



## COMPOSER BIOGRAPHY

**CLAUDE DEBUSSY**

BORN: August 22, 1862

ERA/STYLE: French Impressionism

DIED: March 25, 1918

HOMETOWN: Paris, France

Claude Debussy was born in France in 1862. His parents ran a china shop in a small town outside of Paris. There was not much money, and Debussy's parents had to work many jobs to support the family. A family friend paid for his piano lessons. At first, Debussy thought he wanted to be a sailor, because he loved the water so much. However, after taking a few piano lessons, he decided that he would much rather become a musician. Although his family was not musical, he excelled at the piano and entered the Paris Conservatory when he was 11 years old. For the next 10 years he studied and wrote music at the famous music school.

Debussy won prizes for his piano playing. However, the teachers were not as impressed with his compositions. Debussy had a desire to make a new kind of music. Most of the teachers did not know what to do with him and his "strange" ideas. Debussy was very interested in the new style of painting that the artists of his time were experimenting with. These artists became known as Impressionists. The Impressionist artists did not try to make a clear, exact picture, but instead gave a hint or impression of a general shape. Debussy imitated Impressionist art with his music. Instead of using paint to create an Impressionist picture, he used a wide variety of sounds to create music that people had never heard before. He was able to express the same kind of musical scene through his music as the Impressionist artists did with a brush and paint.

He took many years to develop his own style, and was nearly 40 years old before he achieved international fame. Today, he is considered one of the most influential composers in the modern era of music.