CLAUDE DEBUSSY

PAGODES
from Estampes
arranged for 4 pianos, harmonium and tuneful percussion by Percy Aldridge Grainger

Full Score

BARDIC EDITION
BDE 558
Claude Debussy

PAGODES

arranged for 4 pianos, harmonium and tuneful percussion (19 or more players)

by

Percy Aldridge Grainger

Grainger’s interest in bell-like sonorities had been sharpened by his visit to the Paris World Exposition of 1900, where he heard for the first time Javanese and Balinese Gamelan orchestras, and as a result he became interested in ‘tuneful percussion instruments’ (as he called them). He was impressed by the clarity and independence of tone in the ‘gong orchestras’ and felt that, in these ensembles, there was no tendency for notes to ‘get soaked up’ into an indistinct conglomeration of sounds, as with Western orchestras when ‘loud and complex in tone’.

This same exposition was visited by Debussy and his friend the painter Jacques-Emile Blanche, who had both attended performances by the same Gamelan orchestras. Their playing had inspired Debussy to compose his Estampes for piano solo. In the summer of 1902 on a trip to Dieppe, Grainger happened to meet Blanche who had with him the vocal score of Debussy’s Pelléas et Mélisande, which had received its first performance in Paris a few months earlier. Grainger was intrigued by the harmonic invention he found in the score and was bowled over by what he called ‘the loveliness of the tonery’.

Grainger went on to give the first British performance of Debussy’s Pagodes in 1905 and this transcription of Pagodes for Western tuneful percussion was made in the summer of 1928 during his time as lecturer at the Chicago Music College summer school. In his lecture on the same work, he remarked that ‘if we want one single influence that turned music away from the noisiness of late nineteenth century to the delicacy of twentieth century music, I think it is to be sought in Debussy’s admiration for the Javanese Gong orchestras’. In making this transcription from piano solo to tuneful percussion (including 4 pianos), Grainger was attempting to recreate the sorts of sounds Debussy had first heard at the 1900 Paris Exposition.
Instrumentation

Harmonium
Glockenspiel
Metal Marimba (3 players)
Celesta
Dulcitone (or Harp)
Staff Bells (Hand Bells suspended on a wooden frame by leather straps)
Tubular Chimes
Gong
Xylophone (1 to 3 players)
Wooden Marimba (3 players)
Piano I (1 player)
Piano II (3 players)*
Piano III (1 player)**
Piano IV (1 player)***

*player 1 silently holds down keys whilst players 2 and 3 strike keyboard strings with Marimba mallets

**player strikes keyboard strings with Marimba mallets until bar 73

***player strikes keyboard strings with Marimba mallets until bar 41
Anonymous (arr. Grainger)
Gamelan Anklung (Balinese Ceremonial Music) Ensemble
Sekar Gadung (Javenese) Voices + Ensemble

Michael Blake
Let us run out of the rain (Vibraphone/Marimba – 4 players)

Claude Debussy (arr. Grainger)
Pagodes (Ensemble + Harmonium & 3-4 Pianos)

Percy Aldridge Grainger
Eastern Intermezzo (Ensemble + Harmonium & 2 Pianos)

Maurice Ravel (arr. Grainger)
La Vallée des Cloches (Ensemble + Strings)

full details of scoring on request

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