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Debussy the girl with flaxen hair

As I painted a copy of oil painting Little Irene by Pierre Auguste Renoir, I knew I had finally found the girl with the flaxen hair. I first came to know her in my piano class three years ago. La fille aux cheveux de lin, translated to "the Girl with the Flaxen Hair", is a famous piano piece from the first book of Preludes by 20th century French composer Claude Debussy. My piano teacher Mrs. Lyu regarded it as one of her favorite pieces, passionately describing this girl of pure beauty she saw in music. I was attracted but confused: how can you "see" something (or even someone!) in something that's heard? Back then, for me, sight and hearing were in separate worlds. My performance of the piece was fluent and skilled, but Mrs. Lyu told me the girl of the flaxen hair was not there. I was yet to find the soul of the music. Frustrated and confused, I did some research in the hope to "see" the girl in the music. To my surprise, after I typed the title into my search engine, an oil painting popped up beside Debussy's piano piece. The moment I saw it, I felt it was an ideal visualization of the girl with the flaxen hair. It was named Little Irene, painted in 1880 by famous French impressionist Pierre Auguste Renoir as a portrait of Banker Cahen D'Anvers's 8 year old daughter. Irene, with flaxen hair, sits in a garden in serenity, wearing a white dress with a sky-blue hue. Her skin is fair and her lips are cherry. Her eyes look forward into somewhere no one but her knows. That's the girl I'd love to see in my music. I tried hard to keep the image in mind as my fingers moved on the piano keys, but I still found the connection vague and abstract. How could what you hear relate to what you see, when one is constantly flowing whereas the other is frozen? I could tell the girl I saw in Renoir's painting was not in my music, though I had no idea how I could possibly find her. I almost gave up with the piece until I got to paint a copy of Little Irene in the summer, several months after I came to know it. Painted by numerous swift and broken strokes without any distinct lines, Little Irene was representative of impressionistic style, which sought to capture the instant fluidity of light and air in the imperceptible elapses time. I re-experienced the process of Renoir's creation of Irene as I added each stroke to the canvas. Suddenly, she was not sitting still but moving with life. I could feel sunlight dancing on her flaxen hair with each stroke of brush. As I lit up her eyes with a dip of bright paint on the brush, a light of innocence and hope unique to a little girl glittered in her eyes. Then I suddenly understood why Debussy was known as the founder of Impressionism in music. Wasn't the process of the painting just like the procession of the music? Notes in Debussy's music, overlapped and interweaved on the palette of music, were just like strokes in Renoir's painting. Both Debussy's piano piece and Renoir's oil painting vividly depicted the girl with the flaxen hair and captured the fluidity of light, which was the essence of Impressionism. I finally understood the very true old saying, "music is the flowing art, art is the frozen music." Music is in time while art is in space. Sight and hearing are separable but not separated. Both are ways in which we approach, perceive, and express the world. When I played the piece again, the girl in the painting and the girl in the music were one. Recently, I learnt that Debussy was deeply fond of art and poetry. He once used some impressionistic paintings for covers of his music albums. In fact, his lovely prelude The Girl with the Flaxen Hair was inspired by a poem with the same title by a French poet Charles-Marie René Leconte de Lisle. Here is the first stanza of the poem: "On the grass, sitting in flowersWho sings since the fresh morning?It is the maiden with the flaxen hairThe lovely one with lips like cherries."The poem painted a vivid image that left me with a similar impression as Little Irene. The girl with "the flaxen hair" and "lips like cherries" walked out from the lines. No wonders people call poetry "the art of words." As I read through the poem, painted Little Irene, and played the music piece, I felt an innocent beauty that transcended all forms. The girl with the flaxen hair was really alive in both worlds of sight and hearing. After all, the two worlds are in fact one world, the one we live in. Music, painting, poetry, and more. All come from life and can bring the same