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The Devil in the Belfry a rhapsody for viola and orchestra & Edgar Allan Poe, Claude Debussy, and "The Fall of the House of Usher"

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THE DEVIL IN THE BELFRY
A RHAPSODY FOR VIOLA AND ORCHESTRA
&
EDGAR ALLAN POE, CLAUDE DEBUSSY, AND “THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER”

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The School of Music

by
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B.M., Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, 2004
M.M., Louisiana State University, 2008
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PREFACE

This dissertation is an attempt to combine two of the greatest influences in my life: Edgar Allan Poe and Claude Debussy.

Debussy's music was one of the reasons I set out to become a composer. His imaginative combinations of simple elements completely enthralled me from the very first time I heard his music. I remember it as if it were today. I believed that I would find a satisfactory explanation as to why Debussy's music mesmerizes me by employing to it the traditional means of analyzing music and its techniques. These include the centrality of pitch, form and notation (by which is meant a more optical rather than aural observation of music) in the act of analyzing. After over a decade of study in this direction, I still am unable to furnish an answer to my initial query. Therefore, either I did not look hard enough, or it is now time to reevaluate the philosophy behind the analysis of music, especially as it pertains to Debussy's works. I found the best answer to my musings in Paul Verlaine's *Art Poétique*:

De la musique avant toute chose,
Et pour cela préfère l'Impair
Plus vague et plus soluble dans l'air,
Sans rien en lui qui pèse ou pose.

Il faut aussi que tu n'aïles point
Choisir tes mots sans quelque méprise :
Rien de plus cher que la chanson grise
Où l'Indécis au Précis se joint.

C'est des beaux yeux derrière des voiles,
C'est le grand jour tremblant de midi,
C'est par un ciel d'automne attiédi
Le bleu fouillis des claires étoiles !

Music above everything,
The Imbalanced preferred
Vaguer more soluble in air
Nothing weighty, fixed therein.

And don't go choosing your words
Without some confusion of vision:
Nothing's dearer than shadowy verse
Where Precision weds Indecision.

It's beautiful eyes concealed by veils,
It's a broad day quivering at noon,
It's the blue disorder of bright stars
In autumn skies, cool, with no moon!

Car nous voulons la Nuance encor,
Pas la Couleur, rien que la nuance !
Oh ! la nuance seule fiancée
Le rêve au rêve et la lèvre au cor !

Fuis du plus loin la Pointe assassine,
L'Esprit cruel et le Rire impur,
Qui font pleurer les yeux de l'Azur,
Et tout cet ail de basse cuisine !

Prends l'éloquence et tords-lui son cou !
Tu feras bien, en train d'énergie,
De l'écouter un peu la Rime assagie.
Si l'on n'y veille, elle ira jusqu'où ?

O qui dira les torts de la Rime !
Quel enfant sourd ou lèvre nègre fou
Nous a l'écouter ce bijou d'un sou
Qui sonne creux et faux sous la lime ?

De la musique encore et toujours !
Que ton vers soit la chose envolée
Qu'on sent qui fuit d'une âme en allée
Vers d'autres cieux à d'autres amours.

Que ton vers soit la bonne aventure
Éparse au vent crispé du matin
Qui va fleurant la menthe et le thym...
Et tout le reste est littérature.

For we always desire Nuance,
Not Colour, nuance evermore!
Oh, nuance alone can wed
Dream with dream, flute with horn!

From murderous Epigrams flee,
Cruel Wit and laughter impure
That brings tears to the high Azure,
And all that base garlic cuisine!

Take eloquence, wring its neck!
You'd do well, while you're in flow,
To make Rhyme a fraction wiser.
If we don't look out, where will it go?

Oh who'll tell of the wrongs of Rhyme?
What mad Negro, or tone-deaf child,
Created this penny jewel, this crime,
That rings hollow, false under the file?

Music once more and forever!
Let your line be a thing so light,
It feels like a soul that soars in flight
To new skies and fresh lovers.

Let your line be finest adventure
Afloat on the tense dawn wind
That goes wakening thyme and mint...
All the rest – is literature.

Translated by A. S. Kline

I cannot remember when I first started reading Poe. My grandfather, Borisas Cimbliris, gave me an edition of Poe's complete works. This book was on my nightstand for years. His writings encouraged me to think about what lies beneath appearance concerning the human race. I go to E.A. Poe whenever I find the need for outside inspiration to compose music. So far, I have composed four works based on Poe's writings: *The Bells*, *The Island of the Fay*, *The Masque of the Red Death*, and now *The Devil in the Belfry*.

In *The Devil in the Belfry*, I am honored to be able to quote some of the very few sketches¹ that Debussy left for an unfinished work based on the Poe tale of the same title. His sketches were only scored for piano with no indication for instrumentation. Most of them are only about three bars long. As such, I felt free to work with his sketches in my own style. Furthermore, I conceived my work apart from any attempt at recreating what Debussy might have wished to do. I can only hope that he gives his blessing for my treatment of his work.

Debussy's *La Chute de la Maison Usher* has been a project on standby for me since I was an undergraduate student. Due to the lack of time to pursue personal interests, not to mention the hardship to get material related to *La Chute de la Maison Usher*, this project was postponed until now. My proposition for a study was to peruse, through a chronological framework, about how a composition based on a literary work is conceived. First the composer starts understanding the story (or poem) he has chosen. Afterwards the story becomes an obsession. Then the music finally comes to life. I wanted to focus completely on *La Chute de la Maison Usher* and avoid an overworked comparison with *Pélleas et Mélisande* and other works. The study brought to light not only musical revelations, but also a deeper understanding of Debussy's mind. It brought me comfort to find that, as myself, he would take weeks to decide upon some details in harmony, and that he also had a difficult time finishing works, owing to personal demands for perfection.

¹ The facsimile of these sketches is printed in the end of Edward Lockespeiser's *Debussy et Edgar Poe: Documents inédits* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1962).

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INSTRUMENTATION

2 Flutes (2nd doubling Piccolo)
2 Oboes (2nd doubling English Horn)
2 Clarinets in Bb
2 Bassoons

4 Horns in F
2 Trumpets in Bb
2 Trombones
Tuba

Timpani

Percussion 1

Tubular Bells
Snare Drum
Tambourine
2 Tom-toms

Percussion 2

Glockenspiel
Crash Cymbals
Tambourine
Snare Drum
Tam-tam
Bass Drum

Percussion 3

Bass Drum
Tambourine
Tam-tam
Crash Cymbals
2 Tom-toms
Snare Drum
Glockenspiel

Solo Viola

Strings



James Ensor
The Devil in the Belfry
(1886 – 1888)
pencil and charcoal on paper
11 11/16 x 9 15/16 in.

TRANSPosed SCORE

Duration: ca. 23 minutes

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is in two parts. The first is an original composition, *The Devil in the Belfry*, while the second is a discussion of Claude Debussy's unfinished opera, *La Chute de la Maison Usher*.

The Devil in the Belfry is a rhapsody for viola and orchestra based on Edgar Allan Poe's tale of the same title. It contains quotations from the few sketches that Debussy left for his unfinished work, *Le diable dans le beffroi*. Quoting Debussy's sketches was the sensible course of action, since they have the same literary basis as my work, and because I wish to pay tribute to these unfinished treasures.

Poe's tale tells the story of a town, the Dutch borough of Vondervotteimittis, where its inhabitants are only concerned about two things: keeping time, and cabbage. One day a devil, carrying a big fiddle, arrives in the town creating chaos in the people's systematic lives. The devil goes into the belfry, attacks the bell ringer, and rings the bell thirteen times instead of twelve, thus horrifying the entire town. He stays in the belfry while playing an Irish jig and tolling the bells by pulling the ropes with his teeth.

The devil playing a "big fiddle" is the reason for the choice of the viola as the solo instrument.

Debussy's *La Chute de la Maison Usher* is an opera based on Poe's tale, "The Fall of the House of Usher." All that remains for this opera are sketches, scored as a *particell*.

This work occupied Debussy's mind for over a decade until his death in 1918. As Debussy immersed himself in the story, he began to identify himself and his

surroundings to those in the ‘House of Usher.’ Therefore, this work is also a window into Debussy’s mind. The first chapter shows the importance of Poe in France and different ways to interpret “The Fall of the House of Usher.” The second chapter is centered on Debussy’s letters, demonstrating his profound interest in this opera. The last chapter is an analysis of the libretto and the music of *La Chute de la Maison Usher*.

PART I: A RHAPSODY FOR VIOLA AND ORCHESTRA

TRANPOSED SCORE

to Gerry Varona

The Devil in the Belfry

A Rhapsody for Viola and Orchestra

Maíra Cimblaris

$\text{♩} = 45$

Flute I

Flute II (Piccolo)

muda in picc.

Oboe I

Oboe II (English Horn)

2 Clarinets in B \flat

2 Bassoons

I

II

Horn in F

III

IV

2 Trumpets in B \flat

2 Trombones

Tuba

Timpani

Percussion 1

Percussion 2

Percussion 3

Cadenza
largamente e sostenuto

f

$\text{♩} = 45$

Solo Viola

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Contrabass

The Devil in the Belfry

This image shows a page from a musical score, likely for a symphony orchestra. The score is written for multiple instruments, including woodwinds, brass, percussion, and strings. The notation is in standard musical notation, with staves for each instrument. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *mp* (mezzo-piano). The tempo is marked as $\text{♩} = 47$. The score is divided into measures, with some measures containing complex rhythmic patterns and others containing rests. The instruments listed on the left include Fl. I, Picc., Ob. I, Ob. II, 2 B♭ Cl., 2 Bsn., Hn. in F (I, II, III, IV), 2 B♭ Tpt., 2 Tbn., Tuba, Timp., Perc. 1, Perc. 2 (Glockenspiel), Perc. 3, S. Vla., Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and Cb. The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a time signature of 4/4.

The Devil in the Belfry

This musical score page, titled "The Devil in the Belfry", displays the orchestral and percussion arrangements for measures 19 through 22. The score is organized into two systems of staves.

First System (Measures 19-22):

- Fl. I:** Measures 19-22 are rests. Measure 21 features a *f* (forte) dynamic with a wavy line above the staff.
- Picc.:** Measures 19-22 are rests. Measure 21 features a *f* (forte) dynamic with a wavy line above the staff.
- Ob. I & II:** Measures 19-20 contain triplet eighth notes. Measures 21-22 feature a *f* (forte) dynamic with sixteenth-note patterns.
- 2 B♭ Cl. & 2 Bsn.:** Measures 19-20 are rests. Measures 21-22 feature a *f* (forte) dynamic with sixteenth-note patterns.
- Hn. in F (I, II, III, IV):** Measures 19-20 are rests. Measures 21-22 feature a *f* (forte) dynamic with triplet eighth notes.
- 2 B♭ Tpt. & 2 Tbn.:** Measures 19-20 are rests. Measures 21-22 feature a *f* (forte) dynamic with triplet eighth notes.
- Tuba:** Measures 19-20 are rests. Measures 21-22 feature a *f* (forte) dynamic with quarter notes.
- Timp.:** Measures 19-20 are rests. Measures 21-22 feature a *f* (forte) dynamic with eighth-note patterns.
- Perc. 1 (Snare Drum):** Measures 19-20 are rests. Measures 21-22 feature a *f* (forte) dynamic with eighth-note patterns.
- Perc. 2 (Crash Cymbal):** Measures 19-20 are rests. Measures 21-22 feature a *f* (forte) dynamic with eighth-note patterns.
- Perc. 3 (Bass Drum):** Measures 19-20 are rests. Measures 21-22 feature a *f* (forte) dynamic with eighth-note patterns.

Second System (Measures 19-22):

- S. Vla.:** Measures 19-20 feature a triplet eighth-note pattern. Measures 21-22 are rests.
- Vln. I & II & Vla.:** Measures 19-20 feature a triplet eighth-note pattern. Measures 21-22 feature a *f* (forte) dynamic with eighth-note patterns.
- Vc. & Cb.:** Measures 19-20 are rests. Measures 21-22 feature a *f* (forte) dynamic with eighth-note patterns.

