

Debussy's Letters: Recipients, Current Locations, Current Concerns

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In 2005, Debussy's complete correspondence was published by Gallimard in a large one-volume edition of more than 2,500 pages.¹ Here, the late François Lesure and I put forth a highly detailed documentary record of Debussy's life and work in the form of his personal letters, which we edited in great detail. Some scholars, and we are among them, see this type of publication as the best possible kind of biography. Prior to our 2005 publication, the most important edition of the letters was François Lesure's 1993 volume, which consisted of 329 letters: this was in fact an expanded version of his 1980 edition, which counted 250 letters.² In the introduction to the 1993 publication, Lesure estimated the number of letters still to be published at approximately 1,500.³ In fact, the number was far greater: our 2005 edition includes some 3,076 letters and contracts. More precisely, it includes 2,585 letters *from* Debussy, 62 contracts, and 310 letters addressed *to* the composer; it likewise includes 82 letters *from* members of his family and 37 further letters addressed *to* them. In addition to the texts of the letters, and a general index, we presented, at the back of the volume, eight different appendices. These contain: 1) a transcription of Victor Segalen's conversations with Debussy from the years 1907 and 1908; 2) a

diplomatic transcription of a letter from Debussy's youth (letter 1885), in order to show the young man's habits of punctuation; 3) a table that gives the addresses of Debussy various domiciles; 4) a table of Debussy's signatures dating from 1883 to 1897; 5) a table of Debussy's first editions with their variously inscribed dedications; 6) a table of the RISM library *sigla* used in the indications of the letters' provenance; 7) bibliographical abbreviations; and 8) a table of the recipients of the letters with a short biography of each. Since the publication of the 2005 edition, new letters have of course come to light, and I am currently working on a supplementary volume.

I should like to elaborate here upon two points in particular: first, the geographical distribution of the depositories of Debussy's correspondence; and, second, the social standing of Debussy's various correspondents.

LOCATIONS

Approximately 56% or 1,713 of the letters included in the 2005 edition are preserved in public libraries; this leaves 44% or 1,363 of the letters remaining in private hands, or in repositories that have yet to be located (TABLE 1). That so many of Debussy's letters remain in private collections is due to the fact that they have long been appreciated for their fine stylistic attributes, their humour, and, of course, their embodiment of the hand of the highly celebrated composer. Moreover, in recent years, the monetary value of Debussy's letters has conspicuously increased: a normal letter sells these days for a price that ranges between 1,500 and 8,000 euros. Such sums are of course difficult for librarians to find. But they do have the effect of encouraging some private collectors to sell their letters. (Although collectors began to prize Debussy's letters even before his death, it was in fact during the 1930s that their value began to rise to the stratosphere.)

To the best of my knowledge, the first sale by a dealer of a Debussy letter occurred in January 1902, when the antiquarian Charavay described Debussy in his catalogue as 'one of the best composers of the younger generation.'⁴ Unfortunately, it has not been possible to discover to whom that letter was addressed. Debussy did write to his friend Pierre Louÿs, the writer and poet, that 'the fellow who sold a letter of mine to Charavay is obviously someone who fears nothing; the only award I see such a man receiving for his courage is some kind of military medal.'⁵ Five months later, shortly after Debussy had become famous in the aftermath of the first performances of *Pelléas*, the well-known critic Pierre

Lalo, the son of the composer Édouard Lalo, sold another letter of Debussy's, dated 27 August 1900, in which Debussy had written: 'Many years ago I was forcibly removed from the Opéra for being too energetic in demonstrating my admiration for that charming masterpiece *Namouna*.'⁶

Most of Debussy's letters, 48.8% of them, including all documents falling into the categories described above, are still in France (TABLE 1).⁷ The number of letters conserved in other European countries is small: only 5.13%.⁸ By contrast, 15.91% of them are found in the United States of America, which makes the USA the second most important holder of the composer's correspondence. In other countries – Armenia, Brazil, Canada, and Japan – we find only 0.22% of the letters.⁹ However, for 29.94% of them, the current location is, alas, unknown.¹⁰

TABLE 1. Location of Debussy's letters throughout the world

Area	Distribution (%)	Details	Distribution (%)
Europe	53.93	France	48.8
		Other countries	5.13
		Switzerland	1.65
		Italy	1.17
Unites States of America	15.91	New York, Morgan Libray	5.1
		Austin, HRHRC	4.81
		New Haven, Beinecke Library	3.51
		Other	2.49
Other countries	0.22		
Still not located	29.94		

The fact that most of Debussy's autograph letters are found in French collections is consistent with the development of his career, which was played out essentially in his home country, even though between 1907 and 1914 he did briefly travel for concerts to Belgium, England,¹¹ Austria, Hungary, Russia, Italy, and The Netherlands.¹² If some letters are found in Italy (1.17% of them), this is because, for *Le Martyre de saint Sébastien*, Debussy was in contact with Gabriele D'Annunzio, who at the time was in France, but whose archives are in the Vittoriale degli Italiani (Gardone Riviera). The country of Switzerland, with 1.65%, possesses more letters than any European country outside of France,

owing to the presence there of the Paul Sacher Stiftung, in Basel, which houses the papers of both Stravinsky and Varèse. Furthermore, the Basel collector Rudolph Grumbacher, who owned a number of important Debussy letters and manuscripts, has now deposited them in the Paul Sacher Stiftung.

