

Abstract

The “Repetition” concept in Debussy’s Music as an Alternative of the “Developing Variation”

The paper aims to elaborate the “repetition” in Debussy’s music –a concept which is abundantly used and which became an indispensable factor of Debussy’s aesthetic (Ruwet: “Les duplications dans l’oeuvre de Claude Debussy”, *Langage, Musique, Poésie*, 1972)– by analyzing the *Prélude à l’Après-midi d’un Faune* and the second piece of the *Nocturnes*, “Nuages”. The analyses aim to explore the impact of the repetition concept on the generation of Debussy’s unique language, and its difference from the “development-grounded” language of the classic/romantic German style. A brief formal function analysis (William Caplin: *Classical Form*, 1998; Janet Schmalfeldt: *In the Process of Becoming*, 2011) of selected themes by Debussy will be introduced to demonstrate the shortcomings of the Classical/Romantic approach on his music. The analyses will be propped up with some reflections on the “expectation” theory by Leonard Meyer (*Meaning and Music*, 1956) and the ITPRA theory by David Huron (*Sweet Anticipation*, 2006), to speculate on the aesthetic consequences caused by the abundant repetition, as discontinuities, loops, static/dynamic conflict, and hesitation. Along with this, the temporal qualities of Debussy’s music will be shortly elaborated in this context. This central theme will be supported by some attempts to create a new analytic approach for describing the design and the structure in Debussy’s music with a vocabulary which underlines the distance of this music to the German style and the close relation between Debussy and the symbolist poetry, especially with Mallarmé, as expressed by Elisabeth McCombie (*Mallarmé and Debussy: Unheard Music, Unseen Text*).