

***La chanson de la folle au bord de la mer* by Alkan**

What does the title of this work mean?

It means 'the song of the mad woman on the sea shore'. It's a poetic/descriptive title. The type of work is a prelude (from a set of preludes) - usually has one idea, repeated throughout. We can hear the mad woman's song on the shore through the bass low register chords which are the relentless waves, and the sustained sad melody of the woman in the higher register. The forward movement towards the climax, and the interchange between minor and major tonalities suggest her madness.

What key is this in?

This is in Ab minor but always in 2nd inversion, keeping the harmonic movement insecure (ties in with the 'madness' idea). It moves to Ab major in the middle section, then back to Ab minor for the final section.

Song form - verses and interludes

Introduction - 'call' bars 1 to 4

Section 1 (verse) bars 5 to 13

Interlude - bars 14 to 16

Section 2 (verse 2) bars 17 to 31

Section 3 (verse 3 - repetition of verse 1) bars 33 to 39

Coda (interlude) bars 40 to end - finishes with Ab minor in root position

Period/Style - Romantic.

Style - Romantic style - melody has long phrases, melody very important. Harmonic shifts chromatically or to unrelated keys. Accent of dissonance. Homophonic texture (melody in foreground). Epic or small pieces, character pieces typical. Piano development influenced music greatly, many piano pieces written at this time. Romantic style (from 'About Music') - expansive singing melodies; wide ranging melodies, varied with chromatic inflections; rhythmic diversity and elasticity; tempo rubato; increasing chromaticism; expanded concepts of tonality; homophony, turning to increased polyphony in later years of era; genres included symphonic poems, art songs, solo piano works; expansion of forms and interest in continuous as well as miniature programmatic forms; mainly secular works for paying audiences (not sacred for church); wide ranging dynamics for expressive purposes; new instruments; increased virtuosity with more direction from composers in scores; expression concerned with individual emotion, mood, atmosphere; interest in the bizarre and macabre.

Composer/Genres:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles-Valentin_Alkan

Mostly piano, organ and pedal piano works including sonatas and descriptive pieces. Also chamber works.

Notation:

Lentement - slowly

Metronome marking 88 quavers per minute

soutenu - sustained

con pedale - with pedal

p - piano -soft

crescendo - gradually getting louder

tres soutenu - very sustained

pedale sempre - always pedal

Tristement - sadly

slurs - play legato - play smoothly

repeat signs - repeat the section

un peu plus de son, et en animent peu a peu - a little more sound and animated little by little

en augmentant toujours - increasing always

avec emportement - with enthusiasm

en dim beaucoup - softening a lot

R.Hocking - quick analysis sheet

en rall beaucoup - slowing a lot
en s'eloignant - fading away
long repos - long pause
fermata - pause - hold the note longer than written
en mesure - in tempo
poco rinforzando - a little reinforced
pp - pianissimo - very soft
en se perdant - dying away
rall. poco - a little getting slower
ppp - piano pianissimo - very very soft