As for the United States, Debussy did at one point plan to travel there, but the project never came to fruition. A few major and knowledgeable collectors are responsible for the three most important American collections of Debussy letters. The first, now in the Morgan Library in New York, is that of Mrs. Margaret Gallatin Cobb (1907–2010), who was a passionate Debussy scholar, even though she never occupied an academic position. Of the 154 letters owned by the Morgan, more than 100 once belonged to Mrs. Cobb; these served her well when working on her book *Debussy and the Poets*,¹³ her study of Popelin, and her translation and revision of Dietsch's biography of the composer.¹⁴ Not long before her death in 2010, at the age of 102, she found time to edit the wonderful correspondence between Debussy and the conductor and composer Désiré-Émile Inghelbrecht, which she possessed, and which she published in 2005.¹⁵ The second main American collection, now at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre in Austin, Texas, formerly belonged to the famous collector Carlton Lake (1916–2006), an art critic who spent many years in Paris, was a passionate admirer of French culture, and purchased many documents concerning Alfred Jarry, Samuel Beckett, Édouard Dujardin, and a large number of musical manuscripts from the Durand archives, among them manuscripts of Ravel and Dukas. The collection of Debussy letters (133 *from* Debussy, 14 *to* Debussy) is particularly remarkable: it contains some 18 letters from Debussy to his publisher Georges Hartmann, 19 letters to the critic Georges Jean-Aubry and 26 to the critic Émile Vuillermoz, 9 to the writer Gabriel Mourey, and 14 of the 18 known letters that Chausson addressed to Debussy.¹⁶

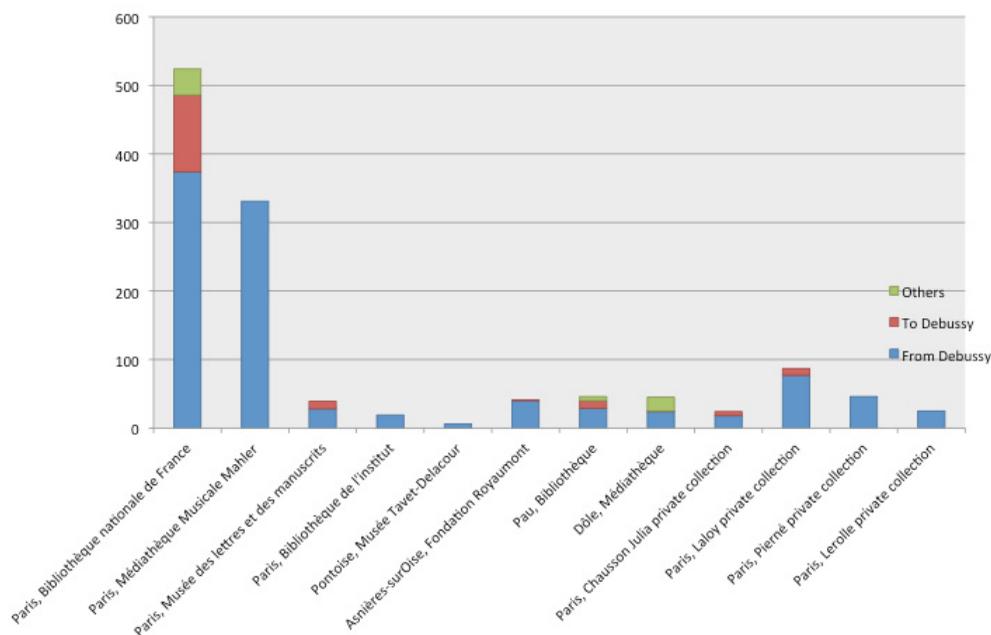
The third and final important American set of letters is that of another passionate and eclectic collector, Frederick R. Koch, who assembled in only eight years an amazing collection of literary and musical manuscripts, whose highlights include drafts for Proust's *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, Brahms's *Alte Liebe*, sketches for Schubert's great *Fantasia in F minor*, and the fascinating short score of *Pelléas et Mélisande*. This huge collection is now housed at the Beinecke Library of Yale University, in New Haven, Connecticut. The Koch collection is composed of 86 letters, including Debussy's letters to his first wife, Lilly Texier, and one very important letter on *Pelléas* to the English critic Edwin Evans.¹⁷

Finally, I should mention the papers of the violinist Arthur Hartmann, now found at the Free Library of Philadelphia. Arthur Hartmann – not to be confused with the publisher Georges Hartmann – made a few transcriptions of

works by Debussy, with the composer's approval, and gave a concert with him in February 1914.¹⁸

Turning our attention now back to France (TABLE 2), we find the most important collection of Debussy letters at the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), that is to say 17% of them (524 letters), mainly housed in the Département de la Musique: 374 letters *from* Debussy, 112 letters *to* Debussy, and 38 letters from others in his family. If the collection at the Bibliothèque nationale de France was at first a modest one consisting of some 100 letters, it was much expanded with the acquisition of the collection of Dolly de Tinan, the composer's stepdaughter, who gave to the library 34 letters written by Debussy to his mother, and 31 letters written by Gabriele D'Annunzio to Debussy and to his wife Emma.

