

WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDINGS

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THE UNKNOWN
DEBUSSY
RARE PIANO MUSIC

NICOLAS HORVATH

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

THE UNKNOWN DEBUSSY RARE PIANO MUSIC

NICOLAS HORVATH, *piano*

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16	A NIGHT IN THE HOUSE OF USHER (1915–17, transcribed 2010) (cadenza by Nicolas Horvath) *	06:30

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WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING

TOTAL TIME: 84:48

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

THE UNKNOWN DEBUSSY – RARE PIANO MUSIC

Rediscovered, completed and transcribed by Robert Orledge

My interest in the wonderful music of Claude Debussy began in the 1980s when I researched and published a book with Cambridge University Press entitled *Debussy and the Theatre*. During the course of my studies in Paris, I was amazed to discover that Debussy planned over 50 theatrical works but only finished two of these entirely by himself (the opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* in 1893–1902 and the ballet *Jeux* for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes in 1912–13). Of the rest, many were never started musically (like *Siddharta* and *Orphée-roi* with the Oriental scholar Victor Segalen, 1907); some had a few tantalising sketches (like the Edgar Allan Poe opera *Le Diable dans le beffroi*, 1902–03); some were half-finished (like his other Poe opera *La Chute de la Maison Usher*, 1908–17); while others were musically complete but had their orchestrations completed by other composers (like *Khamma*, by Charles Koechlin, 1912–13; or *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien* and *La Boîte à joujoux* by his 'angel of corrections' [l'ange des Corrections] André Caplet in 1911 and 1919 respectively).

For it has to be admitted that what some scholars call Debussy's 'compulsive achievement' could equally well be viewed as laziness, especially as far as the minute detail required for calligraphing his orchestral scores was concerned. It was as if creating the music itself was of greater importance than controlling its final sound, even if Debussy was an imaginative orchestrator when he found the time and energy to do it. It also seems true that Debussy also preferred inventing ideas to turning them into complete pieces. However, despite the lack of detail in many of his sketches (missing clefs, key signatures, dynamics, phrasing, etc.) the notes themselves are surprisingly accurate, whether or not they can be compared with a later draft. Thus, a large number of sketches exist for his Chinese ballet *No-ja-li ou Le Palais du silence* and it is not too difficult to see which parts of Georges de Feure's 1913 scenario (see below) inspired which ideas. But Debussy hardly made any attempt to join them together after the first few bars.

It was usually up to his publisher, Jacques Durand, to find solutions when Debussy risked a breach of contract. Debussy was supposed to supervise the orchestrations completed by others, but this supervision was usually very light and restricted to quiet, sensitive moments in which problems were easier to spot. Far from jealously

guarding every one of his created notes, as Ravel did, Debussy once even went as far as to ask Koechlin to 'write a ballet for him that he would sign' on 26 March 1914 when he was hard-pressed to fulfil his lucrative contract for *No-ja-li* with André Charlot at the Alhambra Theatre in London. In the end, Debussy (through Durand) sent Charlot the symphonic suite *Printemps* instead, whose orchestration had been completed by Henri Busser in the Spring of 1912.

So, when I was offered early retirement as Professor of Music at Liverpool University in 2004, I seized the opportunity it would give me to spend time trying to reconstruct some of Debussy's lost potential masterpieces from his existing sketches and drafts – then orchestrating them in Debussy's style when this was appropriate. I had begun this mission in 2001 with the most promising project, the missing parts of Scene 2 of *La Chute de la Maison Usher* and the sheer joy it gave me at every stage persuaded me to tackle other projects, especially when Debussy experts were unable to identify exactly where I took over from Debussy (and vice versa) in *Usher*.



L'Enfant prodigue, representation at Jardin des Tuilleries' Théâtre de verdure, 1913

The following collection of preludes begins with the piano solo reduction of the prelude to *L'Enfant prodigue*, Debussy's successful Prix de Rome submission of 1884 (and revised in 1907–08 with the assistance of Caplet) which was made by Jacques Durand. Right after it comes Debussy's Wagnerian opera *Rodrigue et Chimène* (1890–93) which, in contrast, has had quite a few orchestral performances. Here the piano solo comes from the Durand vocal score published in 2003 (*Œuvres complètes*, VI/1, pp. 3–6) with my revised ending for concert performance.



