

Claude Debussy

Clair De Lune



We recently tabbed this great tune 'electric shred' style. This month our classical maestro **Bridget Mermikides** gives it a whole new twist, this time for solo acoustic.

ABILITY RATING

● ● ● ● ● **Advanced**

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
KEY: D	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Technical precision
TEMPO: 45 bpm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Extended arpeggios
CD: Tracks 26-27	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Impressionist repertoire

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862-1918) is one of the most famous piano composers of all time, and a pioneer in the field of what has become known as impressionistic music. Debussy was a virtuoso pianist from a young age, but devoted much of his energies - and anguish - into composition.

Not content to simply perform or replicate the romanticism of the day, Debussy worked hard blending a French nationalism, with virtuoso pianist techniques with an extraordinary musical eclecticism. He was profoundly affected by the Javanese music he heard at 1889 Exposition Universelle, the opening of the Eiffel tower; his significant incorporation of pentatonicism, parallelism and unusual scales into his music is a great example of a powerful cross cultural influence in the history of 'Western Art' music.

Debussy's music seems so familiar and accessible today with its lush, descriptive qualities and non-traditional compositional techniques, but it was a revolution in its historical context.

This month I've made an arrangement of Debussy's most famous piano piece, the ever-popular Clair De Lune. This is actually the third movement of his Suite Bergamasque, which took 15 years to complete (although Debussy commenced the suite back in 1890, it didn't get published until 1905). Inspired by a Paul Verlaine poem, the piece captures exquisitely images of moonlight with beguiling harmonies, a timeless melody and a sentiment that still appeals to so many today.



Debussy: like so many composers, a troubled genius

I've transposed Clair de Lune from its original key of F, down a minor 3rd to D major, in order to make it playable on the guitar. And although it's impossible to play every note that the piano plays, I've made sure that the important musical material is preserved. In fact the composition actually finds a very natural home on the guitar with its parallelism and contemporary harmonic ideas. It must be said that this is one of the most challenging arrangement I've made for this series, as it involves real fretting hand control and plucking hand independence. So, as ever, practise patiently, using the tab captions as a guide, and you'll soon have an amazing new piece in your repertoire. ■

“**Debussy was a virtuoso pianist from a young age, but devoted much of his energies, and anguish, to composition.**”

TECHNIQUE FOCUS

PICKING HAND POSITIONING

The positioning of the picking hand and movements of the fingers is super important in classical guitar playing in order to produce a tone that is of good quality and that projects well. The right arm rests on the larger bout and the wrist should be gently arched over the instrument so that only the fingertips are touching the strings. When plucking either rest stroke or free stroke the movement comes from the joints of the fingers and not from the wrist or arm so there should be no 'pulling' of the strings but more 'pushing' the string so the trajectory of the finger follows through under the hand.



TRACK RECORD There are various albums with guitarists playing Debussy's work. But I'd seriously recommend getting to know the pieces as they were written - for piano. This way you can transfer the essence of that to your six-string performance. The Walter Gieseking (1895-1956) recording, Debussy: Complete Works For Piano (2012 Regis) is an excellent starting point.

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 27

[Bars 1-20] The first chord of each bar - often only a two-note chord, needs to sustain for the whole bar and therefore requires the fretting hand fingers to remain in place on the notes while the upper melodic notes are executed. This opening section requires extreme precision and accurate fretting hand fingertip work in order to prevent any unwanted muting and to allow all the notes to ring clearly; in bar 2 the first finger changes from its fingertip position on the C# - second quaver - to a momentary collapsed half barre on the D and F# - third quaver - then reverts to the fingertip again for the next C#. At no point does the

first finger lose contact with the third string. The same technique is needed for the next bar when the first finger changes from a fingertip position to a collapsed half barre for the F#. Again the first finger does not lose contact with the third string. There is a fairly big fretting hand stretch at bar 5 and again this chord needs to be held intact for two whole beats underneath the melody notes. In bar 20 the bass note A# can be held throughout the bar by using an angled barre across the 6th and 5th frets to catch the triad on the 6th quaver beat. Fretting hand fingering has been indicated to give the best possible solutions.

Andante tres expressif
♩ = 45 approx

Measures 1-5: D/F#, Bm/F#, A7/E

Measures 6-10: G6/D, A/C#, G/B, F#7/A#, D/A, G6, D/F#, A/E A

Measures 11-15: D, G6, D/F#, G6

Measures 16-20: A7, D7/C#, Bm, Emadd9, Em, Em7, Em6/9, Em7, Em, Emadd9, Em, Emadd9, Em7, Em, Em7, Em6/9, Em7, Em, A7, Em/A

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 27

[Bars 27-43] Bar 27 is where the flowing semi-quaver section begins. On the piano this is usually played fast and fluid but on the guitar it is very difficult to emulate. So take it at a steady pace and practise it slowly and patiently bit by bit, gradually increasing the speed when each bar is secure enough. Some plucking

hand fingering suggestions are offered for possible solutions to the tricky arpeggios ahead. At bar 38 use a half barre at the 3rd fret, and a five-string barre for the last whole beat of bar 39 to prepare for the beginning of bar 40. Bars 41 and 42 are pretty challenging and require well organised plucking hand



Measure 20: A#dim7, G/B, C#dim7, G/B, G/D, G/B

Measure 21: Em, F#m7/E, Em, Em7, D/F#, Dm/F, D5/E, A7

Measure 22: D, F#m, F/A, F6/A, D, F#m, F/A, D

Measure 23: E7, A9, G, F#m, A9, G, F#m

Measure 24: Em, Emadd9/G, Em/G, Baug/D#, Em, Faug/A, D, F#m, F/A, F6/A

Measure 25: D, F#m, F/A, F6/A

Measure 26: D, F#m, F/A, F6/A

Measure 27: D, F#m, F/A, F6/A

Measure 28: E7, A9, G, F#m, A9, G, F#m

Measure 29: Em, Emadd9/G, Em/G, Baug/D#, Em, Faug/A, D, F#m, F/A, F6/A

Measure 30: D, F#m, F/A, F6/A

Measure 31: D, F#m, F/A, F6/A

Measure 32: E7, A9, G, F#m, A9, G, F#m

Measure 33: Em, Emadd9/G, Em/G, Baug/D#, Em, Faug/A, D, F#m, F/A, F6/A

Measure 34: D, F#m, F/A, F6/A

Measure 35: D, F#m, F/A, F6/A

Measure 36: E7, A9, G, F#m, A9, G, F#m

Measure 37: Em, Emadd9/G, Em/G, Baug/D#, Em, Faug/A, D, F#m, F/A, F6/A

Measure 38: D, F#m, F/A, F6/A

Measure 39: D, F#m, F/A, F6/A

Measure 40: E7, A9, G, F#m, A9, G, F#m

Measure 41: Em, Emadd9/G, Em/G, Baug/D#, Em, Faug/A, D, F#m, F/A, F6/A

Measure 42: D, F#m, F/A, F6/A

Measure 43: D, F#m, F/A, F6/A

Lyrics:
 i p i m a p p p i m a
 a p i m a i m i m i m i p i p
 m p p i m a i m i m i m p i m a i
 a i m a m p p i m a p p i m a
 p p p i m a m p i a p i m p i a i m
 a i m

CD TRACK 27

at the 15th fret and plucking hand first finger touches the string half-way along its length from said fret (an invisible 27th fret) while simultaneously plucking the same string with the third finger. Remember that a piece like this can take time to master; so be patient, work slowly and - as I always say - try to enjoy the learning process as well as its results. Good luck!

52 GuitarTechniques December 2012