TABLE 2. Location of Debussy's letters in France: public and private collections



The most considerable increase to the BnF collection came however from the purchase, on 5 February 1999, at the Hôtel Drouot, in Paris, of 83 letters from Debussy to Louÿs, and of 62 letters from Louÿs to Debussy.¹⁹ I should also mention the Victor Segalen archives housed in the Manuscript department of the Bibliothèque nationale. Unfortunately, 8 of Debussy's 22 letters to Segalen remain to be located.

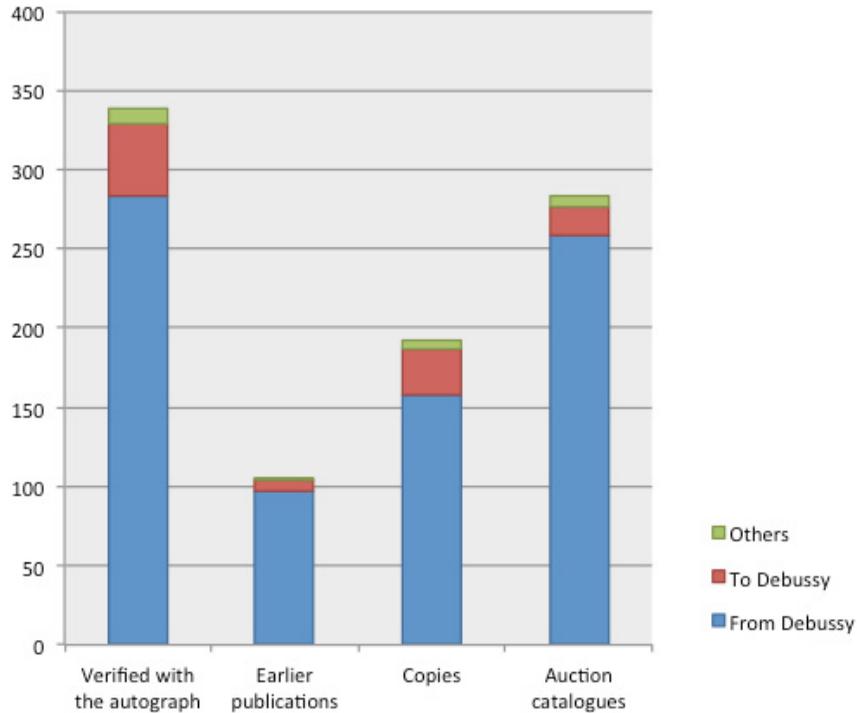
The second important collection of Debussy letters in Paris is found in the Médiathèque Musicale Mahler, where Debussy's letters to his publisher Jacques Durand are preserved: 10.76% of the total, or 330 letters.²⁰ Outside Paris, one can find most of the correspondence with the writer Paul-Jean Toulet, which is preserved both in the Fondation Royaumont, in Asnières-sur-Oise (the letters having once been owned by the pianist François Lang, who died in Auschwitz),²¹ and in the municipal library of Pau, where Toulet was born. Finally, the Médiathèque of Dôle, in the Jura, owns the papers of Pasteur Vallery-Radot, who was a friend of Debussy's towards the end of the composer's life.

Beyond those accessible in libraries, 343 letters (11.15% of the total) are still in private hands.²² Among these are: a part of the Chausson correspondence (24 letters), which still belongs to the family, as the collection was divided in half at time the estate was settled in the 1950s; the letters to the critic and man of letters Louis Laloy, even though 7 of the 84 letters to Laloy were sold in previous years; the letters to Gabriel Pierné (33 of them), and some of the letters to Édouard Colonne (13 of them), which are the property of the heirs of Gabriel Pierné; and the letters to the painter Henry Lerolle (25 of them), which are still in his family.