Little Toomai laid himself down close to the great neck lest a swinging bough should sweep him to the ground, by W.H. Drake, 1894

Also included are the first versions of the openings of the piano prelude *La Fille aux cheveux de lin* (1907) in which she has rather spikier hair, and of *Bruyères* (1912) where the heather is softer, though it took Debussy two attempts to make a prelude that would match *La Fille* in popularity. Then in January 1913, Debussy struggled to complete *Toomai des éléphants* as the 11th prelude in *Book 2*, finally replacing it by a rather Stravinskian study *Les Tierces alternées*. However, his daughter Chouchou was fascinated by elephants and in the summer of 1913, Debussy wrote her a 'Toybox Ballet' (*La Boîte à joujoux*) which contains a 'Pas de l'éléphant' and an 'old Hindu chant which is still used to train elephants [in India]. It is constructed on the scale of "5 o'clock in the morning", which means it must be in 5/4 time.' (*Vieux chant hindou qui sert, de nos jours encore, à apprivoiser les éléphants. Il est construit sur la gamme de "5h du matin" et, obligatoirement, en 5/4.*) My reconstruction of this lost prelude is based around this material which evokes a day in the life of Toomai, the young mahout, and his faithful elephant Kala Nag from one dawn to the next, incorporating the legendary 'Elephants' Dance' from Rudyard Kipling's *First Jungle Book* (1894) which only Toomai was ever privileged to witness. Nicolas Horvath is here premiering the revised second version of this prelude which contains an effect of piano harmonics as the dawn returns towards the end.

I have left the Prelude to '*L'Histoire de Tristan*' (2011) till last because it requires more explanation. In July 1907, Gabriel Mourey offered Debussy a libretto (since lost) based on *Le Roman de Tristan* by the medievalist Joseph Bédier. This used the Cornish/Breton version of the Tristan legend, in which Yseult [Isolda] of the White Hands betrays Tristan (now mad) in the fourth and final act. Debussy thought that Wagner had 'deformed' the legend in his opera and was enthusiastic about putting this to rights, but was thwarted by Bédier's cousin Louis Artus, who had written his own scenario and insisted that Debussy set this or nothing.

So, in the end, all that survived is a letter to Durand of 23 August 1907 in which Debussy cites a fanfare and one of his proposed opera's '363 themes' – a joke at the expense of Wagner's ubiquitous Leitmotifs. However, Debussy's theme resembles a dance-like folk song which is ideally suited to the 'changing background' technique'. So, with

the aid of another Breton folksong (*Le Faucon*) it proved a joy to reconstruct. Debussy's attractive theme (which is totally un-Wagnerian) gradually gains momentum, and after reaching an ecstatic climax, representing the transient happiness of the lovers, it dissolves into an expressive coda and an elegiac close, leaving us with the ultimate tragedy of their ill-fated affair. The orchestral version of this prelude can be heard on *City of Light: New Discoveries* PFNS CD 005, together with *No-ja-li*, as recorded by the Cardiff University Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Mark Eager in 2015. Or via my website www.robertorledge.co.uk (Recordings section).

Together with other manuscript sketches from Debussy's last productive summer of 1915, the Hotel Drouot sale in Paris, on 7 December 2004 included the start of an unknown piano piece. The 18-bar outline suggested a *Petite Valse* ('Little Waltz') in the accessible style of Debussy's *La Plus que lente* of 1910, to which astute pianists will recognise passing allusions both during and at the end of my completion. The waltz is simply meant to be enjoyed by pianists seeking what might be termed a novelty by a great composer, as well as by its audience.

Fêtes galantes was actually planned as a hybrid opera-ballet to a libretto by Debussy's friend Louis Laloy. For this, Laloy arranged selected poetry by Paul Verlaine into three tableaux, replacing an earlier (unstarted) Debussyan project with Charles Morice entitled *Crimen amoris*. During his last productive summer of 1915, Debussy set a sequence from the start of the first tableau, 'Les Masques', involving stanzas 1 and 3 of the opening song for Mezzetin in Verlaine's comedy *Les Uns et les Autres*. The action is set in a park à la Watteau late one summer afternoon as Mezzetin attempts to entertain a group of nonchalant masqueraders with only the aid of his voice and a mandolin.



Costume for dancer Ida Rubinstein
in the leading male role in
Le Martyr de Saint Sébastien,
by Leon Bakst, 1912

Next comes an unused movement, probably a first draft of *La Passion*, the third of the 'Fragments symphoniques' in *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien* (1911). Again, this will be the first ever performance of this anguished but beautiful piece, and knowing how pushed for time Debussy was when he composed *Le Martyre* it is surprising that he progressed so far with a piece that he subsequently replaced.

With *No-ja-li* (*Le Palais du Silence*) of January 1914 it helps to follow the sequence of events in Georges de Feure's scenario, as Debussy did in his sketches, and to know that Prince Hong-Lo is incapable of speech and seeks to impose his own inner 'Silence' on pain of death throughout his palace on the ancient island of Formosa (now Taiwan). In the end, the salvation for his beloved young wife, the Princess No-ja-li and the court comes through the power of music (in this case from a Malaysian gamelan orchestra and its associated dancers). After the opening gamelan prelude comes the explanation of the unhappy situation at Hong-Lo's palace by the Narrator (spoken in French on the recording):

Prince Hong-Lo is mute / Prince Hong-Lo has cursed destiny / And avenged his fate / He imposes on his domains / 'The Silence' / A Solemn oath preserves the severe law / All is sadness in his frightened soul / All seems gloomy in his eyes! / No more warm colours! / No more soft nuances! / 'Neutral' on the walls / And 'grey' on the men – / 'Black' / On himself! / He loves – poor prince – the little princess / NO-JA-LI / Charming slave made idol / For her he is not the law / Only that of his oath: / Let her adorn herself with chiming colours! / Let her pose as a flower! / She is the only light / in all this sadness.

