

DEBUSSY IN CONTEXT

Exploring the many dimensions of Debussy's historical significance, this volume provides new perspectives on the life and work of a much-loved composer and considers how social and political contexts shape the way we approach and perform his works today. In short, focused chapters building on recent research, contributors chart the influences, relationships, and performances that shaped Debussy's creativity, and the ways he negotiated the complex social and professional networks of music, literature, art, and performance (on and off the stage) in Belle Époque Paris. It probes Debussy's relationship with some of the most influential '-isms' of his time, including his fascination with early music and with the 'exotic', and assesses his status as a pioneer of musical modernism and his continuing popularity with performers and listeners alike.

SIMON TREZISE was Associate Professor in the Music Department, School of Creative Arts at Trinity College Dublin before his retirement in 2021. He is the author of *Debussy: La Mer* (Cambridge University Press) and editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* and *The Cambridge Companion to French Music*.

COMPOSERS IN CONTEXT

Understanding and appreciation of musical works is greatly enhanced by knowledge of the context within which their composers lived and worked. Each of these volumes focuses on an individual composer, offering lively, accessible and concise essays by leading scholars on the many contexts – professional, political, intellectual, social and cultural – that have a bearing on his or her work. Biographical and musical influences, performance and publishing history and the creative afterlife of each composer's work are also addressed, providing readers with a multifaceted view of how the composers' output and careers were shaped by the world around them.

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DEBUSSY IN CONTEXT

EDITED BY

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UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment
 978-1-108-47206-7 — Debussy in Context
 Simon Trezise
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
 UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
 New Delhi – 110025, India
 103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
 a department of the University of Cambridge.

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 education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108472067

DOI: 10.1017/9781108560986

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When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781108560986

First published 2024

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Trezise, Simon, editor.

TITLE: Debussy in context / edited by Simon Trezise.

DESCRIPTION: [1.] | Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University
 Press, 2024. | Series: Composers in context | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2023057348 | ISBN 9781108472067 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108458955
 (paperback) | ISBN 9781108560986 (ebook)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Debussy, Claude, 1862–1918. | Debussy, Claude, 1862–1918 – Friends and
 associates. | Debussy, Claude, 1862–1918 – Appreciation. | Music – France – Paris – History and
 criticism. | Paris (France) – Social life and customs. | Paris (France) – History – 1870–1940.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC ML410.D28 D383 2024 | DDC 780.944/361–dc23/eng/20231226

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023057348>

ISBN 978-1-108-47206-7 Hardback

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In Memoriam
David J. Code (1966–2022)
Reader in Music, School of Culture and Creative Arts,
University of Glasgow

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Preface

Over one hundred years since his death, Debussy's music has lost none of its allure. It continues to communicate with audiences in strikingly different ways, as is demonstrated by his ineffable presence in popular culture; Debussy 'crosses over' easily. Even when his music occurs in 'serious' or mainstream programming, such as his inclusion in the 2023 BBC Proms, it may be as the purveyor of exotic colours or works that evoke the elements. For one concert, 'Ibéria', from the orchestral *Images*, was chosen for 'Impressions of Spain' (that word, 'impression', is so often present), and for the late-night 'Moon and Stars' concert we were offered organ arrangements of the slow movement from the String Quartet and 'Clair de lune'. In 2023, the Los Angeles Philharmonic opened a concert with the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, the programme notes for which emphasised the work's sensuous qualities.

The same annotator, Kathy Henkel, also spoke of the work as one of the 'great contributions to modern music', thereby drawing us back to the endlessly fascinating prospect of Debussy as both a popular composer and one of the most radical innovators in the history of music. It is therefore unremarkable, but heartening, that the past few years, galvanised in part by the centenary, have witnessed a rich procession of new publications, including François de Médicis and Steven Huebner (eds.), *Debussy's Resonance* (2018); Gurminder Kaur Bhogal, *Claude Debussy's Clair de lune* (2018); Marie Rolf's translation and revised edition of François Lesure's critical biography (2019); Siglind Bruhn, *Debussy's Instrumental Music in Its Cultural Context* (2019); Teresa Davidian, *Experiencing Debussy: A Listener's Companion* (2019); Alexandra Kieffer, *Debussy's Critics: Sound, Affect, and the Experience of Modernism* (2019); Kiyoshi Tamagawa, *Echoes from the East: The Javanese Gamelan and Its Influence on the Music of Claude Debussy* (2019); François de Médicis, *La maturation artistique de Debussy dans son contexte historique, 1884–1902* (2020); Denis Herlin, *Claude Debussy: Portraits et études* (2021); and David J. Code and Barbara L. Kelly (eds.), *Debussy Studies 2*

(in progress). There are also journal articles and the continuing excitement of the *Œuvres complètes*. Furthermore, the early-music movement in performance has started to accustom the world to hearing Debussy with instruments and (occasionally) performing conventions from his time. Even with so much scholarly and practical activity there is still a need for an accessible volume that covers the full gamut of Debussy's life and work without the constraints of a chronological biography. The present volume, drawing on the latest research, sets out to do this, enriching the coverage by positioning Debussy in the world around him, his context.

Working with so many distinguished scholars of Debussy and French music has been a joy. I am most grateful to all of them for their enthusiasm and support. I would also like to thank Denis Herlin for kindly checking all thirty-two chapters and the index in addition to his own contributions. Thanks are due to Cambridge University Press and my commissioning editor, Dr Katharine Brett, who has been an invaluable support and source of advice. Abi Sears at the Press has been on hand to provide assistance for the final editing stages and production.

Sadly, David Code's untimely death occurred during the book's preparation for publication. His two chapters were complete at the time and required only a few minor adjustments. In recognition of his remarkable contribution to Debussy scholarship and the world beyond it, this volume is dedicated to his memory.

Notes on the Text

Chapters 8, 19, 22, and 23 were translated from the French by the editor.

Abbreviations

<i>Correspondance</i>	Claude Debussy, <i>Correspondance (1872–1918)</i> , ed. François Lesure and Denis Herlin (Paris: Gallimard, 2005)
<i>Debussy Letters</i>	<i>Debussy Letters</i> , ed. François Lesure and Roger Nichols, trans. Nichols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987)
Lesure (Rolf)	François Lesure, <i>Claude Debussy: A Critical Biography</i> , rev. and trans. Marie Rolf (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2019)
<i>Monsieur Croche</i>	Claude Debussy, <i>Monsieur Croche et autres écrits</i> , rev. ed. François Lesure (Paris: Gallimard, 1987)