

A STUDY OF J. S. BACH'S TOCCATA BWV 916; L. VAN BEETHOVEN'S SONATA OP.
31, NO. 3; C. DEBUSSY'S IMAGES BOOK ONE; F. CHOPIN'S SCHERZO NO. 2,
OP. 31: HISTORICAL, THEORETICAL AND STYLISTIC IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract

This Master's Report is a study of four piano compositions performed on April 10, 2016 at the author's Master's Piano Recital. These discussed pieces are including Johann Sebastian Bach's *Toccatà in G major, BWV 916*; Ludwig van Beethoven's *Sonata in E-flat major, Op. 31, No. 3*; Claude Debussy's *Images Book One*; Fryderyk Chopin's *Scherzo No. 2, Op. 31*. This study focus on historical, theoretical and stylistic implications of each composition.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	v
List of Tables	vii
Acknowledgements.....	viii
Chapter 1 - J. S. Bach's <i>Tocatta in G major, BWV 916</i>	1
Biographical Information on J. S. Bach.....	1
Bach's <i>Tocatta</i>	2
Theoretical Analysis.....	3
<i>(Allegro)</i>	3
<i>Adagio</i>	5
<i>Allegro e presto</i>	6
Conclusion	8
Chapter 2 - Beethoven's <i>Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3</i>	9
Biographical Information on Beethoven.....	9
Three Style Periods	11
<i>Sonata No. 18, in E-flat major, Op. 31, No. 3</i>	12
Theoretical Analysis.....	13
I. <i>Allegro</i>	13
II. <i>Scherzo Allegretto Vivace</i>	17
III. <i>Menuetto Moderato e grazioso</i>	19
IV. <i>Presto con fuoco</i>	20
Conclusion	22
Chapter 3 - Debussy's <i>Images Book One</i>	23
Biographical Information on Debussy	23
Impressionism in Painting and in Music	24

Symbolism and Debussy	26
History Background of <i>Images Book One</i>	27
Debussy's Musical Language in <i>Image Book One</i>	28
1. <i>Reflets dans l'eau</i>	29
2. <i>Hommage à Rameau</i>	31
3. <i>Mouvement</i>	32
Conclusion	33
Chapter 4 - Chopin's <i>Scherzo Op. 31 in B-flat minor</i>	34
Biographical Information on Chopin	34
<i>Scherzo</i> in General	36
Chopin's <i>Scherzo no. 2</i>	37
Theoretical Analysis.....	38
Final Thoughts	44
Bibliography	47
Appendix A - Bach <i>Tocatta in G major BWV 916, III. Allegro e presto. Color-coded Fugue</i> Analysis.	50
Appendix B - Recital Program.....	55

List of Figures

Figure 1-1 Bach Toccata in G major BWV 916, I. (Allegro), mm. 1-6.	4
Figure 1-2 Bach Toccata in G major BWV 916, I. (Allegro), mm. 25-29, example of imitation between hands.	4
Figure 1-3 Bach Toccata in G major BWV 916, II. Adagio, mm. 57-68. Subject.	5
Figure 1-4 Bach Toccata in G major BWV 916, II. Adagio, mm. 78-80. Coda.	5
Figure 1-5 Bach Toccata in G major BWV 916, III. Allegro e presto. Opening subject and answer, modulate G-D-G major, and head motive.	7
Figure 2-1 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, I. Allegro, Theme II, mm. 46-54. Example of Alberti Bass.	14
Figure 2-2 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, I. Allegro, Theme I, mm. 1-28.	15
Figure 2-3 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, I. Allegro, opening motives.	16
Figure 2-4 Wagner: Tristan und Isolde, m. 3, Tristan Chord.	16
Figure 2-5 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, I. Allegro, “Tristan” Chord.	16
Figure 2-6 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, II. Scherzo. Theme 1, mm. 1-19.	17
Figure 2-7 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, II. Scherzo. Transition, mm. 35-38.	18
Figure 2-8 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, II. Scherzo. Theme two, mm. 50-56.	18
Figure 2-9 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, III. Menuetto, mm. 1-16.	19
Figure 2-10 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, III. Trio, mm. 17-38.	20
Figure 2-11 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, IV. Presto, Theme 1, mm. 17-38.	21
Figure 2-12 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, IV. Presto, Theme 2, m. 34-46.	21
Figure 2-13 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, IV. Presto, Closing Theme, m. 64-79.	22
Figure 3-1 Claude Monet, Impression, soleil levant (1872).	25
Figure 3-2 Reflets dans l’eau. Opening three-note melody in the left hand, mm. 1-2.	29
Figure 3-3 Reflets dans l’eau. Two layers of sounds, mm. 9-11.	30
Figure 3-4 Reflets dans l’eau. Climax in E-flat major, mm. 56-58.	30

Figure 3-5 Hommage à Rameau. Initial melody, mm. 1-4; bass note need to be hold by middle pedal, mm. 5-6.	31
Figure 3-6 Mouvement. Opening ostinato, mm. 1-8.	32
Figure 4-1 Opening question-answer motive of Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, mm. 1-24.	40
Figure 4-2 Flowing descending phrase of Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, original, mm. 49-52; coda I, mm. 716-719; coda II, mm. 756-759.	41
Figure 4-3 Con anima section example of Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, mm. 65-74.	41
Figure 4-4 Trio section of sostenuto, of Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, mm. 265-284.	42
Figure 4-5 Trio section of espress., of Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, mm. 309-318.	43
Figure 4-6 Trio section of leggiero, of Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, mm. 334-351.	43
Figure 4-7 Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, mm. 20-25. The fz is hard to play on the second beat and the following rests can also be confusing.	44
Figure 4-8 Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31. Hyper measure and hyper-downbeat in the first two pages of the piece.	45

List of Tables

Table 1-1 Bach Toccata in G major BWV 916, III. Allegro e presto. Fugue analysis chart.....	6
Table 4-1 Form and Key Analysis for Op. 31, Scherzo in B-flat minor.....	39

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Chapter 1 - J. S. Bach's *Tocatta in G major, BWV 916*

Biographical Information on J. S. Bach

Johann Sebastian Bach was a German composer and organist of the late Baroque period. He was born into a musical family in Eisenach on March 21, 1685. Both of his parents, Johann Ambrosius Bach and Maria Elisabeth née Lämmerhirt, died when he was ten years old. Thereafter, he was sent to his brother, Johann Christoph Bach, who was an organist at Ohrdruf. Sebastian received musical training, including organ lessons and composition instruction, from Christoph.

Sebastian left his brother when he was nearly fifteen, and went to school at the Michaelisschule in Lüneburg, where he sang in a choir at St Michael's Church and probably learned from the organist-composer Georg Böhm. In 1703, he was appointed organist and choirmaster of St Boniface Church at Arnstadt. He transferred to Mühlhausen as organist in 1707. The same year he married his cousin Maria Barbara Bach, who later gave birth to seven children, including future composers Wilhelm Friedemann and Carl Philipp Emanuel.

For the next nine years, Sebastian continued his career as an organist in the Kapelle of the Duke of Saxe, at Weimar, in 1708. He left Weimar after not being offered the position of Kapellmeister in 1717. By then, he had composed many of his best-known organ works and church cantatas, including the *Fantasia and Fugue in G minor BWV 542*.

In 1717, he was appointed Kapellmeister at the court of Anhalt - Cöthen. His new employer was interested in instrumental music rather than religious music, and he played the violin and the harpsichord. The situation gave Sebastian a unique opportunity to compose and perform instrumental works. Bach's works from this period include keyboard suites and inventions, the first book of The *Well-Tempered Clavier*, various string sonatas, suites, and partitas, and the six *Brandenburg Concertos*.

In 1720, when Sebastian was traveling to Carlsbad, with Prince Leopold, his wife suddenly died, leaving her husband with four children to raise. In December 1721, Bach married Anna Magdalena Wilcken, who was a 20-year-old, soprano, and the daughter of a court trumpeter. Anna

gave birth to thirteen children, but only three of them survived into adulthood, among them, Johann Christian, who became a renowned composer.

Bach's employment at Cöthen became problematic, especially after the prince married and the new princess had little interest in music. Sebastian then decided to move to Leipzig, where he was employed by St Thomas Church in 1723. He conducted the *St John Passion* at St Thomas Church as part of his interview for the position. Sebastian Bach stayed at St Thomas for the rest of his life. During his time in Leipzig, he composed more than 250 church cantatas, the *St Matthew Passion*, *Mass in B minor*, and the *Goldberg Variations*. During the last ten years of his life, he was suffered from eye diseases, which eventually caused him to go totally blind in 1749. He died in Leipzig on July 28, 1750.

During his lifetime, Johann Sebastian Bach was famous as a virtuoso organist. However, as a composer, his compositions were considered old-fashioned by his contemporary musicians and only few of his works were printed. The revival of Bach's music began more than half a century after his death. On March 11, 1829, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy conducted the *St Matthew Passion* in Berlin. Subsequently, Bach's complete works were published systematically by the Bach Gesellschaft beginning in 1850, to mark the centenary of the composer's death.

