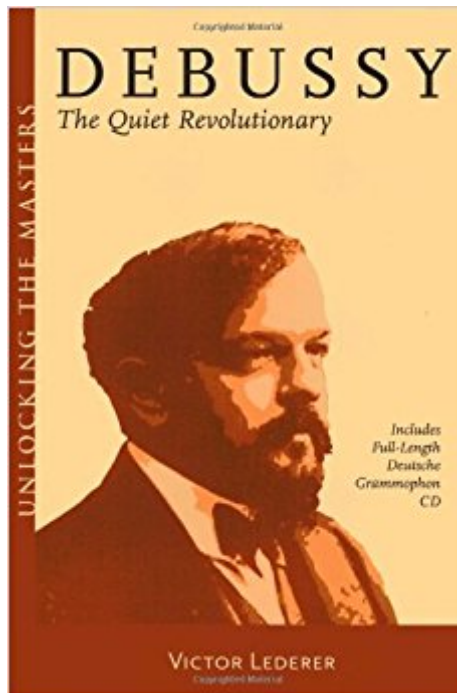




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# Debussy: The Quiet Revolutionary (Unlocking The Masters Series No. 13)



## Synopsis

Victor Lederer explores the sophistication, refinement and inspirations of Debussy's music, pointing out subtleties that otherwise could take years of careful listening to fully appreciate. Includes a full-length CD of the maestro's masterworks.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Victor Lederer is a successful journalist and music critic. He has worked for the American Record Guide, and Classics Today.com

I am a faculty member of Manhattan School of Music's Precollege Division and have taught a class on Debussy for many years. Lederer's Debussy is thorough, yet concise (144 pages) and speaks of the man in an informed historical context and his music in suitably descriptive terms, which lend impressive perspective to the listener. The opening chapter on Debussy's influences (before the biography in Chapter 2) is a clear indication at the outset of the seriousness of this study. While not a theoretical analysis, Lederer's vivid accounting of Debussy's oeuvre accurately portray the composer's own theory about music as quoted below: "Who will discover the secret of musical composition? The sound of the sea, the curve of the horizon, the wind in the leaves, the cry of a bird, register complex impressions within us. Then suddenly, without any deliberate consent on our part, one of these memories issues forth to express itself in the language of music. It bears its own harmony within it. By no effort of ours can we achieve anything more truthful or accurate. In this way

only does a soul destined for music discover its most beautiful ideas." - Claude Debussy (1911) The inclusion of a CD makes this book an excellent value and a perfect volume for understanding how best to listen to and better understand this "quiet revolutionary." One note on accuracy: On page 29, Lederer states "the opening flute melody" of *Faune* recurs, however, he fails to mention this melody is played by the oboe, overlooking an important change in orchestral color.

Victor Lederer presents an easy to read overview of the life and works of Debussy. He highlights important aspects of Debussy's music in clearly defined chapters. His approach is descriptive rather than musically analytical. For anyone wanting a neat overview with stepwise illustrations of some of his works on a DG disc this is a fine introductory work. An entire chapter is devoted to his opera *Pelleas and Melisande*, in which he provides readers with useful background and illustrations of the libretto and the music. The same is done for orchestral and major piano works. I like his systematic articulate approach to the description of the subject matter. However on the negative side, his descriptions of the music are in the vein of the critic who uses florid language to describe the music - any one interested in the analysis of Debussy's music as regards form, harmony and structure will be disappointed. Overall a good buy for those who want a less challenging view of Debussy's work.

The first two chapters of this volume are alone worth the price of this book - having read a dozen books on Debussy, including the ones the author quotes throughout, this book is most worthy of praise. The author presents in succinct and concise terms the essence of Debussy's music itself - he brilliantly captures the very vitality of Debussy's musical idea or unique treatment fully stated in a very compact form. The CD included has many of the finest performances/interpretations available as well. The balance of the book (majority of the volume) takes you through Debussy's catalog of works, with the author observing how these musical ideas are manifested - often including the "timing" on the CD where the reader/listener can follow along, replay, and examine closely. Debussy's musical treasures reveal themselves upon replaying, relistening - this gem of a book, rewards you even sooner.

Debussy's music ranks among the most challenging: his influence on other composers makes it essential to understand his approach, but typically music students find such analysis a daunting proposition. Not so *Debussy: The Quiet Revolutionary*, which pairs a cd of music with an analysis of the subtleties of his works and analyzing Debussy's approach and contributions. The author is a New York critic on music and culture: his approach is perfect for any newcomer to Debussy and is

especially recommended for middle to high school students receiving a strong introduction on Debussy's art and achievement. Diane C. Donovan California Bookwatch

I have some of the other books from this Unlocking the Masters series, and they are WONDERFUL!!! Not only are they factual and informative, but they are easy to read and really show you what to look/listen for in the music! It comes with a CD which has musical examples of pieces that are talked about in the book! This book is a wonderful tool for any student!

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