

**Claude Debussy** (1862–1918) changed the direction of music history with works such as his celebrated tone poem *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, the opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* and his extended symphonic works *La Mer* and *Images*, as well as with highly original and challenging piano compositions.

An absorbing portrait of a pioneering composer, this book describes how Debussy pursued his innovative ideas in *fin-de-siècle* Paris, where developments in the written and visual arts crucially influenced his work. Debussy's personal life was the subject of malicious gossip and (occasionally substantiated) rumour, echoes of which persist to the present day. Through discussion of letters, contemporary accounts, photographs and of course the music, Debussy's fiercely guarded personality begins to emerge and we encounter a complex and contradictory character, one who combined indulgent sensuality with iron self-discipline, tenderness with cruelty, ebullient extroversion with gauche shyness, and a passionate conviction in his ideas with insecurity and self-doubt.

**Paul Roberts** is a concert pianist. He has recorded discs of Debussy's piano music, DVDs on Debussy's *Préludes* and *La Mer*, and is the author of *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, London, and director of the piano summer school in France, *Music at Castelfranc*.

**Jean-Jacques Sempé** is one of the world's greatest illustrators, known among other things for his *New Yorker* covers. His albums, graphic novels and children's books are all published by Phaidon.

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Cover illustration by Jean-Jacques Sempé

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ISBN 978-0-7148-3512-9



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