To conclude this chapter, let me specify that the 920 letters which have yet to be located – 29.94% or nearly one-third of all the letters published in 2005 – may be divided into four categories (TABLE 3):

1. letters (10.98% of the total or 338 letters) of which I possess copies of the autographs but of whose current owners I am unaware;²³ these are marked with an asterisk in the 2005 edition along with the words 'non localisé'; whenever possible, I have indicated the provenance of the letters and the auctions at which they were sold;
2. letters (3.44% of the total or 106 letters) which had been published earlier, but whose texts needed to be verified with the autograph;²⁴
3. letters (6.27% of the total or 193 letters) whose texts were transcribed from a copy made by a third party, for example, by Henry Borgeaud,²⁵ the editor of the astonishing Debussy-Louÿs correspondence published in 1945;²⁶
4. letters (9.25% of the total or 283 letters) of which we possess only excerpts from books or auction catalogues;²⁷ in some cases I was able to complete the text by comparing two or three different auction catalogues; but in general these transcriptions are not very reliable.

TABLE 3. Categories of Debussy's non-located letters



CORRESPONDENTS

Many of Debussy's correspondents were writers (TABLE 4) – something that partly confirms what Paul Dukas told Robert Brussel in 1926: 'The strongest influence exerted upon Debussy was that of literary figures, not that of musicians.'²⁸ Four of them were friends: René Peter, Paul-Jean Toulet, to a lesser degree D'Annunzio, and to the greatest extent, Pierre Louÿs (1870–1925), the famous author of the *Chansons de Bilitis*, with whom the composer corresponded from 1893 to 1904. Most of their interchange turned on that close friendship, but it also concerned various opera projects for which Louÿs was supposed to write librettos. None of these ever materialised. Nor did librettos materialise from others with whom Debussy discussed the possibility of an opera, including Toulet, Peter, Gabriel Mourey, and Victor Segalen.²⁹

TABLE 4. Debussy's letters classified by category of recipients

Category	Letters from Debussy	%	Details
Writers	498	19.26	Louÿs: 6.5%; Peter: 3.21%; Toulet: 2.94%; D'Annunzio: 1.23%; Mourey: 1.16%; Segalen: 0.85%; Régnier: 0.69%
Publishers	465	17.98	Durand: 13.23%; Hartmann: 3.17%
Journalists, Concert Agents and Theatre Managers	436	16.86	<i>Journalists</i> : 9.05% (Laloy: 3.24%; Godet: 2.27%; Vuillermoz: 1.19%; Jean-Aubry: 1.54%) <i>Concert Agents and Theatre Managers</i> : 2.05% (Astruc: 1.54%; Carré: 0.5%)
Composers	399	15.43	Caplet: 2.23%; Dukas: 1.5%; Pierné: 1.27%; Chausson: 1.27%; Inghelbrecht: 1.19%; Messager: 0.81%; Fauré: 0.54%; Varèse: 0.46%; Stravinski: 0.38%; Falla: 0.38%
Performers	256	9.9	<i>Singers</i> : 2.74% (Perier: 0.5%) <i>Conductors</i> : 2.66% (Colonne: 0.73%; Doret: 0.65%; Fuchs: 0.46%) <i>Instrumentalists</i> : 1.66% (Hartmann, violinist: 0.85%; Rummel, pianist: 0.42%)
Artists	58	2.23	Lerolle: 0.96%
Others	179	6.99	<i>Financial affairs</i> : 0.38% <i>Doctors</i> : 0.5% <i>Booksellers</i> : 0.38% <i>Politicians</i> : 0.38%
Not identified	92	3.55	
Family	202	7.80	Emma: 4.4%; Lilly: 2.82%
Total	2585	613	

Among Debussy's correspondents, publishers, after writers, are found most frequently. With Jacques Durand, Debussy dealt closely as both a friend and a business partner, as he did to a lesser extent with his first publisher, Georges Hartmann, of whom Debussy said, in a letter to Louÿs of the 25 April 1900, just after Hartmann's death: 'he was a lucky find for me and he played his part with a smile and a good grace you don't often come across among art philanthropists.'³⁰ I would nonetheless like to emphasise the fact that Jacques Durand was by far

the most frequent correspondent: we have 340 letters from Debussy to Durand, most of them from the period from 1902 to 1917.³¹ This correspondence was partially published by Durand himself, in 1927, in a volume containing 223 letters of the total of 340. Durand did not include 91 letters and made cuts in the 223 others, because of passages concerning financial matters or illness, or because the composer had set down offensive remarks about his contemporaries. Furthermore, Durand's volume contains errors of dating and textual transformations that render Debussy's style more conventional than in fact it was.³² The correspondence with Durand was thus presented fully and unexpurgated only with our publication of the complete letters in 2005. It reveals in newfound detail the actual chronology of the works, and how difficult Debussy found it to complete some of them. Moreover the contracts that Debussy signed with the Durand publishing house are fully transcribed for the first time in the 2005 edition.³³

After the writers and publishers come journalists, concert agents, and theatre managers. Here we have:

- 40 letters to Gabriel Astruc, the founder of the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and the organiser of the Russian Season with Diaghilev, and 13 letters to Albert Carré, the director of the Opéra-Comique, where *Pelléas et Mélisande* was performed for the first time in April 1902;
- 84 letters to Louis Laloy, a highly intelligent fellow who was at once musicologist, music critic, and sinologist, and who played an important role in Debussy's life between 1903 and 1910;
- 59 letters to the musicologist and music critic Robert Godet, the only man, along with the composer Paul Dukas, with whom Debussy communicated over his entire lifetime, even though there was a gap of eight years, from 1902 to 1910, caused by Debussy's breakup with his first wife, Lilly Texier;
- 31 letters to the critic Émile Vuillermoz, who was in contact with Debussy primarily because the composer had agreed to write a regular column for the journal of the Société Internationale de Musique, the *Revue Musicale S.I.M.*, in 1913 and 1914.