Georges de Feure's *No-ja-li* scenario has various musical references to help listeners. You can read it online here: https://www.naxos.com/sharedfiles/PDF/GP822_No-Ja-Li-scenario.pdf

Debussy planned to compose seven pieces of incidental music for André Antoine's production of Shakespeare's *King Lear* (*Le Roi Lear*) in 1904 at the time of his elopement to Jersey with Emma Bardac. However, he never completed the project due to Antoine's frequent postponements and unwillingness to provide the '30 musicians' Debussy required to avoid 'a feeble little sound like fleas rubbing their legs together!' ('*un pauvre petit bruit de mouches se frottant les pattes*'). And so the 'Entrée de Lear' (Act 1, Scene 1), 'Le Roi Lear dans la lande' (Act 3, Scene 2) and the 'Bruits de bataille' (Act 4, Scenes 3–4) never saw the light of day. In the end, Antoine used an existing score by Edmond Missa, although Debussy remained attracted to the concept of Shakespeare and music and was still working on *Le Roi Lear* in 1907 for separate orchestral performance as a suite. And in 'July 1908' he copied out four bars of a *Prélude* for the critic Georges Jean-Aubry, which I have recently expanded for this album.

Following on from this is a *Fanfare* with timpani effects which is substantially different from the one published by Roger-Ducasse in 1926. Then comes *Le Sommeil de Lear*, which is the same as the 1926 publication. Then, on the verso of the *Fanfare* manuscript I discovered the start of an extremely moving little piece in a modal D minor, which could only be for *La Mort de Cordélia* in Act 5, Scene 3. I thought this would be best suited to a binary movement in which most of the first half, the striking chromatic introduction and the elegiac theme are all by Debussy. This pencil sketch turned up in 2000 in the collection of Mrs Jayne Ericourt (wife of the pianist Daniel Ericourt) in Greensboro, North Carolina, USA.

I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the celebrated pianist Nicolas Horvath for enthusiastically bringing my Debussy works to public attention in their solo piano formats, both through his recent recitals across France and through this Grand Piano release. In some cases these are true piano pieces (like *Toomai des éléphants*), in others they are piano reductions of orchestral scores (like *Fêtes galantes*), while in others they are piano solos in their own right that also exist in orchestral versions (as in the incidental music for *Le Roi Lear*). Needless to say, most of these tracks are world première recordings, and this is certainly true of *A Night in the House of Usher* and its companion piece *Un jour affreux avec le Diable dans le beffroi* ('A Dreadful Day with the Devil in the Belfry') which I arranged specially for Nicolas in November 2018 as a virtuosic, almost Lisztian paraphrase-fantasy. To remind us of the plot as the dramatic scenes unfold, *Un jour affreux avec le Diable dans le beffroi*, like the start of *No-ja-li* has a narrator (spoken in French on the recording):

[After an overture rising from the underworld, with a polka and a children's folksong inserted, a carillon rings out]: After this, the villagers start to count, with the bells of the belfry / 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 / It's good / 13! / The bell rang 13 times / 13! / The Devil is here where the clock should be! / Damn it! / The cracked bells / The Devil laughs fit to burst / He pulls from the pocket of his coat, a small dancing master's violin / 'My God!' said the devil – and he tunes his violin slowly / The Devil leads the villagers in a fantastic and remorseless jig [with jokes at the expense of Beethoven, Brahms and Tchaikovsky] / The Devil directs the villagers towards the canal – where he jumps to the other side, always laughing / The villagers try to imitate him, but it's a disaster / [In Part 2] the villagers are transported to a hedonistic and lively Italian village. They are similarly transformed: the men have crooked hats – the women have wide open bodices! They dance a mad Tarantella / 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 13 / shouting 'Hey there! Hola' / [Jean, the young hero, makes a fervent] prayer to God against the Devil / The prayer is a success. The bell rings normally! / The expression of the Devil changes. In turn he shudders! / Everything goes black / The devil disappears in a brief red glow ... / And the carillon and the bells sounded as usual / 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 / That's good! / But the Devil's grinning face appears once again where the clock should be – briefly.

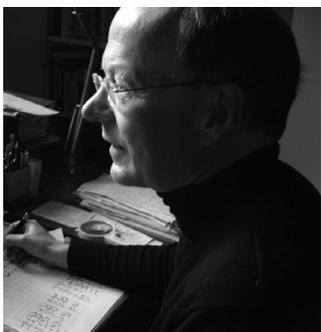
Over the years 1908–16, Debussy had produced a viable scenario for *Usher* on his third attempt. But when he came to making a complete draft of the music, he seems to have lost interest during Roderick Usher's long monologue, even though he was setting his own text. As in *No-ja-li* he jumped to the next passage that interested him, in this case the exciting final melodrama and the collapse of the Usher house itself.



