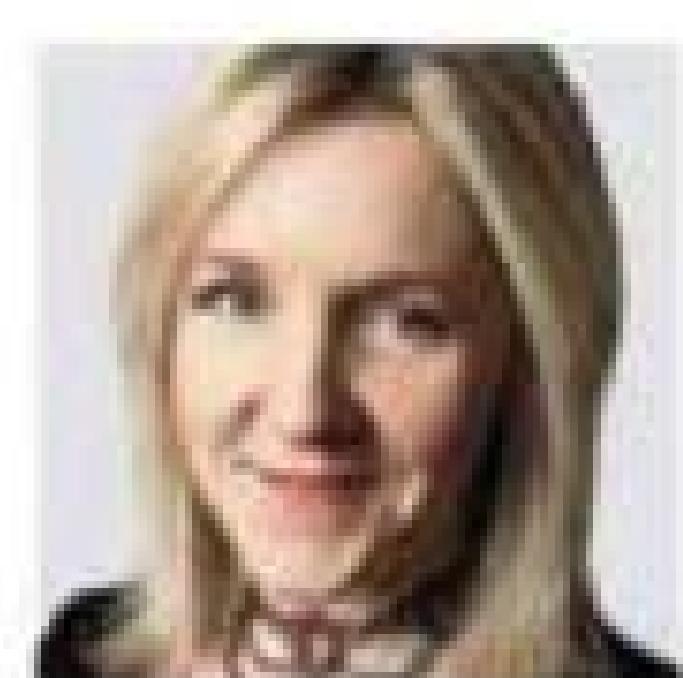




Léo Delibes

The Flower Duet



This month our classical maestro **Bridget Mermikides** transcribes a wonderful piece by one of France's most respected and celebrated 19th century composers.