Only then come composers: 39 letters were addressed to Dukas, who was the dedicatee of *La Damselle Éluë* [*The Blessed Damsel*], a mystical and even pagan oratorio, from the period 1890 to 1893, on a text by the Pre-Raphaelite poet Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Dukas was a close friend of Debussy's in the early years as well as at the end of his life. But closest to Debussy was André Caplet, to whom Debussy wrote some 60 letters, and with whom he was in contact from 1908 until the end of his life. Caplet helped Debussy complete the orchestration of *Le Martyre de saint Sébastien* during the spring of 1911. He also made a

transcription for two pianos of the orchestral score of the three *Images*. There are 21 letters to André Messager: these are particularly beautiful, interesting, and warm, because Debussy recognised that without Messager's contributions as conductor in the first performances of *Pelléas* at the Opéra-Comique, the opera would not have enjoyed the great success that in fact it did indeed enjoy from the very beginning. That there are only 21 letters to Messager is due to the fact that Messager, like others, was deeply disappointed by Debussy when the composer left his first wife in 1904. The relationship with Ernest Chausson – to whom Debussy addressed at least 33 letters, the number we possess, most of them from the period between April 1893 and March 1894 – was likewise shortened for similar reasons: Chausson had criticised Debussy for continuing a sexual relationship with his then mistress, Gaby Dupont, at the same time as he announced his engagement to the singer Thérèse Roger. The letters he wrote to Chausson are long, confidential, and particularly interesting, for it was during his close friendship with Chausson that Debussy began to compose his one completed opera, *Pelléas*. The letters to Stravinsky, far less numerous, demonstrate the admiration Debussy felt for the Russian composer, even though he was somewhat suspicious of Stravinsky, as Stravinsky was of him.

In the list of Debussy's correspondents, performers, mainly conductors and singers, arrive in fifth position. Debussy paid close attention to the way his music was to be performed. For example, when there was a change in the cast of *Pelléas* at the Opéra-Comique, he asked the new singers to come to his home in order to rehearse with them and offer important advice. Debussy may have had a reputation of being somewhat antisocial, but he usually wrote to the singers after a première in order to thank them. He also was particularly demanding with the conductors of his works and was usually present during rehearsals.

As is shown in TABLE 5, Debussy's relationships with artists were not particularly important, except for those with the painter Henry Lerolle, Chausson's brother in law, and one of the close witnesses to the genesis of *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Even though I know that Debussy maintained a close friendship with the sculptor Alexandre Charpentier, I have been able to find only four letters addressed to the artist, too few to gain a notion of what their friendship was really like.³⁴

The penultimate group of Debussy's correspondents includes letters to various other individuals, for example, businessmen (when Debussy was beleaguered by financial difficulties), doctors (when he was dealing with the cancer that eventually ended his life) and booksellers (for Debussy was always a passionate reader). And the final 'group' of correspondents consists of his two wives. The letters we possess to his first wife, Lilly, are, firstly, from 1899, when he was

courting her with a view towards marriage, and, secondly, from 1902 to 1904, when their relationship was coming to an end. The letters to the woman who became his second wife, Emma Bardac, begin in 1904; in general, they concern Debussy's travels to Austria, Russia, Italy, and The Netherlands.

From these statistics we may gain a panoramic outline of what is found in detail in the letters published in the 2005 edition. But significant gaps in the picture remain. For example, there is only a single letter from Debussy to his parents, which dates from May 1909, when the composer was in London for the Covent Garden première of *Pelléas et Mélisande*.³⁵ In fact the transcription of that letter was made from a photocopy, preserved in the Dietschy Archives that are now in the Musée Claude Debussy at Saint-Germain-en-Laye. I have no idea how Dietschy, one of the first biographers of the composer, obtained this document.³⁶ It is possible that he was in touch with Debussy's sister, Adèle, who probably kept the original manuscript, since the letter never appeared in auction or bookseller catalogues. From letters to his family we would have a far richer view of Debussy's life, for example, during his stay at the Villa Medici from February 1885 to March 1887. In fact, we know of Debussy's feelings about life in Rome only from the letters he wrote to Henry Vasnier, where he complains bitterly about the Villa Medici, as well as from the letters he wrote to the bookseller Émile Baron, in 1886. Other lacunae include the letters to Satie, to Camille Chevillard, the conductor of the first performances of the *Nocturnes* and of *La Mer*, and to Mary Garden, the creator of the role of Mélisande in 1902.³⁷

