Debussy's combination of specific harmonic and rhythmic materials, an amazing composition of capricious character, lilting melodic line, rich harmonic resonance, and inexhaustible creative freedom comes into existence.

In a structural analysis of *Les tierces alternées* in Diether de la Motte's *Kontrapunkt – ein Lese- und Arbeitsbuch* (Counterpoint – a reading and workbook) of 1991, the rhythmic, tonal, and melodic materials are laid out in a two-dimensional blueprint. In this format of presentation, what is not immediately perceivable in temporal medium becomes another type of musical and intellectual experience. Furthermore, it reminds me of the visual and spatial experience of watching arabesque patterns in Islamic art. Instead of being limited by restriction, the artists' imagination becomes fully activated to reach unprecedented height of creativity.

5.1.8 Legend and Festivities: *La Cathédrale engloutie, Feux d'Artifice*

The extra-musical association in the Prélude, *La Cathédrale engloutie*, refers to the legend of Ys, a undersea Gothic city in Brittany, France. My personal experience of French Gothic cathedrals,

Notre Dame de Paris and Basilique Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Chartres, was awe-inspiring. The height of these architectural wonders was supported by columns, pointed arches, flying buttresses, and spires. Standing inside these cathedrals, I could but look up and admire the heaven-reaching ceiling and the vast space all around me.

In *La Cathédrale engloutie* and legends like the city of Ys, the potentialities for transformation and the mysterious rules by which they abide are fascinating and astonishing. The image of a cathedral emerging from sea amazes me not only with the motion of reaching upwards to divinity, but also with the idea of rebirth. Like Sandro Botticelli's painting, *Birth of Venus*, at Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy, water is a symbol for the cradle of life also in Greek mythology.

Marked “*profondément calme (dans une brume doucement sonore)*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 42) at the opening of the Prélude, *La Cathédrale engloutie*, a sonority of depth and immateriality is created by a hollow chord on G, dominant of C major, with perfect 8^{ve} and 5th in extreme opposite registers. Gliding across the central register, chords with the same intervals blend into the overall harmonics and produce an effect of fluidity and transparency. This musical texture brings to my mind the image of water and a submerged Gothic cathedral. After the E octave strikes twelve times, magic begins to happen. At the marking, “*peu à peu sortant de la brume*” (p. 43), waves of triplet 8th notes rise and fall around a low B pedal point as the cathedral slowly ascends. When the C major hymn in full organ resonance arrives at “*sonore sans dureté*” (p. 44), the fortissimo chords delineate the monumental profile of the cathedral, which towers over the sea surface.

If water symbolizes the womb of life, fire represents its consummation. In my early childhood in Taiwan, we kids played with fireworks during Chinese New Year celebrations. Seeing flames of various colours and shapes bursting out of tiny tubes was both breathtaking and scary. Depending on the design, the detonation of each firework made distinct trajectory with particular velocity for certain duration.

The Prélude of *Feux d'Artifice* brings back my memory of these explosive and thrilling spectacles. What an assortment of fireworks is created by Debussy's sound figures in this Prélude! There are the shimmering whole-tone 32nd-note triplets at the opening, marked “*léger, égal et lointain*” (Debussy, 2007, p. 126), the faraway blasts of triton staccato octaves, the flying arpeggios of 7th, 9th, and 11th chords, and the thunderous adaptation of French national anthem, *la*

Marseillaise. Coming out of nothing and returning to silence, *Feux d'Artifice* reminds me of how fireworks roar across the night sky, illuminate the darkness with their brilliancy, and dissolve into the colours of night. When I apply my personal experience to playing and listening to this Prélude, the virtuoso pianistic writing ceases to be merely acrobatic. My imagination is on fire, my body is engaged in the sound production, and the musical experience becomes exciting on mental, physical, and emotional levels.

With such recollections of the formation of my personal knowledge and how my musical understanding of these Debussy Préludes was molded accordingly, the following chapter will use the somatic tools of body-mind awareness and self-observation to examine my musical experience in eight Debussy Préludes.

6 Emerging Themes from Transformative Cycle

6.1 From Personal Experience to Knowledge – Externalizing Somatic Transformation of Body-Mind Awareness in 8 Debussy Préludes

In the previous chapter, my transformation through the musical and extra-musical experience in my study of 24 Debussy Préludes was described. The current chapter will examine what I have learned from yoga, one of the somatic disciplines studied, and how this tool of body-mind awareness has helped improving several aspects of my musical study and performance of the Debussy Préludes.

After six years of intensive hatha yoga practice, my range of body mobility, kinesthetic sense, and thinking habits have changed. Through stretching and strengthening exercises in yoga posture flows, my musculoskeletal balance and circulation system grew better. The breathing exercises in Pranayama helped me to develop body awareness and relaxation skills. During the process of releasing muscular tension and acquiring control of respiration, I learned to expand my sensory experience, gain introspection, and raise my tolerance level.

Yoga practice starts on the mat. Off the mat, life application varies from person to person. From what I have learned on the mat, having access to emotional management, reflective thinking, and body-mind consciousness is beneficial for my daily activities. In my musical study, application of somatic practice appeared useful for monitoring my physical and mental conditions, elevating my level of concentration, and increasing my adaptability to surprises and changes in performance situations.

Examining my physical experience during the past musical performances of such Debussy Préludes as *Bruyères* and *La fille aux cheveux de lin*, I noticed dissimilar physical states and mental attitudes. In the opening solitary phrase of *Bruyères*, my body felt ready to play without any muscular over-contraction and my mind focused on hearing the imaginary resonance of minor 11th chord that envelops the melody. *La fille aux cheveux de lin* also begins with a single melodic filament. However, I found myself uncertain about how to create a natural effect of rhythmic undulation in that phrase. At the same time, I held my breath and felt my muscular effort of moving this phrase in the engagement of my upper chest and right inner thigh. What

distinguishes the former condition from the latter in such musical experience of playing and hearing *Bruyères* and *La fille aux cheveux de lin*? What happens during a performance experience that I can consider gratifying? On which musical and non-musical elements do I focus my attention during such experience? How do my mind and body respond when I am confronted by what appears to be a challenging *Prélude*? How do solutions materialize to transform my state of physical and mental disharmony into a pleasurable musical immersion in such situation?

In my learning process of the 24 Debussy *Préludes*, observing my reaction to different structural characteristics, pianistic challenges, and non-musical associations in these compositions gave many practical pointers to formulate strategies for improvement. The somatic tool of body-mind awareness keeps me informed of the states of my physical involvement and mental participation. When sensations of body straining and mind disturbance are perceived, these signals give me the opportunity to choose what to do immediately and afterwards. On the other hand, when a satisfying performance experience occurs, self-observation becomes a tool to comprehend the focal point of my musical concentration and general condition of my body and mind. This musical and somatic data allows me to analyze the interplay of musical and non-musical elements in such experience for future reference.

Musical performance and Somatics are two branches of practice-based study. They both utilize sensory experience. They require active mental involvement and physical participation. In both fields, there is constant exposure to the unforeseen, which offers unending opportunities to learn more about music, Somatics, and myself. In both disciplines, to go from the departure point of receiving new input to the moment of personal assimilation, I learned that time, practice, and self-reflection are indispensable. During my recent years of piano study with Mrs. Orlov at the University of Toronto, the interval between the moment when she introduced a new musical or technical concept and the time when I became able to apply it independently took at least one to two years. Such timing in my music learning process was parallel to that of my yoga practice. For example, I became acquainted with the technique of muscular engagement in the pelvic floor and abdomen areas at the beginning of 2013. It took me more than 12 months of daily yoga practice to become able to feel and gain conscious control of these body parts both on and off my yoga mat.

Using the same eight categories of Debussy Préludes and one piece from each group, the following sections will examine my somatic experience and musical transformation through these compositions. Descriptions of selected lesson content with my piano teacher, Mrs. Orlov, will be included to scrutinize how I assimilate new information and come to a personal realization of these Préludes. This account of my musical and somatic transformation is given with the purpose of studying my personal experience. It is not intended for making prescriptive statements nor generalizing objective facts. Specific musical excerpts are chosen to elucidate the explanations about my personal journey through these eight pieces and labelled as Figures 6.1 to 6.12 below.

6.1.1 Foreign Places – Getting Started

When I first looked at the music and subtitle of *La Puerta del Vino*, my immediate impression was that both musical idiom and non-musical reference in this Prélude were outside my experience. How could I hear and project more Andalusian temperament in *La Puerta del Vino*? What did it mean to sound Spanish? While my musical and extra-musical investigation into the mystery of this composition began, I also had opportunities to watch myself during moments of practicing and playing.

On a mental level, I could see myself worried about not being familiar with the stylistic features of this piece. As I faced my doubts, I detected an urge to go straight to the piano and play till something better happened. On a listening and playing level, I noticed that my attempt to play was much more predominant than hearing and imagining the musical sounds. However, from my past experience of practicing without having a clear idea of what to hear, I knew this was not a solution. When the action of performing prevailed over the process of listening and understanding, my rendering of *La Puerta del Vino* could not project a full realization of the musical effects in this sound tableau.

Witnessing where my attention went in previous executions of this Prélude, I started to consider other focal points for redirecting my concentration. As I was gathering direct experience of Spain and Spanish culture, my recollection of that land was a sensation of melting in the merciless heat and dry atmosphere. The colours of the landscape and architecture were brilliant. My experience of the scorching sun of Iberia made me very grateful for the welcoming shadows of cooler nights. With a broader scope of imagination and associations, I scrutinized Debussy's

score, which increased my receptivity to listen and search for expressive musical integrants. Turning back to the composer's notation, I kept my ears out for details to gain further musical comprehension of *La Puerta del Vino*.



Figure 6.1 Measures 11 to 13: the chromatic embellishment above the resonance of a 9th chord (Debussy, 2007, p. 70).

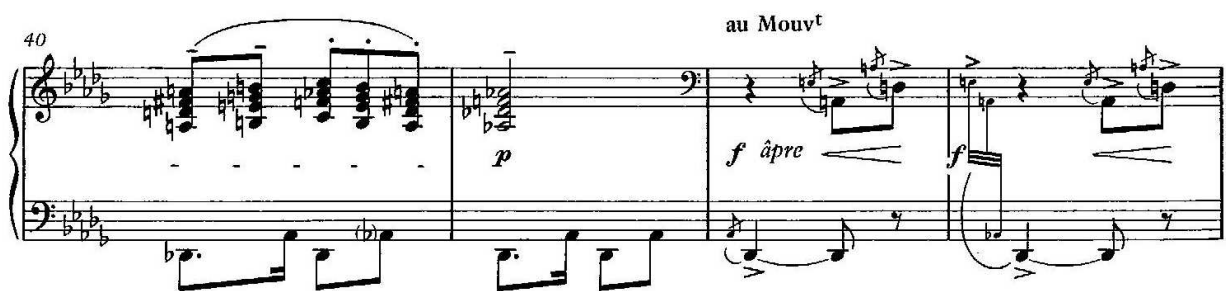


Figure 6.2 Measures 40 to 44: the swaying habanera rhythm being abruptly interrupted by a motif one octave below (Debussy, 2007, p. 72).