Bach's *Tocatta*

Tocatta in Italian means "to touch." It is one of the oldest keyboard genres, mainly for organ and harpsichord. Typically, a *tocatta* is a short, improvisatory, virtuoso and fast-moving piece, featuring dexterity of the performer's fingers.

Johann Sebastian Bach composed twelve *toccatas* in total, including four *Pedaliter Toccatas* for organ, *BWV 538*, *540*, *564*, and *565*; seven *Manualiter Toccatas* for keyboard *BWV 910-916*; moreover, he wrote a *tocatta* in the first movement of *Partita no. 6, BWV 830*.

The seven *Manualiter Toccatas* were composed possibly during Bach's early career in Weimar. Unlike most of the composer's works, the seven *toccatas* were not composed to fulfill Bach's job duties.

Though they were normally known and published under a collective title, there is no evidence to prove that Bach intentionally composed them into a set, unlike the *English Suites*, *Well-Tempered Clavier* and other collections. The tonalities of these seven works, G major, G minor, D major, E minor, D minor, C minor and F sharp minor, show there is no tonal relationship among them.

The *Tocatta in G major, BWV 916* was called *Concerto seu Toccata pour le Clavecin* (*Concerto for Toccata for Harpsichord*) in a lost manuscript copy reported by Heinrich Nicolaus Gerber, a student of Bach. The French word *clavecin* refers to both clavichord and harpsichord. The *G major Toccata* is in three movements, known as *allegro*, *adagio* and *allegro e presto*. It is worth noticing that Bach only marked the tempo for the second and third movements. The first movement, has different titles in different editions of scores; for example, in the Peters Edition it is entitled *allegro*, in the Bach-Gesellschaft Ausgabe it is marked *presto*. The layout of the movements was possibly borrowed from Italian norms, as in the composer's *Italian Concerto BWV 564*, which has three movements *toccatà*, *adagio* and *fugue*. Besides the Italian influence, Bach also followed the German keyboard tradition, as in all the other toccatas, and ended the whole piece with a fugue.

Theoretical Analysis

(Allegro)

The first movement *allegro* was written in G major. It starts with groups of descending scales, which serve as an *instrumental ritornello*. After a chain of descending parallel chords, it ends on a perfect authentic cadence, in m. 4. The following two-and-half measures contains an alternative melodic solo section, imitated by different voices, while accompanied by articulated sixteenth-note voicings.



Figure 1-1 Bach Toccata in G major BWV 916, I. (Allegro), mm. 1-6.

The opening episodes repeat several times in the later passage and explore into various tonalities that are closely related to the home key; all the sectional endings land in a perfect authentic cadence. The solo phrase also features an imitative “echo-effect” between hands. For example, in m. 25, the melody first appears in the soprano line in the right hand, then reappears in the next measure in the bass line and is played by the left hand. The same formula is frequently used throughout the whole movement.



Figure 1-2 Bach Toccata in G major BWV 916, I. (Allegro), mm. 25-29, example of imitation between hands.

From m. 39, until the last entrance of the opening episode in m. 49, is a long sequence of dominant-tonic related broken chords, followed by the coda.

Adagio

The second movement, adagio, is a slow movement, and it was written in a highly expressive recitative style. The lyrical subject is elaborated with Italian melodic style lyricism and is imitated frequently among four voices. Performers often play this movement with added ornaments, so as to emphasize its improvisatory and free spirit.

The subject appears in the soprano voice in the opening measure and is later imitated by the other three voices, which play imitative melodic material that is derived from the subject.

The image shows three systems of musical notation for the Adagio movement of Bach's Toccata in G major, BWV 916, measures 57-68. Each system consists of a treble and bass staff. The first system is labeled 'Adagio' and 'Subject' with a double asterisk (**). Red boxes highlight the subject's appearance in the soprano voice in the first measure and its subsequent imitations in the other three voices (soprano, alto, and bass) across the three systems. The subject is a melodic line starting on G4, moving through A4, B4, C5, and ending on G4. The accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and a treble line with chords and occasional melodic fragments.

Figure 1-3 Bach Toccata in G major BWV 916, II. Adagio, mm. 57-68. Subject.

The adagio is in E-minor. It ends with a recitative coda and lands on a Picardy-third in the dominant of the home key E-minor.

The image shows the final three measures (78-80) of the Adagio movement. The notation is in treble and bass staves. Measure 78 begins with a recitative-style melodic line in the soprano voice, marked with a double asterisk (**). The piece concludes in measure 80 with a Picardy-third cadence, where the key signature changes from one sharp (F#) to no sharps or flats (C major), which is the dominant of the home key E-minor.

Figure 1-4 Bach Toccata in G major BWV 916, II. Adagio, mm. 78-80. Coda.

Allegro e presto

The last movement is marked *Allegro e presto*. Written in G major, and with a fast tempo, *presto*, this movement is a three-voice fugue. The opening subject contains a dotted, skipping rhythm, which is derived from to a French *canarie* or *gigue*.¹

As shown in the fugue analysis chart below, this is a counter-exposition fugue, and in its two expositions, all the subjects and answers are in the exact same key and voice placement.

Measure	1	3	4	7	8	11	11	19	19	22	23	26	27	31
	Exposition #1						Episode #1		Exposition #2 (link)					
Soprano	Subject-----CS-----						Seq.		Subject-----					
Alto	Answer-----CS-----						Seq.		Answer-----					
Bass	Subject-----						Seq.		Subject-----					
Key	G-D	D-G	D-G	G-D	G-D		D		G-D	D-G		G-D		
Cadence	PAC(D)						IAC(G)		PAC(D)		IAC(D)		PAC(D)	

Measure	31	33	33	34	37	41	42	43	46	47	50	50	55	55	56	59	61	66
	Episode #2		Middle Entry #1(stretto) (link)						Episode #3		Middle Entry #2 (link)							
Soprano	Seq.		Subject-----						Seq.		Subject-----							
Alto	Seq.		Answer-----CS(alto+bass)---						Seq.		Answer-----							
Bass	False Entry		CS-----Answer-----						Seq.		*S/A-----							
Key	G		e-b	e-b	b-e		G-D	e-D	D-A(D:I-V)			A-D		D-G			a-E-a	
Cadence	IAC(D)								PAC(A)		PAC(D)							

Measure	66	73	73	74	77	81	83	85	87	89	89	93	93	94	95	96	97
	Episode #4		M.E.#3/F.E.(stretto) (link) (link)						Episode #5		Final Entry (stretto)						
Soprano	Seq.		Subject-----						Seq.		Subject-----						
Alto	Seq.		Subject-----CS-----						Seq.		Subject-----						
Bass	Seq.		Subject---						Seq.		Subject-----						
Key	C-G		G-D	G-D	G-D	G-D	G-A				D-G		G	G			
Cadence	PAC(a)		PAC(G)						PAC(a)		IAC(G) PAC(G)						

Table 1-1 Bach Toccata in G major BWV 916, III. Allegro e presto. Fugue analysis chart.

¹ David Schulenberg, *The Keyboard Music of J. S. Bach*, 2nd ed, New York: Routledge, 2006, 535 p.

Moreover, as shown in the fugue analysis chart above, there is a coherent tonic-dominant (G-D) modulation appearing within the subjects and answers. For example, as shown in the Figure 7, the opening subject is divided by three perfect authentic cadences (PAC) into three motives. The three PACs are respectively landed in G major, G major and D major. As a result, the subject modulated from tonic to dominant key of D major. Similar modulatory character carries over in the following answer, which takes the tonality back to tonic. Bach placed this tonic-dominant modulation within all the subjects and answers in this fugue. On the other hand, countersubjects share the same key with its overlapped subjects or answers.

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The top staff is the opening subject, marked 'Allegro. Subject'. It is divided into three motives by three Perfect Authentic Cadences (PAC). The first PAC is in G major, the second is in G major, and the third is in D major. The modulation from G major to D major is indicated by a red circle around the D4 note in the subject. The bottom staff is the answer, marked 'Answer'. It is divided into two motives by two PACs. The first PAC is in D major, and the second is in G major. The modulation back to G major is indicated by a red circle around the G4 note in the answer.

Figure 1-5 Bach Toccata in G major BWV 916, III. Allegro e presto. Opening subject and answer, modulate G-D-G major, and head motive.

The head motive in the opening subject is commonly used in the later passages as a formative cadence. For example, the second episode ends with the head motive in an imperfect authentic cadence. Another similar case occurs when the head motive ends on a perfect authentic cadence in A-minor and starts the episode number five.

A color-coded fugue analysis is attached in the Appendix A.

Conclusion

Although the seven toccatas are less popular than the well-known *Well-Tempered Clavier*, *Prelude and Fugue*, or the *Goldberg Variation*, by studying this piece, I have gained a greater of Baroque stylistic interpretation. Particularly, the detailed analysis of the fugue solidified my understanding. Furthermore, the historical research increased my knowledge to learn the culture of Bach's day. For example, the dotted rhythm in the beginning of the fugue originated from French dance *canarie* or *gigue*. This knowledge helps to comprehend the energetic spirit of the work.