The Devil in the Belfry

28 A ♩ = 94

Fl. I *mp*

Picc. *muta in fl. II*

Ob. I *mp*

Ob. II *English Horn mp*

2 B♭ Cl. *mp* 1.

2 Bsn. *mp* 1.

Hn. in F I II III IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

S. Vla. *mp* *mf dolce* 3

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc. *mp*

Cb. *mp*

The Devil in the Belfry

[illegible]

The Devil in the Belfry

[illegible]

The Devil in the Belfry

56

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

56

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

56

S. Vla.

f *mf* *mp*

Vln. I

pizz *p* *mf* *arco* *mf*

Vln. II

pizz *p* *mf* *arco* *mf*

Vla.

pizz *p* *mf* *arco* *mf*

Vc.

pizz *p* *mf*

Cb.

p *mf*

The Devil in the Belfry

This page of the musical score contains the following instruments and parts:

- Flutes (Fl. I, Fl. II):** Both parts play a melodic line starting at measure 68, marked *mf*.
- Oboes (Ob. I, Ob. II):** Both parts play a melodic line starting at measure 68, marked *mf*.
- 2 B♭ Clarinet (2 B♭ Cl.):** Plays a rhythmic pattern starting at measure 68, marked *mf*.
- 2 Bassoon (2 Bsn.):** Plays a rhythmic pattern starting at measure 68, marked *mf*.
- Horns (Hn. in F I, II, III, IV):** All parts are silent.
- 2 B♭ Trumpet (2 B♭ Tpt.):** All parts are silent.
- 2 Trombone (2 Tbn.):** All parts are silent.
- Tuba:** All parts are silent.
- Timpani (Timp.):** All parts are silent.
- Percussion (Perc. 1, Perc. 2, Perc. 3):**
 - Perc. 1: Tubular Bells, marked *mf*.
 - Perc. 2: Tambourine, marked *mf*.
 - Perc. 3: Bass Drum, marked *sfz*.
- S. Vla. (Solo Viola):** Plays a melodic line starting at measure 68, marked *mf*.
- Violins (Vln. I, Vln. II):** Both parts play a melodic line starting at measure 68, marked *mf*.
- Viola (Vla.):** Plays a melodic line starting at measure 68, marked *mf*.
- Violoncello (Vc.):** Plays a melodic line starting at measure 68, marked *mf*.
- Contrabass (Cb.):** Plays a melodic line starting at measure 68, marked *mf*.

The score includes a rehearsal mark 'B' at measure 68.

The Devil in the Belfry

[illegible]

The Devil in the Belfry

[illegible]

The Devil in the Belfry

[illegible]

The Devil in the Belfry

[illegible]

The Devil in the Belfry

[illegible]

The Devil in the Belfry

123 D ♩ = 45

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

Timp.

Perc. 1
Tubular Bells
mp

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

S. Vla.
mp

D ♩ = 45

Vln. I
p

Vln. II
p

Vla.
p

Vc.
p

Cb.
p

pp *mp* *pp* *mp* *mf*

The Devil in the Belfry

128 E ♩ = 30 (♩ = ♩)

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

mp

p

mp

The Devil in the Belfry

[illegible]

The Devil in the Belfry

145 $\text{♩} = 60$ $\text{♩} = 120$

Fl. I *mp* *mf*

Fl. II *mp* *mf*

Ob. I *mf*

Ob. II *mf*

2 B♭ Cl. *mp* *mf*

2 Bsn. *mf*

I *mp* *mf*

Hn. in F

III *mp* *mf*

IV

2 B♭ Tpt. *mp* *mf*

2 Tbn. *mp* *mf*

Tuba *mp* *mf*

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2 Glockenspiel *mf*

Perc. 3

S. Vla.

145 $\text{♩} = 60$ $\text{♩} = 120$

Vln. I *mf*

Vln. II *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Vc. *mf*

Cb. *mf*

The Devil in the Belfry

[illegible]

The Devil in the Belfry

[illegible]

The Devil in the Belfry

[illegible]

The Devil in the Belfry

177

Fl. I

Picc.

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

177

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

177

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

p

mp

mp

mf

5

The Devil in the Belfry

184 G ♩ = 60 rall.

Fl. I

Picc.

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

muda in fl. II

p \curvearrowright *mf*

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

S. Vla.

G ♩ = 60 rall.

mp

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

mp

mp

mp

The Devil in the Belfry

195 $\text{♩} = 45$

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I
II

Hn. in F

III
IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

S. Vla.

Cadenza largamente e sostenuto

f

$\text{♩} = 45$

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

arco

mp

arco

mp

The Devil in the Belfry

206 H $\text{♩} = 30$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$) $\text{♩} = 120$

Fl. I *p* *mf*

Fl. II *p* *mf*

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl. *p* *mf*

2 Bsn. *mf*

Hn. in F I *p* *mf*

III *p* *mf*

IV *p* *mf*

2 B♭ Tpt. *p* *mf*

2 Tbn.

Tuba

Timp. *mf*

Perc. 1 Tubular Bells *mp*

Perc. 2 Glockenspiel *mf*

Perc. 3

S. Vla. *f*

H $\text{♩} = 30$ ($\text{♩} = \text{♩}$) $\text{♩} = 120$

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

The Devil in the Belfry

215 *rall.*

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

215

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

215

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

p

rall.

The Devil in the Belfry

225 $\text{♩} = 60$ *accel.* 1 $\text{♩} = 94$

Fl. I *mf*

Fl. II *mf*

Ob. I *mf*

Ob. II *mf*

2 B♭ Cl. *mf*

2 Bsn. *mf* 1.

Hn. in F *mp* *mf* *f*

Hn. III *mp*

Hn. IV *mp* *mf*

2 B♭ Tpt. *mf*

2 Tbn. *mf*

Tuba *mf*

Timp. *mf*

Perc. 1

Perc. 2 Glockenspiel *mf*

Perc. 3 Tambourine *mf*

S. Vla. *mp* *mf* *accel.* 1 $\text{♩} = 94$

Vln. I *mf*

Vln. II *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Vc. *mf*

Cb. *mf*

The Devil in the Belfry

235

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

235

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

235

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Tambourine

mp

235

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mp

mp

mp

mp

mp

The Devil in the Belfry

This page contains the musical notation for measures 246 through 258. The instruments listed are:

- Fl. I
- Fl. II
- Ob. I
- Ob. II
- 2 B♭ Cl.
- 2 Bsn.
- Hn. in F (I, II, III, IV)
- 2 B♭ Tpt.
- 2 Tbn.
- Tuba
- Timp.
- Perc. 1 (Tubular Bells)
- Perc. 2 (Glockenspiel)
- Perc. 3 (Bass Drum)
- S. Vla.
- Vln. I
- Vln. II
- Vla.
- Vc.
- Cb.

The score includes various musical markings such as dynamics (*ff*, *mf*, *pizze*) and articulation (*stacc*, *acc*). A rehearsal mark 'J' is present at measure 249.

The Devil in the Belfry

258

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

258

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

258

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

The Devil in the Belfry

[illegible]

The Devil in the Belfry

[illegible]

The Devil in the Belfry

282 K $\text{♩} = 47$

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I *muto in picc.*

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

Timp.

Perc. 1 *ff*

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

S. Vla.

Vln. I *8va loco*

Vln. II *8va loco*

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

K $\text{♩} = 47$

The Devil in the Belfry

The Devil in the Belfry

The Devil in the Belfry

301

Fl. I *mp* *mf* *f* *accel.*

Fl. II *mp* *mf*

Ob. I *mp* *mf*

Ob. II *mp* *mf*

2 B♭ Cl. *mp* *mf*

2 Bsn. *mp* *mf*

I *mp* *mf*

II *mp* *mf*

Hn. in F *a 2*

III *mp* *mf*

IV *mp* *mf*

2 B♭ Tpt. *mp* *mf*

2 Tbn. *mp* *mf*

Tuba *mp* *mf*

Timp. *mp* *mf*

Perc. 1 *mp* *mf*

Perc. 2 *mp* *mf*

Perc. 3 *Bass Drum*

S. Vla. *ff* *f* *ff* *accel.*

Vln. I *mp* *mf* *f*

Vln. II *mp* *mf* *f*

Vla. *mp* *mf* *f*

Vc. *mp* *mf* *f*

Cb. *mp* *mf* *f*

The Devil in the Belfry

6

309

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

309

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

309

S. Vla.

309

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

accel.

L

♩ = 120

arco

f

arco

f

arco

f

arco

f

f

The Devil in the Belfry

320

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

320

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

320

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

mf

a 2

mf

mf

mf cresc.

f

pizz

mf

pizz

mf

The Devil in the Belfry

331

molto rit.

Fl. I *mf* *f*

Fl. II *mf* *f*

Ob. I *mf* *f*

Ob. II *mf* *f*

2 B♭ Cl. *f*

2 Bsn. *f*

I *f*

Hn. in F *f*

III *f*

IV *f*

2 B♭ Tpt. *f*

2 Tbn. *f*

Tuba *f*

331

Timp. *f*

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

331

S. Vla. *ff*

Vln. I *molto rit.* *f*

Vln. II *f*

Vla. *f*

Vc. *f* *arco*

Cb. *f* *arco* *f*

The Devil in the Belfry

338

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

338

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

S. Vla.

338

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

molto rit.

♩ = 94

The Devil in the Belfry

[illegible]

The Devil in the Belfry

359

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

ff

Tuba

359

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

359

S. Vla.

ff

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

f

The Devil in the Belfry

This musical score page, titled "The Devil in the Belfry", displays the orchestral and string arrangements for measures 362 through 364. The score is organized into three systems, each containing multiple staves for different instruments.

First System (Measures 362-364):

- Flutes (Fl. I, Fl. II):** Both parts play a rapid, ascending sixteenth-note scale starting in measure 362, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic.
- Oboes (Ob. I, Ob. II):** Similar to the flutes, they play a rapid ascending scale in measure 362, also marked *f*.
- 2 B♭ Clarinet (2 B♭ Cl.):** Plays a series of chords in measure 362, marked *f*.
- 2 Bassoon (2 Bsn.):** Plays a single note in measure 362, marked *f*.
- Horn in F (Hn. in F):** Divided into four parts (I, II, III, IV), they play chords in measure 362, marked *f*.
- 2 B♭ Trumpet (2 B♭ Tpt.):** Plays chords in measure 362, marked *f*.
- 2 Trombone (2 Tbn.):** Plays a single note in measure 362, marked *f*.
- Tuba:** Plays a single note in measure 362, marked *f*.
- Timpani (Timp.):** Features a complex rhythmic pattern in measure 362, marked *f*.
- Percussion 1 (Perc. 1):** Plays a single note in measure 362, marked *f*.
- Percussion 2 (Perc. 2):** Plays a complex rhythmic pattern in measure 362, marked *f*.
- Percussion 3 (Perc. 3):** Plays a single note in measure 362, marked *f*.

Second System (Measures 362-364):

- Soprano Viola (S. Vla.):** Plays a complex rhythmic pattern in measure 362, marked *f*.
- Violins (Vln. I, Vln. II):** Both parts play a complex rhythmic pattern in measure 362, marked *f*.
- Viola (Vla.):** Plays a complex rhythmic pattern in measure 362, marked *f*.
- Violoncello (Vc.):** Plays a complex rhythmic pattern in measure 362, marked *f*.
- Double Bass (Cb.):** Plays a complex rhythmic pattern in measure 362, marked *f*.

Third System (Measures 362-364):

- Violins (Vln. I, Vln. II):** Both parts play a complex rhythmic pattern in measure 362, marked *f*.
- Viola (Vla.):** Plays a complex rhythmic pattern in measure 362, marked *f*.
- Violoncello (Vc.):** Plays a complex rhythmic pattern in measure 362, marked *f*.
- Double Bass (Cb.):** Plays a complex rhythmic pattern in measure 362, marked *f*.

The Devil in the Belfry

365

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

365

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Tam-tam

Perc. 3

365

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

The Devil in the Belfry

369

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

369

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

369

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

The Devil in the Belfry

This page of the musical score covers measures 372 to 374. The instrumentation includes:

- Fl. I, Fl. II
- Ob. I, Ob. II
- 2 B♭ Cl., 2 Bsn.
- Hn. in F (I, II, III, IV)
- 2 B♭ Tpt., 2 Tbn., Tuba
- Timp., Perc. 1, Perc. 2, Perc. 3
- S. Vla., Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., Cb.

The score is written in 4/4 time. Measure 372 begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic for the woodwinds. Measure 373 features a timpani roll and a strong rhythmic pattern in the percussion. Measure 374 continues the orchestral texture with various dynamics and articulations. The bottom of the page shows the beginning of measure 375.

The Devil in the Belfry

375

Fl. I *mf*

Fl. II

Ob. I *mf*

Ob. II *mf*

2 B♭ Cl. *mf* 1.

2 Bsn. *mf* 1.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

375

Timp. *mf*

Perc. 1 *ff*

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

375

S. Vla. *f*

Vln. I *mf* *rall.* *a tempo*

Vln. II *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Vc. *mf*

Cb. *mf*

The Devil in the Belfry

380

Fl. I *ff*

Fl. II *ff*

Ob. I *ff*

Ob. II *ff*

2 B♭ Cl. *ff*
a 2

2 Bsn. *ff*

I *ff*

II *ff*

Hn. in F *ff*

III *ff*

IV *ff*

2 B♭ Tpt. *ff*

2 Tbn. *ff*

Tuba *ff*

380

Timp. *ff*

Perc. 1

Perc. 2 Tam-tam

Perc. 3 Bass Drum *ff*

380

S. Vla.

Vln. I *ff*

Vln. II *ff*

Vla. *ff*

Vc. *ff*

Cb. *ff*

(♩ = ♩)

The Devil in the Belfry

383

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

383

Timp.

Tubular Bells

Perc. 1

Glockenspiel

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

383

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

N 94

The Devil in the Belfry

[illegible]

The Devil in the Belfry

400

Fl. I

Picc.

Ob. I

E. Hn.

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I
II

Hn. in F

III
IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

400

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

400

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

mf

Solo

f

mf

f

mf

The Devil in the Belfry

410

Fl. I

Picc.