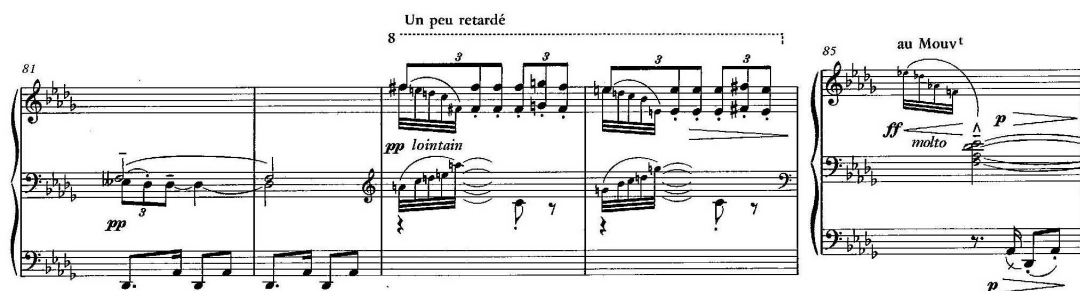


Figure 6.3 Measures 81 to 85: the suggestive characterization of chivalry and allurement (Debussy, 2007, p. 75).

Admiring the chromatic embellishments in the harmonic resonance in Figure 6.1, feeling the swaying habanera rhythm and being startled by abrupt entrances of musical figurations in octave

displacements in Figure 6.2 on page 61, taking delight in the suggestive characterization of chivalry and allurements in altered chords in Figure 6.3 on page 61, and exploring the shadowy depths of sustained chords of 9th from the beginning to the end were but a few possibilities to help me see this piece in a new light. Bringing my attention to these musical components and their temporal interaction facilitated the establishment of my focal points of concentration. When my mind strayed away from the music during the performances of *La Puerta del Vino*, these musical cues assisted me in recovering my centre of attention.

6.1.2 Fairyland with Illustrations by Rackham – Airborne Peter Pan

One of the wondrously aerial Préludes, "*Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses*" hovers between the worlds of human and fairy. To my ears, the continuous trills throughout the piece evoke the ethereal images of fairies coming together and later, of an airborne baby Peter Pan approaching his sleeping mother's window.

Almost transparent and floating on a thread of sustained tones, Debussy found ingenious and musical ways to employ the figuration of *trillo*. While I marvelled at the beauty of this Prélude, I also noticed myself being concerned about how to navigate such trill passages of extended lengths. As a technical preparation, several *trillo* exercises with various combinations of fingering, tonalities, velocity, and dynamics were a part of my experimentation in daily practice.

When the moment of playing "*Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses*" came, I watched myself as the music proceeded. As the duration of each trill ornamentation became prolonged, my attention was shifting away from music to my preoccupation about playing *trillo*. As my apprehension escalated, my physical movements became inefficient, my muscles started contracting, and this embellishment lost its continuity and decorative quality. During the 28-bar long trills in Figure 6.4 on page 63, which precedes the closing section of this exquisite musical portrait, my recurrent experience was that of mental uneasiness, physical fatigue, and a feeling that such *trillo* was becoming increasingly clumsy and heavy with every bar.

Figure 6.4 Measures 73 to 78: the beginning of this 28-bar long trill and the entrances of resonant layers below (Debussy, 2007, p. 81).

For this seemingly technical problem, I delved into the harmonic texture of this *Prélude* for musical solutions. In Debussy's score, this ornamentation figure of *trillo* is always enveloped in the resonance of the chord progressions. Instead of playing trill notes to create the effect of smooth continuity in Figure 6.4, hearing the embellishment in the harmonics of the sustained lower tones gave me a musical contextualization and alternative options. When I started to hear the *trillo* figures as the overtones of the general harmonic progression, they became more of a continuation of the overall tonal vibration and less of an isolated entity. As I listened to the harmonization of different musical layers, I had a clearer idea of how the surrounding chords were supporting the fluttering trills. When the sound was distinct in my musical imagination, my arm muscles stopped over-contracting and my palm ceased squeezing, which facilitated the movement of *trillo* playing.

Hearing and playing this musical decorative figure either within the harmonic overtones or as a trill *per se* resulted in very different performance experiences. For me, listening to the sound and working with the music was instrumental in adapting my playing mechanism for musical intents, as well as finding a more comfortable movement for playing trill ornamentation.

6.1.3 Portraits of Nature – Seeking My Focal Point of a Musical Experience

Bruyères has been one of the more accessible *Préludes* in my study and performance experiences. From a musical viewpoint, hearing the expressive quality of the music, the subtle shifts in the harmonic nuances, the fluidity in the harmonic rhythm and melodic lilt has always delighted me. From a somatic viewpoint, I noticed a calmer state in the body and a readiness of the mind to enter a musical experience of *Bruyères*.

From my experience of this composition, what created favourable performance conditions? Did a musical experience of mental ease and physical comfort originate in my personal preference? On what did I focus my attention to immerse myself in the music during the past performances of *Bruyères*? What did I hear and follow? What united the various musical elements in my listening and playing experience?

From my yoga practice, the awareness of my body-mind condition has become more acute, which enabled me to reflect on my musical experience. However, the introspection and relaxation techniques were only the beginning of gaining an understanding of why a particular musical experience was satisfying. What happens in my mental state and physical condition, as well as how I can consciously enter other moments of musical gratification, is the focus of my interest and curiosity.

From the first readings of *Bruyères*, I had the impression that musically and technically, this piece was within my capabilities. Unobstructed by immediately recognizable difficulties, I was free to start learning this Prélude without worry. As I became more familiar with the music, I found myself looking for more ways to hear the changing tonal colours during the chord connections. For instance, Figure 6.5 shows the sustained tone of E flat throughout the phrase ending of piano and *più piano* and extending into the 2-bar transition in 3/4 time signature. This E flat sonority connects the successive chords together in my tonal imagination and gives me an opportunity to create a longer phrase with different shades of harmonic colours. Listening for the ubiquitous reverberation between the sounds became an integral part of my musical focus in *Bruyères*. Hearing how harmoniously the chords, melodies, and rhythms blend with one another widened my musical imagination. It also provided a doorway to finding a richer palette of tonal nuances for my playing.

The image shows a musical score for measures 15 to 19 of Debussy's *Bruyères*. The score is in G-flat major (three flats) and 3/4 time. Measures 15-17 show a piano (p) section with a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. Measure 18 is marked 'più piano' and 'pp doux et léger'. Measure 19 is a 2-bar transition. The E-flat note is sustained throughout the phrase.

Figure 6.5 Measures 15 to 19: the suggestive resonance of E flat (Debussy, 2007, p. 85).

This process of exploring the usage of musical elements for interpretation brought me to find inspiration and natural expression during my performances of this Prélude. The freedom from any mental and physical concern was a central physiopsychological feature of this learning experience. The absence of fear allowed me to fully concentrate on the musical elements, form a sound image of their effect, and enjoy the musical execution. This insight was of benefit for other compositions that I was studying.

When I detected my fear in other pieces, this observation helped me to not react instinctively. First, I began by locating where my fear originated. Surveying my mental and physical states, I brought my awareness to where the body parts were over-contracting and what was preoccupying my mind. Seeing the correspondent musical happenings, I could then select a musical problem to solve in such condition of physical tension and mental concern. Taking my time to attentively listen, apply, and work on the musical components in such learning situations helped to find my way into the music.

6.1.4 Clowns and Caricatures – Caprice and Astonishment

In Debussy's musical characterization of *General Lavine - eccentric*, Edward Lavine the comic acrobat comes to life. For me, his sudden somersaults, awkward movement, capricious mood swings, and quirky humour presented an immediate challenge to realize a musical interpretation. Further than being confounded, I found the caprice in General Lavine's funny sketches tricky to manage in musical renderings.

When I saw the instantaneous switches in the dynamics, my haste in complying with the subito piano, sforzando forte in piano, and forte markings often resulted in overlooking the gradation of sonority. When forte was indicated, I frequently landed on fortissimo. When I was listening and following some peculiar deviations in harmonic progression, I often lost track of the rhythmic impulse. When I was not prepared for the abrupt changes in the music, they took me by surprise.

On a parallel plane, I observed my physical movement while playing the passages of sudden shifts in this Prélude. I could feel the exertion in my arm muscles when making an effort to create contrasting effects in my performances. My eagerness to comply with Debussy's indications translated into excessive muscular effort, which resulted soon in physical fatigue.

During my lessons, we investigated how the rhythmic units of 8th notes could structurally stabilize the divergent musical effects amid a general state of flux. Such musical problems requested a renewal of my imagination and General Lavine's portrayal. How did he impersonate a wooden puppet to leave Debussy with such a vivid musical impression of rigidity? Returning to Debussy's score as seen in Figure 6.6, the 8th-note triads with markings of dry staccato at the beginning began to acquire a rhythmic angularity in my visual and sound imagination. During the transition of a suspension of silence, a fermata, and the trailing triads to a surprise in Figure 6.7, the quality of stiffness in the rhythmic units of 8th notes helped me to employ the full duration of each 8th length for preparing the effects of unexpected changes.

Dans le style et le Mouvement d'un Cake-Walk

Figure 6.6 Measures 1 to 3: the 8th-note chords with dry staccato (Debussy, 2007, p. 89).

Figure 6.7 Measures 43 to 48: transition from rhythmic angularity to silence, fermata, and a surprise (Debussy, 2007, pp. 91-92).

Becoming aware of the structural value in the 8th-note time units changed my physical movement between the sharp attacks of the wooden sounds in this musical comedy. I could produce the tone quality of angularity and stiffness with the speed of my pianistic attack, thus leaving the

larger muscles of my arms agile and available to go swiftly from one spot to another in these comical skits. By finding a suitable point in my playing mechanism to engage and keeping the other body parts neutral enhanced my physical coordination. It helped me to create a more effective musical caricature.

The clarification of General Lavine's stage image gave me an access to comprehend Debussy's composition and shape the dramatic timing in this Prélude. When the extra-musical associations of this musical comedy became internalized, the musical components acquired a different expressive meaning and reinforced my understanding and enhanced my concentration during the performances of *General Lavine - eccentric*.

6.1.5 Antiquity and Enigma – Terpsichorean Sculpture

The image of the dancing statues belongs to the realms of mythology, imagination, and arts. My experience of seeing ancient Greek sculpture, the Bronzi di Riace, in Italy was awe-inspiring. Handling such unyielding material as bronze, the artistic craftsmanship endowed the static figures with a sense of motion. When I was watching these bronzes, my gaze followed the converging lines along the contour of each statue. I found my body moving in accordance with where my eyes happened to be in the intersecting planes of these three dimensional structures. This physical sensation of feeling the movement in plastic arts was my first instance of experiencing a representation of motion and life in an inanimate artwork.

Translating this phenomenon into musical terms, *Danseuses de Delphes* posed a similar problem right from the start. In Figure 6.8 on page 68, the stately procession in the multi-layered sound structure is sustained by the quarter-note chords and little else. Consequently, the feeling of movement relies mostly on my musical imagination and the use of tonal colours. In my lessons, Mrs. Orlov suggested that I listen to the imaginary subdivisions of 8th and 16th notes for moving through the longer note values, as well as to employ imperceptible agogic emphases at various moments to feel the lilt of this sculptural dance. When I could hear the continuance of tone between the chords in the multiple layers, this Prélude brought a rewarding performance experience.