The lacunae are even more crucial among the letters received by Debussy (TABLE 5). He surely received many communications from people of whose names, now, we simply have no idea.³⁸ The composer seems to have treated the letters he received with draconian economy. In August 1913, writing to Jacques Durand about the publication of the songs entitled *Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé*, Debussy asked his publisher to return to him the letter he had received from Doctor Bonniot, Mallarmé's son-in-law, in order to store it in his 'archives'.³⁹ A few months earlier, he had sent to Durand another letter that he had received from Charles Morice, a poet and a close friend of Verlaine's and the dedicatee of *Art poétique*, whom Debussy had met in the 1890s: Debussy told Durand to read the letter, then to destroy it.⁴⁰

Of the 310 letters addressed to Debussy that we possess, most are from writers: there are 102 from Pierre Louÿs, 33 from Paul-Jean Toulet, 18 from D'Annunzio, 14 from Segalen,⁴¹ 2 from Maeterlinck, most notably one dated October 1895 in which the writer gives the composer his authorization to set to music his play *Pelléas et Mélisande*, 3 from Mallarmé, 2 from Henry de Régnier, 2 from André Gide, and 2 from Paul Valéry.⁴²

TABLE 5. Letters addressed to Debussy classified by category of senders

Category	Letters to Debussy	%	Details
Writers	181	58.4	Louÿs: 32.90%; Toulet: 10.64%; D'Annunzio: 5.80%; Segalen: 4.51%; Mallarmé: 0.96%; Maeterlinck: 0.64%; Valéry: 0.64% 2; Gide: 0.64%
Publishers	9	2.9	G. Hartmann: 1.61%; Durand: 1.61%
Journalists, Concert Agents, and Theatre Managers	18	5.8	
Composers	59	19.03	Chausson: 5.80%; Stravinsky: 1.61%
Performers	29	9.35	
Artists	4	1.29	
Others	6	1.93	
Not identified	0	0	
Family	4	1.3	
Total	310	100	

Except for the 18 letters addressed to Debussy by his friend the composer Ernest Chausson, and the 5 others addressed to Debussy by Igor Stravinsky, we have only tiny bits of the correspondence he had with Alfred Bruneau, Édouard Colonne, Paul Dukas, Manuel de Falla, Vincent d'Indy, Erik Satie and Eugène Ysaÿe.⁴³ From his close friends André Caplet, Louis Laloy, and Robert Godet, nothing survives other than 5 letters Godet sent to Debussy at the end of his life, only one of which Debussy answered, because he was too ill to deal with the others. Moreover, we were able to add to the known letters only 8 more from the pens of his main publishers during his lifetime, 5 from Georges Hartmann and 3 from Jacques Durand, a small number by comparison with the 80 we possess that were addressed by Debussy to Hartmann, and the 340 he addressed to Durand. Lastly, the letters and telegrams that Emma Debussy, his second wife, sent to Debussy when he was abroad, were surely destroyed after Debussy's death, in March 1918. Debussy's reply to Emma, dated 8 December 1913, reveals the strong reproaches that she made to him: 'Do you realise that you

wrote: "I don't know how I'll manage not to bear your music a grudge?"... Don't you think that's enough to upset one's equilibrium somewhat?'⁴⁴ That is the only sentence we have from any of Emma's letters to her husband, to which we may add three lines found on a small visiting card for his name day of 22 August 1911.⁴⁵

To conclude, let me mention once again the supplementary volume of Debussy correspondence that I am now preparing. At the present time I am in possession of 137 letters that will be added to those presented in the 2005 edition.⁴⁶ These are divided into two groups: 93 letters that are entirely new, and 43 letters of which only excerpts appear in the 2005 edition.⁴⁷ Of these new or partly new letters, 26 are found in private collections, 19 others are found in libraries, and the rest, 92 letters, are located I know not where: I am aware of them only from auction and bookseller catalogues. Of course this number is constantly changing. The task of discovering and collecting the letters, by comparison with what we had to do while preparing the 2005 edition, has become rather more complicated because of the internet. The web does of course make it possible to efficiently consult many library catalogues; it also has encouraged the online sale of letters and documents, often with only incomplete or inadequate documentation. The positive side of this is that online sellers frequently include facsimiles, in colour, of the documents they wish to sell. To keep abreast of them requires constant, almost daily attention. Editing Debussy's correspondence is rewarding, on a day-to-day basis. But the editor also has to remind himself, daily, that the work, in truth, will never be 'done'.