Ob. I

E. Hn.

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

410

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

410

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

mf

mf

mf

mf

mp *mf*

mp

mp

mp *f*

mf

pizz

mf

pizz

mf

Tubular Bells

The Devil in the Belfry

419 $\text{♩} = 94$

Fl. I

Picc.

Ob. I

E. Hn.

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

mp

mf

mf

mf

mf

mp

mp

mp

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

419

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

419

S. Vla.

(Paganini)

f

$\text{♩} = 94$

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

The Devil in the Belfry

428

Fl. I *mf*

Picc. *mf* *muto in fl. II*

Ob. I *mf*

E. Hn. *mf*

2 B♭ Cl. *mf*

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

428

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

428

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

The Devil in the Belfry

436

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

E. Hn.

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

436

I
II

Hn. in F

III
IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

436

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

436

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

The musical score is arranged in three systems. The first system contains staves for Fl. I, Fl. II, Ob. I, E. Hn., 2 B♭ Cl., and 2 Bsn. The second system contains staves for I/II Hn. in F, III/IV Hn. in F, 2 B♭ Tpt., 2 Tbn., and Tuba. The third system contains staves for Timp., Perc. 1, Perc. 2, Perc. 3, S. Vla., Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc., and Cb. The S. Vla. staff begins at measure 436 with a complex melodic line featuring trills and slurs. The other staves are mostly empty, indicating rests or silence for those instruments in this section.

The Devil in the Belfry

446

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

E. Hn.

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

446

I
II

Hn. in F

III
IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

446

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

446

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

The Devil in the Belfry

453

P $\text{♩} = 120$

Fl. I *mf*

Fl. II *mf*

Ob. I

E. Hn.

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn. *mf*

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

453

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

453

S. Vla. *f*

P $\text{♩} = 120$

Vln. I *f pizz*

Vln. II *f pizz*

Vla. *f pizz*

Vc. *f pizz*

Cb. *f*

The Devil in the Belfry

463

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

E. Hn.

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

463

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

463

Timp.

Perc. 1

Tubular Bells

mf

mf

mp

Tambourine

mp

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

463

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

mf

The Devil in the Belfry

475

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

E. Hn.

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

475

I
II

Hn. in F

III
IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

475

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

475

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

mp

mf

Tom tons

Q

Q

The Devil in the Belfry

The Devil in the Belfry

508

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

E. Hn.

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

508

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

508

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

Tambourine

508

S. Vla.

f

Vln. I

mf

Vln. II

mf

Vla.

mf

Vc.

mf

Cb.

mf

The Devil in the Belfry

519

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

E. Hn.

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

519

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

519

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

519

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

mf

mf

f

The Devil in the Belfry

529

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

E. Hn.

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

mf

E. H.

mf

mufa in ob. II

529

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

529

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

mf

Tom tons

mf

5

529

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

The Devil in the Belfry

538

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

538

I
II

Hn. in F

III
IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

538

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

538

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

The Devil in the Belfry

548

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

548

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

548

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

548

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

The Devil in the Belfry

♩ = 47

R accel. poco a poco

554

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

554

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

554

Timp.

Tubular Bells

Perc. 1

mf

Perc. 2

Glockenspiel

Perc. 3

Crash Cymbal

f

mf

554

S. Vla.

♩ = 47

R accel. poco a poco

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

arco

f

Cb.

f

mf

f

mf

The Devil in the Belfry

563 $\text{♩} = 54 \text{ accel.}$

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

563

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

563

S. Vla.

$\text{♩} = 54 \text{ accel.}$

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

568 $\text{♩} = 58$

The Devil in the Belfry

570 S $\text{♩} = 60$

Fl. I *mf* *cresc.* *ff*

Fl. II *mf* *cresc.* *ff*

Ob. I *mf* *ff*

Ob. II *mf* *ff*

2 B♭ Cl. *mf* *ff*

2 Bsn. *mf* *ff*

Hn. in F I II *ff*

III IV *ff*

2 B♭ Tpt. *ff*

2 Tbn. *ff*

Tuba *ff*

Timp. *mf* *ff*

Perc. 1 *ff*

Perc. 2 *ff*

Perc. 3 *ff* Snare Drum *ff*

S. Vla. *mf* *ff*

Vln. I *mf* *ff*

Vln. II *mf* *ff*

Vla. *mf* *ff*

Vc. *mf* *ff*

Cb. *mf* *ff*

The Devil in the Belfry

577

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I
II

Hn. in F

III
IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

577

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

577

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

585

The Devil in the Belfry

The Devil in the Belfry

molto rit. U $\text{♩} = 85$

590

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

590

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

590

S. Vla.

molto rit. U $\text{♩} = 85$

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

mf *f* *ff* Glockenspiel

The Devil in the Belfry

595

Fl. I

Fl. II

Ob. I

Ob. II

2 B♭ Cl.

2 Bsn.

I

II

Hn. in F

III

IV

2 B♭ Tpt.

2 Tbn.

Tuba

595

Timp.

Perc. 1

Perc. 2

Perc. 3

595

S. Vla.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Cb.

molto rit.

muda in E. H.

ff

molto rit.

The Devil in the Belfry

600 V $\text{♩} = 47$

Fl. I *mp*

Fl. II *mp*

Ob. I *mp*

E. Hn. *mp*

2 B♭ Cl. *mp*

2 Bsn. *mf* *mp* *mp* *a 2*

I *mp*

Hn. in F

III *mp*

IV

2 B♭ Tpt. *mp*

2 Tbn. *mp*

Tuba *mp*

600 Timp. *pppp* *mp* *mf*

Perc. 1 *mf* *mf*

Perc. 2 Tam-tam *mp*

Perc. 3 *mp*

600 S. Vla. *f*

V $\text{♩} = 47$

Vln. I *mp*

Vln. II *div.* *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Vc. *mp*

Cb. *mp*

**PART II: EDGAR ALLAN POE, CLAUDE DEBUSSY,
AND “*THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER*”**

CHAPTER I

EDGAR ALLAN POE IN FRANCE AND “*THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER*”

“It is in Music, perhaps, that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired by the Poetic Sentiment, it struggles — the creation of supernal Beauty.”¹

“Il faut, c’est a dire je desire, qu’Edgar Poe, qui n’est pas grand’chose en Amerique, devienne un grand homme pour la France.”² Charles Baudelaire wrote this to Saint-Beuve after spending almost ten years immersed in translating Edgar Allan Poe’s tales. Thanks to Baudelaire, Edgar Allan Poe did become a great man, not only to France, but also to the world. Baudelaire and Poe never met; and they spoke different languages. Yet, Baudelaire was immediately attracted to Poe’s work from the very first time he read it: “the first time I opened a book written by him, I saw with fear and delight, not only themes dreamt by me, written by him, twenty years before.”³

The influence of Poe in France starts with Baudelaire, and it is spread through Symbolism and the Decadent movement. Poets such as Mallarmé, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Valéry, among numerous others, have been touched by Edgar Allan Poe’s writings. His

¹ Edgar Allan Poe, “The Poetic Principle,” in *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1992): 1027.

² “Edgar Poe, who isn't much in America, must become a great man in France—at least that is what I want.” Charles Baudelaire, *Lettres de Baudelaire* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1907): 91.

³ *Ibid.* 362.

influence is so strong that both Baudelaire and Mallarmé address him as “Le Poète.”⁴ T.S. Eliot wrote an essay investigating the reason for such appraisal, when in America Poe is not appreciated in the same way.⁵ In this essay Eliot, who never really liked Poe, attempts to devise a rational elucidation to why the French symbolists (which were of great interest to him) had their literary roots in Poe. He believed that the writers who did not have English as a first language could not see the flaws in Poe’s work. His essay is focused on the influence that Poe had on three particular writers from different generations: Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Valéry. According to him, Baudelaire was interested in Poe as the man; Mallarmé was attracted to Poe’s technique of the verse; and Valéry was fascinated by the theory of poetry behind Poe’s work.⁶ All of these aspects brought a new style in French literature. Poe was such an authority in the French literature that his influence became so common, many times not even being noticed.

According to T. S. Eliot, Edgar Allan Poe is perhaps one of the least appreciated American writers. His literary accomplishments were very much overshadowed by his alleged reprobable way of life, which contains alcohol abuse, gambling, and a marriage to Virginia Clemm, his 13-year-old cousin. During his life and for quite some time after his death, these details of Poe’s life obscured his innumerable poems, tales, essays, and

⁴ Célestin Pierre Cambiare, *The Influence of Edgar Allan Poe in France* (New York: G. E. Stechert & Co., 1927): 77.

⁵ T. S. Eliot, *From Poe to Valery* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1948).

⁶ *Ibid.* 23.

literary critical reviews. Critics and reviewers often take Poe's life details in consideration when analyzing his work. This kind of approach diverges the attention of the reader to Poe's life instead of focusing solely on the tale, since a work of art has to stand on its own, even if it may or may not have been influenced by external circumstances.

"*The Fall of the House of Usher*" is one of those stories where some can relate to aspects of Poe's life embroidered into the lines. Even though Poe is usually associated with the narrator in his stories, many critics relate Roderick Usher with Poe himself, as "the most perfect pen-portrait of Poe which is known."⁷ Poe gives his own opinion of his work in a letter to James Russell Lowell⁸ dated July 2, 1844:

"I think my best poems 'The Sleeper,' 'The Conqueror Worm,' 'The Haunted Palace,' 'Lenore,' 'Dreamland,' and the 'Coliseum,' — but all have been hurried and unconsidered. My best tales are 'Ligeia,' the 'Gold-Bug,' the 'Murders in the Rue Morgue,' 'The Fall of the House of Usher,' the 'Tell-Tale Heart,' the 'Black Cat,' 'William Wilson,' and 'The Descent into the Maelström.' 'The Purloined Letter,' forthcoming in the 'Gift,' is perhaps the best of my tales of ratiocination. I have lately written for Godey 'The Oblong Box' and 'Thou art the Man.'"⁹

One is most likely to notice that Poe's most famous poem, "The Raven," is not listed among his favorite works. "The Raven" was only published in January 1845, about six months after this letter. Definitely Poe did not consider "The Raven" to be

⁷ Dawn B. Sova, *Critical Companion to Edgar Allan Poe: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work* (New York: Facts on File, 2007), 68.

⁸ Lowell wrote a critical biography on Poe. In his article Poe is described as "the most discriminating, philosophical, and fearless critic upon imaginative works who has written in America."

⁹ Arthur Hobson Quinn, *Edgar Allan Poe – A Critical Biography* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1969), 429-430.

“hurried and unconsidered” since he wrote an entire essay about it – “The Philosophy of Composition.”

“*The Fall of the House of Usher*” starts with a quote of Béranger’s chanson *Le Refus*, which Poe cites in French: “*Son coeur est un luth suspendu; Sitôt qu’on le touché, il réssone.*”¹⁰ The story begins with the narrator, unnamed, arriving at the mansion of his friend Roderick Usher. The latter had complained about an illness in a letter that reached the narrator from a far distance, and described the malady as including oversensitivity to light, sounds, smells, and tastes. He also mentions nervous agitation and mental disorder. Upon their encounter it is added that mild sensations can be tolerated, and indeed, the host proceeds to improvise on his guitar for his guest. The verses tell the story of a king who sinks into madness after being troubled by evil forces looming over him and his palace.¹¹ The narrator attempts to alleviate his friend’s gloomy disposition by complementing his paintings and reading with him. Roderick later tells the narrator that he thinks the house is alive. A sizeable amount of the tale is dedicated to describing the physical as well as evocative state of the house. It is mentioned that it is quite antiquated, with moss growing on the masonry outside; while inside, old furniture, books, and instruments are kept but are not enough to enliven the general uneasy coldness of the place.

¹⁰ His/Her heart is a poised lute; as soon as one touches it, it resonates.

¹¹ This poem is “The Haunted Palace” written in 1838, first published in the April 1839 issue of *Baltimore Museum* magazine, later incorporated in “The Fall of the House of Usher.”

It is revealed that Roderick's twin sister, Madeline, suffers from a mysterious disease. She is soon found to be dead and, upon the insistence of Roderick, entombed in a vault in the house for two weeks before burial. As the days pass, Roderick's agitation begins to affect the narrator, who finds himself increasingly uneasy and agitated. Just as a storm breaks over the house, Roderick comes to the narrator's bedroom with a lamp, which he throws out after opening the windows. This causes a gust of wind to come into the room, which creates temporary disarray.

In order to calm his host, the narrator reads aloud "The Mad Trist," which is a novel about a knight called Ethelred. In the story, Ethelred forcibly enters a hermit's dwelling in order to get out of a storm. He soon finds out a palace of gold guarded by a dragon. He also finds a shield with an inscription on it, which says that whoever slays the dragon wins the shield. Ethelred proceeds to kill the dragon with his mace. The dragon falls with an otherworldly shriek as Ethelred collects his prize. The shield falls on the floor with a heavy clatter.

The events in the story that the narrator reads find parallels in the house of Usher. It is soon shown that Roderick Usher entombed his sister alive. Just as the narrator reads the part where the Knight crashes into the hermit's house, scraping sounds are heard in the Usher house. And again, when the dragon is described as giving off a loud shriek, an equally unnerving shriek that the narrator had already envisioned for the dragon in the book is heard for real. Finally, the counterpart for the shield's clattering drop is a "reverberation, metallic and hollow." Soon Madeline finds her way up to the room where the two men are, falls on her brother, and both land on the floor

dead. The narrator is filled with terror and flees the house. He then looks back to see it violently split in half and sink into the tarn.