idea back to life. From the arranger: Claude Debussy is considered a huge influence in the development of early 20th century music. Having studied in the Paris Conservatory at a very young age he was able to pursue composition and embody the progression of French compositions and tonality for the late romantic era. He was considered an impressionist composer, who uses timbre as the color for his musical paintings. Even though Debussy only used a solo keyboard for most of his Preludes, he is considered to have painted a picture using new and unique tonalities and chord progressions. The Girl with the Flaxen Hair is a short but charming prelude based on a poem by Charles Marie Rene Leconte de Lisle. It is one of the most popular of works in Debussy's First Book of Preludes. The melody is based upon the delicate arpeggio of a minor seventh chord. After landing on the tonic it builds to the IV and then gracefully falls using parallel fourths and fifths back to a quiet tonic. Score and parts included: Euphonium (BC), Tuba Page 2 From the arranger: Claude Debussy is considered a huge influence in the development of early 20th century music. Having studied in the Paris Conservatory at a very young age he was able to pursue composition and embody the progression of French compositions and tonality for the late romantic era. He was considered an impressionist composer, who uses timbre as the color for his musical paintings. Even though Debussy only used a solo keyboard for most of his Preludes, he is considered to have painted a picture using new and unique tonalities and chord progressions. The Girl with the Flaxen Hair is a short but charming prelude based on a poem by Charles Marie Rene Leconte de Lisle. It is one of the most popular of works in Debussy's First Book of Preludes. The melody is based upon the delicate arpeggio of a minor seventh chord. After landing on the tonic it builds to the IV and then gracefully falls using parallel fourths and fifths back to a quiet tonic. Score and parts included: Euphonium (BC), Tuba 4 Sea Interludes - Dawn Benjamin Britten Download '4 Sea Interludes - Dawn' on iTunes Deux Arabesques, 1888/1891 (Walter Gieseking, 1925)The shape of the arabesque inspired art nouveau painters of Debussy's era, as well as architects, jewelers, sculptors-- and musicians. Listen to the curving lines and fluid rhythms here, and you can't help but be reminded of the curvaceous lines of women's flowing long hair and spiraling jewelry.La fille aux cheveux de lin, Prelude no. 8, Book 1, 1909-1910 (Kautsky, 2014)(Note: this and other links to the Preludes require a free Spotify account)This is, of course, the piece with the title which justifies a discussion of hair in Debussy's piano music, but in the Robert Burns and Leconte de Lisle's poems which formed the inspiration for the maiden at hand, we glimpse only one aspect of hair's many guises. This long-haired maiden is sweet and innocent and possibly a bit forlorn; those pictured in poetry, painting, and Debussy's own opera, Pelléas et Melisande,are often seductive, vacant, or hopeless -- their hair entangles them in a multitude of life's vicissitudes.Brüyères, Prelude no. 5, Book 2, 1912-1913 (Kautsky, 2014)Brüyères (Heather) avoids.La damoiselle élue, 1887-1889 (Gieseking)This early Debussy cantata sets Rosetti's poem of the same name; a mere glance at Rosetti's accompanying painting (see above) makes it clear that this blessed damozel looking down from heaven is herself hypnotized by her flowing hair as her lover may be as well. Hair played a central role for the English Pre-Raphaelites painters like Rosetti, and Debussy was attracted by the same pale, wan maidens. Though intded for orchestra, female chorus, and solo singers, it's interesting to hear even this small portion on the piano.Pelléas et Mélisande, 1893-1902 (Wiener Philharmoniker, Claudio Abbado)Debussy's single completed opera stands as one of the great monuments of 20th century music. Debussy took as the basis of his libretto Maeterlinck's symbolist play, and its story about a sad and lost woman whose involvement with the brother of her husband leads to her lover's death and ultimately her own death in childbirth was set by both Faure and Schoenberg as well. The tragic story is told here with music that sounds preternaturally like speech; there are very real traces of Wagnerian harmony and leitmotifs, but the grandiosity of Wagner has been banished and an overwhelming delicacy has taken its place. Mélisande's hair plays a strangely large role in the drama; it very literally ties her