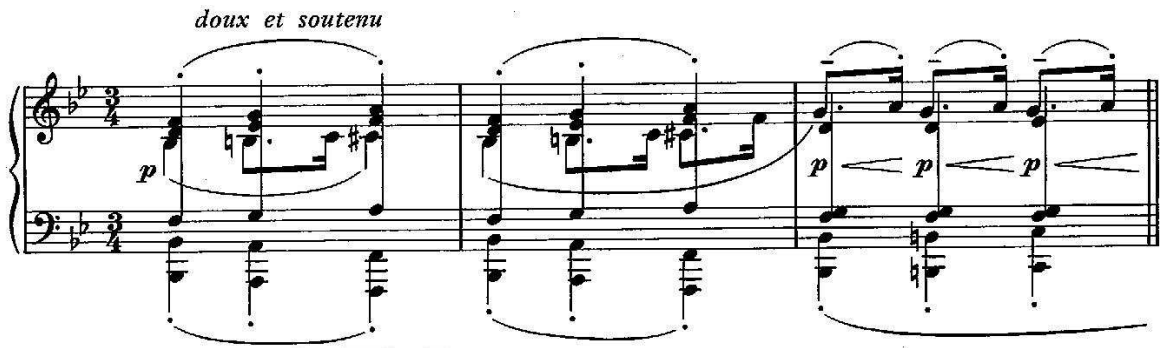


Figure 6.8 Measure 1 to 3: the feeling of procession between the quarter-note chords (Debussy, 2007, p.2).

Nevertheless, in a few recitals where I started with *Danseuses de Delphes*, I saw myself struggling with the unfamiliar instruments and unknown acoustics. I did not feel the fluidity in my sound connection as immediately as I thought necessary. At one point, I even considered myself incapable of starting a recital with this piece and thought about not playing it at the beginning of a performance.

Upon further reflection, I became aware of the fact that some minutes were required for me to warm up to an instrument and its characteristics. Also, I needed time to adjust my way of hearing, playing, and responding to the music in an unfamiliar space. This realization allowed me to stay calm and bring my focus to listening with undivided attention, accepting each instrument and venue as they are, and playing with the interaction of all these factors. Instead of expecting a particular musical result and being disappointed by unanticipated conditions, I was free to concentrate on the music and adapt myself to the unforeseeable elements of live performances.

6.1.6 Poetry – Resonance and Atmosphere

In Leconte de Lisle's poem of *La fille aux cheveux de lin*, the portrait of the girl with flaxen hair is enhanced by beauty of her surroundings. In Figure 6.9 on page 69, Debussy's composition begins with a solitary line, which is supported only by the resonance of my musical imagination for nearly two bars. Feeling the gentle sway of this tune, the composer's marking, "without rigour", suggests spaciousness and fluency. At the dynamic levels of piano and pianissimo, many subtle transitions of the mood, harmonic colour, and pace happen during the sustained tones.

Très calme et doucement expressif (♩ = 66)

The image shows a musical score for the first eight measures of a piece. The tempo is marked 'Très calme et doucement expressif' with a quarter note equal to 66 beats per minute. The score is in 3/4 time and the key signature has two flats. The first system (measures 1-4) shows a right-hand melody with eighth notes and a left-hand accompaniment of long, sustained chords. The second system (measures 5-8) continues the right-hand melody and the left-hand accompaniment. The marking 'p sans rigueur' is present in the first system.

Figure 6.9 Measures 1 to 8: the solitary opening with my imaginary harmonic support and the long chords providing the time for transition (Debussy, 2007, p. 34).

The tonal characteristics of this musical poem correspond to Leconte de Lisle's poetry. In the poet's description of this girl's delicate lips and big eyes, he implores her to not reply to his invitation with words, but with an expressive look of her eyes. In Figure 6.9, the harmonic resonance is implied by more silence than actual sound. Meanwhile, the rhythmic movement is felt during the duration of the ties instead of real notes. The atmosphere of intimacy is almost palpable, but it escapes a concrete description. The ineffability of such exquisite delight is present in the composer's economy of musical elements, from which a performer can infer infinite variations of expression. This is the musical challenge that I faced in learning and playing this Prélude.

Before I closely examined the harmonic structure of this sound tableau, I felt the urge to play expressively without having a clear idea of how and which musical components to use. While the formation of my musical conception was still underway, I found my posture in playing this Prélude to have a forward inclination in my upper body and a slight squeeze of my thighs. From what I learned in my yoga study, the lean to the front in my upper body suggested my eagerness to play this lovely piece. The contraction of my inner thighs implied my concern about not performing it well. While my body position mirrored my uncertainty about how to convey the

unaffected expressiveness of this musical poetry, I turned my attention back to the texts to seek a doorway to gaining more understanding of this composition.

Imagining and anticipating the harmonic support for the suspended melodic lines helps me to find the tonal colour of musical passages such as the opening phrase in Figure 6.9 on page 69. Hearing the subdivisions of elongated sounds into 8th and 16th length creates a feeling of elasticity in the shape and timing of the tonal vibrations. Playing the fundamental chord progression of this piece makes the connections and changes of its mood audible to my ears. These were but a few samples of experimentation to examine the structural elements and listen to this composition with fresh ears.

When I became ready to hear and play *La fille aux cheveux de lin* with harmonic resonance in my musical ears, my physical attitude changed. Instead of pressing forward, I could stay centred in the atmosphere of calmness and exquisiteness. The setting of open air and confidence in the poem reminded me to let my guard down momentarily.

When my musical imagination of the harmonic, rhythmic, and expressive components was formed, my listening began and shaped every moment of the musical experience. Each piano and acoustic space is unique, as well as the variability of every instant. Debussy's writing in *La fille aux cheveux de lin* demands that playing proceeds listening. Such performance experience is comparable to practicing a meditative yoga flow. I can only get ready, breathe, listen, and follow the music.

6.1.7 Musical Arabesque – Tracing the Thirds

The only Prélude subtitle with the reference to a musical component, *Les tierces alternées* is equally enigmatic as other Debussy Préludes with extra-musical references. When my teacher and I examined the musical writing of this composition, we located a hidden melodic line in the alternating thirds. The linear quality of this concealed melody forms a musical arabesque, which demands a special attention to articulation and phrasing. Over the alternating thirds in 16th note value, Debussy's indication says, "lightly detached without dryness" (Debussy, 2007, p. 118). According to this seemingly contradictory instruction, detached without dryness, how could the 3^{rds} be played? Which necessary physical movement would be required to create such a musical effect?

In my piano lessons on this Prélude, we first addressed the musical issue of the melodic arabesque and then looked at how to integrate the necessary acoustic, technical, and expressive elements to create an effect of fluidity between the 3^{rds}. In such a passage as Figure 6.10 shows, we experimented with inverting the distant 3^{rds} so they could be played as sinuous neighbour notes, separating the upper and lower layers of these 3^{rds}, playing a single layer with one hand in lieu of alternating hands, listening for the end of one sound to connect to the beginning of the next, and other combinations that facilitated the assimilation of legato hearing and playing.

Un peu plus animé
légèrement détaché sans sécheresse
les notes marquées du signe – doucement timbrées.

7 Cédez //

Figure 6.10 Measures 7 to 12: the 3^{rds} in alternation (Debussy, 2007, p. 118).

With time and attention, I learned to listen for the linear fluidity in this composition, which shaped a serpentine choreography for the two alternating hands. The movements of my arms and hands were simplified to a minimum, which reduced the weight in my finger contact with the piano keys. The tips of my fingers became highly sensitized to the weight of the keys during both instants of pressing and releasing the key surface. When the essential motion of playing 3^{rds} became localized in the first joint of my fingertips, the larger arm muscles moved only when necessary. Such coordination of the different parts in my mechanism of piano playing enhanced my physical efficiency and created a sense of fluency in my pianistic gesture. As a result of the physical ease, the sound quality in my execution acquired lightness and clarity.

When I learned the desired musical effects in *Les tierces alternées*, I could develop a physical movement of economy and precision. My application of this technique to playing alternating 3^{rds} could then obtain the quality of fluidity in the detached articulation. My observation of this process showed that having a clear sound image helped to create my gesture of physical execution.

6.1.8 National Festivities – Blaze and Blast

During the process of learning and playing *Feux d'Artifice*, my challenge was to face the blaze and blast of this musical pyrotechnic exhibition, as well as my fear of explosion. My childhood memory of seeing and playing with the literal dazzling combustion was a combination of excitement and fright. I liked watching the brilliant event, but I was scared of being burned.

The image shows a musical score for measures 84 to 87. Measure 84 begins with the instruction 'più f e cresc.' and features a series of chords with 'ff' dynamics. Measures 85 and 86 continue this pattern with 'ff' dynamics and '8' markings above the notes. Measure 87 features a glissando in the right hand and a bass line with an '8va_a' marking.

Figure 6.11 Measures 84 to 87: the fortissimo fireworks (Debussy, 2007, pp. 138-139).

In the musical passages of forte and fortissimo detonation, Mrs. Orlov noticed that I was prone to withdrawing from the unrestrained display of sharpness, outburst, and power. In the big leaping movement such as the passage from *più forte e crescendo* to the fortissimo chords in Figure 6.11, my teacher observed that I would close my eyes as my hands arrived at their destinations. On the contrary, in the pianissimo opening of *Feux d'Artifice* in Figure 6.12, hearing and playing the distant sparkling octaves triggered neither psychological nor physical retraction in me. While the enjoyment of musical fireworks at a safe distance during the opening and closing sections of this *Prélude* was welcome, I noticed my reservation about lighting the metaphoric fuse and receiving the full impact of the sonic discharge during the climactic moments.

The image shows a musical score for measures 9 to 10. Measure 9 begins with the instruction 'marqué' and a dynamic of 'pp'. Measure 10 features a 'pp' dynamic and a 'marqué' marking.

Figure 6.12 Measures 9 to 10: the pianissimo sparks (Debussy, 2007, p. 127).

Becoming aware of this remembrance is useful for separating my instinctive reaction from creating an artistic effect of virtuosity. My experience with real fireworks brought me in direct contact with inflammable material and left an indelible mental and emotional impression. However, in the context of this Prélude, the thrill of pianistic pyrotechnics is fireproof. As I began to watch my physical approach during my performances of *Feux d'Artifice*, I perceived my tendency to employ more weight than speed in my attack of forte and fortissimo sonorities. Such inclination brought heaviness to my gesture and obstructed the lightning speed in the movement necessary for navigating such an earthshaking passage as shown in Figure 6.11 on page 72. When I could feel my laborious physical exertion and became able to hear the thumping quality of my forte chord playing, I understood the content of my lessons on this piece to learn how to bite the chords with the attack speed instead of my arm weight. This sensory experience was an invaluable tool for my practice of such musical passages. By monitoring the economy of my physical gesture and listening for the desired sound quality, I gradually learned to move through the explosive sections of brilliancy with efficiency, which produced a musical effect of vibrancy and illumination.

By keeping my eyes open and witnessing my learning process, the memory of the actual pyrotechnics could transform into a catalyst to exploring expression and finding inspiration for my musical performances of this Prélude. By perceiving the ineffectual physical movement and its correspondent sound result, I opted for the choice of developing a more effective technical means for obtaining a different musical outcome. Taking an active role in kindling musical fireworks, I now look forward to future opportunities of playing and fully enjoying the unhazardous exhilaration of pianistic works such as *Feux d'Artifice*.