ABILITY RATING

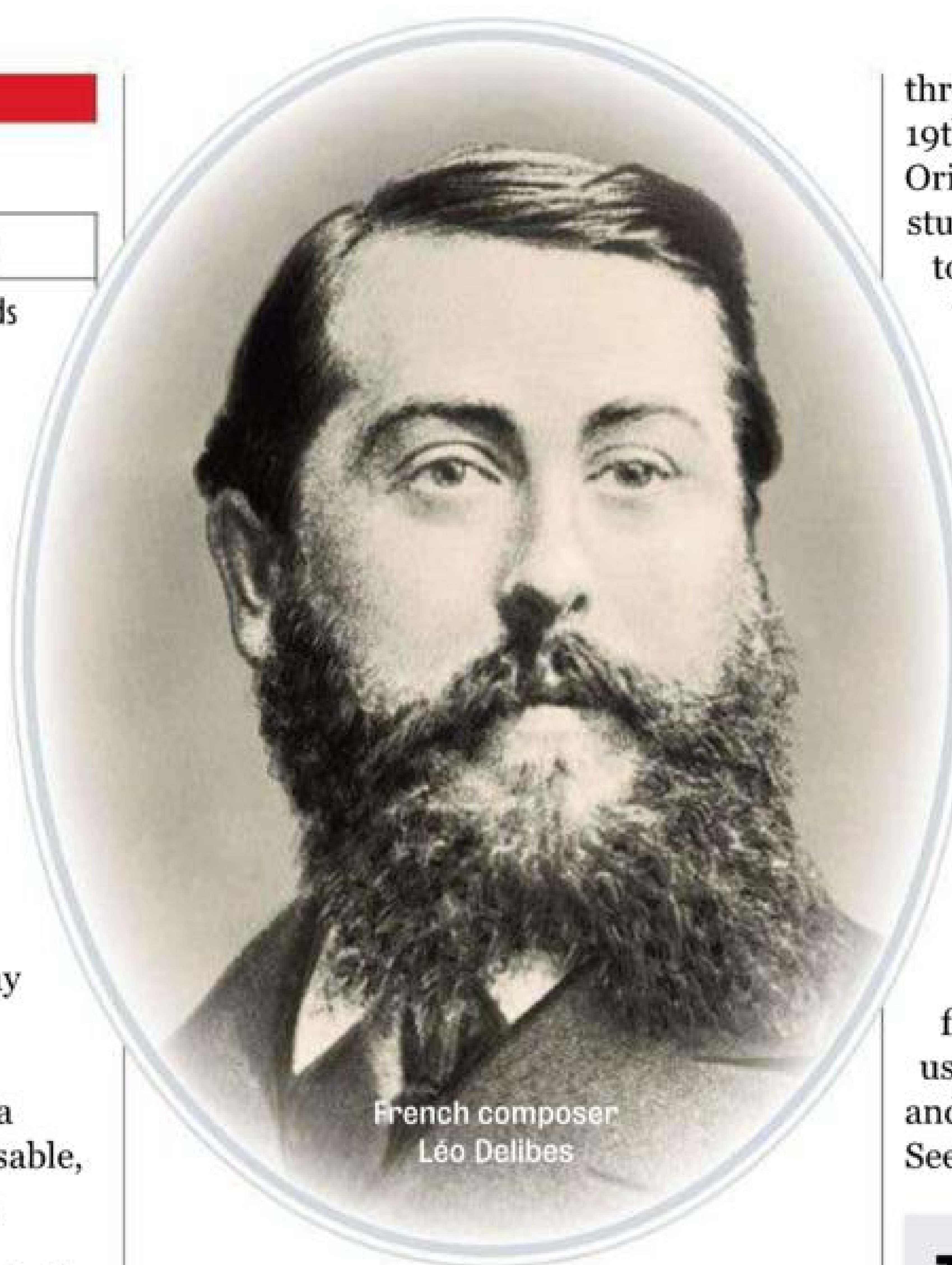
● ● ● ● ● Moderate

INFO	WILL IMPROVE YOUR
KEY: C	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Melody playing in 3rds
TEMPO: 58 bpm	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 6/8 rhythm
CD: Tracks 31-32	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Repertoire

THIS ISSUE WE are looking at an arrangement of The Flower Duet by Léo Delibes (1836-91), a talented, prolific and influential French composer of vocal, ballet and opera music. His beautiful work was highly respected by such luminaries as Tchaikovsky, who rated him a greater composer than Brahms - great praise indeed. Delibes may not be a household name, but like Grieg and Tchaikovsky, his music has found its way from 'classical high art' into broad contemporary popular culture. His Divertissement-Pizzicato from his opera Sylvia, for example, is instantly recognisable, appearing in countless films, TV shows, cartoons and adverts whenever a light, balletic and humorous character is required.

This issue's piece The Flower Duet comes from Act 1 of Delibes' 1883 opera Lakmé and is sung by the eponymous heroine and her servant Mallika as they gather flowers by the river. The two voices intertwining inspire a

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French composer
Léo Delibes

feeling of transcendent calm amidst a tragic love story and are widely loved by opera fans and the general public alike. The Flower Duet has had a resurgence of popularity by its use in film and TV scores but in particular by its adoption as the British Airways theme tune from 1989 - where its sense of detached, floating comfort is perfectly placed.

Much of the character of this piece is due to its underlying 6/8 time signature, composed in the style of a barcarolle: a folk song of Venetian gondoliers, which captures the rhythm of oar-strokes, as the gondola glides

through the canals. Delibes - as was the late 19th Century vogue - was also inspired by the Orient and this influence may be heard in the stunning melody, which somehow manages to capture the flowers' fragile beauty. The two voices sing mainly in 3rds, with Lakmé's higher soprano line occasionally holding onto longer notes while Mallika's lower mezzo-soprano voice continues a florid line. The arrangement takes these two melodic lines and supports it with a reduction of the orchestral accompaniment in the lower register. The original key of B major has been transposed to D major here to make the piece more idiomatic for solo guitar. This may not seem like the most complicated arrangement in the series, but it takes some work to capture the effortless feel of the barcarolle rhythm and to keep the harmonised melody fluent. As ever enjoy the learning process, use the tab captions for technical guidance, and have fun playing this wonderful piece. See you next month! ■

TECHNIQUE FOCUS

PICKING HAND FINGERNAILS

The use of picking hand fingernails is an essential part of a classical guitarist's technique; they are used for plucking the strings and need to be kept in tiptop shape by filing and smoothing the edges to enable a player to produce a consistently good tone. A good starting point for finding the correct shape is to follow the curve of the fingertip with nails around 2mm beyond the fingertip. An asymmetrical shape - shorter on the left when looking the nails with the back of the hand facing you, is commonly used so the nail acts as a 'ramp' when plucking. The flesh of the fingertip is used in combination with the nail for a warm full tone.

MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY/ALAMY



TRACK RECORD There are many recordings of The Flower Duet out there, but a good investment is Dame Joan Sutherland's and Jane Berbié's recording on Decca's 1996 Great Opera Duets release. Not only is this a very elegant performance but you also get 12 other great opera duets to enjoy, including the exquisite Vogliatemi Bene from Puccini's Madame Butterfly.