to Golaud, her lover. A Mélisande with short hair is unimaginable, the long tresses are an essential extension of this woman's body, and she occupies herself in combing them when she is unable to embark on any other action.La Chevelure from Chansons de Bilitis, 1897-1898 (Dawn Upshaw)Here again, this time in a text by Pierre Louÿs, hair is the binding agent between lovers. The "frisson" or shiver that ends the text captures the mystery of the entire song, where dream and reality merge as surely as do the lovers. Following many of the titles in our Wind Ensemble catalog, you will see a set of numbers enclosed in square brackets, as in this example: Description Price Rimsky-KorsakovQuintet in Bb [1011-1 w/piano]Item: 26746 \$28.75 The bracketed numbers tell you the precise instrumentation of the ensemble. The first number stands for Flute, the second for Oboe, the third for Clarinet, the fourth for Bassoon, and the fifth (separated from the woodwinds by a dash) is for Horn. Any additional instruments (Piano in this example) are indicated by "w/" (meaning "with") or by using a plus sign. Flute Oboe Clarinet Bassoon — Horn This woodwind quartet is for 1 Flute, no Oboe, 1 Clarinet, 1 Bassoon, 1 Horn and Piano. Sometimes there are instruments in the ensemble other than those shown above. These are linked to their respective principal instruments with either a "d" if the same player doubles the instrument, or a "+" if an extra player is required. Whenever this occurs, we will separate the first four digits with commas for clarity. Thus a double reed quartet of 2 oboes, english horn and bassoon will look like this: 0,2+1,0,1-0 Note the "2+1" portion means "2 oboes plus english horn" Titles with no bracketed numbers are assumed to use "Standard Instrumentation." The following is considered to be Standard Instrumentation: Duo - Flute & Clarinet - or [1010-0] Trio - Flute, Oboe & Clarinet - or [1110-0] Quartet - Flute, Oboe, Clarinet & Bassoon - or [1111-0] Quintet - Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bassoon & Horn - (or [1111-1] Following many of the titles in our Brass Ensemble catalog, you will see a set of five numbers enclosed in square brackets, as in this example: Description Price CoplandFanfare for the Common Man [343.01 w/tympani]Item: 02158 \$14.95 The bracketed numbers tell you how many of each instrument are in the ensemble. The first number stands for Trumpet, the second for Horn, the third for Trombone, the fourth (separated from the first three by a dot) for Euphonium and the fifth for Tuba. Any additional instruments (Tympani in this example) are indicated by a "w/" (meaning "with") or by using a plus sign. Trumpet Horn Trombone . Euphonium Tuba Thus, the Copland Fanfare shown above is for 3 Trumpets, 4 Horns, 3 Trombones, no Euphonium, 1 Tuba and Tympani. There is no separate number for Bass Trombone, but it can generally be assumed that if there are multiple Trombone parts, the lowest part can/should be performed on Bass Trombone. Titles listed in our catalog without bracketed numbers are assumed to use "Standard Instrumentation." The following is considered to be Standard Instrumentation: Brass Duo - Trumpet & Trombone, or [101.00] Brass Trio - Trumpet, Horn & Trombone, or [111.00] Brass Quartet - 2 Trumpets, Horn & Trombone, or [211.00] Brass Quintet - 2 Trumpets, Horn, Trombone & Tuba, or [211.01] Brass Sextet and greater - No Standard Instrumentaion People often ask us about "PJBE" or "Philip Jones" instrumentation. This is a special instrumentation adopted and perfected by the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble. It consists of the forces 414.01, and often includes Percussion and/or Tympani. In addition, there are often doublings in the Trumpet section - Piccolo and Flugelhorn being the most common. While this instrumentation has come to be common, it is still not "Standard" as many Brass Detechs use very different forces, most often with more Horns than PJBE. Following many of the titles in our String Ensemble catalog, you will see a set of four numbers enclosed in square brackets, as in this example: Description Price AtwellVance's Dance [0220]Item: 32599 \$8.95 These numbers tell you how many of each instrument are in the ensemble. The first number stands for Violin, the second for Viola, the third for Cello, and the fourth for Double Bass. Thus, this string quartet is for 2 Violas and 2 Cellos, rather than the usual 2110. Titles with no bracketed numbers are assumed to use "Standard Instrumentation." 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