“*The Fall of the House of Usher*” was first published in the *Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine* in September 1849. In this tale Poe utilizes his “totality of impression.”¹² One can find full employment of this technique immediately in the first phrase of the tale: “During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher.”¹³ The underlined words show mood that Poe wants to express. The entire tale follows this pattern of inter-relating words.

Scholars and literature critics have been analyzing Edgar Allan Poe’s short story in different perspectives. It has been seen as a tale of horror and mood, as a psychological and symbolic tale, and even as discussion for Freudian analysis. There are many paths to follow when dissecting such a complex tale as “*The Fall of the House of Usher*.”

The most simplistic kind of analysis is the one that concludes, “*The Fall of the House of Usher*” is “horror for its own sake.” This is how Cleanth Brooks and R. P.

¹² Technique described in Poe’s famous essay in Edgar Allan Poe, “The Philosophy of Composition” in *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1992): 978-987.

¹³ Edgar Allan Poe, *Contes*, trans. Charles Baudelaire, ed. Roger Asselineau (Paris: Aubier, 1968), 170.

Warren see this work and claim that both the characters and the story lack “free will and rational decision.”¹⁴ Many authors have criticized this view of Poe’s tale. Their sentiments are summed up in the opening of Leo Spitzer’s article.¹⁵ He gives a symbolist analysis to the story, alleging that anyone can relate to any of the characters in the story because they portray universal sentiments. For him, the House of Usher represents not only the mansion, but also the family of Usher (which is about to be extinct, since Roderick and Madeline are the last of the lineage). Therefore, their characteristics and fate are bound to one another. There is constant comparison between the house and Roderick Usher. For example, Usher’s “silken hair” of “wild gossamer texture” and “more than web-like softness” compared to the “fine tangle web-work” of minute fungi on the walls of the mansion. “*The Fall of the House of Usher* involves not only the physical fall of the mansion, but the physical and moral fall of the two protagonists.”¹⁶ Darrel Abel was the pioneer of the symbolist analysis of “Usher” and he was the one who first pointed the issue of the supernatural vs. the psychological in this tale.¹⁷

¹⁴ Cleanth Brooks and R. P. Warren, “‘The Fall of the House of Usher:’ Edgar Allan Poe,” in *Understanding Fiction* (New York: Appleton-Century Croft, 1943), 202.

¹⁵ Leo Spitzer, “A Reinterpretation of ‘The Fall of the House of Usher,’” *Comparative Literature* 4, no. 4 (Autumn, 1952).

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 352.

¹⁷ Darrel Abel, “A Key to the House of Usher,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 18 (1949).

Some critics tend to analyze the story after studying Poe's life and personality. An example of this is J. O. Bailey's article, which presents "*The Fall of the House of Usher*" as a vampire tale based on Poe's personality.¹⁸ He claims that both Roderick Usher and Poe have a split personality, which swings between ratiocination and mystification. Bailey also believes that Madeline represents Virginia.¹⁹ When Poe wrote this tale he was living in constant fear over the impending death of his wife Virginia. She had been diagnosed with tuberculosis. Even though she only had the first serious illness a couple of years after the story was published, it is believed that her suffering played a great role in the composition of "*The Fall of the House of Usher*" along with other tales, such as "Eleonora," "Berenice," and "Ligeia."

Marie Bonaparte wrote a thesis full of Freudian analysis on Poe's writings while following the idea that Poe's life and personality is directly linked to this particular story.²⁰ The foreword of her work was written by Freud himself, who was her friend and mentor. Bonaparte classifies "*The Fall of the House of Usher*" as a "Tale of the live-in-death mother."²¹ Bonaparte believes that not only Virginia's but also Elizabeth Arnold's (Poe's mother) illness had greatly influenced the writing of this story. Both women died of tuberculosis. In her analysis the house represents both Elizabeth and Virginia, with

¹⁸ J. O. Bailey, "What Happens in 'The Fall of the House of Usher'?" *American Literature* 35, no. 4 (January, 1964): 465-466.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 465-466.

²⁰ Marie Bonaparte, *The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe: a psycho – analytic interpretation* (London: Imago Publishing Co. LTD, 1949).

²¹ *Ibid.* 211.

Lady Madeline symbolizing a double of the house, and Roderick is Poe himself. Many authors, such as Maurice Lévy and Roger Forclaz, have questioned the psychological analyses of Poe's writings. Lévy says that because Poe had such dexterity in the Gothic techniques, his metaphors mirror a psychological model that the Gothic personifies.²² Forclaz discusses how Marie Bonaparte "attempts to explain art with the aid of Freudian theories and to interpret Poe's works in the light of psychoanalysis."²³ He argues that she completely disregards the literary movement of that time and the role of conscious thought, concentrating solely on Poe's fiction as the primary source of information about the writer. Forclaz goes even deeper in her analysis claiming that her theory contradicts itself.²⁴

Most of the articles cited above focus on the Usher characters and the house, while perceiving the narrator as more of a storyteller rather than an actual participant in the events of the story. G. R. Thompson writes about the narrator as being unreliable, saying that "the whole system of interpenetrating levels or structures of both tales [the other being "Ligeia"] leads ultimately to Poe's ironic mockery of the ability of the human mind ever to know anything with certainty, whether about the external

²² Maurice Lévy, "Poe et la tradition 'gothique,'" *Caliban: Annales de la Faculté de Lettres de Toulouse* 4 (1968).

²³ Roger Forclaz, "Psychoanalysis and Edgar Allan Poe: A Critique of the Bonaparte Thesis," in *Critical Essays on Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Eric W. Carlson (Boston, Massachusetts: G. K. Hall & Co., 1987): 187.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 190-191.

reality of the world or about the internal reality of the mind.”²⁵ Patrick F. Quinn questions Thompson’s point of view. He claims that Thompson assumes too many things to justify his theory. For example, Thompson shows the house resembling a skull or death-face, when nothing in Poe’s text suggests either.²⁶

Another theme vastly discussed about “*The Fall of the House of Usher*” is the possible incestuous relation between Roderick and his sister Madeline. Renata Wasserman points six famous articles that talk about this matter.²⁷ Some of the authors, such as D. H. Lawrence, Allen Tate, and John Marsh (who even further suggests that there is also necrophilia in the story),²⁸ see clearly that there is indeed incest between Roderick and Madeline. On the other hand, Daniel Hoffman and Floyd Stovall believe that there is no apparent evidence of this matter in the story. In Poe’s writing sexuality has never been explicit. There are hints of it, but the certainty of facts is left to the reader’s imagination. The most palpable clue about whether or not there really is an implication of incest in the tale is found in the poem, “The Haunted Palace.” Herein is found the word “Porphyrogene.”

²⁵ G. R. Thompson, “Explained Gothic [“The Fall of the House of Usher”], in *Critical Essays on Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Eric W. Carlson (Boston, Massachusetts: G. K. Hall & Co., 1987): 144.

²⁶ Patrick F. Quinn, “A Misreading of Poe’s ‘The Fall of the House of Usher,’ ” in *Critical Essays on Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. Eric W. Carlson (Boston, Massachusetts: G. K. Hall & Co., 1987).

²⁷ Renata R. Mautner Wasserman, “The Self, the Mirror, the Other: ‘The Fall of the House of Usher,’ ” *Poe Studies* 10, no. 2 (1977): 33.

²⁸ John L. Marsh, “The Psycho-Sexual Reading of ‘The Fall of the House of Usher,’ ” *Poe Studies* 5, no. 1 (June, 1972): 8-9.

Porphyrogene has two roots. “Porphyros” comes from the Greek language, meaning “purple,” which is a color often related to royalty. But looking to the derivatives of this word in English, one gets “porphyry” and “porphyrin.” The definition of “porphyry” is “a hard igneous rock containing crystals, usually of feldspar, in a fine-grained, typically reddish groundmass,” while “porphyrin” is defined as “any of a class of pigments (including heme and chlorophyll) whose molecules contain a flat ring of four linked heterocyclic groups, sometimes with a central metal atom.”²⁹ Somehow, it is hard to relate “porphyry” to the tale. Now, “porphyria” is a hereditary disease that is caused by an accumulation of “porphyrin” in the human body. By the description of both Roderick and Madeline, it may be concluded that the Ushers might be suffering from this condition, especially if the allusions to the family bloodline are taken into consideration. Therefore, “Porphyrogene” might be a reference to the antecessor in the family who had the gene for “porphyria.” John Allison makes notice of the word “Porphyrogene” in his essay: “The cryptic word ‘Porphyrogene,’ which refers to royal birth, is incased within parentheses, just as the Ushers are encased within their ‘House.’ Clearly the word can suggest the ingrown, incestuous purity of aristocratic families.”³⁰

These are a few of the themes explored concerning “*The Fall of the House of Usher*.” It is almost possible to pair most of these articles one against the other: Brooks and Warren vs. Spitzer (horror vs. symbolism); Bonaparte vs. Forclaz and Lévy (psychological analysis vs. Gothic style); Thompson vs. Quinn (unreliability vs.

²⁹ Definitions from the New Oxford American Dictionary.

³⁰ John Allison, “Coleridgean Self-Development: Entrapment and Incest in ‘The Fall of the House of Usher,’ ” *South Central Review* 5, no. 1 (Spring, 1988): 42.

subjectivity). Furthermore, there persists the well-trodden discourse about the presence or absence of incest. One can never know exactly how an artist's mind proceeds unto creation, or what may have initiated a work of art. After perusing over all of these analytical angles in "*The Fall of the House of Usher*," there is only one universal conclusion: that it is a literary masterpiece. Being as such, it has attracted analysis upon itself and inspired other artists in their own personal ventures.

When scholars hit upon such passion to decipher a piece of work of art one can only imagine the effect that such a work may have for the mind of another artist, especially one who immersed himself in the story as Claude Debussy did when composing *La Chute de la Maison Usher*.

CHAPTER II

DEBUSSY AND *LA CHUTE DE LA MAISON USHER*

“I cannot deny it, I am in that state of mind in which I’d rather be a sponge at the bottom of the sea or a Chinese vase on a mantelpiece, anything rather than a man of thought, that very fragile piece of mechanism that only works when it wants to, and in regard to which the will of man counts for nothing. You give orders to someone who doesn’t obey, and this someone is yourself. As I hardly wish to accept the fact that I may be a complete idiot, I go on dreaming in some kind of empty circle, like the silent wooden horses in a merry-go-round with no music to set them going and no one to ride on them. Perhaps this is the punishment for those who live in the world of ideas and who doggedly follow a single one – the *idée fixe* which is a prelude to madness.”³¹

This is one of Claude Debussy’s thoughts on the process of composition. Being a very meticulous composer, it always took him quite some time to achieve the desired effect in his pieces. His opera based on Edgar Allan Poe’s tale, *La Chute de la Maison Usher* (*The Fall of the House of Usher*), was a compositional process that never had closure. Debussy worked on *La Chute de la Maison Usher* completely on his own. He wrote the libretto himself, which went through numerous alterations until the final version.³² Debussy spent practically all his free time working intensively on *La Chute de la Maison Usher* since the completion of *Pélleas et Mélisande* in 1902. It is an

³¹ Portion of a letter from Debussy to André Caplet, written on July 24, 1909, translated by Edward Lockspeiser, “New Letter of Debussy” *The Musical Times* 97, no. 1362 (August, 1956): 404. Caplet was a composer and conductor. He is known to have orchestrated Debussy’s *Children’s Corner*, *Pagodes*, *Clair de Lune*, and *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien – Fragments Symphoniques*. He was one of Debussy’s closest friends.

³² Robert Orledge, *Debussy and the theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 109.

incommensurable loss to the world that Debussy died before arriving at a satisfactory interpretation of the tragic delirium of Roderick Usher.

Debussy has been interested in Edgar Allan Poe's work for a long time. On a questionnaire in February 16, 1889, he indicated one of his favorite prose writers was Poe along with Flaubert.³³ In the same year he had a conversation with Ernest Guiraud,³⁴ describing his ideal poet: "Someone who only insinuates what there is to be said. The ideal [for an opera] would be two dreams associated. No time or space."³⁵ This kind of subjective idea is felt throughout Edgar Allan Poe's writing. In fact, the statement by Debussy almost quotes the end of the first strophe on Poe's poem "Dream-Land:"

"I have reached these lands but newly
From an ultimate dim Thule –
From a wild weird clime that lieth, sublime,
Out of SPACE – out of TIME."³⁶

Edward Lockspeiser compiled most of the manuscripts that were found of *La Chute de la Maison Usher* in his *Debussy et Edgar Poe: Documents inédits*³⁷ for the

³³ Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 67.

³⁴ Guiraud was a French composer and music teacher whose theories influenced Debussy.

³⁵ Arthur Rosenblat Nestrovski, *Debussy e Poe* (Porto Alegre: L&PM Editores, S. A., 1986): 48.

³⁶ Edgar Allan Poe, "Dream-Land," in *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1992): 70.