La Chute de la Maison Usher, by Jean Epstein, 1928

In the process of completing the missing half of the score, I discovered that by reusing Debussy's material for similar psychological situations across the opera, and by metamorphosing existing ideas (as Debussy does with Mélisande's theme in his opera), the only things I really needed to add were linking material and any passages where fast music was required. So the 'nightmare scherzo' and Lady Madeline's escape from her coffin and her final bloody revenge on her brother are all mine, but most of the rest is existing Debussy in changing contexts (in which the Russian technique of 'changing backgrounds', both harmonic and textural, proved extremely useful, as it did to Debussy in his *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*). Eventually, both my completed ballet *No-ja-li* and the *House of Usher* were successfully premiered in 2006 and the latter soon began to find its way into the established repertoire in Europe and the US. To further support this, I transcribed some of the highlights of Debussy's score as *A Night in the House of Usher* for organ, and subsequently piano – with a focus on Scene 2 and the final, horrific and macabre melodrama. In this form it was first performed by Ian Buckle in the Howard Assembly Rooms, Leeds in 2010.

Robert Orledge



Robert ORLEDGE is a leading scholar of late 19th and early 20th-century French music, and a Professor Emeritus of the University of Liverpool. He has published numerous books and articles on Fauré, Debussy, Koechlin and Satie. Since taking early retirement in 2004, he has become a 'creative musicologist', concentrating on completing and orchestrating Debussy's unfinished works. His completion of *The Fall of the House of Usher* was premiered at the Bregenz Opera Festival in 2006, alongside the Chinese ballet *No-ja-li* in Los Angeles. His *Nocturne pour violon et orchestre* was broadcast from the Amsterdam Concertgebouw in 2011 with Isabelle Faust as soloist and Heinz Holliger conducting, and the opera *Le Diable dans le beffroi* was first performed in Montreal in 2012.

COMPENSATE FOR THE DELIVERANCES OF FATE

Bad coincidences occur in the lives of great artists, which might compel a painter to leave his finest picture in the form of mere hurried sketches, or that which compelled Beethoven, for example, to leave behind to us in many great sonatas (as is the case of the great B major) only an unsatisfactory piano arrangement of a symphony. Here the artist coming after ought to try posthumously to amend the life of the master: which is what he would do, for example, who, as a master of orchestration, should waken to life for us that symphony now lying in the death-trance of the piano.

in *Human, All Too Human*, I, § 173
Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), translated by Helen Zimmern

DISCUSSING UNFINISHED BUSINESS

When a composer leaves a score incomplete, is there an artistic duty to try and bring his or her intentions to a satisfactory conclusion, for the sake of completeness? Or is it presumptuous to take up the creative baton and guide the fragment over a finishing line that can necessarily be only speculative? We asked a psychologist, a composer, a musicologist and a philosopher for their views.

I. Surrogate Scores: Leaps of Faith

Ah, the Unfinished...

The Unfinished is pure poetry. It brings together and interweaves the most vulnerable and beautiful aspects of humanity. It is both abhorrent and sublime.

The Unfinished is abhorrent because it represents a sudden breaking-off, powerlessness, lack of fulfilment. It's simply left hanging, lacking continuation, breath or repose. The Unfinished is death, but an incomplete death. It's the sorrowful face of waste, the weary flight of a bird that will never be able to land.

The Unfinished is also sublime. It's the whispered promise that 'anything is still possible'.

The Unfinished is a powerful call to action, it lifts us out of discouragement and draws our creative forces towards itself. It keeps us awake, sets us going, infuriates us. Infuriates us with the desire to release it into the world. The Unfinished demands of our *madness* that we make it worthy to fulfil its Destiny. The Unfinished is a Life without breath that nevertheless breathes enough air into us to keep going till the end.

The Unfinished is pure poetry.

The Unfinished aspires to be born *completely*. It doesn't care whether it finishes its gestation in this womb or that. With every fibre of its being it aspires to live, to make a name for itself, to be recognised and to be disseminated. It aspires to inspire the world.

Some will say that finishing an Unfinished work is an illusory, pretentious and futile task. They'll call it scandalous, transgressive. Or worse yet, treacherous. But what fears lurk behind those who invoke *the ultimate respect due to the Artist*? To what narcissistic dictatorships are they answerable? Are they afraid that the grubby little hands of an illegitimate artist will soil the venerable work? Are they afraid a *Second* will leave his or her mediocre traces on the upper-case imprint of the *First*? For opponents of completion, the work represents the glory of a major Artist. The work is his or her Ego made manifest. One does not complete an Ego. One bows before it, doesn't one?