In this chapter, the application of what I learned from yoga practice was predominantly a self-study, both physically and psychologically, of my musical experience during the period of learning and preparing these selected eight Préludes for performance. Putting such observation in words helped me to examine my personal and musical experience from a new perspective. The following chapter will use recording analyses of my past recitals and other artists' interpretations to scrutinize how the transformation in my journey with Debussy Préludes and Somatics can manifest in my actual performances and listening experience.

7 Developing New Interpretative Lenses

7.1 New Principles Learned from Listening to Performance Recordings and Analyses of *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*, *Bruyères*, and *Ondine*

At this point, intellectual, musical, and practical aspects of my learning process of the 24 Debussy Préludes have been examined to glean an understanding of the different stages of my musical and personal journey. In Chapter 2, viewing Debussy in the context of history, culture, and artistic influences demonstrated the importance of extra-musical stimuli in the composer's personal and musical life. A survey of Debussy's pianistic compositions in Chapter 4 shed light on the interrelationship between his creative output and non-musical sources of inspiration. In the context of keyboard literature development, Debussy created innovative sonorities and expressions, which revolutionized the instrumental writing and musical idiom of 20th century piano oeuvres. Debussy's suggestive subtitles for his 24 Préludes generated innumerable research volumes and led me to start my personal investigation of their implication.

The transformative cycle of these Préludes and emerging themes from my musical and somatic growth is narrated in Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 described how Debussy's non-musical inspirations have enriched my personal experience and musical knowledge of his 24 Préludes. Chapter 6 examined how the somatic tools of body-mind awareness, self-observation, and reflection have enhanced my process of studying and performing eight Debussy Préludes.

The current chapter will utilize Debussy Prélude recordings of my recitals and other artists. To examine the transformation of my performing and listening experience, three Préludes have been selected: *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*, *Bruyères*, and *Ondine*. My live performance recordings were collected from three doctoral recitals at the University of Toronto in 2008 and 2009, as well as a recital at Circolo Culturale Lirico Bolognese in Bologna, Italy, in 2012. To observe my listening experience of other artists' interpretations of these three Préludes, I was consulting recordings by Pascal Rogé, Maurizio Pollini, Francine Kay, Krystian Zimerman, Dino Ciani (1941-74), Monique Haas (1909-87), Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli (1920-95), Sviatoslav Richter (1915-97), and Claudio Arrau (1903-91).

My recordings of *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest* were taken from my recitals on May 28th, 2008, October 13th, 2009, and September 2nd, 2012. Both *Bruyères* and *Ondine* came from the same recitals on May 27th and October 13th, 2009, and September 2nd, 2012. For analyses of other artists' interpretations of *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*, the compact discs of Pollini (1999), Kay (2006), and Rogé (1978) have been chosen. Three records of *Bruyères* are by Haas (1963), Zimerman (1994), and Ciani (1970). A selected discography of *Ondine* includes Benedetti Michelangeli (1989), Richter (1993), and Arrau (1987).

The content of the present chapter is divided into two main parts. Relating the experience of hearing my recital recordings of these three Préludes in chronological order, the first part is self-reflective. It examines the changes in my musical renderings, as well as how they lead me to revalue and alter my attitude and perception in my listening process. As a result of the transformation of my auditory and musical experience, the second part discusses how I listen differently to other artists' interpretations of these same three Préludes. In this new state of receptivity, a survey of discography is presented with a report of my most recent understanding and findings. Specific musical excerpts are chosen to accompany my observations and labeled as Figures 7.1 to 7.19 below.

7.1.1 Listening to Myself – Expectation, Surprise, and Realization

For the purpose of writing this dissertation, I had the opportunity of listening to my recital recordings, an activity which I have rarely undertaken with willingness. Watching this habitual reaction of shunning my performance records, I recognized my fear of disappointment. Each performance occasion is a reality check for me. Its transient attribute makes live concert an interactive and spontaneous artistic activity. With as much musical preparation as I can master, I may commence an execution with any aspiration or expectation, but I can only participate in the happenings of this temporal art form and follow its own course of action.

While I have learned to accept this aspect of the musical profession and shift my attention from preconceived thoughts to the actual performance, for me, the prospect of listening to digital recordings of past recitals is not a welcome thought. On stage, my performance practice has taught me to immerse myself in the music. Off stage, am I able to listen to myself without an immediate emotional reaction? Is my performance impression from a recital capable of affecting

my listening experience of the same event afterwards? What is the correspondence between my sensation as an executor and my perception as an audience of the same musical rendering?

With all due concerns and doubts, listening to my recital recordings of *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*, *Bruyères*, and *Ondine* turned out to be an experience beyond my anticipation. When I bypassed the urge to make immediate comments about what sounded pleasing or disagreeable to my ears, I could hear and understand better the musical objectives and effects of every execution. For each Prélude, the musical transformation from one performance record to another is noteworthy. Although I had the impression of having formed a musical conception of these three Préludes from the start, the actual projection of distinct layers in sound texture, clarity of phrasing, transition between contrasting sections, and precision in psychological timing is not completely clear until the second round of recital recordings and thereafter. Contrariwise, what I remembered as glaring mishaps during recitals were not so evident in the recordings to disturb the musical expression and flow.

All in all, when I heard my performance records of these three pieces, it was a musical experience of solely listening. Setting aside the expectation of success or failure, as well as the reliance on my memory of any particular impression during recitals, these sound recordings brought me to hear these performances in new ways that exceeded my imagination. Listening without giving particular emphasis to what I would like or not like to hear, I became more ready to discern details, which may be of benefit to enlarging my interpretative choices later.

In the following paragraphs, three performance records of each Prélude will be analyzed in their overall musical conception, harmonic and rhythmic structures, tonal colours, variety of dynamics and articulation, and pianistic execution. The different recordings of the same composition will be compared to scrutinize my process of musical maturation in each piece. To differentiate one recital recording from another, I will list them in chronological order in the subheading of each Prélude and refer to them by the roman numerals I, II, and III.

7.1.1.1 *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest* (I May 28th, 2008 II October 13th, 2009 III September 2nd, 2012)

On a performance level, all three recital records of this Prélude demonstrate good understanding of the composition and its style, solid pianistic preparation, and steady growth of musical

imagination and artistry from one performance to another. Amongst them, the most noticeable modification is the duration of each execution. Recording I lasts three minutes and forty-two seconds. Recording II runs three minutes and fifty-eight seconds. Recording III takes up four minutes and fourteen seconds. At first hearing, the general tempo in all three renderings sounds similar. Why is there an increasing difference of time from one recital to another?

7.1.1.1.1 Adjustments in timing

Closer examination shows that such duration change from one performance to another originates in how the musical storm and its effects of waves, thunder, lightning, and precarious voyagers are projected with increasing clarity. The three recitals have dissimilar musical timing during transitional passages and different sense of space between separate sound layers in the compositional texture.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system covers measures 5 and 6, with a 'molto' marking below the staff. The second system covers measures 7, 8, and 9, with 'p' and 'pp' markings. The notation includes arpeggiated figures, tremolos, and solid chords, with various dynamics and articulations.

Figure 7.1 Measures 5 to 9: the transition from an arpeggiated tidal wave to a pianissimo low F sharp (Debussy, 2007, p. 26).

In Figure 7.1, the figuration of the arpeggiated tidal wave rapidly descends on pianissimo low F sharp *tremolo* as the lone vessel of F sharp major chord comes forth. Amid the general rumbling resonance and the combination of different keyboard registers, the beginning of each new musical layer, *tremolo* in 5th and solid major chord progression, requires time to be audible. In Recording I, the *tremolo* bass and right hand solid chord arrive in strict time, which results in an

inundation of overlapping sonorities from two different harmonic functions and three dissimilar musical figurations. Recording II navigates the same transition with the use of a microscopic agogic stress on the low F sharp to pronounce the start of this *tremolo* resonance. In Recording III, more elasticity in timing is discernible between the end of the descending arpeggio and the entrances of the *tremolo* and major chord. This flexibility gives time to the tonal colour of one musical motif to resonate before the next one arrives. Consequently, the clarity of these three divergent elements helps to create the effect of unpredictability of a turbulent ocean.

Figure 7.2 Measures 13 to 15: another transition with agogic effect (Debussy, 2007, p. 27).

A comparable transition takes place in Figure 7.2 between *più pianissimo* diminuendo and the low F sharp pedal point. In all three recordings, the infinitesimal delay in articulating this obsessive pedal point brings out its ominous quality. Again, the transitional timing in recordings II and III are progressively more elastic in whispering this funereal note of F sharp from the abyss.

Figure 7.3 Measures 33 to 35: approaching the second stormy peak (Debussy, 2007, pp. 29-30).

As the storm approaches its second summit in Figure 7.3, recording I plays in straight time and razes the musical portrait of lightning, storm, exposed ship, and thunder to the ground. At this tempo, the layers of forte chords in the central register and low B octave are indistinguishable. To my ears, going directly between the chords of *très en dehors* and fortissimo B pedal point produces a musical effect in rhythm and pitch that bears a resemblance to a seesaw. In recording

II, the ascending bar in chromaticism stretches and conveys the effect of *augmentant beaucoup*. This expansion of time and sounds creates a physical and psychological moment of suspense just before the storm breaks in the bar of 3/4 time signature change. In recording III, the feeling of suspense is augmented by taking even more time during this musical transition. In the stormy bar of 3/4, a slight spacing separation is also audible between the first forte chord in middle register and the crash of low B octave. This tiny delay makes me listen for the arrival of the low B thunderclap with expectancy and dread.

The image displays a musical score for measures 47 to 54, consisting of four systems of piano and bass staves. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 3/4. Measure numbers 8, 32, 49, 51, and 54 are indicated at the beginning of their respective systems. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings. The first system (measures 47-48) features a piano staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with chords, marked with *sf*. The second system (measures 49-50) includes markings for *piu f*, *ff*, and *ff* with accents. The third system (measures 51-52) shows a *ff* marking and a *dim. molto* instruction. The fourth system (measures 53-54) consists of a piano staff with a rhythmic accompaniment marked *pp* and a bass staff with chords.

Figure 7.4 Measures 47 to 54: the third climax (Debussy, 2007, pp. 31-32).

Figure 7.4 on page 79 shows the arrival of the third earthshaking climax. From recordings I to III, there are conspicuous variations of pace at which the dominant 7th chords go from forte to *sforzando* forte, *più forte*, and fortissimo. Once again, in recording I, going straight through this passage deprives it of the psychological impact of grandeur and terror when the music arrives at *più forte* and fortissimo. Both recordings II and III employ an almost imperceptible deceleration to highlight the crescendo into *più forte*, the change of direction in 32nd-note *tremolo*, and the precipitous six-octave avalanche culminating in fortissimo. This deliberate timing accentuates the arrival moment when musical figures converge on the central register. This passage sounds even more spacious in recording III because of the amount of time it takes to articulate the multiple layers of spinning *tremolo* in octave, windswept and massive chords, and the terrifying thunderclap.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system, labeled '62', shows a piano part with a dynamic marking of *più pp* and a tempo instruction 'Serrez et augmentez'. The second system, labeled '68', shows a piano part with dynamic markings of *f*, *ff*, and *fff sec*, and tempo instructions 'Retenu' and 'au Mouvt'. The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Figure 7.5 Measures 62 to 63 and 68 to 71: elastic tempo surprises at the end (Debussy, 2007, p. 33).