³⁷ Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy et Edgar Poe: Documents inédits* (Monaco: Éditions

commemoration of the centenary of Debussy's birth. In this book one finds a draft of the libretto of 27 pages, the libretto in its final state of 17 pages, a musical manuscript of 21 pages written for voice and piano with a few indications for the instrumentation (this manuscript corresponds to the first scene of the libretto), and two pages that used to belong to the same manuscript, but were from an earlier date.³⁸ These documents are presented in the end of the book in facsimile. Over forty years later, Robert Orledge made a very detailed edition, which is included in Debussy's complete works by Durand.³⁹ Aside from those editions there is also two editions by Juan Allende-Blin. One is from 1978, an orchestral version of *La Chute de la Maison Usher*, with Allende-Blin's orchestration.⁴⁰ This version is a reconstruction attempt of the manuscripts left by Debussy. Even after Allende-Blin's extensive work, the only scene that is actually complete is the first one. The second one, which is the last one, is very fragmented. Debussy did not leave many indications in the manuscript concerning orchestration and performance indications such as articulations, dynamics, and metronomic markings. Allende-Blin's orchestration of *La chute* is based on Debussy's latest symphonic works.

du Rocher, 1962).

³⁸ Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy et Edgar Poe: Documents inédits* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1962): 46.

³⁹ Claude Debussy, *Le roi Lear; Le diable dans le beffroi; La chute de la Maison Usher*, ed. Robert Orledge (Paris, France: Durand, 2006).

⁴⁰ Claude Debussy, *La chute de la maison Usher: drame lyrique en 1 acte et 2 scènes; livret de Debussy d'après Edgar A. Poe; fragments rassemblés, déchiffrés et orchestrés par Juan Allende-Blin* (Paris: Société des Editions Jobert, 1978).

The other Allende-Blin's version is a transcription for voice and piano.⁴¹ There is also a lesser known version of Debussy's *La Chute de la maison Usher* by Carolyn Abbate, orchestrated by Robert Kyr. According to Orledge, the orchestration in this one is much more similar to the one in *Pelléas et Mélisande*.⁴² From all of these editions Orledge's is the most complete one. Being the latest, it includes manuscripts there were not found before the other editions were published.

Debussy's wife, Emma, had the proclivity of presenting friends with pages of her husband's unfinished works after his death. Thus, there is a determinate possibility that some pages of *La chute de la Maison Usher* are still missing due to their dissemination in this fashion. Furthermore, it is probable that there are more parts of this work that remain unknown.⁴³ Debussy had the habit of giving Emma "musical gifts," as Robert Orledge calls it, on her birthday. In 1909 she was presented with "*Ce qui sera peut-être le prelude à 'La Chute de la Maison Usher.'*"⁴⁴ This is the first dated manuscript of *La Chute*.

⁴¹ Claude Debussy, *La chute de la maison Usher: drame lyrique en 1 acte et 2 scènes d'après Edgar Allan Poe / musique et livret de Claude Debussy; compilation, déchiffrement du texte et de la musique et orchestration de Juan Allende-Blin; transcription chant et piano de Juan Allende-Blin* (Paris: Société des Editions Jobert, 1979).

⁴² Robert Orledge, *Debussy and the theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 122.

⁴³ Robert Orledge, "Debussy's 'House of Usher' Revisited," *The Musical Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (October, 1976): 545.

⁴⁴ This is what will probably be the prelude of *La Chute de la Maison Usher*.

Lockspeiser does not mention this manuscript in his book, possibly because he did not have knowledge of its existence until after publishing *Debussy et Edgar Poe*.⁴⁵

One can find evidence of how much *La Chute de la Maison Usher* meant to Debussy upon examining his correspondence. However, the very first instance that Debussy and Poe were mentioned together was in fact not in a letter by Debussy, but in one from the French writer André Suarès to Romain Rolland in January 1890. In it Debussy is shown to be “writing a symphony using psychologically developed themes... from which the idea comes from some tales of Poe, especially from ‘*The Fall of the House of Usher*.’ ”⁴⁶ Suarès might have been confused when he called Debussy’s composition a symphony instead of an opera. Or maybe Debussy was not so sure what the piece based on “*The Fall of the House of Usher*” would be when he talked to Suarès. Debussy himself declares his interest in Poe and “*The Fall of the House of Usher*” a few years later, in the beginning of his letter to Ernest Chausson on September 3, 1893. He practically quotes the opening of Poe’s tale: “Dear friend: I’m done, I cannot avoid the sadness around me: sometimes my days are dull, dark, and soundless, like those of an Edgar Allan Poe hero, and my soul is romantic as a Chopin ballade! Solitude is crowded with too many memories which we cannot shut out.”⁴⁷ After this letter, the next time Debussy

⁴⁵ Robert Orledge, “Debussy’s Musical Gifts to Emma Bardac,” *The Musical Quarterly* 60, no. 4 (October, 1974): 551.

⁴⁶ Arthur Rosenblat Nestrovski, *Debussy e Poe* (Porto Alegre: L&PM Editores, S. A., 1986): 45.

⁴⁷ Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 154.

mentions the Usher project is in a letter to his publisher Jacques Durand in June 18, 1908, fifteen years later: “Throughout this last days I have been busily at work on ‘*The Fall of the House of Usher*,’ I have found it an excellent means of strengthening one’s nerves against any form of fear. Yet, there are moments where I lose a sense of identity. When I am no longer able to perceive the familiar objects around me, and if the sister of Roderick Usher were suddenly to come in I shouldn’t be extremely surprised.”⁴⁸ Exactly one month later he wrote Durand again saying, “I wish to have written you sooner these last days but the heir of the Usher family doesn’t ever leave me in peace... I am rude at least a dozen times per hour, and the outside world barely exists for me. This is a delightful state of mind which, however, has the inconvenience of being inappropriate to our twentieth century”⁴⁹ This is clear evidence of the intensity that Debussy invested in the writing of *La Chute de la Maison Usher*.

Debussy signed a contract for the performance of *La Chute de la Maison Usher* in 1908 with Gatti-Casazza, the director of the Metropolitan opera. The opera would be performed in the season of 1911. Upon signing the contract Debussy says to Gatti-Casazza: “It is a bad piece of business you are doing... I do not believe I will ever finish any part of all this. I have some remorse in taking these few dollars. I write for myself alone and do not trouble at all about the impatience of others.”⁵⁰ And Gatti-Casazza

⁴⁸ Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 1096-1097.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 1102.

⁵⁰ Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy: his life and mind* (London: Cassell & Company LTD, 1965): 141.

recalled Debussy saying “I must tell you honestly that of the three works there barely exists a sketch of the librettos; and as to the music, I have only written some vague ideas... Do not forget that I am a lazy composer and that I sometimes require weeks to decide upon one harmonious chord in preference to another.”⁵¹

From 1908 until the end of his life Debussy never stopped talking about his Edgar Allan Poe project. *La Chute de la Maison Usher* is one of the works that haunted Debussy for at least the last ten years of his life, if not more. Perhaps because “Poe leads his readers gradually and by imperceptible degrees from the real to the extraordinary, and this introduces them into a psychological order very different from the one in which they are normally at home.”⁵² And Debussy needed to be taken away from the mundane lifestyle, as he explains to Durand in a letter of July 8, 1910:

“Those around me resolutely refuse to understand that I’ve never been able to live in a world of real things and real people. That is why I have this imperative need to escape from myself and go off on adventures, which seem inexplicable because they figure a man nobody knows; and perhaps he represents the best side of me! After all an artist is by definition a man accustomed to dreams and living among apparitions... How can one expect that this same man could go through quotidian life under the strict rules of traditions, laws, and another barriers posted by a hypocrite and coward world.”⁵³

⁵¹ Giulio Gatti-Casazza, “Gatti talks of *Pélleas* as sung in Milan and New York,” *New York Times*, 15 March, 1925: 6.

⁵² Patrick F. Quinn, *The French Face of Edgar Poe* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1957): 60.

⁵³ Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 1299.

Debussy gradually immersed himself in this story. This is palpable each time he wrote to his friends concerning *La Chute de la Maison Usher*.

While working on *La Chute de la Maison Usher*, Debussy was also extremely busy writing commissioned works, attempting to make a living solely on composing. Debussy never had the time that he needed to find the perfect balance both in music and the libretto. There are several letters where he expresses his desire to work exclusively on *La Chute*. He explains to Durand on a letter from July 13, 1909: “Choisnel⁵⁴ tells me you would like to have the next portion of the *Images*... I confess I’d rather put them on one side lately in favor of Edgar Allan Poe. It’s an absorbing task, so I hope you will forgive me.”⁵⁵ In a letter to André Caplet in September 21, 1909, Debussy says, “I couldn’t bring myself to work on *Images*, for the reason of Monsieur E. A. Poe... this man, although dead exercises over me an almost anguishing tyranny. I forget the essential conditions of behavior and lock myself as a brute beast in the House of Usher.”⁵⁶ And Debussy explained the same matter to Durand, on the very same day: “I should count on your friendship when I ask you to forgive me for having neglected *Images* in these last times, for abandoning myself to look only after Roderick Usher... I

⁵⁴ Gaston Choisnel was a French composer who made several arrangements of Debussy’s music.

⁵⁵ Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 1195.

⁵⁶ Claude Debussy, *Lettres inédites à André Caplet: Recueillies et présentées par Edward Lockspeiser. Avant-propos d’André Schaeffner* (Monaco Ville: Éditions du Rocher, 1957): 41.

retire with him, and, upon my awakening, I am taken by his dark melancholy...”⁵⁷ Also to Durand on June 2, 1910: “I received the libretto for *Masques et Bergamasques* but I hadn’t time to read it. So we will have to look at it together. Your letter found me in the House of Usher, allow me to return there...”⁵⁸ When Debussy was commissioned by the violinist Arthur Hartman to write the Violin Sonata he made sure to let him know that “Only this time I am in the House of Usher... I am talking about it because I must finish it, otherwise I will become enraged.”⁵⁹

Taking those examples into consideration, Debussy’s single interest apparently was to work on *La Chute de la Maison Usher*. Other works from the same period were considered a professional obligation while *La Chute* was seen as a personal goal. Debussy wrote to Durand in July 8, 1910 about his work on *La Chute*: “I work as much as I can, and it is in these moments where I satisfy my taste for the inexpressible! If I am able to succeed as I wish, this progression in anguish, which should be *La Chute de la Maison Usher*, I will have served music well.”⁶⁰

Debussy had difficulty in finishing his compositions, aside from being extremely careful and demanding with his work. He would get very attached to them, as one can see in his letter to Pierre Louÿs on January 22, 1895: “Pélleas and Mélisande are my

⁵⁷ Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 1215.

⁵⁸ Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 1286.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 1313-1314.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 1299.

only friends at this moment; we just started knowing each other better, now arriving to a story with a development we perfectly know: because, isn't to finish a work a little bit like the death of a beloved one?... A ninth chord... The flats are blue..."⁶¹ Supporting this idea that finishing a work is not the most important goal, M. Croche states "Define aims? Finish works? These are questions of childish vanity."⁶²

Yet, in a letter written in December 22, 1911 to Caplet, Debussy complains about being frustrated for not finishing his composition:

"Music isn't helpful to me either. I have not yet managed to finish the two little Poe operas;⁶³ everything strikes me as being boring and empty (like a cavern). For a single bar that is almost alive, there are twenty stifled beneath the weight of what is known as tradition, whose hypocritical and despicable influence I nonetheless recognize there, despite my efforts. Observe, if you please, that I am little concerned about the fact that it may be my own tradition we are talking about. It is nevertheless a matter of trickery by which you merely see yourself in different guises. One must put aside everything that devours the best part of one's thoughts and bring oneself to a state in which one concentrates relentlessly on oneself alone. What happens, of course, is just the opposite: there is in the first place the family to reckon with which stands in the way either through kindness or simply because they are blind to facts. And then there are the Mistress temptation, I should say, which one hasn't even reckoned with, so ready is she to give herself until everything is abandoned."⁶⁴

⁶¹ Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 237-238.

⁶² Claude Debussy, *Monsieur Croche Antidilettante*, (Paris: Les Bipliophiles, 1921): 9.

⁶³ The other one being *Le Diable dans le Beffroi*, based on Poe's "The Devil in the Belfry."

⁶⁴ Claude Debussy, *Lettres inédites à André Caplet: Recueillies et présentées par Edward Lockspeiser. Avant-propos d'André Schaeffner* (Monaco Ville: Éditions du Rocher, 1957): 57.

