

CLAIR DE LUNE | NO. 3 FROM SUITE BERGAMASQUE

CLAUDE DEBUSSY
(1862-1918)

i.e. "au clair de la lune", or "under the light of the moon"

Debussy's original title: "Ballade romantique"

Andante très expressif

pp con sordina

count: 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

count: 1 2 3 1 2 1 2

descending bass line

left hand enters on weak beat

three programmatic elements: the moon, water, and love

count: 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

three 2-bar phrases
begin here

count: 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

"bottom of the lake"

keep flow + lightness in left hand

count: 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3

dying away

Exercise: to improve control of the keyboard, take a chord in the bass and try to produce an identical sound three times in a row

Tempo rubato

three layers: 1) bass, 2) melody in octaves, 3) chords

don't alter fingering when practicing layers separately

practice as block chords, then
arpeggiate slightly

no bass, but continue to hear all the layers

un poco mosso

play arpeggios evenly, with flatter fingers



bass outlines D_b arpeggio

D_b major

F minor

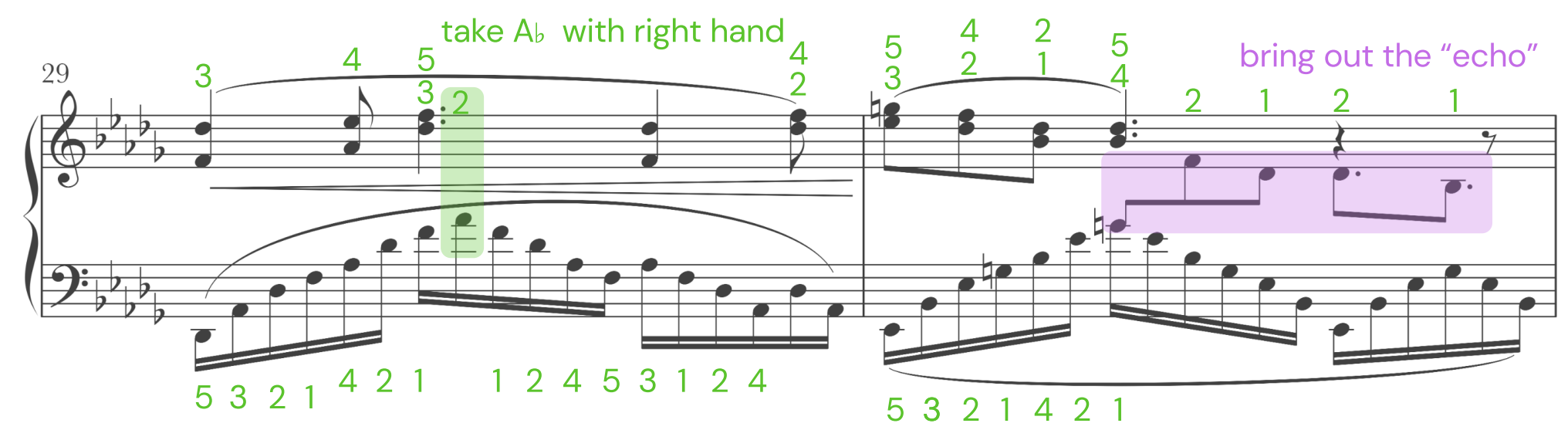
take time for special harmony

F_b major (E major)

this time, keep flowing into next bar

take A_b with right hand

bring out the "echo"



5 3 2 1 4 2 1

1 2 4 5 3 1 2 4

5 3 2 1 4 2 1

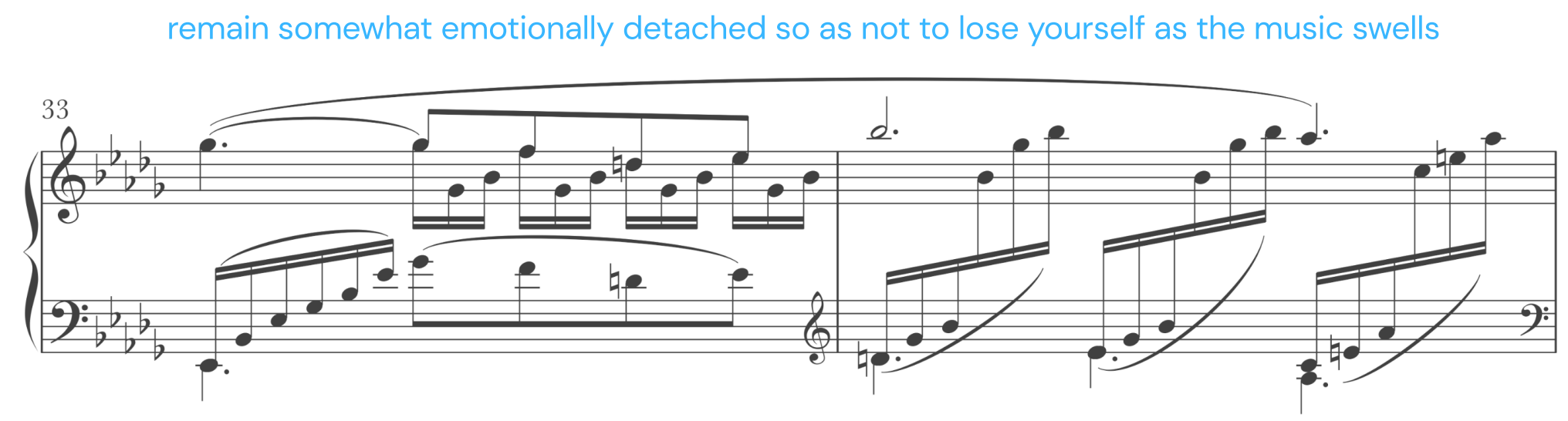
apply arm and finger weight to top voice



p

p

remain somewhat emotionally detached so as not to lose yourself as the music swells



p

35 *cresc.*

37 *En animant* *più cresc.*

apply arm weight to top voice

show G# falling to F#

three layers: 1) melody 2) bass 3) arpeggio

39

give the illusion of breathing

41 *f* *dim.*

"pure romantic ecstasy"

take F# with right hand

bring out inner line (clarinet-like)

43 Calmato

2 1 2 1

4 3 5 4 3 4 3 1

phrase the repetition differently

pp

save the quietest dynamic for m. 51

unchanging A \flat harmony: cellos and basses

three flutes

45

47

cello

treat as chorale and show voice emerging from arpeggios

"the miracle"

49

take your time

back to reality, with regrets

opening theme, with new harmonies

51 a Tempo I

8va

ppp

F pedal tone

53 (8)

bass finally changes,
preparing for descending cascade

55

hold suspense

57

7

59

pp

C_b resolves to B_b within G_b major chord

the most important note of entire piece, according to Debussy

5

2

“bottom of the lake”

coda (remembering last night's dream)

63

play next three bars with even harmonies (not vocal)

pp morendo jusqu'à la fin

cross over with left hand

67

cross over with left hand

69

left hand

right hand

2+3

allow time for left hand to return to bass

“as light as a bird”

no fermata, release on beat 3