And yet, artists are the conduits through which a Sacred element is channelled. They put themselves wholly and humbly at the service of their work in order to finish it. True artists crave a place in the world for their creations more than they crave respect for their creative acts. If respecting creators means agreeing to fossilise their genius and the Sacred element that had no other aspiration than to be channelled through them, then let's forget about respect. Let's show our endless gratitude instead, by daring to breathe new life into their abandoned work. Let's be brave.

But then, is it really possible to finish the unfinished? To complete, add, juxtapose passages to turn them into a whole? That much is possible. But how do we turn this Whole into something *real* and *alive*? Can anyone else gain sufficient insight into a work's innermost coherence? Or understand its opening sufficiently well to find a direct route towards creating its ending? Who can claim to be able to 'take a work to as near to perfection as possible' when he is not its original author? Is it possible to meet up with the creator of a work at some place of transcendence?

Nothing is less certain, nothing is less simple. Nothing is less legitimate.

And yet.

Look – the soul of a poet is approaching. It's heard that little voice saying to it, in a yell and a murmur, 'Why not you?'. It's heard the whispering of the Unfinished, it's sniffed out the sublime behind the abhorrent. And suddenly that soul is filled with the audacious desire to dip the inadequate fingers of Man into the sacred ink of the unfinished work. The poet shivers. Then, in a last attack of giddiness, he abandons all he knows, renounces his Ego, leaves human places and Time behind. He throws himself, bereft of certitude and brimming with confidence, into the heart of an act of creation. He answers the call.

That's when the soul of the poet, in an absurd and all-encompassing act of folly, meets up with both the creator and his work, in the place where they had left their intimate melodies hanging. And the poet lends them his Breath.

Nothing is more impertinent than a Life that goes in search of a path on which to reveal itself. Nothing is more powerful than the Intent of a poet's soul. But how much courage that poet must have to dare transgress the Law of those who canonise works when they ought to honour what makes them Sacred. How much generosity he must have to invest everything in a work that will never be his.

So, let's be thankful for this unlikely encounter between the desperate poetry of the Unfinished and the organic audacity of the poet who completes, with mad humility, the act of Love.

And the finished work can inspire the world. At last.

Marie-Lise Babonneau

Marie-Lise Babonneau is a clinical psychologist at Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital, Paris

II. A Kiss of Life from a Labour of Love

In my life as a composer, two unusual opportunities have come my way: I've completed two unfinished works by composers whose style and preoccupations were very different from my own.

The first, in 1999, was an early work by Ernest Chausson – *La Veuve du Roi basque*, for soloists, chorus and orchestra. The second, in 2005, was a *Mass* by Josquin des Près, of which only the *Credo* had survived.

What should we call this kind of work? Completion? Revision? Correction? Realisation? Re-creation? All of the above? In both cases, I remember experiencing a very particular mental state, my unconscious mind alone enabling me to banish the stress of such a foolish and absurd undertaking.

Finishing another composer's unfinished work means invigorating sketches that have been declared clinically dead. It means giving them life.

But it's even more than that: it's a declaration of love for the art of the composer.

There's no other word for what we're talking about here than love.

Not veracity, authenticity, musicology.

Just love.

While finishing the young Chausson's cantata, or composing the other movements of the Josquin Mass, I found myself in a strange parallel world: in a space removed from the history of music. A sort of quantum leap in which I found myself in several places at once: in the respective eras of these two composers, but my own time as well. Above all (and this is the heart of the matter) I was in a sublime, timeless musical sphere, on a passionate quest for musical beauty.

Various thoughts come to mind: why reconstruct a tenth symphony by Beethoven (with catastrophic results), why complete Mahler's *Tenth* (with terrible results)? Why dream up virtual works with neither love nor passion?

Now let me indulge in a little mythomania and megalomania: who will do the same with my sketches and unfinished works in a hundred years' time? I would happily entrust such a worthwhile task to some kind soul *post mortem*, but only on condition that the work was accomplished in a state of passionate, irrational madness. And, moved and grateful, my proud ghost would applaud, hidden away at the back of the concert hall.

Régis Campo

Régis Campo is a composer and a member of the Academy of Fine Arts (Institut de France)

III. When is a Hole Whole?

Before deciding whether or not it's sacrilegious for a work to be completed by any hand other than its creator's, we might well say that an unfinished work, because it's not completely a work, is therefore not completely the work of its author either. Before knowing whether the attribution needs to be revised and corrected, its lack of completion calls its full quality as a work into question. One of the paradoxes whose invention is usually credited to Eubulides of Miletus deals with the endless delay in the moment at which the accumulation of piece after piece forms a whole. The so-called *sorites* paradox (*soros* being the Greek for heap) states that because one grain of wheat does not make a heap, one grain added to another grain cannot be enough to form a heap, nor can one grain added to two grains be enough... Hence the impossible question: where does the sketch end and the work begin?