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 32

[Bars 1-12] Sensible organisation of the fretting fingers is important to achieve a smooth performance of this piece. In order to make the F# on the first string sustain in bar 1, the D chord can be played by barring the first finger across the top three strings and using the second finger for the D note on the second string. A subtle and even more musical way is by barring the third and second strings with the first finger while fretting the F# on the first string with the second finger and taking the D note on the second string with the third finger. This way avoids potentially losing the F# melody note on the fourth eighth note of the bar. The

3rds at the end of the bar use fretting hand fingerings to make the shifts smooth. **[Bar 3]** Use a half barre at the 7th fret and again follow the fretting hand fingering indicated. At bar 4 use the second finger for the C# just before the F#m barre chord. This allows the first finger to lengthen and prepare for the barre slightly earlier and prevents a sudden jump of the finger. **[Bar 5]** This differs from barre 1 in that a B note has been added on the fourth 8th note, enriching the harmony and making it closer to the original score. Apart from that the four-bar phrases are the same up to bar 12.

The guitar score for 'The Flower Duet' by Léo Delibes is presented in a 6/8 time signature with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score is divided into measures, with chords indicated above the staff and fret numbers for each string (E, B, G, D, A, E) shown in the bass staff. The sequence of chords and fret numbers is as follows:

- Measure 1:** Chord D. Fret numbers: E (0), B (2), G (3), D (2), A (0), E (0).
- Measure 2:** Chord Gmaj7/D. Fret numbers: E (0), B (2), G (3), D (2), A (0), E (0).
- Measure 3:** Chord G6/D. Fret numbers: E (0), B (2), G (3), D (2), A (0), E (0).
- Measure 4:** Chord D. Fret numbers: E (0), B (2), G (3), D (2), A (0), E (0).
- Measure 5:** Chord Gmaj7/D. Fret numbers: E (0), B (2), G (3), D (2), A (0), E (0).
- Measure 6:** Chord G6/D. Fret numbers: E (0), B (2), G (3), D (2), A (0), E (0).
- Measure 7:** Chord D. Fret numbers: E (0), B (2), G (3), D (2), A (0), E (0).
- Measure 8:** Chord Bm/D. Fret numbers: E (0), B (2), G (3), D (2), A (0), E (0).
- Measure 9:** Chord F#m. Fret numbers: E (0), B (2), G (3), D (2), A (0), E (0).
- Measure 10:** Chord D. Fret numbers: E (0), B (2), G (3), D (2), A (0), E (0).
- Measure 11:** Chord Gmaj7/D. Fret numbers: E (0), B (2), G (3), D (2), A (0), E (0).
- Measure 12:** Chord G6/D. Fret numbers: E (0), B (2), G (3), D (2), A (0), E (0).
- Measure 13:** Chord A. Fret numbers: E (0), B (2), G (3), D (2), A (0), E (0).

Measure 13 includes a sequence of notes: a, a, a, a, i, p, p, i.

PLAYING TIPS

CD TRACK 32

[Bars 13-20] Here the second section begins. Using the fretting hand fingering indicated here allows the second finger to remain on the third string and slide up to the C# with out losing contact. The plucking hand finger is also indicated here. At bar 17 there is a nasty stretch on the G chord. If this proves impossible to achieve, lift the barre and revoice the chord using open G and B (third and second strings) instead but keep the outer two notes (low G, high B) intact. At bar 20 when moving up to the G and Bb keep the first finger straight and use it as a hinge barre because you will need the barre again for the remainder of the bar.

[Bar 22 to end] Watch out for the slightly tricky string crossing in bar 22 and hang on to the upper note A with the fourth finger. In bar 26 there is a lovely re-harmonisation of the melody with clever fretting hand fingering. The second half of bar 28 has pauses and uses a double pull-off - use your fourth and third fingers to first and second. Make sure the first and second fingers are firmly in place first or this will not work. There is a bit of a stretch between the second and fourth fingers at bar 29 but this is to keep the F# and A notes sustaining over the top of the D major arpeggio accompaniment.

16

G

E B G D A E

19

Gm

p

D/A

E B G D A E

22

Am

Am6/9

A9

rit

a p i m i m

E B G D A E

25

D

Gmaj7/D

G6/D

D

Em7b5/D

D

a tempo

E B G D A E

28

Bm/D

G/D

A/C#

G/B

D

1

2

E B G D A E