Chapter 2 - Beethoven's *Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3*

Biographical Information on Beethoven

German composer Ludwig van Beethoven was born in Bonn on December 17, 1770 and died in Vienna on May 26, 1827. He is generally considered as one of the most influential composers of the classical period, along with Haydn and Mozart. Beethoven was an “unsurpassed genius, expressed with supreme mastery in his symphonies, chamber music, concertos, and piano sonatas, revealing an extraordinary power of invention, marked a historic turn in the art of composition.”²

Beethoven's family was of Flemish origin. Ludwig grew up in a musical environment, both his grandfather Ludwig and his father Johann were musicians; the grandfather was a choir director and Johann was a tenor and also taught singing and piano. Beethoven admired his grandfather, but the relationship with his alcoholic father was stressful. He hoped to exploit Beethoven's music talents, so he gave his son very strict music training at an early age. Beethoven learned to play violin and piano.

In 1779, Beethoven started to study composition with his first important teacher, Christian Gottlob Neefe, who was a composer and conductor. The pupil made significant progress; he assisted his teacher as court organist and published his first composition, the *Dressler Variations*, in 1782. Neefe thereafter discovered his pupil's great potential and announced that Beethoven “would surely become a second Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, were he to continue as he has begun.”³ He taught Beethoven to study Bach and encouraged him in keyboard improvisation.

² Nicolas Slonimsky, and others, “Beethoven, Ludwig van,” *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, Centennial Ed. New York: Schirmer Books, 2001, pp. 260-271.

³ Denis Arnold and Barry Cooper, "Beethoven, Ludwig van," *The Oxford Companion to Music*, *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed March 22, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e698>.

At the age of twenty-one, Beethoven moved to Vienna and started to study composition with Franz Joseph Haydn. Soon his fame as a virtuoso keyboard improviser was rapidly spreading. Mozart died in 1791 and several patrons were looking for someone to take his place. Beethoven took advantage of this opportunity. At that time, virtuoso pianists were very much needed for private houses of the nobility, and Beethoven's outstanding pianistic skills, particularly improvisations, were a good match for this need.

Haydn had been very easygoing. However, lessons with Haydn seemed unsatisfactory to Beethoven, so that he approached Johann Schenk secretly to have lessons. In 1794, Beethoven discontinued his lessons with Haydn when Haydn left Vienna for London.

Thereafter, Beethoven began a systematic contrapuntal study with Johann Georg Albrechtsberger for about a year. Then, Beethoven took lessons in vocal composition with Italian composer Antonio Salieri, who was the Imperial Kapellmeister at the Austrian Court.

In March 1795, Beethoven made his public debut as a pianist, in Vienna, performing his newly-composed piano concerto. During the following year, his compositions became extremely popular, especially after an extensive performing tour of Prague, Dresden, Leipzig and Berlin. Beethoven was able to support himself through the publication of his works and aristocratic patrons frequently paid for dedications. He became a successful composer and pianist when he was thirty years old.

Unfortunately, a tragedy happened to him in his late-twenties. He started to lose hearing progressively. Then, he sought medical help but realized that there was no available cure. The deafness was an incredible emotional shock to him. In 1802, after a final attempt at a cure, he wrote the famous "Heiligenstadt Testament" to his brothers, in which he shared his thoughts of committing suicide. In 1811, as a result of his deafness, he was forced to give up conducting and performing in public but continued to compose. Around 1814, at the age of forty-four, Beethoven went almost totally deaf and had to rely on conversation books to communicate. Interestingly, many of his most admired works come from the last fifteen years of his life.

In 1815, after the death of his brother Carl, Beethoven became involved in a legal suit to gain custody of his nephew Karl from his mother. Beethoven eventually succeeded. Until the end

of his life he committed much time to Karl, which he might otherwise have had to invest in composition. By 1824, Beethoven was very sick, and his relationship with Karl remained intense. Karl eventually attempted suicide.

In October 1826, after completing a series of string quartets and embarking on a string quintet, Beethoven became unable to work and he died on March 26, 1827. His funeral was a grandiose public event, as a huge crowd followed the procession to the cemetery.

Three Style Periods

Beethoven was a transitional figure bridging the Classical and Romantic eras in Western Music. Traditionally, his compositions have been divided into three periods: early, middle and late. Along with all of Beethoven's musical output, his thirty-two piano sonatas document all the stylistic changes, bringing his classical sonatas to their stylistic peak then gradually transforming the musical idiom into the new romantic spirit.

This classification was first established by Wilhelm von Lenz in *Beethoven et ses trois styles (Beethoven and his Three Styles)*, written in 1828. Lenz proposed that each period of Beethoven's compositions features its distinguishing stylistic character. Lenz also suggested specific works as representatives for each period.⁴

The first period, or the early period, dated up to about 1802. At that time, Beethoven was influenced primarily by Viennese classicism, which was established by Mozart and Haydn. His major works in this period include the violin sonata *Spring* and *Symphony No. 1*. Piano and chamber works are the dominant genres in this period. Beethoven's early piano sonatas feature formal exploration and were influenced predominantly by Haydn and Clementi. Many of these early sonatas have four movements. Some of the third movements were marked *minuetto*, others were termed *scherzo*. This reflects Beethoven's innovation of substituting the traditional third

⁴ Joseph Kerman, "Beethoven, Ludwig van," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed March 27, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40026pg11>.

movement, *minuet* into *scherzo*. According to Lenz, this period started with Beethoven's *Trio Op. 1* and climaxed with his performances of the *First Symphony* and the *Septet* in 1800.

The middle period dated from 1802 to 1815, bringing most of Beethoven's popular works. This period began with the *Third Symphony Eroica*, and ended with the *Emperor Concerto*. Also, his *Fourth*, *Fifth* and *Sixth* symphonies were included in this period. The *Seventh* and *Eighth*, however, were considered transitional works from first to second period, while he progressively lost his hearing, thus were not included. This period highlighted most of his orchestral and piano works. His music output in this period is gradually more innovative than the first period: he extended and transformed extensively many musical features, such as themes, motives, harmonic progressions and key changes. In Lenz's work, the second period extends from the *Moonlight Sonata* to the *Piano Sonata in E minor, op. 90*. The second period piano sonatas showed a variety of styles and forms. The most well-known and frequently performed piano sonatas in this period are *quasi una Fantasia* (popularly known as *Moonlight Sonata*), *Pastorale*, *Waldstein*, *Appassionata* and *Les Adieux*.

The last period continued from 1815 until his death. This is the mature period in which each major composition is considered a masterpiece that is extremely distinctive, original and transcendent. During this time, the Classical influence upon him had completely vanished and his style became more intimate and "private." Major works from this time are mostly for solo piano and string quartet. There are no more concertos. Most popular pieces from this period are the *Ninth Symphony*, the five final string quartets, and the five last piano sonatas. Generally, these five late sonatas are considered relatively difficult repertoire for the piano. The *Hammerklavier* is the most complex sonata among all the sonatas he wrote. Until Franz Liszt played it in a concert, it was considered unplayable.

Sonata No. 18, in E-flat major, Op. 31, No. 3

The years of 1801 and 1802 were the transitional years that ended the first period and started the second period of his compositional output. Works that were written during this time were impacted by Beethoven's struggle with his progressive loss of hearing. Major works from

this period are the piano sonatas from opus 26 to opus 31, including the famous *Moonlight* and *Tempest*. These works clearly show the composer's transformative decisions of abandoning Classical influence and exploring new ways of expression.

Piano Sonata in E-flat major, op. 31, no. 3 was the third piece in a collection of three piano sonatas, which were published as op. 31 in 1803 with no dedication. The nickname of this work is *La Chasse* (the Hunt). The title was not assigned by the composer. A jocular and humorous mood dominates the sonata. Camille Saint-Saëns referenced the *Trio* from the third movement, *Menuetto* for his *Variations sur un thème de Beethoven Op. 35, for two pianos*.

This work contains four movements, which were entitled *Allegro*, *Scherzo*, *Minuet*, and *Presto*. It is Beethoven's last piano sonatas that contain four movements, with the sole exception of op. 106. Moreover, as stated earlier, Beethoven was the first composer who used *scherzo* in the third movement of instrumental sonatas instead of a *minuet*. This sonata, however, contains both a *scherzo* and a *minuet*, though it was the last one to include a *minuet* in all Beethoven's sonatas. It is also worth noting that there are no slow movements in this work, which makes the form of the entire work unique, and, more importantly, supports the joyful character throughout the piece.

Theoretical Analysis

I. *Allegro*

The first movement, *Allegro* was written in classic sonata-allegro form in the tonic key of E-flat major. As a transitional work bridging Beethoven's first and second period, this work contains both classical influence and some of the composer's revolutionary ideas.

The most obvious facts that Beethoven had likely adopted a Classical type of writing, is the Alberti bass he used in the second theme, plus a simple melodic line in the right hand part. This is shown in the figure below:



**Figure 2-1 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, I. Allegro, Theme II, mm. 46-54.
Example of Alberti Bass.**

On the other hand, Beethoven pursued a rule-breaking way of writing by starting the piece with an ambiguous $ii^{6/5}$ chord instead of a traditional tonic or dominant chord, and delayed the arrival of the tonic all the way until m. 8. He adopted the same type of writing in his *First Symphony*.

