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Piano Portraits of the Belle
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By Catherine Kautsky

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Debussy's Paris: Portraits of the Belle Époque takes readers on a tour of Paris through detailed descriptions of the city's diversions and the music Debussy wrote reflecting them. Catherine Kautsky explores how key works reveal not only the most appealing aspects of Paris, but also the more disquieting attitudes of the time. In contrast to the childlike innocence of fairy tales, minstrel shows had racist overtones, colonization entailed domination, and the brooding nationalism of the era was rife with hostility. Debussy left no avenue unexplored, and his piano works present a sweeping overview of the passions, vices, and obsessions of the era's Parisians.

When played today, Debussy's music breathes the story of one the world's most fascinating cities. Kautsky reveals little known elements of Parisian life during the Belle Époque and weaves the music, the man, the city, and the era into an indissoluble whole. Her portrait will delight anyone who has ever been entranced by Debussy's music or the city that inspired it.

Catherine Kautsky is chair of keyboard at Lawrence University and has been lauded by the New York Times as “a pianist who can play Mozart and Schubert as though their sentiments and habits of speech coincided exactly with hers...” She has concertized widely, performing in major halls in New York, Chicago, Washington, and Boston, soloing with the St. Louis Symphony and other orchestras and appearing frequently on public radio.

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