If he were not so concerned about the completion of his works, why would Debussy care so much about this particular composition? Perhaps this work meant more to him than any of the previous ones. Or perhaps this work awakened in Debussy something about himself that he was not aware until then. Debussy got completely involved with Poe's tale, practically putting himself inside the House of Usher, as one can see in his letter to André Caplet, written in August 25, 1909:

"No, it's not neurasthenia and it's not hypochondria either, but the delightful pain of choosing one idea out of many. And then, I've been spending my days lately in *La Maison Usher*, which isn't exactly a house to calm the nerves, quite the opposite... You get into the strange habit of listening to the dialogue of stones and expecting houses to fall as though that were a natural, even necessary phenomenon. What's more, if you press me to, I'd admit to a greater sympathy with that house's inhabitants than with... many others, who shall remain anonymous. The man of unbending moral rectitude never inspires me with any confidence whatever..."⁶⁵

This habit of referring to himself as actually living in the House of Usher became so constant, that even Durand asked Debussy about how was life in *La Maison Usher*, and Debussy would respond: "As you say, I'm spending my time in *La Maison Usher*... not exactly a nursing-home and sometimes I emerge with my nerves stretched like the strings of a violin. At such moments, I would be capable to respond rudely to God himself, since long ago, this holy man had chosen to remain anonymous forever!"⁶⁶ After this Debussy would close his letters to Durand with phrases like "and, with apologies

⁶⁵ Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 1206.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 1302.

from the House Usher”⁶⁷ or “If you come to Paris, call me so I can annoy you a little with the Usher family.”⁶⁸ As much as Debussy wished to talk about the dark universe of the Ushers, he would not discuss them openly. For example, he asks his wife Emma to “stop talking about the old Usher house” because it is something that he cannot do “in front of Chouchou [his daughter] and Miss [Chouchou’s care taker].”⁶⁹

Debussy developed close empathy with the Usher characters as he tells Louis Laloy⁷⁰ in August 24, 1910: “I am in a hateful mood, taking no pleasure in anything unless it be the pleasure of every day destroying myself a little more... There is something of the Usher family in this situation, although this explanation may not bear too close a scrutiny, for they are the best family I have.”⁷¹ Debussy started referring to the Ushers as if they were close friends, as mentioned in a letter to Durand in July 21, 1911: “I am afraid the charms of Houlgate may not be sufficient to allow me to forget the Usher family.”⁷²

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 1306.

⁶⁸ Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 1313.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* 1568.

⁷⁰ Laloy was a French musicologist. He was the first to write Debussy’s biography.

⁷¹ Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 1309.

⁷² *Ibid.* 1439.

Debussy's never-ending search for the perfect results in the composition of *La Chute de la Maison Usher* and his frustration on not achieving it is shown in this letter to Robert Godet (who was perhaps Debussy's most intimate friend) written in December 18, 1911: "I haven't quite arrived to find what I want for the two little Poe dramas... The craft is apparent and one can see the 'seams!' The more I go, the more I hate this mess that is a wrong 'coarse-mouth.' As also with strange or amusing harmonies, which are only games of society... How much it is first necessary to find, then to abolish, to arrive up to the bare flesh of emotion... Yet the pure instinct should warn us that: the fabrics, the colors are just illusory disguises!"⁷³ After this letter Debussy got extremely busy with compositions such as *Jeux* and *Khamma*, among others. Thus he does not comment on *La Chute de la Maison Usher* for quite some time, until he writes Durand in September 12, 1912: "Tired as I am, I've gone back to my *old projects*. My love for them should give me new strength; that's what I hope, anyway."⁷⁴

Debussy's preoccupation on finishing *La Chute de la Maison Usher* kept growing. The poet Victor Segalen⁷⁵ wrote to his wife about Debussy in September 5, 1913: "Lunched this morning with Debussy, more open and confiding than ever. He is writing, almost to order, things that annoy him: *Khamma*, an Egyptian ballet for Maud Allan, a nude dancer, and *Crimen Amoris* on pieces of Verlaine put together by Charles

⁷³ Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 1471.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 1535.

⁷⁵ Debussy had a project an opera, "*Orphée*," where Segalen was the librettist. Unfortunately this opera was another unfinished work.

Morice. He cannot even finish for himself his two little dramas of Poe.”⁷⁶ According to Lockspeiser, this is the last time that Debussy’s Poe project is mentioned before the First World War.

In 1909, not so long after Debussy began his immersion in the House of Usher, he was diagnosed with rectal cancer. In 1916 his disease had worsened, making Debussy realize he might never finish the work which occupied his life for so long. In a letter to Robert Godet in January 4, 1916 Debussy wrote: “I was on the point more or less of finishing *La Chute de la Maison Usher*, but the illness has quashed my hopes. Obviously it does not matter in Aldebaran or Sirius whether I make music or not, but I do detest contradiction and I accept badly this turn of fate! And I suffer as a damned!”⁷⁷ Debussy never stopped working on *La Chute de la Maison Usher*, even with this adverse situation. He was still hopeful that he would be able to finish it. In a letter of July 21, 1916 Debussy expresses to Durand how much finishing this work would mean to him: “It’s enough to drive one to suicide at least. If I didn’t have the desire as well as the duty to finish the two Poe operas, I’d have done it already.”⁷⁸

A few days after, in August 10, 1916, Debussy, still hopeful of completing *La Chute*, wrote Paul Dukas: “It is possible that *The Fall of the House of Usher* will also be the ‘fall’ of Claude Debussy. Destiny should allow me to finish it, for I shall not wish to

⁷⁶ Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy: his life and mind*, vol 2 (London: Cassell & Company LTD, 1965): 148.

⁷⁷ Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 1964.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 2008.

rely entirely on *Pelléas* for the harsh judgment of future generations... a musician is no good to the dead!"⁷⁹ Perhaps because of the knowledge of death soon approaching, Debussy was identifying himself to Roderick Usher, who also knew about his imminent death. Dukas thought that Debussy's editorial work (complete edition of Chopin's piano music in twelve volumes) kept him from finishing *La Chute*:

The two Poe tales haunt him continually and I have heard the first reading of the scenario of the *Maison Usher* (which he reads much better than d'Indy reads his [*Légende de*] *Saint Christophe*). I find his dramatic idea entirely to my liking if the music arrives as he wishes, but I believe it is the music above all which does not satisfy him, even though he has written so much of it. I get the impression that his editorial work has impaired that marvelous musical intuition which directed his energies in the past, and that he no longer possesses that conviction which gave us the *Faune* and *Pelléas*.⁸⁰

In a letter of September 4, 1916 to Godet, Debussy expresses his mind-set: "This house has curious points of resemblance with the House of Usher... Even if I haven't got Roderick Usher's cerebral disorders or his passion for Weber's last waltz, we share a certain hypersensitivity... I could give you details, which would make your beard fall out... It's extremely unpleasant, not for your beard (which has nothing to fear), but for me, as I don't like to draw attention to myself."⁸¹ And in a letter of October 6, 1916,

⁷⁹ Robert Orledge, *Debussy and the theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 102.

⁸⁰ Claude Debussy, *Le roi Lear; Le diable dans le beffroi; La chute de la Maison Usher*, ed. Robert Orledge (Paris, France: Durand, 2006): XXII.

⁸¹ Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 2022.

Debussy, comparing himself to Roderick Usher (who had only one friend, the narrator), declares to Godet: “You are my only friend (alias Roderick Usher).”⁸²

When Debussy died *La Chute de la Maison Usher* sank with him, just like the Usher House that disappeared into the tarn. In March 27, 1918, Pierre-Barthélemy Gheusi from the L’Opera Comique wrote Emma Debussy, sending his condolences for her husband’s death, adding at the end of the telegram a hopeful note, “I am waiting for *La Chute de la Maison Usher*.”⁸³ And so are we...

⁸² Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 2034.

⁸³ *Ibid.* 2192.

CHAPTER III

THE LIBRETTO AND THE MUSIC

“I do not want to write anything which in any way approaches *Pélleas*. I cannot understand the object of a writer who creates a second work along the same lines which made the first successful. I should no more want to repeat myself than I should want to copy someone who had written before me. Therefore, when I have nothing to say I do not attempt to write. The inspiration I have through E. A. Poe is totally different in its elements from that which I felt through Maeterlinck, and I believe that it will be equally successful and when I say equally successful I mean that it will find the same number of enemies and the same number of friends.”⁸⁴

Unfortunately, comparisons between *Pélleas et Mélisande* and *La Chute de la Maison Usher* are unavoidable. This is not due to the obvious fact that both of them are operas written by Debussy. Comparisons between the two works stem from Poe’s potent influence on French literature, and particularly on Maurice Maeterlinck, who wrote the play *Pélleas et Mélisande*. Maeterlinck had expressed his taste for Poe’s poems. His favorite tale was “The Fall of the House Usher.” Maeterlinck said to Léon Lemmonier:⁸⁵ “Edgar Poe has exerted on me, as on everyone of my generation, a big, profound, and durable influence. I owe to him the birth in my work of a sense of

⁸⁴ Debussy’s statement in an interview published in *Harper’s Weekly* of August 29, 1908 in Jean-François Thibault, “Debussy’s Unfinished American Opera: *La Chute de la Maison Usher*” in *Opera and the Golden West*, ed. John Louis DiGaetani and Josef P. Sirefman (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1994): 199.

⁸⁵ Lemmonier was a literary theorist. He is the author of *Edgar Poe et les poètes français* (Paris: Editions de la Nouvelle Revue Critique, 1932).

mystery and my passion for the beyond.”⁸⁶ In an interview in December 4, 1910, Debussy was still insisting on the fact that the subjects in Maeterlinck and in Poe were not closely related:

“I am very pleased with this subject because, not only does it have the secret atmosphere, the sentiments, the tension and the emotions contained in the novel of Poe never before translated in music, but also because one cannot find a more complete contrast than that between Poe and Maeterlinck.

Furthermore, I believe that it should be the aim of every artist to take himself as far as possible from the nature and subject of his success. I have had a success with *Pélleas et Mélisande*, and that is the reason why I shall never again write a work in which its subject or atmosphere is recalled.”⁸⁷

Indeed, the atmosphere of the music of *La Chute de la Maison Usher* differs from the one in *Pélleas et Mélisande*. It is considerably darker and more grave. However, the characters from *Pélleas et Mélisande* do have similarities with the ones from “*The Fall of the House of Usher*.” Roderick Usher shares with Pélleas the pallid and frail features as fate prevails over them. Furthermore, Madeline (like other women in Poe’s works such as Ligeia and Morella) has that fragility and mysteriousness of women who are destined to die of an enigmatic illness, just as Mélisande. Mélisande is often associated with Mélusine (a feminine spirit of fresh water), a mythical figure in French folklore. Madeline is not associated with any mythological character. Aside from the characters, the scenario where the stories happen, as in the castle in *Allemode* and the Usher mansion, also resemble each other. Both settings are gloomy and exert a particular

⁸⁶ Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy et Edgar Poe: Documents inédits* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1962): 49-50.

⁸⁷ Robert Orledge, “Debussy’s ‘House of Usher’ Revisited,” *The Musical Quarterly* 62, no. 4 (October, 1976): 552.

angst upon its inhabitants. Most importantly, the main focus of both stories is the inescapability of fate.

In order to transform Poe's tale for stage, Debussy had to do many changes. The most obvious one is the transformation of the narrator's monologue into dialogues. Roderick himself has only four speeches in "*The Fall of the House of Usher*," one of them being "The Haunted Palace." Madeline is barely seen throughout the story and is a mute character. The doctor, also a mute character, does not play any important part in the story. In Poe's tale, there are two other characters, the valet and the servant. They have the same kind of role as the doctor's. Debussy does not use them for his stage version.

Debussy gave a brief description of each character before the story begins in the libretto. Their costumes are all from the English Romantic epoch. The friend (L'Ami) is described as being much older than Roderick, resembling a simple gentleman farmer. He wears brown clothes of ribbed velour and high soft boots. The doctor (Le Médecin) has no palpable age. His hair is russet blend of threads of silver; his look shines through broad glasses. His voice is whispery, and he has a worried expression; he always seems to fear that there is someone behind him; he is dressed in black – as was in the period. Madeline is very young, wearing a long white dress. Roderick is 35 years old. He has the devastated face of anguish; he looks a little like Edgar Allan Poe. In spite of the disorder of his costume, one can see that he cares about his appearance. He wears a dark green necktie.

In comparison to Poe's tale, the friend still holds the role of setting the story in motion by being assigned scenes with both Roderick and the doctor. The doctor

however, is a character almost totally conceived by Debussy. This character is an expansion of the description given by Poe of his “countenance... wore a mingled expression of low cunning and perplexity.” The doctor is in love with Madeline and condemns Roderick’s unnatural love for her. In Debussy’s version he is the one who buries Madeline alive, not Roderick. As in Poe, she barely makes an appearance in the development of the story. Roderick’s character is a little different as well. In Debussy’s he not only suffers from the mental illness seen in Poe, but also becomes a victim of the doctor’s scheming.

Orledge made an extensive study of the three versions of the libretto, analyzing the changes it went through from 1908 to 1916. He wrote an article entitled “Debussy’s House of Usher Revisited” dedicated to this matter.

1) First Version of the Libretto

Debussy had the intention of making *La Chute de la Maison Usher* an opera in only one act from the beginning of the libretto drafting. The first version of the libretto dates from 1908 to June 1909. It shows the difficulty of expanding Baudelaire’s translation into the stage version. This first version is basically a sketch of the transformation from Poe’s prose to dialogues. This expansion led to the re-drafting in the second version of the libretto, which was written between August 1909 and June 1910.