Figure 2-2 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, I. Allegro, Theme I, mm. 1-28.

The ambiguous opening can be regarded as an introduction section (mm. 1-17) before the first theme (mm. 18-28). The introduction section opens with two motives, a descending motive and an ascending chromatic motive, which are used throughout the movement. In m. 17, this section is ended with a perfect authentic cadence to establish the home key of E-flat major, and the first theme follows after.



Figure 2-3 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, I. Allegro, opening motives.

Another interesting point worth mentioning that shows Beethoven as a front-runner of expanding harmonic language in the history of western music, is the use of a chord similar to “Tristan⁵” chord in this movement. Although, Beethoven’s “Tristan” chord has the same note spelling and sound as Wagner’s, the harmonic function is totally different. The Tristan chord in Wagner resolves like an augmented six chord, whereas in Beethoven, it is meant to be a diminished seventh chord with the alto E serving as a suspension.

Figure 2-4 Wagner: Tristan und Isolde, m. 3, Tristan Chord.



Figure 2-5 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, I. Allegro, “Tristan” Chord.

⁵ A Tristan chord is a chord that consists of A4, A6 and A9 intervals above the bass note. It was named after the opening leitmotif, referring to *Tristan* in Richard Wagner’s opera *Tristan und Isolde*. Beethoven did however, write this chord in this sonata fifty-five years prior to Wagner’s opera.

II. Scherzo Allegretto Vivace

The second movement was entitled, *Scherzo Allegretto vivace*, and it is in the key of A-flat major. The humorous and playful character continues in this movement. This is a very different second movement compared with most of the common sonatas, since it isn't a slow movement. This *scherzo*, however, is also different from the regular scherzos, because it is in 2/4 time (*scherzos* are traditionally written in 3/4 time). The movement is in sonata form instead of ternary form and it lacks a Trio section for it to be the standard *scherzo* that we know.

The image shows the first 19 measures of the Scherzo Allegretto Vivace from Beethoven's Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3. The score is in A-flat major and 2/4 time. It features a right-hand melody and a left-hand accompaniment. The right hand starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic, followed by a strong *sf* dynamic. The left hand plays a staccato accompaniment. The score includes various dynamics such as *p*, *sf*, *pp*, *cresc.*, and *f*. There are also markings for *poco ritard.* and *a tempo*. The score is divided into measures 1-5, 6-10, and 11-15, with measure numbers 5, 10, and 15 circled. The piece ends with a final chord in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

Figure 2-6 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, II. Scherzo. Theme 1, mm. 1-19.

The *scherzo* begins with the first theme, in A-flat major. The melody is in the top voice of the right hand, while the left hand plays staccato accompaniment. Dynamics should be paid special attention. For example, the opening starts with *piano*, then, followed by a striking *sf* in the up-beat that leads to the next measure. The *sf* sounds like a hiccup and suggests a playful nature. The frequent repetitions of theme one in the movement suggest a strong feeling of rondo form.

The harmony also supports the joyful character. After the first theme, there comes the unexpected *fortissimo* F major chord, which sounds like an explosion and leads to the transition section before theme two. The second theme (mm. 50-56) is back to the home key and is much shorter in length in comparison with the first theme.

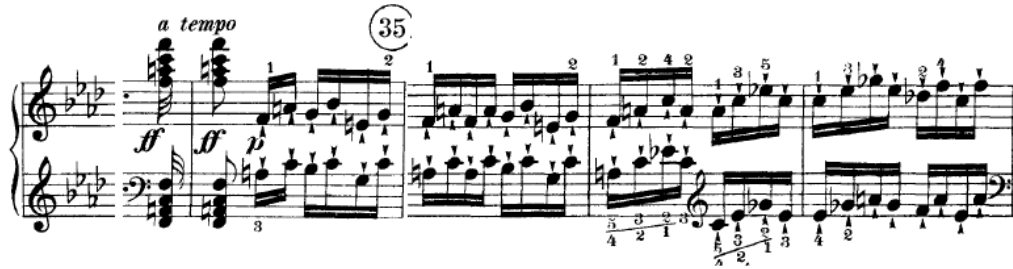


Figure 2-7 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, II. Scherzo. Transition, mm. 35-38.



Figure 2-8 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, II. Scherzo. Theme two, mm. 50-56.

The development starts with theme one but modulates to F major and C major, which are distant keys from the home key, A-flat major. The recapitulation is a standard one, with only the added alto voicing in the second appearance of the first theme begin different. A final coda is relatively short, beginning in measure 161. The monophonic and staccato sound makes this movement end in a joking way.

III. Menuetto Moderato e grazioso

The third movement is in E-flat major. It strictly follows the ternary form: A-B-A-Coda. The A section, *menuetto*, is much less energetic than the previous two movements. It is more serious, calm, and lyrical in nature. The singing melody in the upper line is supported by alto and bass harmonic output. In contrast, the *trio* is more playful in character. It starts with off-beat chords between different registers with harmonic progression. The *forte* octaves in m. 21 end the section surprisingly by contrasting the starting *piano*, in terms of dynamics. Camille Saint-Saëns quoted the melody from this *trio* in his variations for two pianos.

MENUETTO.
Moderato e grazioso.

Figure 2-9 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, III. Menuetto, mm. 1-16.

Figure 2-10 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, III. Trio, mm. 17-38.

IV. *Presto con fuoco*

The last movement is entitled *Presto con fuoco*, meaning literally “very fast tempo with fire,” which indicates its incredibly vigorous character. The form of this movement is sonata-allegro. Moreover, it is also referred to as a sonata-form *tarantella*. A tarantella is a 6/8 Italian folk dance featuring fast upbeat tempo and usually accompanied by tambourines. The rhythm is the most interesting element to study, since it best matches the tarantella quality.

In the first theme, the continuous triplet pattern in the left hand accompaniment keeps driving the tension till the strong arrival of the tonic chord in m. 6, which gives a feeling of sudden pause. The fast triplet rhythm might suggest a tambourine accompanying a tarantella dancer. At the same time, the right hand melody begins presenting a characteristic rhythmic motive that combines a pick-up and dotted rhythmic pattern, which brings us to the hunt scene as if we were hearing the horseback riding clatter.



Figure 2-11 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, IV. Presto, Theme 1, mm. 17-38.

The second theme starts at m. 34 and continues until m. 63. Beethoven played with the downbeat by either emphasizing it with a *sf* or, omit it with a rest. This switching keeps pushing the energy forward, and creates an excitement, even a conflict when it's being heard.



Figure 2-12 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, IV. Presto, Theme 2, m. 34-46.

The closing material borrows rhythmic patterns from theme one. The jumpy “horse-riding” rhythm is carried from the first theme, only with different note placement: there is an added eighth rest substituting the second half beat of the quarter note in the first and fourth beat in theme one. The left hand accompaniment continues perpetual triplets. The bouncy rhythm is called a *saltarello* rhythm, which means “jumping” and refers to a string bowing technique that is to bounce the bow

on the string. It originated from the *saltarello*, a quick Italian dance in 6/8 time, similar to the *tarantella* with a characteristic jumping feel to the rhythm.



Figure 2-13 Beethoven: Piano Sonata Op. 31 No. 3, IV. Presto, Closing Theme, m. 64-79.

The development and recapitulation use all these themes with modulation, or prolongation, that makes the jumpy and exciting character last to the very end of the piece. The coda section, from m. 279 to m. 333, especially, adds dynamic tension, such as a fortissimo contrasting with piano, pushing the piece up to a highly energetic ending.

Conclusion

Though very often known for music that features serious and heroic emotions, such as, for example, in the *Pathétique Sonata*, Beethoven presents in this *sonata op. 31 no. 3* a rare sense of humor. It is important to know the right spirit of this particular piece rather than be misguided by our common perception on Beethoven and his works.

Chapter 3 - Debussy's *Images Book One*

Biographical Information on Debussy

French composer, Achille – Claude Debussy, was born on August 22, 1862 at St Germain-en-Laye and died on March 22, 1918 in Paris. Debussy was one of the most important Impressionist composers in the history of music. He described in the *Baker Dictionary of Musicians* as a “great French composer whose music created new poetry of mutating tonalities and became a perfect counterpart of new painting in France.”⁶

As a child, Debussy took his first piano lesson with an Italian violinist, Jean Cerutti. He didn't receive any formal education until he entered the Paris Conservatoire at the age of ten. His first teachers in the Conservatoire were Antoine Marmontel, piano, and Albert Lavignac, solfège. Debussy's impressive musical talents were immediately recognized by his teachers.

In 1875-1877, though Debussy won many small prizes for solfège and piano, he failed to win the *premier prix* for piano which forced him to give up his dream of becoming a pianist. During his eleven years at the conservatory, he frequently played as a vocal accompanist and composed many important songs.

The years 1880 to 1882 were an important time period for Debussy's career. He went to Russia and worked for Nadezhda von Meck, known mostly today as the wealthy patroness of Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky. Debussy was assigned to teach Nadezhda's children and play duets with her.