To solve the paradox, all we have to do is re-evaluate certain activities: the grain is to be milled, it is potentially a heap in and of itself; the heap is a future, whose definitive version is, on listening, still provisional in nature. The pleasure of music calls for movement. What does the work matter, if we have vitality and dynamism. And if we have to choose life over identity, music over stylistic properties, it means we choose the enjoyment of a musical experience over the knowledge as to whether the score is by Debussy – partially, mostly or completely.

Except that completers claim a fidelity to the style of Debussy and would like to pass off their pastiche style as equally legitimate – or at least, of comparable importance – as the restorations of monuments that have deteriorated over time or been damaged by catastrophic events. We have two options: either we stick to the ontology of the work and, with all due respect, we can always let liberality slip to the point of demanding that the retoucher leave some overt clues so that the listener can spot the end of Debussy and the start of the work of completion (the entire appeal of which would supposedly, however, have lain in making the join as seamless as possible); or we create a work of a different kind, one which is inspired by an unfinished composition and which, with the interpolation of opposing stylistic approaches, moves the focus to new questions: What's the point of finishing a work? Why have a style if it's not amenable to being blended?

In the meantime, we've moved on from the paradox of the heap to the Ship of Theseus, which Plutarch tells us was 'preserved by the Athenians until the time of Demetrius Phalareus'. In order to do this, the Athenians 'took away the old planks as they decayed, replacing them by new and stronger timbers'. A little like Lichtenberg's Knife ('a knife without a blade, for which the handle is missing'), you can therefore hear a work by Debussy part of which was not written by Debussy, but by a retoucher, and therefore the part written by Debussy is not completely by Debussy because Debussy was not committed enough to it to finish it and the part written by the retoucher is not fully that person's either, because it would have been so different without its quasi-pseudo-Debussyan prerequisite.

David Christoffel

David Christoffel is a poet, musicologist, composer and radio programme creator

IV. Finished, for Good or Ill

There's something unseemly about completing unfinished masterpieces. They may even be beyond completion, frozen for ever in their radical imperfection. Continuing to work on them at all costs, in a laudable but somewhat naïve desire for completion, would result in nothing but a profound distortion of their original character. It's hard to imagine painting restorers, for example, taking the liberty of adding colours to a canvas they considered to be unfinished.

And yet there's a certain obsession these days with the idea of completion. A Spanish novelist seeking to make a name for himself published a 'sequel' to *Don Quijote* a few years ago, young cartoonists are giving famous figures second lives in their artwork, and our cinema screens are filled with endless remakes.

Who, though, can seriously claim to have the ability to *perfect* the work of an incomparable genius? The failure of the numerous attempts to reconstruct the 'internal logic' of Pascal's *Pensées* should serve as a warning. Does anyone have the right to assemble the scattered pieces of what he or she thinks is a puzzle and proudly present it to the public once it's 'completed'? Doesn't all the charm of Pascal's flashes of inspiration reside in their fragmentary nature?

We must however distinguish between intentional and unintentional lack of completion. In the former case, we should leave well alone. Certain works, such as Michelangelo's *The Entombment* or Rembrandt's *The Great Jewish Bride*, must remain as they are, because they reflect the artist's own intention. Completing the *non finito* would be as ridiculous as putting arms back on the Venus de Milo or changing the end of *Carmen* because it's 'inconceivable in this day and age to applaud the murder of a woman'...

If death interrupts the writing of a book or symphony, however, the frustrated reader or listener can't help imagining its ending, if without making any claims to be a match for the original author. The pleasure of playing a tiny part in the creation of a work can't be underestimated. It's one well understood by those film directors who let viewers choose their preferred ending from various alternatives. But even these choices are imposed on us and our freedom to choose is instantly circumscribed.

So there's a huge difference between an AI program that 'completes' an unfinished symphony by Schubert or Dvořák and a human interpretation, which of course is based on a long and meticulous process of reconstruction but retains a degree of creative spontaneity.

Artificial Intelligence, which has no understanding of music and is only capable of carrying out calculations, will concoct a possible continuation based on the varying levels of frequency with which different notes appear in the composer's works as a whole, clumsily mimicking his unique style. While this works with chess, because a computer can reproduce the best moves of the world's grand masters by analysing a database of millions of games, it's far less successful when it comes to music. If a mere computer program, however sophisticated, were genuinely to succeed in completing a symphony, it would be as astonishing as if the mechanical pianos invented in Debussy's day suddenly started improvising.

There's also no need to program pianists before they play. The musicologist gives them the basic fabric, which they then embroider according to their own sensibilities and the inspiration of the moment. Everyone knows that true music-lovers always look for the artist's name before buying a recording. What you have in your hands isn't a recording of Debussy but a recording of Nicolas Horvath performing and completing Debussy. It's not so much a continuation as it is a re-creation.

According to the *Dictionnaire Littré*, the adjectival form, *achevé*, of the verb *achever* – to finish/complete – means *accompli en bien ou en mal* – 'finished, for good or ill'. It's up to the listeners to decide!