In Figure 7.5, there are three tempo indications from *serrez et augmentez* to *retenu* and *au mouvement*. Recording I starts *serrez* at a brisk pace and continues in the same speed all the way to the final *sforzando* forte *sec* explosion. Without the broadening *augmentez* and suspenseful *retenu* effects, this ending loses its quality of drama and finality. Recording II begins the same

section with a more restrained tempo. In recording III, the realization of Debussy's tempo and dynamic indications is more clear. The dynamic, rhythmic, and register changes are effective to bring this Prélude to a surprise final climax.

7.1.1.1.2 Dynamic gradation

The extremely abrupt changes in dynamics are present throughout this musical storm. Such gradation of volume control is established in all three recital recordings. However, more distinctive differentiation is noticeable in recordings II and III as the following two musical excerpts will demonstrate.

In Figure 7.6, the *tremolo* in major 2nd goes through sudden shifts from piano to forte crescendo and piano in less than three bars. Recording I plays this *tremolo* passage with clarity, but stays within a narrow range of dynamic contrast. Recordings II and III widen the volume difference between *subito* forte, crescendo, and piano, which creates a more frightening effect in this short span of time.

The image displays two systems of musical notation for piano. The first system covers measures 29 and 30. Measure 29 begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking and features a tremolo in the right hand. Measure 30 shows a sudden shift to forte (*f*) dynamics. The second system covers measures 31 and 32. Measure 31 returns to piano (*p*) dynamics, and measure 32 continues with the tremolo passage. The notation includes treble and bass clefs, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and various musical symbols such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Figure 7.6 Measures 29 to 32: the dynamic changes at lightning speed (Debussy, 2007, p. 29).

From the fortissimo last chord, the *diminuendo molto* in *tremolo* uses less than one bar to reach a pianissimo new departure point in Figure 7.4 on page 79. Recording I follows the *diminuendo* indication, but falls short of the pianissimo destination. This incomplete transition of sonority and dynamics makes the alternation between G and G sharp in the *tremolo* barely perceptible

because of the low register and louder than pianissimo volume. In recordings II and III, the *diminuendo molto* is effectively projected to arrive at a new colour of pianissimo *tremolo*. This contrast increases the dynamic variety and psychological impact of turbulent unpredictability and danger in these performances. The alternating G and G sharp in the low *tremolo* are more clear and bring out the quality of restlessness in this pianissimo figuration.

7.1.1.1.3 Shaping musical layers

The basic sound layers in this Prélude comprise the rumblings in 32nd notes of various musical figurations, the obstinate pedal points, and the billowy lines of dense chords. These three recital records present different stages of realization of my musical conception. The basic ideas about storm and calamity can be inferred from all three executions, but specific details, as the following musical excerpts will demonstrate, only become clear from recording II.

In Figure 7.1 on page 77, there are two layers, the chords in quarter and longer notes and the low *tremolo* in 5th. The pianissimo *tremolo* in recording I is almost clamorous enough to obstruct the higher line of major chords, whose sustaining presence is consequently weakened. In both recordings II and III, the pianissimo *tremolo* finds its rich harmonic resonance and produces the quality of distance and menace. Supported by the overtones of this reverberation, the major chords breathe into their own line and move independently. In recording II, my inhalation at the tied F sharp major chord is audible. The two distinct layers interact and reinforce each other.

Comparable musical texture can be found in Figure 7.2 on page 78 with *sforzando* thunderbolt in piano, pianissimo chords that sound plaintif et lointain, and the *tremolo* murmuring on low F sharp. In all three recordings, these layers are perceivable. However, in recordings II and III, the initial attack on the thunderbolts is more accentuated, which produces an effect of suddenness. After the F sharp *tremolo* settles into pianissimo, the line of chords begins with a tiny agogic stress and a faraway sonority, which creates a feeling of loneliness and lamentation. Again in recording II, my inhalation at the second tied chord is discernible, which injects a sensation of continuity into this phrase. In recording III, the feeling of suspense throughout the tied chords is reinforced by the murmuring pianissimo *tremolo* resonance.

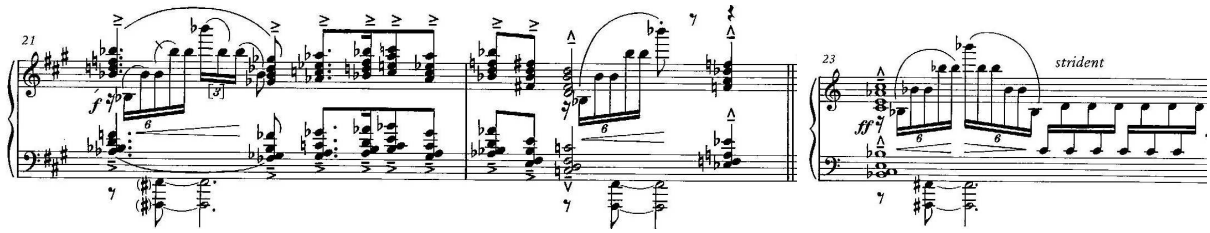


Figure 7.7 Measures 21 to 23: the first climax (Debussy, 2007, p. 28).

In Figure 7.7, the *Prélude* arrives at its first climax with lightning, thunder, and thick chords in chaos. Recording I plays this succession of violent events in a rather matter-of-fact manner. With undifferentiated accents and attack, the stormy chords sound choppy and unshaped. Aiming for the precision of 16th-sextuplet thunderbolts around forte and fortissimo long chords seems to be a main concern at that moment. Furthermore, playing this passage in straight time gives little space between different layers. As a result, the contrast between the various musical elements is not evident. Both recordings II and III show a different level of musical and technical organization. The chords form a long line from dotted quarter-note forte all the way to whole-note fortissimo, thus creating an arch shape uninterrupted by lightning and thunder. The thunderbolts have more space to complete their own trajectories. In the middle of gigantic sound waves, the sharpness of the piercing *tremolo* in 2nd allows this figure to stand out.

The third climax of Figure 7.4 on page 79 presents a similar musical situation. In Recording I, the layers of octaves in 32nd notes, fortissimo dominant 7th chords, and D sharp cracks are homogeneous in their tonal colours. Around the chords of half-note and longer duration, diverse musical elements are played as isolated occurrences. Instead of creating a sense of sonority and dramatic tension together, these layers do not support nor listen to each other. Recordings II and III show more evident interrelationship between the intersecting musical figures. The 32nd-note *tremolo* rides on the resonance of longer chords. The 16th-note octaves ascend and descend with more distinct dynamic shaping and sound direction. Together, the contrasting elements have greater clarity and musical independence to act and respond to each other.

In all three recordings of *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*, my performances convey a feeling of excitement, astonishment, and peril. The integration of all musical elements in this composition

becomes increasingly evident and successful from one rendering to another. Consequently, the psychological effect of threat and fright is more powerful in the later performances, which enhances my musical engagement and enjoyment as an audience.

7.1.1.2 *Bruyères* (I May 27th, 2009 II October 13th, 2009 III September 2nd, 2012)

In all three recital recordings of this Prélude, I can hear a clear projection of the general harmonic structure, calmness and expressiveness in the atmosphere, and a well-defined overall musical texture. From one rendering to another, what I find pleasantly surprising is the different nuances that come forward from various musical layers. Melodic filaments have different harmonic timing and shaping. Tonal transitions undergo subtle changes. The paragraphs below will briefly examine these topics and how each interpretation highlights various details.

7.1.1.2.1 Projecting different layers

In the musical texture of *Bruyères*, there are at least four layers in simultaneous tonal interaction. They support each other with resonance and move seamless through the chord progression. A similar harmonic conception is perceptible in all three records and each execution creates a different combination of chamber ensemble effects.

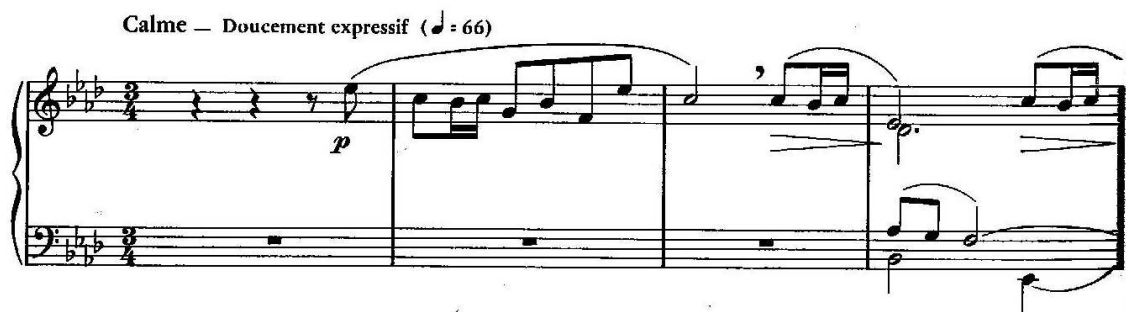


Figure 7.8 Measures 1 to 4: the texture of multiple layers (Debussy, 2007, p. 84).

In Figure 7.8, the opening solitary melody is joined by second violin, viola, and cello in bar 4. Recording I places the viola line in high relief, thus offering a response to the first violin's gentle sigh in diminuendo. In Figure 7.9 on page 85, the range of registers widens as the modal progression arrives at the mezzo forte A flat major sonority. Recording II pronounces the low A flat tone and middle register line with warmth and clarity. The quality of sound in these

harmonic layers supports the 16th-note descending line with a feeling of breath, mellowness, and flexibility. Also, having a deeper and fuller resonance on the low A flat enriches the colour of the mezzo forte A flat major sonority. The rich vibration of this low A flat is extended into the following bar, where the phrase utilizes the same A flat major chord in piano to makes a turn to continue in another direction.

The image shows a musical score for measures 7 to 10. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system (measures 7-8) shows a piano part with a low A-flat major chord and a right-hand part with a descending line of sixteenth notes. The second system (measures 9-10) shows the piano part with a similar chord and the right-hand part continuing the descending line. Dynamic markings include *mf* and *p*. There are also trill markings (*tr*) and a fermata over a note in measure 10.

Figure 7.9 Measures 7 to 10: projecting the different layers with tonal colours (Debussy, 2007, p. 84).

In Figure 7.10, the middle section of *un peu animé* arrives. Recordings II and III highlight distinctive layers and create different nuances of joy. Recording II plays the bass and middle register layers with smiling cheerfulness. Projecting lines in these lower registers adds a soft radiance to the rich resonance. Recording III opens the middle section with a well-voiced top B flat quarter note. This B flat tone begins the phrase with a bright spring colour and a fresh breeze of a sunny morning. Inside the same harmonics, bringing out various shades of textural layers allows different expressions of the same sentiment to come forth in several performances.

The image shows a musical score for measures 21 to 24. It consists of two systems of staves. The first system (measures 21-22) shows a piano part with a low B-flat major chord and a right-hand part with a descending line of sixteenth notes. The second system (measures 23-24) shows the piano part with a similar chord and the right-hand part continuing the descending line. Dynamic markings include *p* and *mf*. The tempo marking *Un peu animé* is present above the right-hand part in measure 23.

Figure 7.10 Measures 21 to 24: the entrance to the middle section (Debussy, 2007, p. 86).