In 1883, he failed to win the *Prix de Rome* but succeeded in winning it in 1884 with his cantata *L'Enfant prodigue*. After the competition, he resided at the Villa Medici in Rome for two years, where he met Franz Liszt, Giuseppe Verdi and Arrigo Boito, and he heard the opera *Lohengrin* by Richard Wagner. He was also influenced by hearing the sound of Gamelan, which is the traditional ensemble of instruments of Java and Bali in Indonesia. In 1888, Debussy met Erik

⁶Nicolas Slonimsky, and others, “Debussy, (Achille-) Claude,” *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, Centennial Ed. New York: Schirmer Books, 2001, pp. 821-825.

Satie, an eccentric composer known today for his *Gymnopédies* and *Gnosiennes*.

In his lifetime, Debussy was often inspired by other artists, such as the British painter Joseph Mallord William Turner and by Symbolist writers and poets, such as, Stéphane Mallarmé. After 1889, he was searching for a way to distinguish his style from Germanic influence, eventually he styled himself as “musicien français.”⁷ In 1918, Debussy died of cancer at his home in Paris.

Debussy experimented with non-functioned harmony, and created his own musical language which “established a new concept of tonality in European music.”⁸ His non-traditional style distinguished his style away from Wagner’s, which was the mainstream musical style at that time. This development has a significant impact on future generations of composers.

Impressionism in Painting and in Music

The direct influence of Impressionist paintings on music is debatable.

Debussy disliked the term “Impressionism”, and said it was, an “invention of critics.” As he wrote in a letter in 1908:

*I am trying to do 'something different' — an effect of reality... what the imbeciles call 'Impressionism', a term which is as poorly used as possible, particularly by the critics, since they do not hesitate to apply it to Turner, the finest creator of mysterious effects in all the world of art.*⁹

This quotation reflects the intense debate between Debussy and the old-school academics

⁷ "Debussy, Achille - Claude," *The Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 2nd ed. rev., *Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, accessed April 19, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e2803>.

⁸ Rudolph Reti, *Tonality, Atonality, Pantonality*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

⁹ Rudolph Reti.

during his time. Debussy's innovation of harmony disobeyed traditional compositional rules and thus had been negatively criticized.

The philosophical and aesthetic term "impressionism" was actually borrowed from the late nineteenth century French painting by Claude Monet "*Impression, Sunrise*," as shown below:



Figure 3-1 Claude Monet, *Impression, soleil levant* (1872).

The term "Impressionism" in painting is used to describe the impression of a natural scene to a painter, and then from the painter, to the viewer. Instead of drawing precise objects, Impressionist painters attempted to portray a vague atmosphere in their works. They frequently used contrasting colors, reflections of light, blurred foreground and background to create this atmosphere, and made viewers concentrate on the overall impression of the works.

In the work *Impression, Sunrise*, Monet used a majority of dark colors, such as grey, dark blue, dark green and black. Among all these dark colors, there is a bright orange sun that distinguishes itself from the grey surroundings. Also, there is a blurred background and foreground of the sky, shore and the sea in front of, and behind the boat. The dark boat seems like the only focused point in the whole painting, and all the other objects are out of focus.

Though Impressionist composers, like Debussy, weren't directly influenced by Impressionist paintings, there are certain artistic elements that Impressionist music and paintings share similarities. Firstly, and the most prominent, similar to its visual counterpart,

Impressionist music uses the term “color”, or tone color. To add colors into music, composers use dissonant intervals, ambiguous tonalities, frequent key shifts, modes, exotic scales and parallel motion. Secondly is the use of blurring the foreground and background. Composers use non-resolving harmonic progressions to create an uncertain and unexpected feeling for listeners. Moreover, extended tremolos and ostinatos are regularly used, so as to divide the music into different layers. Usually, the layer of ostinatos and tremolos are the embellishment of other layers. They are less important and are more often played as a blurring background sound.

Symbolism and Debussy

Symbolism was a late nineteenth century art movement that arose in France, Russia and Belgium. It originated from literature, visual art and theatre art. Symbolist poets rejected the traditional technique of preciseness in description, and sought to describe an individual’s inner emotion by using highly metaphorical language.

Unlike the visual Impressionism, Debussy had been deeply influenced by the Symbolism of art movement, especially affected by Symbolism in literature. Similar to Symbolists who rejected their common art forms and techniques, Debussy went against the traditional composition approach. Besides, Debussy used Symbolist literature, especially poetry, exclusively in his compositions. For example, the famous piano piece written by Debussy, *Clair de lune*, which is the third movement from the *Suite bergamasque*, published in 1891, was inspired by Paul Verlaine’s poetry *Fêtes galantes*, written in 1869. Debussy took the title of *Suite bergamasque* from Verlaine's poem *Clair de Lune*, in its first stanza:

Clair de Lune (French)

Votre âme est un paysage choisi

Que vont charmant masques et bergamasques

Jouant du luth et dansant et quasi

Tristes sous leurs déguisements fantasques.

Moonligh (English Translation)

Your soul is a chosen landscape

Where charming masqueraders and bergamaskers go

Playing the lute and dancing and almost

Sad beneath their fanciful disguises.

Furthermore, Debussy wrote the settings of Verlaine's poem *Ariettes oubliées*, and *Trois melodies*. Apart from Verlaine, the poet Stéphane Mallarmé was another poet that had a major influence on Debussy. Mallarmé's poetry *L'après-midi d'un faune*, which he wrote in 1876, had been the inspiration for Debussy to write *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* in 1894.

History Background of *Images Book One*

Debussy also drew inspiration from his private life. In June 1904, after four years of marriage to Lilly Texier, a model, he left his wife to be with Emma Bardac, an amateur singer and wife of a banker. Eventually, Lilly attempted suicide, which led to several of his friends cutting off their ties with the composer. Shortly after these turbulent events, his daughter Claude-Emma (Chouchou) was born on October 30, 1905. Three years later, Debussy married Emma.

There are a couple of piano pieces, including *Masques* and *L'Isle joyeuse* that were inspired by their honeymoon in Jersey and Dieppe in the summer of 1904. Some of Debussy's best-known piano works were dated around 1905, and that is also the time when he published the set of piano pieces entitled *Images, Book I*, and the piano *Suite Bergamasque*, which contains the popular piece *Clair de lune*. Chouchou also inspired her father to write *Children's Corner* suite, from 1906 to 1908.

Debussy wrote two series of *Images*, *Book I* in 1905, and *Book II* in 1907. Both were first performed by the pianist Ricardo Viñes. As shown from the title *Images*, the compositions were Debussy's attempt to paint music pictures.

The subject of first piece, *Reflets dans l'eau (Reflections in the Water)*, is about reflections

in the water, but Debussy did not specify what the reflections represent. We have to imagine the actual mystery hidden between musical lines. It is worth noting is that there were other composers who wrote pieces based on water themes as well. Maurice Ravel wrote a piece called *Jeux d'eau* (*Playing Water*), which was inspired by Franz Liszt's *Les jeux d'eaux à la villa d'este* (*The Fountains of the Villa d'Este*).

The second piece, *Hommage à Rameau*, is written “in the style of Sarabande,” an eighteenth century, slow, courtly dance with a serious and solemn character. Debussy dedicated this piece to Jean-Philippe Rameau, one of the greatest French keyboardists, and the most influential music theorist of the eighteenth century. It is said that this piece was possibly inspired by Rameau's opera, *Castor et Pollux*. Debussy had a strong interest in the eighteenth century French culture and deeply admired Rameau's work. Furthermore, Debussy was one of the editors for Rameau's complete works, which was published by Durand.

Among all the three pieces in *Images Book One*, the last piece, *Mouvement*, is the one that requires pure virtuosity. The starting ostinato triplet continues throughout the whole piece with a kind of non-stoppable energy. Debussy based this piece on rhythmic continuity, rather than melody. This innovative compositional approach had an impact on later composers like Stravinsky, Bartok and Casella¹⁰.

Debussy's Musical Language in *Images Book One*

In *Images*, Debussy experimented with a new harmonic language, which was very subtle and introverted. His unique musical language features innovative harmonies such as non-functioning and un-resolved chords, sequences of dissonant intervals, ambiguous key shifting and use of modes. Along with rhythmic densities, and extended tremolos and ostinatos, Debussy's music has unique tone colors.

¹⁰ Alfred Conrto, *The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*, London: J&W Chester LTD.

1. Reflets dans l'eau

Impressionist composers, like Debussy, were exploring musical equivalents of fleeting moments of natural objects, like water, fog and clouds. In this particular piece, Debussy used the harmony with a special color to associate the imagination of reflections in water.

The piece starts with pianissimo and resonant chords in the right hand, while the melody written in A^b-F-E^b coming out gently and then going down to low register with the left hand. The peaceful opening brings the listener into an image of flat water.