Notes

- 1 Claude Debussy, *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, ed. by François Lesure and Denis Herlin, Paris: Gallimard, 2005. There was a second issue in 2010 which included some corrections, but no new letters added.
- 2 Claude Debussy, *Lettres 1884–1918*, ed. by François Lesure, Paris: Hermann, 1980; Claude Debussy, *Correspondance 1884–1918*, ed. by François Lesure, Paris: Hermann, 1993.
- 3 Debussy, *Correspondance 1884–1918*, p. 18.
- 4 Paris: Catalogue Charavay (January 1902), no. 47879: ‘un des meilleurs compositeurs de musique de la jeune école’.
- 5 Debussy, *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, p. 635: ‘Le monsieur qui a vendu une lettre de moi à Charavay est sûrement un homme qui ne craint plus grand-chose et, je ne vois guère que la médaille militaire qui puisse récompenser un tel sang-froid!’
- 6 Debussy, *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, p. 567: ‘Il y a déjà très longtemps, je fus mis à la porte de l’Opéra, pour avoir manifesté trop hautement de mon admiration pour ce délicat chef-d’œuvre qui s’appelle *Namouna*.’
- 7 1,188 (from Debussy), 62 contracts, 174 (to Debussy), 77 (other members of his family).
- 8 131 (from Debussy), 12 (to Debussy), 15 (other members of his family).
- 9 7 (from Debussy).
- 10 797 (from Debussy), 100 (to Debussy), 23 (other members of his family).
- 11 Debussy also went to London at the end of May 1903 for Wagner’s *Ring*.
- 12 We do not take into account his stays in Russia, Spain and Italy, when he was in Mme von Meck’s service between 1880 and 1882. Unfortunately, no letters have survived from this period, except for one by Mme von Meck. See Debussy, *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, pp. 11–12.
- 13 *The Poetic Debussy, A Collection of His Songs Texts and Selected Letters*, 2nd edition, ed. by Margaret G. Cobb, trans. Richard Miller, Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1994.
- 14 Marcel Dietschy, *A Portrait of Claude Debussy*, ed. and trans. by William Ashbrook and Margaret G. Cobb, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
- 15 *Debussy’s Letters to Inghelbrecht: The Story of a Musical Friendship*, Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005.
- 16 The 14 letters from Chausson were out of reach during my first stay in Austin, Texas in 2001. This is the reason why they were not found in the 2005 edition of the *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, which was corrected in the second issue of 2010 of the *Correspondance (1872–1918)*. See, for example, pp. 133–135 and pp. 142–143.

- 17 *A Catalogue of the Frederick R. Koch at the Beinecke Library Yale University*, ed. by Vincent Giroud in collaboration with Christa Sammons and Karen Spicher, New Haven: Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, 2006.
- 18 *'Claude Debussy As I Knew Him' and Other Writings of Arthur Hartmann*, ed. by Samuel Hsu, Sidney Grolnic, and Mark Peters, Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2003.
- 19 Some of the letters were separated from the two main lots and were not bought by the Bibliothèque nationale de France. These were in Armand Godoy's collection. When Henri Borgeaud published the *Correspondance de Claude Debussy et Pierre Louÿs (1893–1904)* in 1945 (Paris: Librairie José Corti), he did not have access to this collection and edited most of the letters from two publications in *L'Esprit français* in 1931 and 1932 and in *Le Mois Suisse* in 1942 and 1943. See Debussy, *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, p. 2233 for precise bibliographical references.
- 20 This collection is a deposit made by Jean-Manuel Mobillion de Scarano, the former owner of the Éditions Durand. Some of them are however still in the Durand Archives.
- 21 See Denis Herlin 'La collection musicale de François Lang', in: *Collectionner la musique: histoires d'une passion*, ed. by Denis Herlin, Catherine Massip, Jean Duron and Dinko Fabris, Turnhout: Brepols, 2011, pp. 200–216.
- 22 301 (from Debussy), 30 (to Debussy), 12 (other members of his family).
- 23 283 (from Debussy), 46 (to Debussy), 9 (other members of his family).
- 24 97 (from Debussy), 7 (to Debussy), 2 (other members of his family).
- 25 158 (from Debussy), 29 (to Debussy), 6 (other members of his family).
- 26 See n. 18.
- 27 259 (from Debussy), 18 (to Debussy), 6 (other members of his family).
- 28 Robert Brussel, 'Claude Debussy et Paul Dukas', *La Revue musicale*, VIII/7, 1 May 1926 (Special issue: *La Jeunesse de Claude Debussy*), p. 101 (197): 'La plus forte influence subie par Debussy est celle des littérateurs. Non pas celle des musiciens.'
- 29 See Robert Orledge, *Debussy and the Theatre*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, particularly Parts III and IV.
- 30 Debussy, *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, p. 557: 'ç'avait été quelqu'un de providentiel pour moi et il mettait à jouer ce rôle une bonne grâce et un bon sourire, assez rares chez les philanthropes d'Art.'
- 31 They are two more to Jacques Durand's father, Auguste.
- 32 For example, the text of Debussy's letter of 27 February 1909 is rather different from that published in *Lettres de Claude Debussy à son éditeur*, ed. by Jacques Durand, Paris: A. Durand et fils, Éditeurs, 1927, p. 69 (see Debussy, *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, pp. 1158–1159).
- 33 Contracts with other publishers have also been also included, as far as possible. For an analysis of the latter contracts, see Denis Herlin, 'An Artist High and Low, or, Debussy and