7.1.1.2.2 Pliancy of melodic filament

As Figure 7.9 on page 85 and Figure 7.11 demonstrate, one of the main musical layers in *Bruyères* is a melodic thread of moving 8th notes, 16th notes, 16th triplets, 32nd notes, and 32nd triplets. Most of the time, this filament appears to be the only moving line in the texture. However, closer examinations elucidate how this melody is supported by moving pillars of harmonic resonance from other layers.

In Figure 7.9 on page 85, the mezzo forte A flat major resonance is sustained from the low A flat and up, lasting until the following bar of the same chord in piano. Over and around this resonance, a melodic figuration goes back and forth between the top and middle layers. In recording I, this thread of moving sounds succeeds in obtaining the quality of legato and clarity. At the same time, it has a forward motion and gives the impression of leading the other layers. In recordings II and III, the same melodic line acquires elasticity in shape and pace. Supported by the harmonic cushion of surrounding layers, this melody plays with lightness in touch and suppleness in time. In recording III, the same filament settles in the A flat major resonance and creates a long arch between the mezzo forte and piano A flat chords. It moves through the various note values and crosses registers with fluidity and ease.

Figure 7.11 Measures 15 to 19: the playful melodic filaments (Debussy, 2007, p. 85).

In Figure 7.11, there are two arch-shape melodic figurations. Over the quarter-note subdominant 9th chord of A flat major, the ascending 32nd notes lightly leap into the air and descend weightlessly on tonic 7th chord of A flat with what sounds like upbeat grace notes. In recordings II and III, the tiny arch over the subdominant chord becomes crystal clear and sparkling. The 32nd rest gives this filament the time to be momentarily airborne. In both recordings, this rest has a timeless quality. The little twirl around G, the 7th of A flat tonic chord, becomes a rhythmic and harmonic motif in the transition from pianissimo *doux et léger*. In recordings II and III, the

delicate rainbows of 32nd notes sound transparent and buoyant. As part of the quietly moving texture in longer note values, these tiny arches glitter as if they are small drops of water that reflect the light and colours all around.

7.1.1.2.3 Hearing tonal transitions

In this Prélude, the multiple layers in the musical texture interact and create harmonic sonorities with seemingly improvisatory flow. The sustained tones in various registers participate in moulding the phrase direction with other moving sounds.

Figure 7.12 Measures 37 to 39: the end of the middle section (Debussy, 2007, p. 87).

In Figure 7.12, the middle section returns to *au mouvement* over a chromatic bass line in quarter and longer note values. Moving from G flat to G and A flat, this bass line is combined with chords in the middle register. A harmonic progression is created with a subdominant 9th chord with lowered 3rd of B flat major, a dominant 9th chord of A flat major, and a resolution on the tonic chord of A flat. With a 2-octave displacement, this perfect cadence starts in the central register and turns the semitone resolution from G to A flat into a wide stride of 21st, thus opening up the compass of resonance at *au mouvement*. In recording II, the harmonic direction of A flat major cadence is well established by the voicing and timing of the middle register chords. The low A flat is played almost as a grace note to the tonic chord. Consequently, this display of sonority leaves the low A flat slightly isolated in its tone colour and timing. In recording III, the same progression takes time to stretch down an interval of 21st from G to the low A flat tonic resolution. Taking a long inhalation across this distance, the length between the two chords graciously invites the middle register sounds to join the resonance of the tonic chord. It gives a sense of tonal cohesion to the A flat tonic chord, which spreads across 4 octaves.

The image shows a musical score for measures 43 to 46. On the left, measures 43 and 44 are shown in a compact format. On the right, measures 44, 45, and 46 are shown in a standard score format. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes a piano (*p*) dynamic marking and a *doux* (soft) marking. The music features a cadence with harmonic surprise in octave displacement, where the bass melody moves from a supertonic 7th to a subdominant chord in 2nd inversion, then resolves to its root position.

Figure 7.13 Measures 43 to 46: a cadence with harmonic surprise in octave displacement
(Debussy, 2007, p. 88).

A similar displacement of harmonic arrival point is shown in Figure 7.13. Moving from the supertonic 7th to not the tonic, but subdominant of A flat major, the melodic filament is in the bass while the chords resonate above. The bass melody first reaches a subdominant resolution in 2nd inversion, a unstable position, and it slides down into a low D flat, thus stabilizing the chord in its root position. In recording III, the timing between the position changes of this subdominant chord of A flat gives unity to its resonance in the open position. The subsequent melodic thread, which is an echo of the opening figuration, arrives at an interval of 30th above. Shaping the high E flat in the overtones of the low D flat chord colours this melodic echo with a nuance of distance and transparency.

Listening to all three performance records gave musical pleasure and satisfaction to me. The variety of expressive nuances, the elasticity and fluidity between tonal connections, and the quality of intimacy and chamber music timbres were but a few samples of interpretative variations that came to my notice. Such realization makes me more receptive to the idea of the infinite musical possibilities in this piece. I look forward to exploring more ways of playing, appreciating, and listening to this musical vignette.

7.1.1.3 *Ondine* (I May 27th, 2009 II October 13th, 2009 III September 2nd, 2012)

During my reading of de la Motte Fouqué's story, Rackham's illustrations, and Debussy's score of *Ondine*, I have always been fascinated by their depiction of water and light, as well as the capricious character portrait in these three artistic media. In all three recital recordings, such effects are present and imbue each execution with plenty of contrasts and expressions. The maturation of rhythmic and structural conception is perceptible from one rendering to another. This progression of clarity in musical imagination and sound projection makes the second and third performance records even more understandable and beautiful to my ears.

7.1.1.3.1 Undulation of rhythmic pulse

The metric structure of this Prélude is in 6/8, whose attribute of meanderings facilitates the display of elasticity and fluidity of the musical imagery. Such effect of undulation is more audible in recordings II and III. In recording III, it becomes an integral component in unifying the overall rhythmic structure.

Figure 7.14 Measures 1 to 6: the undulating rhythm (Debussy, 2007, p. 102).

In Figure 7.14, the tied 8th notes of 4th and middle C sharp utilize the full duration of *tenuto* and tie to oscillate between successive groups of dotted quarter length. Recording I plays these opening bars with limpid tone in straight tempo. In recordings II and III, the duration of tied notes is more palpable, thus creating a feeling of gentle sway and the shape of a svelte figure. In recording III, the usage of *rubato* creates smoother connections from one musical motif to another and between consecutive dotted quarter units.

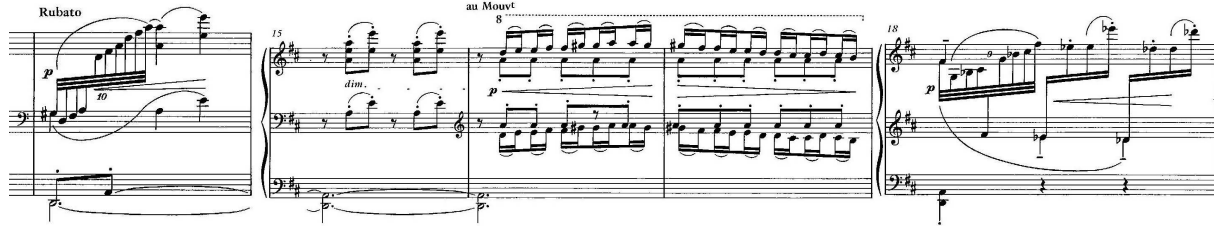


Figure 7.15 Measures 14 to 18: the hemiola and dancing ripples (Debussy, 2007, p. 103).

In Figure 7.15, the 8th rests are the sole indications of pulse between the diminuendo bar and the following *au Mouvement*. The subsequent bar employs hemiola, thus dispersing the regularity of pulsation. In recordings II and III, the pulse at the beginning of every dotted quarter length can be felt, which creates a softly swinging motion. Establishing this pulsation sets the hemiola in motion and creates one long curve per bar. In recording III, more elasticity in *rubato* allows the various musical motifs to flow naturally from one to another.

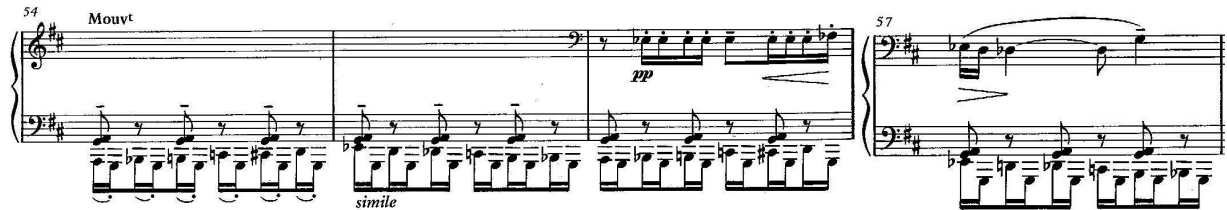


Figure 7.16 Measures 54 to 57: the menacing undercurrents in hemiola (Debussy, 2007, p. 108).

A comparable example of hemiola can be seen in Figure 7.16, where an ostinato in 2nd hovers over a chromatic wave that rises and falls on a low G. The ostinato is grouped in quarter unit while the chromatic swell is organized in dotted quarter length. In recording I, the dotted quarter layer merges into the ostinato line, thus obliterating the superimposed rhythmic effect. In recordings II and III, the two layers are distinctly projected and the interwoven texture conveys a feeling of threat and danger in the pianissimo low register.

7.1.1.3.2 Whimsical moods

In this fairytale, one of the main features is the playful and changeable temperament of Ondine. A wide variety of musical figurations are employed to evoke such capricious characteristics. All three performance recordings bring off these changes with clarity and imagination. In recordings II and III, some of these sudden mood swings become even more explicit and effective.

At the opening bars in Figure 7.14 on page 89, the gentle swing of 8th-note clusters and tritons is caught off-guard by the giggling 16th triplets in mezzo forte crescendo. In recording I, these 16th triplets are played with haste and weight, which chokes the effect of chuckling. In recordings II and III, the precision in the pianistic attack produces a greater tonal clarity. This enhances the switch between the mysterious wave motion in 8th notes and the sudden laughter in 16th triplets.

Figure 7.17 Measures 11 to 12: the whimsical motifs (Debussy, 2007, p. 103).

In Figure 7.17 the splash of minor 2nd and its own inversion scintillates on A. This flash of brilliancy alternates with the sweet 16th-note augmented 2nd and delicate wavelets in 32nd notes around E flat. In recording II, these switches are more distinct in the rhythmic, tonal, and dynamic diversity. However, the little 32nd-note waves in this execution always start with a slightly elongated E flat, thus becoming more predictable. In recording III, the more effective changes of rhythm enhance the quality of lightning and glitter in the descending figure of 2nd and 7th, pensiveness in augmented 2nd of 16th notes, and elasticity in the 32nd-note undulation without the prolonged initial E flat.

7.1.1.3.3 Musical effects of water and light

One of Debussy's sound studies of water, this Prélude demonstrates the composer's ingenuity in handling musical elements to evoke visual and poetic imagery. In all three recital recordings, the multifarious forms of water and shades of light, as well as the quality of fluidity and sparkle, are perceivable. Recordings II and III manifest increasingly refined realization of such intended effects.