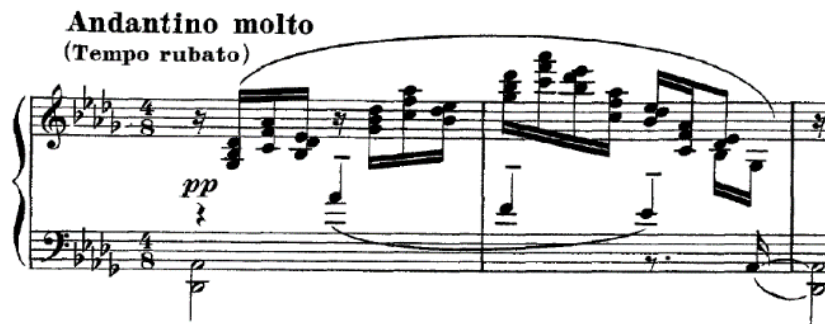


Figure 3-2 Reflets dans l'eau. Opening three-note melody in the left hand, mm. 1-2.

Subsequently, the sound level still remains a peaceful pianissimo, but soon, the sound splits into two layers in m. 9. The lower layer has thicker texture, the climbing chords are adding some dissonant spices and a chromatic feature, as if the water is blurring. The upper layer, on the other hand, is playing single notes in the high register while singing the melody $A^b-E^b-F-B^b$. The tune has a brighter color and a ringing quality, as if bubbles were flowing from the bottom of a stream and going up to its surface, blurring the water. The chromatic chord progression continues.

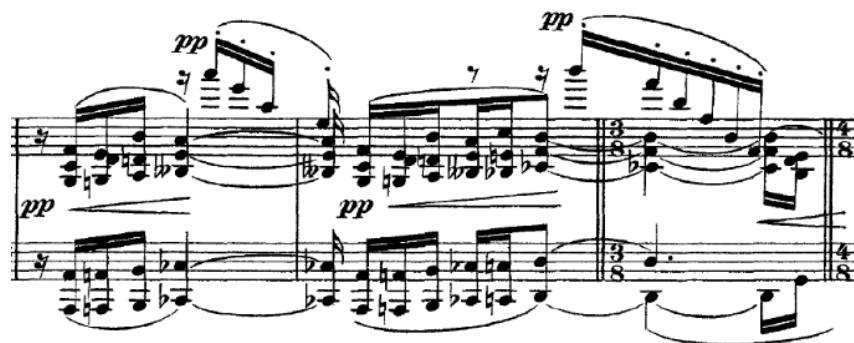


Figure 3-3 Reflets dans l'eau. Two layers of sounds, mm. 9-11.

At *Quasi Cadenza*, sweeping arpeggios dramatically appear and then overflow the rest of the piece, while a three-note melody constantly reappears, as if a reminder of the starting scene. The whole piece was planned from D-flat, gradually turning into E-flat at m. 56, and then hit the fortissimo climax in E-flat major at mm. 57 – 59.

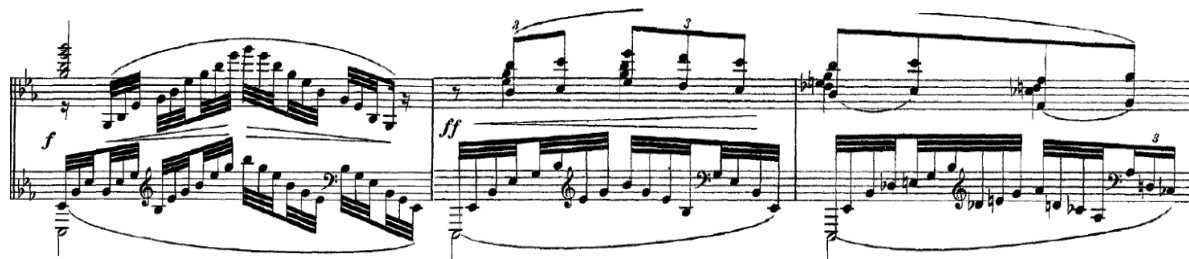


Figure 3-4 Reflets dans l'eau. Climax in E-flat major, mm. 56-58.

2. *Hommage à Rameau*

Debussy marked the tempo as “Lent et grave, dans le style d’une Sarabande mais sans rigueur,” which means slow and serious, in the style of a Sarabande, without rigor. The opening melody sets the foundation for further measures. In m. 5-6, there are measure-long bass notes, serving as pedal points, which creates a mysterious tonal sonority. When playing these bass notes, pianists should use the middle pedal, in order to keep the voice sounding. Apart from holding bass notes, this piece also needs special voicing to avoid loud dissonance sounds, which might interrupt the melody line.

II. *Hommage à Rameau*

Lent et grave
(dans le style d’une Sarabande mais sans rigueur)

pp *expressif et doucement soutenu*

p *pp* *più p*

Figure 3-5 *Hommage à Rameau*. Initial melody, mm. 1-4; bass note need to be hold by middle pedal, mm. 5-6.

3. *Mouvement*

The last piece, is entitled *Mouvement* (Movement). The title suggests a running, fast and exciting character about the piece. According to Debussy, the music “must revolve itself in an implacable rhythm,” and to achieve “whimsical but precise lightness.” The piece starts with an ostinato: three staccato eighth notes and one sustained eighth note. The slur under the staccato indicates to play with pedal, and keep the sound continuous. The last chord with a sustain mark should be played slightly longer, maybe with a longer pedal. The nonstop etude-like ostinato continues in the whole piece, which is difficult to play. It shows a virtuoso side of Debussy’s piano writing.

III. *Mouvement*

Animé (avec une légèreté fantasque mais précise)

The musical score is written for piano in 3/4 time. It begins with a right-hand melody of eighth notes, some grouped in triplets, and a left-hand accompaniment of staccato eighth notes. The first system includes the instruction *Animé* (avec une légèreté fantasque mais précise) and a dynamic marking of *pp*. The second system features a more intricate right-hand melody and a *pp* dynamic marking. A performance instruction reads: *plus pp la m.d. en valeur sur la m.g.*

Figure 3-6 *Mouvement*. Opening ostinato, mm. 1-8.

Conclusion

Debussy wrote *Images (book one)* in his mature years. These three pieces are distinctively different from each other, in the perspectives of theme, character, mood, technique and symbolic meaning, which take a tremendous effort to study. When I was preparing the performance of these works, the most challenging part for me was the understanding of this unique, non-traditional harmonic language. Hearing and imagining the colors in the chords requires not only the physical playing of a chord, but also mental understanding the musical context. In addition, the culture and history of that period constitute another fascinating aspect of study of Debussy and Impressionist music. Successful interpretation of this music requires familiarity with other art forms, such as the Symbolist literature and Impressionist paintings.

Chapter 4 - Chopin's *Scherzo Op. 31 in B-flat minor*

Biographical Information on Chopin

Fryderyk Franciszek Chopin was born in a small village of Żelazowa Wola, near Warsaw, which at that time was part of the Duchy of Warsaw. The exact date of Chopin's birth is unclear. According to Chopin's own memory in his letter he was born on March 1, 1810. However, another birth date was recorded in his certificate of baptism, which is February 22, 1810. Chopin died in Paris on October 17, 1849, at age of thirty-nine.

Chopin was the second son of four children in his family. His father Mikołaj Chopin was a native of France who immigrated to Poland and worked as a French teacher; his mother Tekla Justyna Krzyżanowska was Polish. The family moved to Warsaw when Chopin was seven months old.

As a child, Chopin's musical talents made it clear that he was a musical genius. At the age of seven he was mostly a self-taught pianist and never limited himself to traditional playing, he was particularly skilled at improvising. He began his musical training with formal piano lessons at the age of seven, studying with the Czech pianist Wojciech Adalbert Żywny, who lived in Warsaw at that time.

At the age of eight, Chopin had already started to give concerts; he performed a piano concerto by Gyrowetz, and began to compose polonaises, mazurkas and waltzes. Soon he was a published composer. In 1817, his two polonaises, in G minor and in A-flat major, were published without an opus number.

During the first six years of piano lessons, Chopin's fame as a prodigy was rapidly spreading among the wealthy aristocrats. He was frequently in demand at salons of the elite society. Thus, at his early childhood, being of noble temperament, Chopin already fit into the top social hierarchy in Poland, in contact with elegance and grace.

In 1822, possibly before entering high school, Chopin studied with another much more important teacher, Józef Elsner, director of the Warsaw Conservatory. Elsner taught Chopin

thorough composition knowledge including harmony, counterpoint and form. During the same year, Chopin started to receive organ lessons from Czech musician Wilhelm Würfel.

More importantly, at this point, Chopin was still mostly a self-taught performer, neither Zywny nor Elsner had much to offer Chopin, as far as keyboard technique is concerned. Similarly, Chopin found it was difficult to follow established rules and principles in composing. Though his high school years offered him serious training in composition, eventually Elsner stopped imposing his style of composition on Chopin and may have allowed him to have more freedom and to adopt more individual approach in composing.

In 1825, Chopin published his Op. 1 *Rondo in C minor* in Warsaw. Next year he entered the Warsaw Conservatory as a full-time student. During his years in the Conservatory, Chopin was known as a prominent young pianist in Poland.

In 1829, he completed his musical education in Warsaw and left for Vienna temporarily in order to seek further opportunity and fortune. While in Vienna, he gave highly successful concerts and published his Op. 2 variations on Mozart's aria, *La ci darem la mano* for piano and orchestra. It was this work that attracted the attention of Robert Schumann, who saluted Chopin in his article in 1831, saying: "Hats off, gentlemen! A genius!"