- Money', in *Rethinking Debussy*, ed. by Elliott Antokoletz and Marianne Wheeldon, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 149–202.
- 34 On their friendship, see Jean-Michel Nectoux, *Harmonie en bleu et or, Debussy, la musique et les arts*, Paris: Fayard, 2005, pp. 127–131.
- 35 Debussy, *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, pp. 1184–1185.
- 36 Marcel Dietschy knew of another letter to Debussy's mother, that I was unable to find, and quoted a small extract in his biography. See Marcel Dietschy, *La Passion de Claude Debussy*, Neuchâtel: À la Baconnière, 1962, p. 220.
- 37 There is only one letter in Debussy, *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, p. 637.
- 38 There is one exception, dating to summer 1903. Many letters addressed to Debussy survive, because he was on holidays at Bichain with his first wife, Lilly. He probably left them when he decided to come back to Paris. The following year, he did not come to Bichain, because he felt in love with Emma Bardac. Those letters of summer 1903 addressed to Debussy were kept by Lilly. See Debussy, *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, pp. 754–787.
- 39 Debussy, *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, p. 1653.
- 40 Debussy, *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, p. 1576.
- 41 If the text of the nine first letters from Segalen is published in the Debussy's *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, it is because the writer made a draft of the letter before sending it to Debussy. But Debussy did keep the five long letters that Segalen sent to from China between 1909 and 1913.
- 42 To have an idea of the other writers with whom Debussy corresponded, see also *Vente de livres précieux anciens, romantiques, modernes, manuscrits, documents et lettres autographes Collections Jules Huret et Claude Debussy, 1 December 1933*, Paris: Édouard Giard, Georges Andrieux, 1933, p. 39, nos. 207–208 (2 letters from André Gide); p. 39, no. 211 (24 letters from Joseph Bédier, Georges Courteline, Maurice Donnay, Henri Lavedan, Camille Mauclair, Robert de Montesquiou, Joséphin Peladan, Henri de Régnier, Saint-Pol-Roux, Victorien Sardou, Laurent Tailhade, André Hallays, Georges Jean-Aubry, etc.); p. 39, no. 213 (2 letters from Maurice Maeterlinck, 1 to Henri de Régnier from Maeterlinck, 1 from Georgette Leblanc); p. 40, no. 214 (3 letters from Stéphane Mallarmé, 2 letters from docteur Bonniot, Mallarmé's son in-law); p. 40, no. 217 (4 letters from Henri de Régnier); p. 41, no. 221 (5 letters from Victor Segalen); p. 41, no. 224 (1 letter from Paul Valéry).
- 43 To have an idea of the other composers and performers with whom Debussy corresponded, see also *Vente de livres précieux*, p. 34, no. 179 (40 letters from Désiré-Émile Inghelbrecht, André Caplet, Édouard Colonne, Eugène Ysaÿe, Jean Perier, Lucienne Bréval, Aurélien Lugné-Poe, Arturo Toscanini, Bernardino Molinari, Francesco de Guarnieri, Giusppe Depanis, Vittorio Gui, Ildebrando Pizzetti, Enrico di San Martino, Leone Sinigaglia, Serge de Diaghilev, Tamar Karsavina, Ludmilla Schollar, Nadejda Rimski-Korsakov, Sergei Koussewitsky, Vaslav Nijinski, etc.); p. 34, no. 180 (29 letters from Alfred Bruneau, Gustave Charpentier, Vincent d'Indy, Théodore Dubois, Paul Dukas, Manuel de Falla, Gabriel Fauré, Charles Gounod, Pierre Lalo, Fernand Le Borne, Gabriel Pierné, Henri Rabaud, Igor Stravinsky).

- 44 Debussy, *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, p. 1717: ‘As-tu bien remarqué que tu m’as écrit “Je ne sais pas comment je ferai pour ne pas garder rancune à ta musique”... Crois-tu qu’il n’y a pas de quoi perdre un peu la tête?’
- 45 Debussy, *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, p. 1448.
- 46 Concerning the 93, 80 are by Debussy, the 8 others are addressed to the composer, and the two last are by Chouchou, Debussy’s daughter, and Emma, his wife; for the 43 completed letters, 40 are by Debussy, and the 3 others are destined to the composer.
- 47 The discovery of the autograph gives us the opportunity to complete the text, or to correct it. Sometimes, letters which were approximately dated could be assigned a precise date. For example, a letter to Pierre Louÿs, which was dated 1898 with a question mark (Debussy, *Correspondance (1872–1918)*, p. 437), and for which we had a small extract, has been completed and dated to 6 July 1898.