

A later composer through in the middle of the program, **Debussy** was a true French patriot. Debussy's only solo violin piece was written in 1917 during his stay in the Normandy vacation town of Pourville amidst the backdrop of WWII and his own battle with cancer. Planned as a set of six sonatas for different instruments for his, then, 11 year old daughter Emma, or Chouchou meaning 'pet,' Debussy writes that the sonatas are "an example of what a sick man can write during war." Only completing 3 of the sonatas before his death, the piece is about 13 minutes long and celebrated for its brevity and reflects Debussy's desire to represent the quickly changing interior life of the soul. The first movement, *allegro vivo*, plays between a passionate quality paired with animated sections. Within a fast tempo Debussy specifies when to yield to the expressivity and when to keep the rhythm tight.

As is increasingly more common of composers during the impressionism era, Debussy remains in control of most performance subtleties, even premiering the sonata on May 5th with himself on piano and Gaston Poulet as violinist. However, Debussy refused to be called an impressionist, which may have been one of the many reasons he chose to perform with a violinist famous for playing relatively modern pieces with Spanish influences, including Lalo's *Symphonie Espagnole*. The second movement of this sonata is labeled a fantasy with light colors and joking "scherzando" gypsy-like passages. The other composer, Ravel, whom music lovers know as the other "impressionist" composer says of Debussy's most known work "Prelude to the Afternoon of the Faun" that not even the child genius Mozart had produced a more perfect piece of music in all history. In fact, on the cusp of radical change for all the arts, Debussy makes a stand in keeping tonal center and integrating continuity, to which Debussy once stated that "the goal of form was to never lose interest."

While studying the great German composers like Schumann at the Paris Conservatoire, Debussy learned composition under Ernest Guirard, close friend to Saint-Saëns and the Spanish-influenced Bizet, as well as organ with Cesar Frank. Counter to earlier French romanticism often associated with expressing inner heavy feelings, presented for example by Frank, Debussy developed a disdain for academic form and developed the vivid coloration and oriental orchestration listeners know him for today. The sonata's final movement distantly recalls the opening parallel chords from the first movement and ends the sonata with a heroic animated character, however a bitter sweetness throughout the entire sonata suggests that the final ending in major may feel more forced than an outward representation of happiness.

Surrounded by the famous French poets of the time, Rimbaud and Verlaine, Debussy put music to their free-verse poetry and attended Mallarmé's Symbolist meetings. Similar to his early work, a thinner texture throughout the sonata allows one to hear the color variations from the oriental whole tone figures with the passionate gypsy idioms. In Debussy's later years his friendship with Chausson would influence his use of parallel chords to create atmosphere. The play in animated passages between a joking and heroic character suggest that maybe at this time the tall and strong man, firm in his beliefs, whom we know as the "Prince of Darkness" was concentrating more on light. Steeped in the French tradition of technique, some of the recordings that I most admire for their interpretation of style of Debussy's melodically based tonalities from unprepared dissonances include Jacques Thibaud's from 1929 and Ginette Neveu's 1948 performance.