The image shows a musical score for measures 43 to 47. The score is written for piano and left hand. It features several musical layers: 16th-note triplets in the right hand, sustained 8th-note diminished 5th chords in the left hand, and a 16th-note tremolo in the left hand. The tempo is marked 'Rubato un peu au-dessous du mouvt' and the dynamics are 'pp mormorando'. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. The first system (measures 43-45) shows the right hand playing 16th-note triplets and the left hand playing sustained 8th-note diminished 5th chords. The second system (measures 46-47) shows the right hand playing 16th-note triplets and the left hand playing a 16th-note tremolo. The score is marked 'douxement marqué' and includes a fermata over the final measure.

Figure 7.18 Measures 43 to 47: the whispering breeze, wavelets, and melancholic melodic figure (Debussy, 2007, p. 106).

In Figure 7.18, the combination of musical layers in 16th-triplet tritons, sustained 8th-note diminished 5th, and 16th-note *tremolo* in 5th produces a murmuring stream of melancholy. In recording I, the 16th triplets begin with the whispering tone of a breeze. The diminished 5th in elongated quarter notes creates a quality of tonal liquidity, but becomes thinner as the *tremolo* in 5th enters the texture. Recording II blends the resonance of the air current in 16th triplets, the undulation in diminished 5th, and the undercurrent in 16th-note *tremolo* more successfully. In recording III, these layers merge into one another and create one long phrase from *Le double plus lent* to *Rubato* and the entrance of the hauntingly sweet and sorrowful melody in 8th-note 3rd. Inside the pianissimo sonority of this texture, the 16th triplets acquire translucency, the 8th-note triton is limpid, and the 16th-note *tremolo* flows in the shadow.

The image shows a musical score for three measures (67, 68, and 69) from Debussy's 'Ondine'. The score is written for piano and features a complex texture of arpeggiated figures. Measure 67 begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a 32nd-note arpeggio. Measure 68 starts with a mezzo-piano (*pp*) dynamic and includes a section with a fermata over an 8-measure rest. Measure 69 continues with a mezzo-piano (*pp*) dynamic and features a shimmering, rippling texture. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Figure 7.19 Measures 67 to 69: the memory of Ondine in ripples and light reflection (Debussy, 2007, p. 109).

In the epilogue of this romantic fairytale in Figure 7.19, only ripples and reflections of light remain. Recording I plays the 32nd-note arpeggios with clarity in a straightforward manner. Recording II listens to the resonance of the low D and creates a shimmering tone for the 32nd-note ripples. In recording III, the sparkling ripples are subtly shaped with harmonic colours, thus obtaining a sinuous continuity between the tonal timbres of D major and F sharp major.

In these three recital recordings, the realization of the quality of fluidity and luminosity, as well as my comprehension of the water sprite's story, becomes increasingly effective. Every time, returning to the text of de la Motte Fouqué, the images of Rackham, and the sound of Debussy refreshes my pleasure of visualizing Ondine with new details. Hearing the variations in harmonic, rhythmic, and tonal nuances in my own renderings makes me eager to play with the sound effects of this Prélude in future performances. I am also curious to hear other artists' interpretations of this musical fairytale.

7.1.2 Listening to Other Artists – How Do I Comprehend Their Musical Imagery?

From my musical study with Lynda Metelsky, Germaine Mounier, Serge Blanc, and Marietta Orlov, I learned the skills of reading a score, inferring the composer's intentions, and constructing my own musical interpretation. This method taught me how to consult a musical

text as a primary source. When I listened to live concerts and sound recordings, I was used to refraining from hearing works that I happened to learn at that moment.

At an early stage of studying a piece, such intentional avoidance of listening to other artists' interpretations is what I continue to do to date. Before forming an initial understanding of an opus from the composer's text, listening to another pianist's rendering is a confusing experience for me. Without the knowledge of a reliable score, I have little basis for comprehending another pianist's musical decisions. When an execution sounds agreeable or displeasing to my ears, is the formation of my opinion governed by my understanding of a composition, my comprehension of the performer's musicianship and interpretation, my appreciation of the overall presentation, or whims?

From the experience of listening to my own recital recordings, I recognized the variable and fluctuating nature of my impressions. For *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*, the memory and impression that I had of my 2008 recital was a vivid imaginary storm. Six years later, listening to the same recording did not result in the same opinion. Different performances of the same piece were not alike. For *Bruyères*, all three recital recordings displayed similar conception of shape and direction in chord connections. However, each recording showed a different shade of tonal colour in highlighting various layers in the texture. In general, the combination of instrumental characteristics, acoustics of each recital venue, different audio engineers, and dissimilar recording equipment produced diverse results in the sound quality of my performance records from the University of Toronto and Circolo Lirico Bolognese. It influenced my listening experience of these pieces. When I heard a particular effect such as a slightly metallic quality in a chord progression, I was uncertain whether it was due to my pianistic touch, the instrument, the regulation of balance in the recording, or my own imagination. Such components need to be taken into consideration for listening experience of both live concert and digital recordings. This gives me the idea that my impressions are not absolute. My experience can change.

With such thoughts in mind, I will report my listening experience of *Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest*, *Bruyères*, and *Ondine* by other artists. Three different artistic interpretations for each Prélude will be analyzed and discussed below. Explanations about my understanding of their musical intentions will be given. The purpose of these analyses is not to enumerate my personal preferences. Instead, I would like to examine what I can comprehend in these artists'

performances, how their musical decisions are related to the compositional structure, and the effects achieved by such choices.

7.1.2.1 Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest (Pollini, Kay, Rogé)

These three great performances allow me to visualize the natural disaster and consequent chaos from three different perspectives. Under the hands of Pollini (1999), I feel as part of the West Wind. When I listen to the interpretation of Kay (2006), I think of pictorial representation of ocean and imagine its turbulence from afar. In the 1978 recording of Rogé, I can sense the storm with its sudden and unpredictable gusts of wind.

In this Prélude, Pollini (1999) creates one gigantic sweep of wind that blows everything out of its path. His conception of tempi produces a sense of proportion and cohesion in the musical structure. His pace sounds mathematically calculated, which generates momentum as the music proceeds. Together with an extraordinary palette of dynamics and tonal clarity, Pollini's wind gives me the sensation of being propelled by unrelenting billows. Effective manipulation of psychological timing and dynamic gradation in forte and fortissimo can be found in Figure 7.3 on page 78 to hear how Pollini shapes the second climax with breathtaking intensity and power. The steep rise in volume and speed during the two bars of *en serrant et augmentant beaucoup* arrives at the second climax with an infinitesimal leap, which accentuates the forte chord in the middle register and the fortissimo octave on low B. This employment of microscopic delay in the entrance of each motif creates a sense of infinite space between the distinct sound layers in extreme registers.

What is immediately appreciable in the performance of Kay (2006) is her velvety touch in the compass of pianissimo and piano. It reminds me of watercolours and gives an impression of mystery, misty atmosphere, and loneliness. Her rumbling pianissimo *tremolo* in Figure 7.1 on page 77 sounds far away. Quietly, her solitary vessel of piano major chords sets forth with an ominous smoothness. In the texture of multiple layers, Kay's rhythmic use of broken chord figure and *tremolo* gives an impetus to the shaping of phrases. At *commencer un peu au-dessous du mouvement* in Figure 7.2 on page 78, each series of five broken triads in 16th triplets are shaped with crescendo and diminuendo, as well as a slight accelerando and *decelerando*. This rhythmic and dynamic effect creates a swirling movement. At the second climax in Figure 7.3 on page 78, the spinning C sharp *tremolo* in 32nd sextuplets accelerates and gathers resonance

when the middle register chords are dotted quarter-note long. As a result, the forte dotted quarter-note chords acquire a virtual crescendo and upward lift into the following 8th-note chord. The finesse with which Kay handles musical details creates a beautiful miniature portrait of a stormy ocean.

The tempi variations from one section to another in the interpretation of Rogé (1978) sound strategically planned to underline the divergent musical segments. The arpeggios, *tremolos*, and any note value of 16th-note and shorter are played at *prestissimo volante* pace. The tempestuous aspect of this Prélude is enhanced by abrupt changes in speed and irregular pulsation in Rogé's rendering. During the transitions from diminuendo arpeggio to piano chordal passage in Figure 7.1 on page 77, as well as from chromatic whirlwinds climbing up to second climax in Figure 7.3 on page 78, Rogé makes a peculiar effect by accelerating the flying figuration in crescendo and pausing slightly before the new motif begins. With his usage of damper pedal, this effect in Figure 7.1 on page 77 produces reverberating rumbling in the low register. In Figure 7.3 on page 78, due to the thinner resonance of treble register where the turning figuration ascends chromatically, this timing and dynamic effect creates a gasp before the second climax. Listening to Rogé's performance, I almost have a visualization of wind currents being compressed and lashing out with breathless impulsiveness.

7.1.2.2 *Bruyères* (Haas, Zimmerman, Ciani)

The dissimilar tempo choices in the performances by Haas (1963), Zimmerman (1994), and Ciani (1970) shape very different atmospheres, expressions, and artistic effects in *Bruyères*. The timing of execution is as follows: two minutes and fifty-six seconds for Haas, three minutes and six seconds for Zimmerman, and three minutes and sixteen seconds for Ciani. To my hearing, Haas creates an image of a beautiful moment in simple daily life. In Zimmerman's interpretation, small contrasting events of linear melodic movement, suspended harmonic resonance, and frequent tempo changes are presented in a succession. Ciani's rendering of this musical vignette is tenderly nostalgic and draws my imagination to a place and time removed from where I actually am.

To my ears, the performance of Haas (1963) exemplifies the beauty of simplicity. Within a well-projected musical structure and texture, Haas brings off nuances of expression and tonal colours with an economy of dynamics and tempo alteration. Her observance of Debussy's notation and

indications of articulations, dynamics, and tempi is scrupulous. In Figure 7.8 on page 84, she pronounces the opening melody with unaffected elegance. The following figure in diminuendo places a tiny agogic stress on the 8th-note treble C, thus shaping the descending major 6th from C to E flat into a gentle sigh. Such timing alteration is rare in this execution. When this effect is produced, it becomes a very special moment. The transitional timing from the middle section back to *au Mouvement* in Figure 7.12 on page 87 is in proportion to the harmonic resolution from the dominant 7th to the tonic of A flat major. In the pace of the first tempo, the 8th-note upbeat triton glides into the warm A flat major resonance with ease. Haas succeeds in creating a very expressive and graceful interpretation of *Bruyères* with sobriety and artistry.

As a contrast, the performance of Zimmerman (1994) flashes a series of musical snapshots. When the melodic threads intersect in Figure 7.8 on page 84, the viola line is imbued with vigour and impetus. This forward motion of the filament in the middle register contrasts with the slower pace in the sustained harmonic resonance in Figure 7.9 on page 85. Whether going with momentum or being held in suspense, such speed alternation between lines of horizontal movement and segments of vertical sonority is audible throughout this rendering. In Figure 7.12 on page 87, the transition out of the middle section is played in broad brushstrokes with crescendo and accelerando, arriving majestically at *au Mouvement*. Zimmerman's refined use of pedals allows the interwoven layers in the texture to be resonant and pure. At the same time, he has an impeccable command of pianistic colours to mould the music according to his unique conception of expression and structure.