2) Second Version of the Libretto

Scene 1 of the second version begins with Roderick, alone in his chamber and calling to his sister. The sister is heard singing verses 1, 4, and 5 of Poe’s six verses of

“The Haunted Palace.” She then disappears before Roderick begins a monologue. This monologue was one of the musical gifts Debussy gave Emma for her birthday. This monologue became the opening of the opera in the second version of the libretto. However, it was condensed in the third version and given to the second scene instead. Debussy wrote Durand about this monologue in June 26, 1909: “These last days I have been working on *La Chute de la Maison Usher* and I have almost finished a long monologue of poor Roderick. It’s sad enough to make the stones weep... and as it happens there, it is a matter of the influence that stones have on the morale of neurasthenics. It smells charmingly of mildew, obtained by blending the sounds of low notes in the oboe with harmonics in the violin... (B.S.G.D.G).⁸⁸ Don’t speak of this to anyone; I am very proud of this effect.”⁸⁹

Scene 2 of the second version includes the doctor persuading L’Ami to leave, the story of the doomed Usher lineage, the burial of Madeline, and the suggestion of the doctor’s love for Madeline. The narrator in the tale is left alone at the end of the scene as he declaims that he is suspicious about the doctor.

⁸⁸ The letters B.S.G.D.G. in this letter caused a mystery towards its meaning. Orledge tries to explain them as being a musical motif – Bb, Eb, G, D, G – in his “Debussy’s ‘House of Usher’ Revisited.” There is no indication in the score that this motif is present in Roderick’s monologue. Thus, the inclusion of these letters must have been a joke by Debussy, since he was very proud of the effect. B.S.G.D.G. is an abbreviation for *Breveté sans Garantie du Gouvernement* (Patent without Government Guarantee).

⁸⁹ Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 1193.

Scene 3 of the second version is an interaction between Roderick and L'Ami. The sequence of events is not much different from the original tale. In fact, the end of the libretto is the section that suffered fewer alterations throughout the process of conceiving it.

Concerning the end, Debussy might have been either confused or he wished to make alterations with respect to the "Mad Trist" by Sir Launcelot Canning. The hero in the story is a knight named Ethelred. However, Debussy called the hero "Sir Launcelot" in the first version, then "Sire Ithilrid" in the second, and finally "Sire Ulrich" in the third. Furthermore, Madeline is not given a song at all in the first version. In the second version she gets verses 1 and 4 of "The Haunted Palace," then expanded to take charge of verse 5. Finally she is given only verse 1 in the third version.

3) Third Version of the Libretto

The final version of the libretto is the third version. The main difference between this and the second version is the order of events and their subdivision into two scenes instead of three, as it was first thought.

In a letter of September 4, 1916 Debussy wrote Durand: "In my last letter, I forgot to tell you that, I have at your disposal the libretto of *La Chute de la Maison Usher*. Perhaps it is needless to say this, since it is certain that you do not doubt this?"⁹⁰ With reference to the libretto, Durand stated that Debussy "has completely re-made the libretto for this piece. He should work on this during the last months of his life. This

⁹⁰ Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1872 -1918* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2005): 2021.

libretto, in its final form, was given to me by Debussy in the fall of 1917,”⁹¹ therefore exhibiting without a doubt that Debussy guaranteed the third version of the libretto to be the final one.

The third version, dated October 1915 to September 1916, is formally clearer and flows more organically. Stage directions are evenly distributed. Here the doctor makes two appearances in the second scene, and is given a central role in the first scene. This provides more variety as opposed to the second version. Repetitive material from the second version is cut out in the third version. Scene two is now divided into two parts. One part is found in scene 1 of the third version, while the rest is in the middle of scene 2. Roderick’s first monologue is transferred to the start of scene 2. Only after completing the libretto did Debussy feel more encouraged to set the music.

The following analysis refers only to the third version of the libretto. The indications concerning the instrumentation in the musical examples are the few ones Debussy left. *La Chute de la Maison Usher* opens with a prelude, which begins with a tremolo on the note B together with the cymbal. Aside from Motif I, all of the other pitches belong to a whole-tone scale up to bar 6. The whole-tone scale [C# D# F G A B] is the predominant one in this passage. The two chords that belong to the other whole-tone scale [C D E F# G# A#] are only passing chords. The rapid change from one whole-tone collection to another gives the impression of chromatic motion, since they do not share any pitch in common. C# is the predominant tonal center in the entire

⁹¹ Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy et Edgar Poe: Documents inédits* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1962): 57.

prelude. The bass notes for the first three chords in the opening are C# - G - C#. This tritone reinforces C# as the tonal center. The tremolo and the whole-tone scale create an ambiguous atmosphere, increasing the suspense. Motif *a* is the chromatic version of the motif that opens and closes Madeline's aria.

Prélude
Lent et douloureux

Musical score for the Prélude, measures 1-19. The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It features piano accompaniment with chords and a melodic line in the right hand. Annotations include 'Motif I' (measures 1-3), 'Whole-tone I' (C D E F# G# A#), 'Whole-tone II' (C# D# F G A B), 'Alt. s.h.' (Alto Saxophone), 'Cymb.' (Cymbal), 'Trp. sound.' (Trumpet sound), and 'Motif a' (measures 10-11 and 12-13). Measure numbers 1, 5, and 9 are indicated at the start of their respective measures.

Example 1: [1-19]⁹²

⁹² The measure numbering is done according to Orledge's edition.

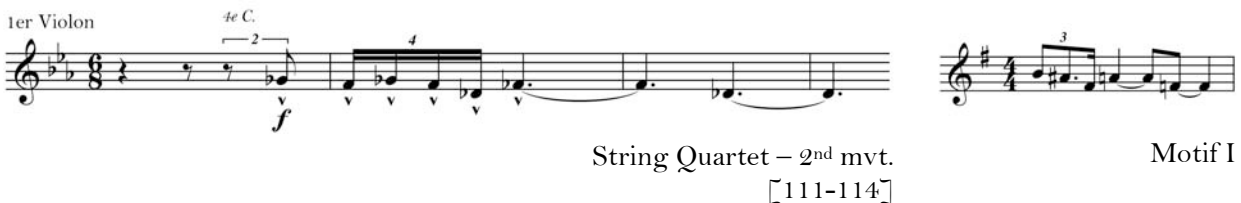
The musical score consists of two systems. The first system, measures 10-13, is marked with the stage direction "[Le Rideau se lève.]". It features a complex texture with many beamed notes in the upper voice and sustained chords in the lower voice. The second system, measures 14-17, is marked "Scène 1". It begins with a "Motif 1" in measure 14. The upper voice in measures 11-13 contains an octatonic scale fragment, and the lower voice in measures 14-17 contains a chromatic scale fragment. The key signature is G major (one sharp).

The three chords in measures 11-13 are a superposition of diatonic and octatonic universes. The first chord is drawn from the C major scale, just as the last chord. The chord in between them is drawn from the octatonic scale [C# D E F G G# A# B]. This superposition is a symbol of reason versus madness, represented by diatonic versus chromatic respectively. The bass line in these three chords also belongs to the same octatonic collection. The upper voice in bars 11-13 is a fragment of another octatonic scale [C C# D# E F# G A A#]. This melody is transposed to even another octatonic fragment in bars 14-17, now with the scale [C D D# E# F# G# A B]. Although the music does not stay in any of the octatonic scales for too long, one can hear the connection between the materials. This aids in the transition from a previously whole-tone predominant universe to a more chromatic one (bars 18-19). The intervals not only get gradually smaller, but the rhythm is also faster, creating tension that culminates in

Madeline's aria. The tritone in the bass (G-C#) contributes to this tension while being a recurrent motif in the first scene.

Motif I most likely represents Roderick's madness. The clear evidence is in two spots in the piece. The first one is in measure 100, when the doctor is describing Roderick's state of mind, telling L'Ami that he "will see that forehead with oversized temples, which bears the scars of the claws of madness!" The word "madness" is juxtaposed with Motif I. The second time this happens is in measure 195, right after Roderick describes his torments: "always falling asleep in a fever, to wake up in anguish. Endless torture, endless, endless!"

Motif I has a curious resemblance to the theme in bars 3-4 in the second movement of Debussy's String Quartet. This similarity is extremely apparent when this theme is slightly modified, starting on the pickup to bar 112. This might not be a coincidence, given that Debussy's String Quartet was composed in 1893. This was around the time when he first started working on *La Chute de la Maison Usher*.



Example 2

Scene 1 begins with Madeline's aria. In the third version of the libretto Debussy omitted verses 4 and 5 of "The Haunted Palace." The melody in Madeline's aria is mainly diatonic, with some chromatic passages. Similar to the Prélude, it has a pedal tone in the form of a tremolo in C# that is present throughout almost the entire aria. This tremolo reinforces C# as the tonal center. Madeline's aria has the key signature of

F# major, which is the ‘subdominant’ of C#. Therefore, the presence of the pedal tone C# creates a tonal instability, since it is the ‘dominant’ of F#. The aria can be divided into five phrases: the first four with four measures and the last one with six.

The first phrase opens with a transformation of motif *a*, now in its diatonic form and ends with a chromatic fragment. It closes with an octatonic melody in the accompaniment, which first recalls the octatonic segment in bars 11-12/14-15 and ends with a reminiscence of motif *a*.

20
MAD. *diatonic* *chromatic*
Dans la plus verte de nos val - lées.

a'
6
octatonic
3

Example 3: Madeline's aria – Phrase 1

Phrase 2 is mainly diatonic. Phrase 3, although diatonic, is presented a half step lower than the previous and the following melodies. Because of this, it sounds like a chromatic passage. This happens right on the spot where the song makes reference to the monarch that went mad. This is a hint of what will happen in the rest of the story of “The Haunted Palace.” The phrase ends with the same octatonic melody in the accompaniment as in phrase 1.

24 diatonic

MAD. Par de bons an-ges ha-bi - tée Ja-dis un pa - lais mer-vei-lieux dres - sait son front, —

28 diatonic

MAD. C'é-tait dans les do - maines du mo-nar-que Pen - sé - - - e.

octatonic

Example 4: Madeline's aria – Phrases 2 and 3

Phrase 4, as phrase 1, starts diatonically before moving to chromaticism. Its chromatic portion presents Motif II for the first time. This change of mood occurs exactly where Madeline sings “Over palace half so fair...” here he hints on the fact that the palace will soon decay. This motif will permeate the entire first scene. The last phrase is a recollection of the opening of the aria, exploring motif *a'* and its variation *a''*. While Debussy did not set the six verses of “The Haunted Palace” musically, he expressed the changes of mood that Edgar Allan Poe expressed in his poem.

32

diatonic

chromatic

MAD.

Ja-mais Sé-ra-phin ne dé-plo-ya son ai - le Sur un pa - lais à moi - tié aus-si beau...

Motif II

36

diatonic

chromatic

MAD.

a

a'

a''

6

3

a

s.h.

Example 5: Madeline's aria – Phrases 4 and 5

Madeline's song is followed by material similar to the opening. The same whole-tone scale is predominant, but this time it is intercalated with chromatic embellishments. Motif I is also presented in this passage, twice. Notice that the tritone in the bass that was seen before also plays an important role here as it helps create tension.

32

MAD.

Ja-mais Sé-ra-phin ne dé-plo-ya son ai - le Sur un pa - lais à moi - tié aus-si beau...

diatonic

chromatic

Motif II

36

MAD.

a

a'

a''

6

3

s.h.

Example 5: Madeline's aria – Phrases 4 and 5

Madeline's song is followed by material similar to the opening. The same whole-tone scale is predominant, but this time it is intercalated with chromatic embellishments. Motif I is also presented in this passage, twice. Notice that the tritone in the bass that was seen before also plays an important role here as it helps create tension.

42

chromatic

chromatic

Motif I

44

chrom.

chrom.

chromatic

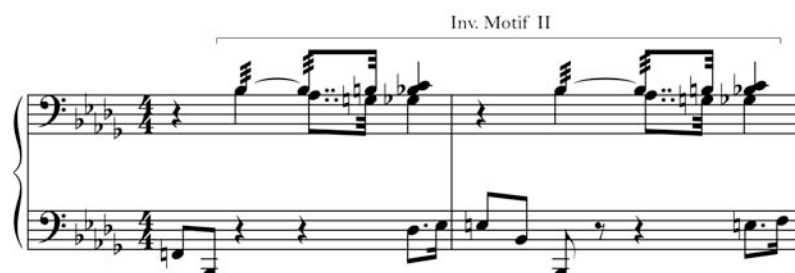
Motif I

47

Example 6: [42-49]

The last three bars in this passage prepare the mood for the entrance of L'Ami and The doctor. The rapid 32^{nds} are related to the doctor. They are present in varied forms throughout his speech during Scene 1.

This first encounter between L'Ami and the doctor starts very tense. It begins with a sort of inversion of Motif II, harmonized similarly in bar 45, where the upper voice goes up chromatically and the lower voice goes down also chromatically.



