

Claude Debussy (1862 – 1918)

Debussy's compositions form part of an art movement known as French Impressionism that evolved in France at the end of the 19th Century. He was its leading musical exponent and a seminal influence on modern music. The aim of Impressionism was to reflect mood, which Debussy did with the use of unusual chords and modes which nevertheless progress unerringly through evocative landscapes to peaks of tension. Careful attention to form gives impalpable sentiments a sense of direction and completion.

The excerpt 'Golaud's Letter' from early in Debussy's only opera, the hugely influential 'Pelleas and Melisande', demonstrates this, and exhibits his masterful expression of mood and drama. Exquisite without being flowery, forceful but not overblown, the Letter's spoken voice recitative style is a natural accompaniment to the Letter's contents, while its general restraint accentuates cadences.