Back in Warsaw, Chopin gave the first public performance of his two newly-composed piano concertos in 1830. In November, he returned to Vienna and did not realize that he would never see Poland again.

A revolution against Russia began in Poland in late November of 1830. In Vienna, Chopin was extremely worried about his family and friends, since he was deeply attached to his homeland. During that time, he composed the famous *Revolutionary Etude in c minor*. He wrote to a friend in 1831: "In feeling I am always in a state of syncopation with everyone...I am gay on the outside...but inside something gnaws at me...."

In September 1831, Chopin left Vienna and settled in Paris. Although, widely celebrated as a performer, he gradually abandoned concert life and only gave private salon recitals to aristocrats and his friends. During his time in Paris, Chopin was close to many leading artists in the Romantic era, including Berlioz, Bellini, Rossini, Delacroix, Heine, Meyerbeer, and Paganini.

He developed a particularly close friendship with Liszt. He supported himself through piano lessons and publications of his compositions.

In 1834 he went to Germany with Ferdinand Hiller, where he met Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Clara and Robert Schumann. He was also friends with literary figures and visual artists: de Musset, Balzac, Delacroix, and Heine; also the Polish poet, Adam Mickiewicz.

Chopin met the famous novelist, Aurore Dupin in 1836, who used George Sand as her penname. Soon they developed a love affair that lasted for ten years, ending in 1847. By that time, Chopin was quite sick with tuberculosis. He played his last concert in London in November 1848, and died in the following year at the age of 39. At his request, Mozart's *Requiem* was performed at his funeral.

Scherzo in General

The Italian word "*scherzo*" means "joke", similar to the French term "*badinerie*." The musical terminology "*scherzando*" indicates the music should be played in a lively and playful manner. The musical genre "*scherzo*" is generally fast, light and humorous in nature. It was usually written in triple meter and ternary form, while coupled with a contrasting trio section.

The title *Scherzo* was first applied to various genres of seventeenth century music, primarily vocal music. In the eighteenth century, around 1781, the term was adopted for regular usage in instrumental works. The traditional *minuet* movement was substituted by the *scherzo*.

Though Haydn was the first composer to mark "*scherzo*" in his string quartets to take the place of a *minuet*, Beethoven was the first one who firmly establish *scherzo* as a substitute for a *minuet*. Beethoven started to include *scherzos* in his works as early as the *Op. 1 piano trio*. He wrote *scherzos* rather than *minuets* in all his symphonies, except for the *First* and *Eighth*. However, the Beethoven *scherzos* had different characters. Instead of light and humorous, frequently they were stormy and almost savage. Also, they were almost always written in 3/4 time, combined with fast tempo and cross-rhythm effects. Mendelssohn also contributed another character of *scherzo*, it was brilliant and dazzling.

In the nineteenth century, the *scherzo* had been established as an independent composition. This was the result of the Romantic composition tradition of abandoning the sonata form and pulling out separate movements as individual works. Compared with the sonata *scherzo*, the independent *scherzo* was much larger in length and highly elaborated.

This type of *scherzo* was fully developed in the Romantic era piano literature. Most well-known works include Chopin's four *scherzos* and one by Brahms; Schuman also wrote smaller independent *scherzos*. Many more works were written or arranged for four hands.

Chopin's *Scherzo no. 2*

Chopin wrote four independent *scherzos*: *Op. 20*, *Op. 31*, *Op. 39* and *Op. 54*, and two *scherzos* as second movements of *Sonata Op. 35* and *Op. 58*.

Chopin marked the opening tempos in all of these four *scherzos* *presto* or *presto con fuoco*. All of these four works have the same formal plan: ternary form, A-B-A, or, *scherzo-trio-scherzo*. Generally, the *scherzo* sections are powerful, dramatic and passionate, while the *trio* sections contain contrasting material; they are lyrical and peaceful. Chopin's style in the *scherzos* is graceful, dramatic, moody, sensitive and extremely expressive. The mood changes drastically and frequently, which is always a challenge to the performer, as it demands sensitive emotion and impeccable technique.

Op. 31 Scherzo in B-flat minor was the second *scherzo* Chopin wrote, it was dedicated to Countess Adèle Fürstenstein. This work was completed in December 1837 and published the same year in Paris. While finishing this work, Chopin was also working on the *Preludes Op. 28* and the second *Ballade Op. 38*.

It was not a good year in Chopin's life. The engagement between Chopin and Maria Wodzińska, who was from a rich Polish family, was unexpectedly broken. The decision of Maria's mother was possibly influenced by Chopin's poor health, and also likely by rumors about Chopin's relationships with women, such as Marie d'Agoult and George Sand. Soon, Chopin had to abandon his hope for a new home, and suffered from emotional disappointment, he packed all of Marie's

letters and annotated the package with the famous words written in Polish: “my sorrow.” Chopin wrote the *Scherzo* in this psychological condition. This work carries contrasting emotions of great tension, almost fury, and flowing whispers. When reviewing the *B-flat minor Scherzo*, Robert Schumann compared it to Byronic poem:

“*The impassioned character of the Scherzo reminds us more of its predecessors; it is a highly attractive piece, so overflowing with tenderness, boldness, love and contempt, that it may be compared, not inappropriately, to a Byron poem. Such a one does not please everyone to be sure.*”¹¹

Theoretical Analysis

The second *Scherzo in B-flat minor, op. 31*, is one of Chopin’s most familiar works and is also the most popular one among the four. As stated earlier, Chopin marked the tempo as *presto*. Along with the fast tempo, Chopin created a dramatic mood change by using frequent key changes. For example, it was written in the key of B-flat minor, and occasionally it switched to its relative D-flat major, even to a remote key of A-major. The form of this work is tripartite: A-B (trio)-A-coda, two themes and return back to the first theme. The overall design in this work is as follows:

Form	Measure No.	Themes	Keys
A-Scherzo	1-64	<i>sotto voce</i>	b ^b , D ^b (relative)
	65-132	<i>con anima</i>	D ^b
A-Scherzo	133-196	<i>sotto voce, w/embellishment</i>	b ^b , D ^b
	197-264	<i>con anima, w/e.</i>	D ^b
B-Trio	265-309	<i>sostenuto</i>	A (distant)
	309-333	<i>espress.</i>	c [#] , E (distant)
	333-364	<i>leggiero</i>	E
B-Trio	365-411	<i>sostenuto, w/e.</i>	A

¹¹ G. C. Ashton Jonson, *A Handbook to Chopin’s Works* (London: W. Heinemann, 1905), 114.

	411-435	<i>espress.</i>	c [#] , E
	435-467	<i>leggiero</i>	E
B'-Trio extension	468-492	<i>sempre f</i>	chromatic
	492-516	<i>agitato, variation I/espress.</i>	g-c-a ^b -A ^b
	516-543	<i>v. I/sotto voce</i>	chromatic
	544-583	<i>sempre con fuoco, v. II/espress.</i>	b ^b , D ^b
A-Scherzo	584-647	<i>sotto voce</i>	b ^b , D ^b
	648-715	<i>con anima, w/extension</i>	D ^b
Coda	716-780	<i>v. II/sotto voce</i>	A ^b -D ^b

Table 4-1 Form and Key Analysis for Op. 31, Scherzo in B-flat minor

This work opens with a characteristic motive, marked *sotto voce*, which means in an undertone with subdued sound. Chopin taught that the first B-flat minor arpeggiated pianissimo unison was a question, followed by a fortissimo answer in upper register chords.

According to Chopin's friend Wilhelm von Lenz, "For Chopin it was never question enough, never *piano* enough, never vaulted enough, never important enough. It must be a charnel-house."¹² To learn and perform this piece, one should diligently study the starting phase in order to understand the right spirit. The question is in a serious and mood, the following answer is in a weighty and dramatic mood.

¹² G. C. Ashton Jonson, *A Handbook to Chopin's Works* (London: W. Heinemann, 1905), 114.

Presto.

The musical score is presented in three systems, each with a piano (right) and bass (left) staff. The key signature is B-flat minor (three flats) and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked 'Presto.'.

- System 1 (mm. 1-4):** The piano part begins with a 'sotto voce' marking. The bass part starts with a forte (*ff*) dynamic. A first ending bracket labeled '1' spans measures 3 and 4.
- System 2 (mm. 5-8):** The piano part continues with a piano-piano (*pp*) dynamic. The bass part remains forte (*ff*). A first ending bracket labeled '1' spans measures 7 and 8.
- System 3 (mm. 9-12):** The piano part features a forte (*f*) dynamic. The bass part continues with a forte (*f*) dynamic. A second ending bracket labeled '2' spans measures 11 and 12.

Articulation marks, including slurs and accents, are used throughout the score. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5 above or below notes.

Figure 4-1 Opening question-answer motive of Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, mm. 1-24.

The opening motive is followed by a brilliant flowing descending phrase, later being altered and used in the coda with the greatest energy.



Figure 4-2 Flowing descending phrase of Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, original, mm. 49-52; coda I, mm. 716-719; coda II, mm. 756-759.

Then it comes to the lyrical *con anima* section. The right hand melody is very beautiful, but clouded with sadness, while accompanied by rapid left hand broken chords, with a subtle harmonic progression.