Yannis Constantinidès

Yannis Constantinidès is a philosopher and a professor of Philosophy and Applied Ethics



Tristan and Yseut, by Jean Delville, 1887

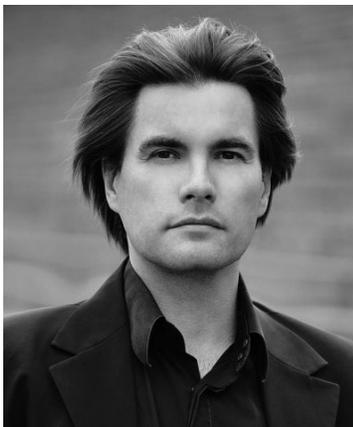
FLORIENT AZOULAY



© Florence Jamart

After serving as dramaturge for Jacques Weber, Niels Arestrup and Arthur Nauzyciel, Florient Azoulay founded the KGA Cie with Xavier Gallais. Their adaptations of Dostoyevsky, Hamsun, Rostand, Faulkner and Loti have been performed in France and the US. His work includes theatre pieces, essays and art-books, including a collaboration with Pascal Dusapin. Translator for Complicite and Simon McBurney, he directed an edition of the works of Shakespeare, illustrated by Richard Peduzzi. As an artistic director he has conceived multidisciplinary events for Hermès International at the Grand Palais, Paris, the docks of the port of Hamburg, Germany, and the Bâtiment des Forces Motrices, Geneva. Azoulay is also involved in performances of contemporary music, and has devised recitals for the Palais de Tokyo, Paris, the Musée des Confluences, Lyon, and the Château de Valençay, where he has served as artist-in-residence since 2017. He served as dramaturge for the operas of Mauro Patricelli (Copenhagen Opera) and has collaborated with the Orchestre de Cannes, the Ensemble L'itinéraire, and the Ensemble de Musique Incidentale, and with musicians including Nicolas Horvath, Abed Azrié, Guillaume de Chassy, Joël Grare, Daniel Blumenthal, Noëmi Waysfeld, Hélios Azoulay, Olivier Innocenti, Yoan Héreau and Raquel Camarinha. He has appeared in France and abroad in countries such as Morocco, the UK, Chile, Italy, Switzerland and Monaco. He teaches dramaturgy at the Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique in Paris.

