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Richard Becker, piano

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GEORGE M. MODLIN
CENTER FOR THE ARTS
at the University of Richmond



CAMP CONCERT HALL
BOOKER HALL OF MUSIC

SUNDAY, JANUARY 26, 1997, 3:00 PM

Richard Becker, *piano*

Title Sources For Book I of Debussy's Preludes¹

- I. Danseuses de Delphes (Delphic Dancers) is inspired by a Greek sculpture at the Louvre featuring three female Bacchantes.
- II. In Voiles (Veils) the title might refer to a dancer's veils.
- III. "Le vent dans la plaine" (The wind on the plain), a line by the eighteenth century poet, Charles-Simon Favart, is also quoted as an epigraph to *C'est l'extase langoureuse*, a Verlaine poem which Debussy set in January, 1889.
- IV. "Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir" (The mix of sounds and scents in the night air) is a line from *Harmonie du soir*, a Baudelaire poem in pantoum which serves as text to the second song in Debussy's cycle, *Cinq poèmes de Baudelaire*.
- V. Les collines d'Anacapri (The hills of Anacapri) is unclear as to source.
- VI. Des pas sur la neige (Footprints in the snow) is unclear as to source.
- VII. Ce qu'a vu le Vent d'Ouest (What the west wind saw) might be drawn from Hans Christian Andersen's "The Garden of Paradise" or Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind."
- VIII. La fille aux cheveux de lin (The girl with flaxen hair) is a poem by Leconte de Lisle (no. 4 of his *Chansons écossaises*) which Debussy set in 1882.
- IX. La sérénade interrompue (Interrupted serenade) is unclear as to source.
- X. La Cathédrale engloutie (Engulfed Cathedral) is a Breton legend retold in Ernest Renan's *Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse*, Paris 1883. The lost city of Ys is submerged by the sea. Its cathedral spires are seen and monks' chants heard as it emerges from water on misty mornings.
- XI. La danse de Puck (Puck's dance) is an allusion to Shakespeare's Puck.
- XII. Minstrels (Minstrels) is inspired by a minstrel show in front of the Grand Hotel, Eastbourne, where Debussy stayed during the summer of 1905.

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¹ The translations are those of Richard Becker and the source descriptions are my paraphrasing of those given in *Oeuvres Complètes de Claude Debussy, Serie 1, Vol. 5: Préludes, Livre I, Livre II*; Roy Howat and Claude Helffer, editors. Durand-Costallat, 1985. (Originally *Book I* was published by Durand-Fils in 1910.)

Program

Préludes, Premier Livre

Claude Debussy
(1863-1918)

- I. Danseuses de Delphes
- II. Voiles
- III. Le vent dans la plaine
- IV. Les sons et les parfums tourment dans l'air du soir
- V. Les collines d'Anacapri
- VI. Des pas sur la neige
- VII. Ce que vu le Vent d'Ouest
- VIII. La fille aux cheveux de lin
- IX. La sérénade interrompue
- X. La Cathédrale engloutie
- XI. La danse de Puck
- XII. Minstrels

• *Intermission* •

Three Prologues for Piano (1997)

Richard Becker
(b. 1943)

Nocturne in B-Flat Minor, op. 9, no.1, B. 54 (1830)

Frédéric Chopin
(1810-1849)

Scherzo in E Major, op. 54, B. 148 (1842)

Chopin

Mephisto Waltz (1860)

Franz Liszt
(1811-1886)



Richard Becker

Richard Becker has performed solo recitals at over sixty colleges and at venues such as Tully Hall, Town Hall, Library of Congress, and at the National Gallery of Art. He has been a chamber music performer at Carnegie Hall, Kaufmann Hall (of the 92nd St. Y), Bucknell Hall, Washington University, Brattleboro Music Center, Harvard Chamber Music Seminar, and locally at the Virginia Museum, the Carpenter Center, the Mosque, at V.C.U.'s Performing Arts Center, and annually at the University of Richmond. He has collaborated with the Shanghai Quartet, Richmond Sinfonia, Currents, Phil and Jungshin Lim Lewis, clarinetist David Niethamer, the Richmond Chamber Players, soprano Nan Nall, violinists Weigong Li and Honggang Li, (1993) violist Zheng Wang (1993), and cellists James Wilson (1993) and Andor Toth Jr., and others.

In addition to recent solo and chamber recitals in the Richmond area, Mr. Becker participated in and performed at the French Piano Institute's French Music Festival in Paris (Salle Cortot, July 20, 1996) for which he was awarded a recital at the French Embassy in Washington, D.C. (October 20, 1996) for excellence in the performance of Debussy (Jurists: Narcis Bonet, Roy Howat, and Roger Muraro).

Richard Becker's own compositions have been performed at: the Tanglewood Music Festival; Peabody Conservatory; Boston's Gardner Museum; the National Gallery of Art's American Music Festival; Town Hall; James Madison University; Williams College; the Eastman Theater of the Eastman School of Music (1993); University of Texas; Bennington College; University of Connecticut; Bucknell University; Boston University; Virginia Museum; and at University of Richmond (1994); among others; and has been heard on NPR and over the Voice of America as performed by: the composer; the Peabody Trio; pianists Kit Young, Claudia Stevens, and Nancy Burton Garrett; the Roxbury Chamber Players; University of Richmond's music ensembles, Currents and Schola Cantorum; members of the Richmond Symphony; and others.

Mr. Becker has coached chamber music, presented piano master classes, and given lecture recitals and workshops at such schools at the New England Conservatory, Peabody Conservatory, Bucknell University, Boston University, Brattleboro Music Center, University of Oklahoma, University of Texas at Austin, Furman University, Marshall University, University of West Virginia, Longwood College, University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, and University of Richmond.

He is a MacDowell Colony Fellow (since 1990) and was nominated for an award by the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1991 for his musical composition. Poetry by Richard Becker has recently appeared in *America*, *Columbia*, *fuel*, and *Bottomfish*. His piano music is recorded on the CRS label.