Ciani (1970) displayed poetic lyricism in his performance of *Bruyères*. With the air of sweet melancholy and calmness, his tempo choice allows the soft glow of warm resonance to pervade this musical tableau. Under his touch, the melodic threads are shaped with different tonal quality and expressions. In Figure 7.9 on page 85, the soaring 16th-note arch in the mezzo forte bar and the smiling 16th-note reflections in the following bar sing in a duet. In Figure 7.10 on page 85, the rainbow-shaped 32nd-note figure is played with sparkling enchantment. Through his use of dynamics and nuances of tone, Ciani succeeds in creating an effect of dovetail between the two overlapping melodic threads from *Cédez* to *au Mouvement* in Figure 7.12 on page 87. From *Cédez*, the filament extends the diminuendo into the following bar and resolves on E flat. At the same time, the mezzo forte 16th-note melody at *au Mouvement* starts with renewed energy. Overall, Ciani uses little alteration in tempo and dynamics during his execution of *Bruyères*.

Instead, his palette of harmonic colours creates delicious variations of expressions and his calm pace allows such nuances enough time to be perceived and enjoyed.

7.1.2.3 *Ondine* (Benedetti Michelangeli, Richter, Arrau)

Through their interpretations of *Ondine*, these three legendary artists proffer different narratives of the same fantasy story. Benedetti Michelangeli (1998) recounts the tale with colourful images, essentiality, and simplicity. Richter (1993) evokes a theatrical representation of this fairytale. Arrau (1987) tells the story of Ondine with melodious voices and great elegance.

With a rich palette of orchestral timbres and harmonic nuances, Benedetti Michelangeli (1998) depicts various scenes and images from Ondine's story by employing sophisticated tonal colours. His performance strictly observes Debussy's score and indications. His choices of tempi and dynamics are sober and refined. In Figure 7.15 on page 90, Benedetti Michelangeli creates a different sonority for each musical layer in the texture across four and a half octaves. The dancing ripples in the two-note slurs of 16th value are imbued with innocence and radiance. In Figure 7.16 on page 90, the biting E flat staccato mutters between the teeth and gives warning about the danger to come. With an impeccable mastery of artistic and pianistic means, Benedetti Michelangeli uses such musical detail as articulation to create a stunning display of characterization and sound study.

The theatrical effects in the performance of Richter (1993) are created by his bonding of dissimilar musical elements into one sweeping gesture, his wide compass of dynamics, and the elastic timing between contrasting dramatic sections. In Figure 7.15 on page 90, the two bars of *Rubato* are broadened out, which is immediately contrasted by the lively dancing ripples in lilting two-note slurs at *au Mouvement*. In Figure 7.16 on page 90, the chromatic undercurrent swells rapidly and engulfs six bars in one terrifying billow. Recorded in a live concert of 1976, this rendering exudes spontaneity. Notwithstanding a few small incidents of imprecision, which are to be expected in the nature of any live performance, Richter's interpretation abounds in his power of imagination and artistry.

Projecting a structural conception not dissimilar to that of Benedetti Michelangeli or Richter, the execution of Arrau (1987) gives a singing quality to every single sound in this musical story. In Figure 7.14 on page 89, the undulating figuration of 16th triplets and grace notes are melodious

and unhurried. Underneath, the 8th-note chords are shaped with harmonic nuances and phrased in such a way to extend into the following pianissimo low A, thus creating a long phrase of tonal continuity. The combination of these layers gives me the impression of seeing wavelets, their shimmery reflections, and the depth of clear water. In Figure 7.16 on page 90, the 8th-note ostinato in 2nd is relentlessly insistent. Within a limited range of dynamics and tempo *rubato*, the precision of this *tenuto* articulation in pianissimo produces another type of menacing tone in the artist's storytelling.

The final section of this dissertation will examine my process of transformation in retrospect. What I learned from Chapters 7, 6, and 5 will be narrated first. In light of this transformational journey through music and Somatics, the initial departure point in Chapter 4 will be re-visited to conclude the current self-study.

8 Conclusion: What I Learned from This Journey

8.1 My Story

Going over my journals from the period of studying the Debussy Préludes, I found an entry made right after my first doctoral recital on May 28th, 2008. It reads as follows:

My Reflection on Performing 9 Debussy Préludes

These pieces transported me to a world of dreams, visions, life, and death. What I learned about each Prélude during my musical, intellectual, and experiential preparation helped the music to come alive in my imagination and materialize in sounds. I remember how vivid and palpable every note felt. I had the sensation of being alive. Listening to the connection between the sounds, which felt infinite, I experienced an expanded sense of time. The music took actual shapes in my imagination and emerged as sonic vibrations at the piano. Both in my musical imagination and performance execution, my preparation helped the musical inspirations to come forth and the tonal nuances to solidify in sounds.

8.2 Discussion and Comparison between Initial and New Interpretative Lenses

In Chapter 7, the listening experience of my recital recordings was a reminder of the transformative essence of my learning process. What I remembered as an exceptional musical experience did not evoke an identical response six years later. When I listened to this particular sound recording, I could appreciate many artistic moments of musical rendering. However, having the span of six years between then and now gave me the space for a more objective consideration. During these six years, I have continued to study more repertoire, experienced other life activities, and repeatedly witnessed the transformational aspect of my endeavours to learn and grow. My memory of past experience has no absolute value. My impressions are transitory. My experience has the potential to change. When studying repertoire from the past, I am ready to examine and hear the music with fresh ears, eyes, and mind.

After having lived my own practical knowledge of the 24 Debussy Préludes, I heard how my musical decisions underwent small, but noticeable alterations from one performance to another. It reminded me of the organic nature of my musical development and personal growth. When

my mind can grasp an intellectual concept with relative promptness, my body needs more time to learn a physical reflex. In my study of piano performance, the changes through musical comprehension and extra-musical imagination took several years to manifest themselves in sound.

At the same time, listening to myself in multiple performances of the same pieces allowed me to hear variations of expression and tonal quality, as well as a different clarity in projecting a similar musical concept, from one rendering to another. There were multiple versions of enjoyable musical performances. The plurality of such artistic experiences was audible.

During the listening sessions of other artistic interpretations in Chapter 7, my previous experience of hearing my past performance records helped me to not form a judgmental opinion when some musical details were not immediately understood by me. Having the opportunity to listen attentively to the same recordings over and over again demonstrated to me that such musical decisions were not random. They projected each artist's musical conception and aesthetic views. They were expressions of individual musicianship and unique voices.

In Chapter 6, reflecting on my musical experience and somatic awareness of body-mind connection brought me to realize that for musical problems, I needed to find musical solutions. The somatic tools of awareness and introspection helped me discern a situation of difficulties, which may manifest in the sound, in my physical condition of over-contraction, or in my mental state of disturbance. However, such non-musical tools could only enhance my ability to detect a musical problem, but not to solve it. My physical body could be stretched and strengthened through yoga postures. However, when I had musical questions, I needed to look for answers in where such questions originated: in the music.

In Chapter 5, my integration of the extra-musical inspiration and the formation of my musical interpretation was documented. My personal journey through the non-musical references in the 24 Debussy Préludes gave an example of how my musical imagination was stimulated and enlivened by my enriched life experience. After my direct experience of travels, readings, artwork viewings, and immersions in nature, I could then examine the same score with a different scope of imagination and be more receptive to its great potential of musical expressions. Such correspondences between personal and musical experiences became

internalized in my score study and piano practice, which then prepared me for realizing my musical conceptions in performance.

Such integration of personal knowledge and musical experience brought me to have a different understanding of what Schmitz (1966) was explaining in his volume of *The piano works of Claude Debussy*:

The whole being of the listener must participate in the reception of the beauty contained in the music, but it is often necessary to stimulate the imagination by commentaries to obtain a state of receptivity. Little by little, the commentary will pale, only the musical substance “per se” remaining in the memory. (p. vii)

Looking again at the research volumes presented in Chapters 4 and 2, I now am curious to visit them again with a different readiness to understand the authors’ musical and personal experiences. When a text is not immediately understandable to me, I now can consider re-visiting it. Another reading will give me an opportunity to capture some details previously unnoticed by me, which will then help me glean a different comprehension of the same words.

8.3 Summary of My Transformative Journey

To answer my own research question, my musical experience in performing these Debussy Préludes has been shaped by a combination of studying the musical score, living the non-musical inspirations, and observing my body-mind state during the pianistic preparation. When the moment of performance came, the integration of such diverse elements allowed me to be free from all non-musical details, focus on the music, and enter an artistic flow.

Examining all aspects as relevant to a composition is part of my music learning process. Taking every possible viewpoint into my consideration helps me to glean an understanding of a work of art. In this process of studying my experience with the Debussy Préludes, I found no shortcut. Time and the continuous exploration of new ways to comprehend, hear, and play the music was a *conditio sine qua non*. However, the outcome of this musical and personal research was invaluable and unique. It transformed my way of reading a text, listening to music, studying a score, forming an interpretation, taking the time to learn and play pieces, and observing my experience. Having the opportunity to document my transformational journey in both writing

and sound recordings, a fresh understanding of such personal knowledge was created. It highlighted the changeable aspect of my past memory, current impression, and future experience. Keeping this realization in mind makes it available for application in other aspects of my daily life.

To conclude this episode of my journey through the 24 Debussy *Préludes* and yoga, a parallel instance of deriving artistic pleasure from studying an artwork from multiple readings and angles will be quoted below. It comes from the lecture notes of Vladimir Nabokov and comprises his parting remarks to his American undergraduate classes of British and European literature:

In fact, the knowledge I have been trying to share with you is pure luxury. It will not help you to understand the social economy of France or the secrets of a woman's heart or of a young man's heart. But it may help you, if you have followed my instructions, to feel the pure satisfaction which an inspired and precise work of art gives; and this sense of satisfaction in its term goes to build up a sense of more genuine mental comfort, the kind of comfort one feels when one realizes that for all its blunders and boners the inner texture of life is also a matter of inspiration and precision.

In this course I have tried to reveal the mechanism of those wonderful toys—literary masterpieces. I have tried to make of you good readers who read books not for the infantile purpose of identifying oneself with the characters, and not for the adolescent purpose of learning to live, and not for the academic purpose of indulging in generalizations. I have tried to teach you to read books for the sake of their form, their art. I have tried to teach you to feel a shiver of artistic satisfaction, to share not the emotions of the people in the book but the emotions of its author—the joys and difficulties of creation. We did not talk around books, about books; we went to the center of this or that masterpiece, to the live heart of the matter. (Nabokov, 1980, pp. 381-382)

9 Postlude

After my journey through music and yoga, I returned to my first experience of altered state of sensory perception in 2012 as narrated in *Prélude*. I saw it in a new light. Between 2012 and 2014, I have experimented with making private musical performances right after a yoga posture session, or intense breathing exercises. The results were common in the fact that my circuit of sensory feedback and motor control was slightly off. In this condition, I could not function at my full capacity in musical performance.

During my process of writing and re-visiting my musical and somatic experience for this dissertation, I came to the idea that such an experience was of exceptional and transient quality. From further intensive yoga study, I acquired the tool of body-mind awareness and the practice of self-reflection, which have been beneficial for my personal life on a day-to-day basis. However, for the formation of my musical conception and comprehension, I did not find any direct correlation between yoga techniques and my musical experience.

This dissertation was an account of what I learned from studying my personal, musical, and somatic transformation. For future research in the fields of music and yoga, I see potential in studying how the cultivation of introspection and body-mind connection can be beneficial for musicians to glean an understanding of their own process of learning and preparation for performance.

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