Musica Academica
Volume 3. Issue 2 (2026): 54-77
DOI: 10.61215/MA.2026.vol.2.iss.2.05

TRANSFORMATIONS OF BELL SONORITY IN FRENCH PIANO MUSIC: FROM LISZT TO DEBUSSY AND RAVEL

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https://doi.org/10.61215/MA.2026.vol.3.iss.2.05

Abstract: *This study examines the transformation of bell sonority in piano music from Franz Liszt to French piano music of the early twentieth century. It proceeds from the premise that Liszt does not treat the bell merely as an illustrative sound effect, but develops several stable compositional models of bell sonority that may be traced through texture, register, intervallic design, harmonic language, repetition, resonance, and semantic function. On this basis, the study analyses Liszt's* Sposalizio *and* Angelus! *as reference types of bell-related sound organisation and sets them primarily in relation to Debussy's* Cloches à travers les feuilles *and* La cathédrale engloutie*. As a brief concluding extension, it also considers Ravel's* La vallée des cloches *as a further refinement of French bell sonority. The analyses show that Debussy and, in a more concentrated way, Ravel do not adopt Lisztian compositional possibilities literally, but transform them into a different poetics of sound: bell sonority shifts from thematically and gesturally articulated imitation towards subtler, more colouristic, and more harmonically open forms of musical space. Whereas in Liszt the bell often remains linked to spiritual, poetic, or symbolic meaning, in French piano music of the early twentieth century its function becomes more closely associated with distance, resonance, spatial organisation, and temporal stasis. The study therefore argues not for a direct linear influence, but for continuities in compositional possibility through which Romantic bell imitation is transformed into a sonorous principle of piano writing.*

Keywords: *Franz Liszt, Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, piano music, bell sonority*

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