

Thursday, December 6, 2018, Feast

Teachers - **Lunch is at 1130.** Please make sure that your class has eaten lunch, packed up, and done chores before noon. Make sure that the students know their groups (A, B, C, or D) so everyone can use the restrooms in plenty of time. We will do composer study and citizenship first.

Composer Study — Claude Debussy

Harvest Playlist -

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2RIujh_zAEO2txl4cFW66rCY-fsuhvL

Earlier Lessons - Our new composer is Claude Debussy. He and Claude Monet have the same first name is Claude, were born and raised in France in the mid 1800s, and died in the early 1900s. Debussy was twenty years younger than Monet. Like the artist Monet, Debussy was trying to break from rigid rules for music and to make shape his music into an experience lacking in pattern. One of his most famous piano compositions “Clair de lune” — French for moonlight — is based on a French poem. It is the third movement (part) of a four-part composition called the *Suite bergamasque*.

Claude Debussy did not have an easy childhood. His parents lived in Paris and they did not have much money. During the Siege of Paris in 1870, his mother took the children to live with an aunt to be away from the city. She lived on the Mediterranean Sea and days spent at the beach left an impression on him. His aunt paid for the seven-year-old boy to take piano lessons. His father picked the wrong side in the battle and spend one year in prison. Claude continued to take lessons and his teachers saw his talent. He was admitted to the Paris Conservatory at the age of ten and only the best musicians studied there. He studied piano, Sol-fa, composition, harmony, organ, and music history and theory. Some teachers liked him and wrote, “A charming child, a truly artistic temperament; much can be expected of him.” Other teachers was less impressed: “Debussy would be an excellent pupil if he were less sketchy and less cavalier.”

This Week’s Lesson - If you were going to write music about the sea, where would you go? Debussy loved the sea but he was inland when he first began writing “La mer.” He drew from his memories of many happy days at a beach along the Mediterranean Sea with his mother, sister, and aunt. Ironically, his father wanted Claude to go to sea as a sailor when he grew up. Fortunately he did not for Debussy

never learned to swim! Being inland in a place called Burgundy seems an odd location for writing about the sea, but this is what Claude wrote to a friend:

“You’ll tell me that the ocean doesn’t exactly wash the hillsides of Burgundy...! And that this could well turn out like some studio landscape! But I have countless memories: that’s better, to my mind, than a reality whose charm generally weighs too heavily on one’s consciousness.”

Debussy started writing the piece in 1903 and did drive to a couple of locations by the sea on the English Channel during the two years he worked on “La mer.” It was not a happy time in his life. He was not in the best of health and his wife did not have the same love for his music as he did. While she was loving toward him and well liked by Debussy's friends, he was annoyed that they did not discuss the things that mattered most to him. These challenges were rippling through his marriage and threatening to tear it apart. Their letters to one another while he traveled were short and not at all sweet.

Tell the class to imagine they are at the beach and they go into the water to experience how the waves feel and what they do. What might the music inspire them to see? Play the only video listed for December 6. See what the class observes for each area. First, have them share any images that came to mind. Depending on the ability of the class, see what they observe about volume and tempo.

- Volume: Is it generally loud or soft?
- Tempo: Is it generally fast or slow?

This is what Ms. Tammy noticed. The mood is brighter and livelier than the first movement. Different instruments seem to take turns expressing the idea of a ripple. Even the body language and facial expressions of the musicians ripple. Again, the music is unpredictable and just, when you think you know where it is going, it suddenly changes. Like waves, when you think you spot a pattern, one hits you in the face with a surprise. At the four minute mark there is a dramatic increase in volume (*crescendo*) and again the music quiets, only to rebuild again at the five minute mark and again back off. The harps play some broken chords (*arpeggios*) at 5:30, creating more ripples. To make sure the idea of ripples has not been lost on us, the ending of the piece comes back to ripples. Like the first movement, the rhythm and tempo is not steady at all and there is a feeling of wandering and restlessness in how the time shifts throughout the movement.

A Glossary of Musical Terms

mood: feeling of music (happy or sad or ...)

dynamics: change

crescendo (getting louder) or *decrescendo (getting softer)*

articulation: how a note is played or sung

sibilance (hissssing sssssoundssssss)

staccato (ve-ry-cho-ppy)

legato (*smoothly connected together*)

tempo: the timing of a piece

fast (**allegro**) or slow (**andante**)

ritardando (a dramatic sloooooowdooooooown at the end of a piece)

rubato (sometimes slightly **allegro** and sometimes slightly **andante**)

form: the structure of a musical composition

fantasia (an instrumental that has a free form with no strict rules)

libretto (a script of words sung/spoken by actors and song lyrics)

opera (theater in which everything is sung)

rondo (an instrumental that has a strict pattern and usually has a fast tempo)

sacred music (music to encourage a prayerful spirit and thoughts about God)

voice: the pitch and range of particular voice

soprano (highest voice, usually women or young boys)

alto (high voice, usually women or young boys)

tenor (low voice, usually men and occasionally women)

bass (lowest voice, usually just men)

arpeggio (a broken chord in which each note is played separately)

chord (a group of harmonic notes that are played at the same time)

Citizenship —

Primary - Primary classes will be reading from *Parables from Nature* by Margaret Gatty <https://www.amblesideonline.org/ParablesParaphrase.shtml#unknown>.

Primary A is finishing “The Law of Authority and Obedience” this week while

Primary B is starting “The Unknown Land.” They will read at their own pace and how much is read per week depends upon two things: how much time is left before everyone leaves and the length of the class’s attention span. Ten minutes is plenty.

For “The Unknown Land,” ask the children what they know about birds and migration. This story explores faith and our final home, the land that is unknown to us in our earthly life, through the perspective of young birds trying to understand what their parents have taught them about the unknown land.

Then read a short section, no more than a page because it is best to leave them wanting more. Then have the class narrate when they remember and have them share what they think will happen next week.

Elementary - This week they are continuing Chapter XI, which tells the rest of the story of concerning the brothers of Oedipus. <http://www.mainlesson.com/display.php?author=guerber&book=greeks&story=quarrel&PHPSESSID=e1aaa2933d46796c956d07c27a5c6c09>

Middle/High School - Cicero!