Figure 4-3 Con anima section example of Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, mm. 65-74.

Thereafter, the whole A section is repeated with several embellishments. The repeated A theme in this scherzo can be omitted because of the lengthy repetition.

The B section, or trio, is in A major, and is marked *sostenuto*, which means to be sustained. As a contrasting section, the trio, or middle section has a peaceful character, full of wonder. The first appearance of the *sostenuto* is the quietest moment in the whole piece. It is worth noticing that the returned *sostenuto* in m. 366, however, was marked *forte*. Not only does the dynamic change, but also the character switches to powerful and proud.

The image shows a musical score for the Trio section of Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, mm. 265-284. The score is in A major and marked *sostenuto*. It features a piano introduction with *sotto voce* and *p* markings, followed by a section marked *delicatissimo* with fingering and dynamic markings.

Figure 4-4 Trio section of *sostenuto*, of Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, mm. 265-284.

As the trio section proceeds, a singing episode marked *espressivo* in C-sharp minor and E-major follows. The melodic material in this episode is borrowed from *con anima* in the A section.



Figure 4-5 Trio section of *espress.*, of Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, mm. 309-318.

The last phrase in the trio section is marked *leggiero*, which means light and delicate. It begins light and it full of lively excitement. It gradually becomes more powerful, until it comes to a sudden stop.



Figure 4-6 Trio section of *leggiero*, of Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, mm. 334-351.

The Coda section brings the dramatic mood together, and throws out terrific energy into a triumphant ending. The opening question-answer motive has been altered and marked *piu mosso*,

more moved and animated. In contrast to the opening, the reappeared question meets with a brilliant and satisfying answer.

Final Thoughts

The most serious challenge that I encountered when I was learning this piece was to count accurately. Since it was written in *Presto* tempo, and the frequent use of rests were very easily to miscount.

At first, I was using the triple meter counting system, so that there are three counts in a measure. The problem arose when I played up to tempo. It was hard to keep the second beat of *ff* in time in m. 22, and keep the rests long enough from the last beat of m. 22 to the first two beats of m. 25.



Figure 4-7 Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31, mm. 20-25. The *ff* is hard to play on the second beat and the following rests can also be confusing.

Therefore, I was experimenting with different counting systems to overcome this difficulty. As I took more lessons and music theory classes, I was introduced a new counting system: hyper-measure, which counts the whole measure as one beat, called a hyper-beat, and then group the hyper-beats into a meaningful group: hyper-measure. Every first hyper-beat in a hyper-measure is called a hyper-downbeat.

In this particular piece, the hyper-measure should be grouped by four hyper-beats. In other words, every four measures should be counted as one hyper-measure. Not surprisingly, Chopin did place the hyper-downbeat in a meaningful way.

Scherzo.
à M^{lle} la Comtesse de FÜRSTENSTEIN. F. CHOPIN. Op. 31.

Presto. 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

sontra voce *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp* *ff* *pp*

Figure 4-8 Scherzo in B-flat minor, Op. 31. Hyper measure and hyper-downbeat in the first two pages of the piece.

As shown from the figure above, in the beginning of the piece, the fortissimo chord in m. 5, which is the answer in the opening question-answer phrase, is the hyper-downbeat. Correspondently, the repetition of the opening motive in m. 25 is also in hyper-downbeat. Interestingly, Chopin put two bars of rest before the reappearance of the motive, he might have intentionally placed the hyper-downbeat in the same arrangement. Similar example can be found in m. 37 and m. 49.

In the *con anima* section, the hyper-downbeat also has significant placement. For example, in m. 97, the hyper-downbeat marks the ending of the former long phrase and the starting of a new phrase. Moreover, in m. 117, the fortissimo chord falls on hyper-downbeat and ends the previous *con anima* section.

Afterwards, the A theme repeats with exactly the same hyper-measure design as the beginning A theme. The A major trio section is written in four-bar phrasing, so the hyper-measure analysis makes sense in this section, since it follows the harmonic change and phrase structure.

Along with its unique lyricism, Chopin's music is sensitive, colorful and emotional. This *Scherzo* contains a unique juxtaposition of rapidly changing motives and rests. The practice of the hyper-measure counting, along with special attention to the hyper-downbeat, helped me perform with increased precision and accuracy.

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Appendix A - Bach *Tocatta in G major BWV 916, III. Allegro e presto.*

Color-coded Fugue Analysis.

The image displays a handwritten musical score for the third movement of Bach's *Tocatta in G major, BWV 916*, titled "Allegro e presto". The score is annotated with color-coded fugue analysis, showing the following sections and markings:

- Exposition #1:** Marked at the beginning of the piece.
- Subject (G→D):** The first entry of the subject in the treble clef, highlighted in blue.
- Counter Subject (D→G):** The first entry of the counter-subject in the bass clef, highlighted in yellow.
- Answer (D→G):** The second entry of the subject in the bass clef, highlighted in yellow.
- Episode #1:** A section marked in green, starting at measure 89.
- Other markings:** Various annotations include "PAC(a)", "IAC(G)", "S(G→D)", and "CSC(G-D)", along with measure numbers (81, 85, 89, 93) and bar numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13).

Handwritten musical score with annotations:

- Exposition #2** (Red box)
- Measure 97: $S(G-D)$
- Measure 100: $A(D \rightarrow G)$
- Measure 104: $IAC(a)$, (link)
- G- Episode #2** (Green box)
- Measure 108: why not a link?
- Middle Entry #1 stretto** (Orange box)
- Measure 112: $S(e\bar{m} \rightarrow b\bar{m})$, $IAC(D)$
- Measure 116: $IAC(b\bar{m})$, $A(b\bar{m} \rightarrow e\bar{m})$, $A(b\bar{m} \rightarrow e\bar{m})$
- Measure 116: $CS(e\bar{m} - b\bar{m})$
- Measure 116: False Entry

Handwritten musical score for piano, featuring six systems of music with various annotations and highlights.

System 1 (Measures 120-123): Marked with a red '4'. Measure 120 is labeled '(link)'. Measure 123 is labeled 'S(G-D)'. The music is highlighted in yellow.

System 2 (Measures 123-125): Marked with a red '43'. Measure 125 is labeled 'CS(ea-D) [Alto + Bass]'. The music is highlighted in blue and orange.

System 3 (Measures 126-128): Marked with a red '46'. Measure 128 is labeled '* S(D-A) (tonic-dominant)'. The music is highlighted in blue and orange.

System 4 (Measures 130-132): Marked with a red '50'. A red box labeled 'Episode #3 - A-D' is placed above the staff. Measure 130 is labeled 'PAC(A)'. The music is highlighted in blue.

System 5 (Measures 133-135): Marked with a red '53'. Measure 135 is labeled 'Mid Entry #2'. The music is highlighted in yellow.

System 6 (Measures 136-138): Marked with a red '56'. Measure 136 is labeled 'PAC(b)'. Measure 138 is labeled '(link)'. The music is highlighted in yellow.

Handwritten musical score for piano, consisting of five systems of staves. The score includes measure numbers (78, 82, 86, 90, 94) and various annotations:

- System 1 (Measures 78-81):** Includes fingering numbers (e.g., 5, 4, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 2, 1, 3, 2, 1, 3) and blue highlighting in the bass staff.
- System 2 (Measures 82-85):** Includes the annotation "S(G-D)" above the treble staff and blue highlighting in both staves.
- System 3 (Measures 86-89):** Includes the annotation "CS(G-A)" above the treble staff, "da" above the bass staff, "Episode #5" in a green box, and "PAC(ant)" above the bass staff. Orange highlighting is present in both staves.
- System 4 (Measures 90-93):** Includes the annotation "Final Entry stretto" in an orange box, "IAC(G)" above the treble staff, and "S(G)" below the bass staff. Blue highlighting is present in the bass staff.
- System 5 (Measures 94-97):** Includes the annotation "PAC(G)" above the treble staff and blue highlighting in both staves.

60 [140]
 S/A(añ-E-añ)

63 [143]
 A/S añ

66 [146] Episode #4 - c-g
 PAc(añ)

70 [150]
 Final Entry or. Mid Entry #3
 S(G-D)

74 [154]
 PAc(G)
 S(G-D)
 (link)
 S(G-D)

Appendix B - Recital Program

GRADUATE RECITAL SERIES

Ye Hua, *Piano*

PROGRAM

Toccatà in G major, BWV 916

J. S. Bach (1685 – 1750)

Sonata Op.31 No.3

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770 – 1827)

1. Allegro

2. Scherzo. Allegretto vivace

3. Menuetto. Moderato e grazioso

4. Presto con fuoco

INTERMISSION

“Images” (vol. 1)

Claude Debussy (1862 – 1918)

1. Reflets dans l'eau

2. Hommage à Rameau

3. Mouvement

Scherzo in B flat Minor, Op. 31

Fryderyk Chopin (1810 – 1849)

ALL FAITHS CHAPEL AUDITORIUM

SUNDAY, APRIL 10, 2016, 3 P. M.

This recital is given in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Master of Music degree. Ms. Hua is a student of Dr. Slawomir Dobrzanski.