Example 7: [50-51]

Their conversation begins in recitative style, with little intervention from the orchestra. After they introduce themselves L'Ami tells the doctor that Roderick is waiting for him. The doctor then persuades him to leave, this without even getting the chance to see Roderick as he arrives. The doctor explains that L'Ami's efforts to console Roderick would be in vain, because no one can alter the destiny of the House of Usher. In this scene, the doctor suggests that incest is the reason for the disease of the Ushers when he says: "Alas! There is nothing to be done! This man is the last of a proud, haughty race, doomed to extinction by the undeviating transmission of the same blood. Nearly all of them were sick, maniacal people engaged in bizarre practices... Madmen, my dear sir, madmen, believe me!"⁹³

It is also in this scene where the doctor hints about his interest in Madeline and Roderick's unnatural love for her. In this passage, one can see that Debussy attributed

⁹³ Claude Debussy, *Le roi Lear; Le diable dans le beffroi; La chute de la Maison Usher*, ed. Robert Orledge (Paris, France: Durand, 2006): 32.

Béranger's quotation in the beginning of Poe's "*The Fall of the House of Usher*" to Madeline, and not Roderick.

- | | |
|--------|---|
| L'Ami | And his sister, Lady Madeline? I know they have never left each other, that their fondness is great... |
| Doctor | Lady Madeline is rarely seen, what does she matters to you? |
| L'Ami | Your manners are odd and I do not understand you. Pray answer me. |
| Doctor | Listen... Lady Madeline is the sweet counterpart of your strange friend. She is so weak, so frail! The doom-laden stones of the house of Usher have fixed her destiny. Little by little, they have frozen her poor smile, her eyes so sweet. Lady Madeline will go like the rest of them, faster than the others perhaps! And then it is his own fault, one should not love one's own sister thus... |
| L'Ami | What do you mean? |
| Doctor | I know it... If you could hear that voice that seems to come from far beyond herself. Often he makes her sing music that would damn angels! It is incomprehensible and dangerous. A woman is not a lute after all... But he will not see anything! He does not sense that her own soul is pouring itself out with the song. Ah! Why does she not want to listen to me? I did everything to warn her, tried everything! She is so beautiful... |
| L'Ami | What delirium is overtaking you? Take me to Roderick..." ⁹⁴ |

When the doctor starts talking about Madeline the music gets lighter, and written in high registers. The low notes are only added when he talks about how the

⁹⁴ Claude Debussy, *Le roi Lear; Le diable dans le beffroi; La chute de la Maison Usher*, ed. Robert Orledge (Paris, France: Durand, 2006): 32.

stones in the House of Usher are affecting her. The music then goes back to the lighter mood afterwards. As in Madeline's aria, the diatonic harmony is prevalent.

MÉD. 114

La - dy Ma - de - line est le doux com - men - rai - re de votre é - trange a - mi. Elle est si fai - ble,

MÉD. 117

si fra - gi - le! Les pier - res ma - lé - fi - ques de la Mai - son U - sher ont fi - xé son des - tin.

Example 8
[114-120]

But when the doctor talks about Roderick's love for Madeline and the way he makes her sing, the music becomes chromatic again, with Motif II predominant in the orchestra. It appears also as a variation in bar 133. The diatonic versus chromatic is Debussy's way of showing Madeline's innocence versus Roderick's neurasthenia.

MÉD. 132

Motif II Je sais... Si vous pou - viez en - ten - dre cet - te voix qui sem - ble ve -

Example 9: [132-140]

144

ROD.

fragment Ma-de - li-ne, altered frag. Ma-de-li - ne...

Roderick was sleeping and Madeline's voice woke him up. When he calls for her, a fragment of the octatonic melody that closes phrases 1 and 3 in Madeline's aria is present in the accompaniment in this passage. It is first presented transposed, while it is slightly altered the second time.

The pedal and the ostinato support Roderick's melody together with a C major chord with an augmented fourth on the upper voice in measure 148. This chord punctuates the end of Roderick's sentences several times in the monologue. This chord represents Roderick's torments, his rational thoughts (the C major triad) being taken over by madness (the F#).

Roderick blames the stones for his disease, just as the doctor does for Madeline's. The accompaniment's texture in this section of Roderick's laments is very similar to the one of the doctor's, when he talks about the stones (Example 8). But Roderick's complaints are much heavier, since the effects the stones have upon him are far greater than the effects that they have upon the doctor.

198

ROD.

Vieil-les pier - res, pier-res bla - far - des! qu'a - vez - vous fait de moi?...

C D E F# G# A#

C# D# F G A B

Example 11: [198-202]

The passage in example 11 recollects the first measures in the Prélude. The pedal on B is found, like in the beginning of the piece. The chords have whole-tone coloring, even though there are notes that do not belong to the whole-tone scale, as for example, the C in the first chord. One can argue that the C serves a timbral purpose in the chord, since it is an overtone of F. It was added to give textural weight to the chord and not as part of the harmonic makeup. If this is considered, all of the chords in the passage are from a whole-tone collection, where, as in the Prélude, the scale [C# D# F G A B] is predominant.

The sonorities are mainly drawn from the whole-tone collection just as Roderick talks about the stones on the wall. When he talks about death, the music becomes octatonic. The pitches both from the melody and the accompaniment are from the octatonic scale [C C# D# E F# G A A#] when Roderick laments that the sun “enters [his] place only to die [there].” Only in the end of the phrase do the pitches G# and B appear.

264

octatonic [C# C# D# E F# G A A#]

ROD. le so - leil ne pé-nétre i - ci que pour y mou - rir.

octatonic [C# C# D# E F# G A A#]

Example 12: [264-268]

Furthermore, the pitches are drawn from the octatonic scale [C# D E F G G# A# B] when Roderick affirms his feelings for Madeline as he says, “Don’t you know that she is the one reason for me not to die!” As in the previous example, there are pitches that do not belong to this collection towards the end. But in this case they are simply neighboring tones.

314

octatonic [C# D E F G G# A# B]

neighboring tones

octatonic

neighboring tones

ROD. Ne sais - tu pas qu'elle est ma seu-le rai-son de ne point mou - rir!

octatonic [C# D E F G G# A# B]

neighboring tones

octatonic

neighboring tones

Example 13: [314-317]

Example 13 is at the end of Roderick’s monologue. After this, L’Ami rushes to Roderick while the doctor makes one last effort to repel him. L’Ami tells the doctor to go away so that he can finally see Roderick. He then embraces his old friend. Roderick goes on to confide in his friend about his fears of total ruin. He dismisses his friend’s

suggestion to start a new life elsewhere, breaks down in tears and leaves the room. There are only small fragments of music for this section of Scene 2, and there is no music at all to when the doctor enters to communicate Madeline's death. L'Ami once again announces that he shall not leave his friend. Roderick then returns singing a little part of "The Haunted Palace." He is shown to be aware of the doctor's evil scheming and his love for Madeline, but not of her burial. In this passage, Debussy pays homage to both Poe and Mallarmé (who translated "The Raven" into French), when he mentions a Raven in the libretto. Roderick compares the doctor to a raven: "The devoted doctor of the family Usher... Ah! Ah! He thinks I see nothing... He thinks I am completely mad... He wants me dead, and he watches me as a greedy raven. He waits."⁹⁵

The last portion of the opera is highly fragmented as well. It is where an ominous storm breaks while they read "The Mad Trist," of which events parallel those of reality. The reading is spoken instead of sung. There are two important elements in the accompaniment for L'Ami's reading. The first one is the octatonic scale [C C# D# E F# G A A#] in two ostinato patterns.



Example 14: [383-386]



Example 15: [400-403]

⁹⁵ Claude Debussy, *Le roi Lear; Le diable dans le beffroi; La chute de la Maison Usher*, ed. Robert Orledge (Paris, France: Durand, 2006): 131.

The second element contains a variation of Motif II. It is first combined with a fragment of the whole-tone scale [C# D# F G A B] and then it is combined with the tremolos that before were octatonic (Example 15).

whole-tone [C# D# F G A B]

406

Var. Motif II

410

Var. Motif II

Example 16: [406-413]

During this section, Roderick begins to fill with horror as the realization of what really happened to his sister dawns on him. Madeline appears and collapses on her brother before they both fall dead on the floor. L'Ami then flees the house as it is sunk into the tarn. In this last scene, Roderick dies under a red-moon. The same moon appears at the end of Berg's *Wozzeck* and Strauss' *Salome*. In all of these, the red-moon symbolizes love and murder. Unfortunately, Debussy did not have a chance to set music for the climax.

One finds Roderick's line that ends the opera, "Ah! Damn  ! Tu me l'as vol  e!" (Ah! Damned! You have stolen her from me!), on the last page of the manuscript. This

line is not present in any of the libretti. This line is followed by a polychord (the triads A minor and G minor) containing almost all pitches in the A Phrygian scale (the F is not present in the polychord). Along with the polychord there is the indication: “tam-tam, bass drum, and cymbals.” In the bottom of the page one reads: “Pour la fin de La Chute de la Maison Usher” (For the end of *La Chute de la Maison Usher*).

[(Seul reste visible, l'étang profond et
croupi qui se referme silencieusement
sur les ruines de la Maison Usher.)]

422

ROD.

Ah! dam-né! tu me l'as vo-lé...

427

ROD.

Tam-Tam
G. C.
Cymb.

Example 17: [422-428]

In February 15, 1913, Debussy described a formula for drama: “this is where one can recognize the tetralogical formula; there are only more Gods, and fewer decors... a clarinet piccolo leads the emotion; a tam-tam organizes the terror... that’s all!”⁹⁶ It seems logical that this statement could be related to his thoughts on *La Chute de la Maison Usher*

The time scales in which events occur in Poe’s tale compared to Debussy’s adaptation show obvious differences. In Poe, the friend stays in the house for several days and begins to get affected by the atmosphere of the House of Usher. In Debussy, Madeline dies and wakes up on the very same day in which the friend arrives at the house.

Perhaps Debussy was considering what Poe discussed in his “Philosophy of Composition” concerning the length of a work: “The initial consideration was that of extent. If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression — for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and every thing like totality is at once destroyed.”⁹⁷ Debussy only wanted two scenes in *La Chute de la Maison Usher*. It is possible that Debussy wanted to create a rising tension, which would have lost its

⁹⁶ Edward Lockspeiser, *Debussy et Edgar Poe: Documents inédits* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1962): 27.

⁹⁷ Edgar Allan Poe, “The Philosophy of Composition” Edgar Allan Poe, in *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1992): 979-980.

effect if the piece turned out to be too long. At any rate, it was a dutiful attempt by Debussy at portraying the literary work at the structural and formal levels.

“Edgar Allan Poe had the most original imagination in the world; he struck an entirely new note. I shall have to find its equivalent in music.”⁹⁸ These are Debussy’s words about the writer who revolutionized literature in France. Apparently he did not suppose that he found this musical equivalent, since he was unable to finish the opera. Perhaps the standards that he set for himself toward this endeavor were far too lofty, owing to his high regard for Poe’s work; not to mention the debilitating nature that other projects inflicted upon its completion. That he did not feel his composition could be worthy of being paired with Poe’s work might even be an underestimation of the frame of mind that he had for the task. Thus, the lack of closure in the work may well be attributed to his excessive self-criticism in the search for the perfect musical counterpart that he saw was duly owed to Poe. Or perhaps Debussy thought he would have more time to compose *La Chute de la Maison Usher*. Or then again, maybe he attached himself to the characters in the House of Usher to the point that he did not wish to let them go. These are mere musings about what might have not allowed him to finish what could have been another Debussyist breakthrough in music: an essentially expressionistic text set to impressionistic music.

⁹⁸ May Garrettson Evans, *Music and Edgar Allan Poe: a bibliographical study* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968): cover page.

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VITA

Born in 1979 in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, Máira Cimbliris began her music studies at the age of 7 at the School of Music of the Centro de Formação Artística of Clóvis Salgado Foundation. She was part of the school's choir while also studying the violin and the cello. She participated in one of the most important art festivals in Brazil, the UFMG winter festival, from 1994 to 1998.

In 1999 Máira Cimbliris enrolled in the bachelor program at the School of Music of the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, majoring in composition. She has studied composition under Oiliam Lanna, Sérgio Freire and Rogério Vasconcelos. She was awarded two scholarships sponsored by the National Research Council (CNPq) as an undergraduate student. The first was an internship in the university recording studio, while the second was a research project in Brazilian Electroacoustic Music. On her last year in that university she began studying the bassoon. She received the Bachelor of Music degree in composition in 2004.

She worked as an assistant teacher in several composition workshops sponsored by the Brazilian government from 2001 to 2004. The composer Claudia Cimbliris, her mother, conceived those workshops.

In 2006 Máira Cimbliris went to the United States to procure a master's diploma in composition as a student and assistant of Boyd Professor Dinos Constantinides at the Louisiana State University. She received the degree in 2008. Her thesis entitled *Sound Frames* was published by VDM Verlag (Germany) in the same year.

She was a finalist in three major composition competitions in Brazil, those being the BDMG Composition Competition (2004), the Camargo Guarnieri Composition Competition (2005), and the Tinta Fresca Composition Competition (2008).

During her years in the US, she has had two pieces performed by the Louisiana Sinfonietta, and one that was expressly included in the repertoire of the Trio Angelico (based in Houston). Furthermore, she was commissioned to write a piece for solo bassoon by Scott Miller. This piece, written in partnership with Claudia Cimleris, occupies a portion of Mr. Miller's DMA dissertation.

Maíra Cimleris is now pursuing her Doctor of Philosophy degree majoring in composition with a minor in bassoon at the same institution. Her degree will be awarded at the August 2011 Commencement.