NICOLAS HORVATH



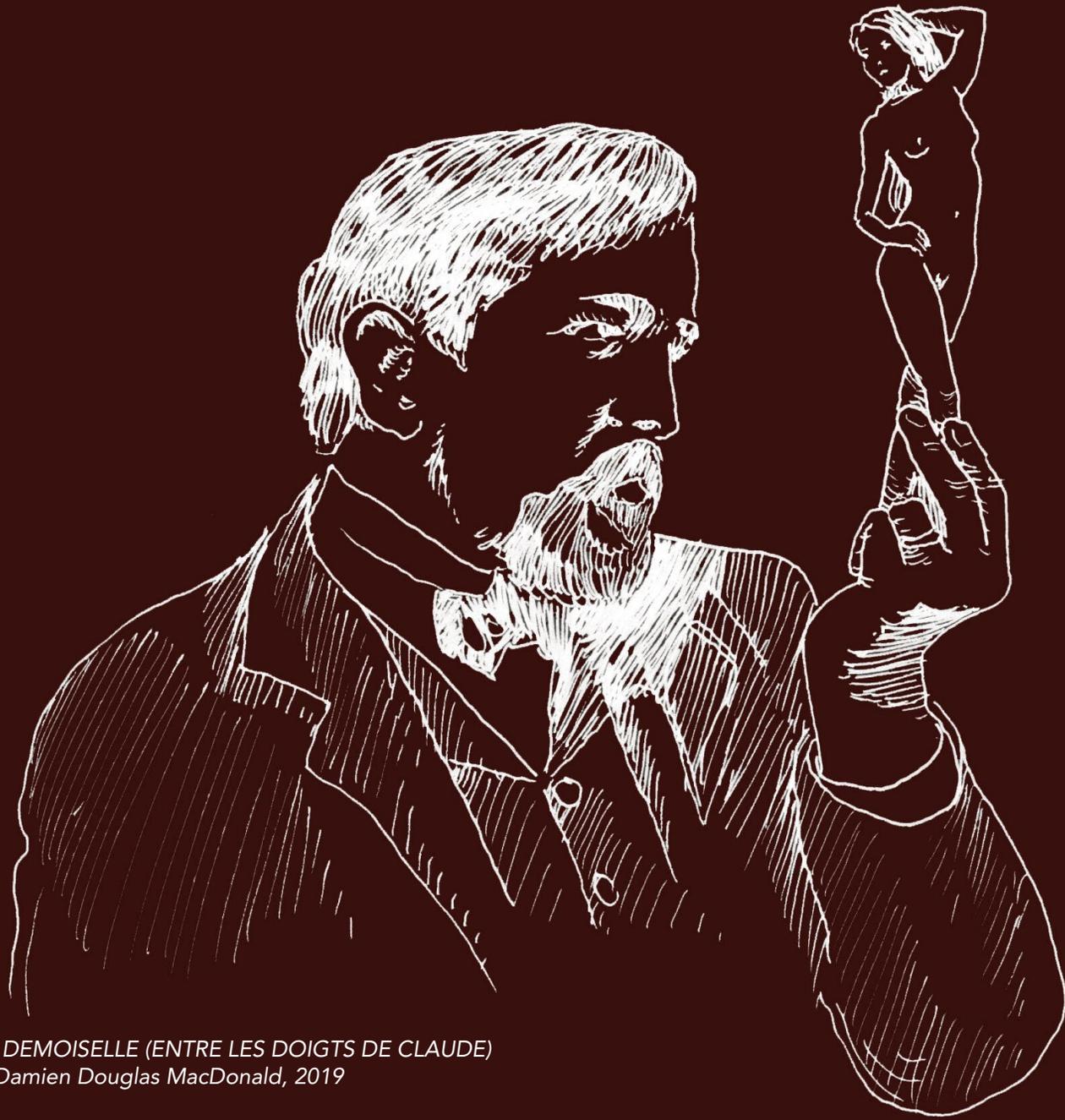
© Perla Maarek

Nicolas Horvath is an unusual artist with an unconventional résumé. He began his music studies at the Académie de Musique Prince Rainier III de Monaco, and at the age 16, he caught the attention of the American conductor Lawrence Foster who helped him to secure a three-year scholarship from the Princess Grace Foundation in order to further his studies. His mentors include a number of distinguished international pianists, including Bruno Leonardo Gelber, Gérard Frémy, Eric Heidsieck, Gabriel Tacchino, Nelson Delle-Vigne, Philippe Entremont, Oxana Yablonskaya and Liszt specialist Leslie Howard who helped to lay the foundations for Horvath's current recognition as a leading interpreter of Liszt's music. He is the holder of a number of awards, including First Prize of the Scriabin and the Luigi Nono International Competitions.

Known for his boundary-less musical explorations, Horvath is an enthusiastic promoter of contemporary music. He has commissioned numerous works and collaborated with leading contemporary composers from around the world, including Régis Campo, Mamoru Fujieda, Jaan Rääts, Alvin Curran and Valentin Silvestrov – and has rediscovered forgotten or neglected composers such as Moondog, Germaine Tailleferre, François-Adrien Boieldieu, Hélène de Montgeroult and Fernand de La Tombelle to name but a few.

Horvath has become noted for the organisation of concerts of unusual length, sometimes lasting over twelve hours, such as the performance of the complete piano music of Philip Glass at the Paris Philharmonie before a cumulative audience of 14,000 people; Alvin Curran's *Inner Cities XL* and the complete piano music of Erik Satie. His discography on Grand Piano includes two highly acclaimed series of Philip Glass and Erik Satie's complete piano works (six and four albums to date, respectively), piano sonatas by the Estonian composer Jaan Rääts, and études by Carl Czerny.

www.nicolashorvath.com



LA DEMOISELLE (ENTRE LES DOIGTS DE CLAUDE)
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CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862–1918)

THE UNKNOWN DEBUSSY – RARE PIANO MUSIC

Robert Orledge's research into Debussy's sketches and incomplete drafts has resulted in the unearthing and reconstruction of numerous lost masterpieces, the piano versions of which are given their première recordings here. Unknown versions of famous pieces such as *La Fille aux cheveux de lin* and an unused movement from *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien* appear alongside the ecstatic *Prélude de l'Histoire de Tristan*. This uniquely valuable programme also includes the life-affirming suite for *No-ja-li (Le Palais du Silence)* with narration.

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|--------------|---|--------------|
| 1–6 | PRÉLUDES OUBLIÉS * | 23:25 |
| 7 | PETITE VALSE (c.1915, completed 2006) | 02:07 |
| 8 | FÊTES GALANTES
Tableau 1 – Les Masques (commencement)
(1915, completed 2006) * | 07:08 |
| 9 | LE MARTYRE DE SAINT SÉBASTIEN
Act 3: Le Concile des faux dieux: La Passion
(unused movement, first draft) (1911, completed 2014) * | 04:28 |
| 10 | NO-JA-LI (LE PALAIS DU SILENCE)
(1914, completed 2005/2014) *
<i>Narrator: Florient Azoulay</i> | 17:17 |
| 11–14 | LE ROI LEAR (1904–08, completed 2004/2018) * | 12:05 |
| 15 | UN JOUR AFFREUX AVEC LE DIABLE DANS LE BEFFROI
(1902–03, transcribed 2018) *
<i>Narrator: Florient Azoulay</i> | 11:37 |
| 16 | A NIGHT IN THE HOUSE OF USHER
(1915–17, transcribed 2010) * | 06:30 |

* **WORLD PREMIÈRE RECORDING**

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 84:48



NICOLAS HORVATH



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