

# The Engulfed Cathedral

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"The Engulfed Cathedral" is one of Claude Debussy's most beautiful works of impressionism. Inspired by an ancient Breton legend, it tells its story simply but with the most gorgeous effects.

Once upon a time, as the legend goes, there was a quaint little picturesque French village, situated in a deep valley, and protected from the surrounding sea by an immense wall. By dint of constant pressure, the sea broke through the wall and flooded the city. Immediately there were turmoil and confusion everywhere. The terrified peasants rushed to their great cathedral, weeping and praying within the protection of its walls. But even here they were not safe, for the vengeful waters found them and poured in to devour them. Then, over all the noise and madness, was heard the triumphal, celestial peal of the great organ, bringing peace and rest to the hearts of

the dying. And it was said that the organist was an angel of God!

And Debussy, listening on the cliff overlooking the now peaceful sea, faintly heard the chimes of the cathedral bells. Now they grow louder and still louder over the deep rumble of the sea. He heard the far-away cries of the stricken peasants, almost obliterated by the murmur of the ominous water. Then he heard the glorious melody of overpowering strength and beauty. The heart-rending notes rose and fell in celestial crescendos of depth and purity. There was peace and joy and triumph in those tones—peace after a hurried unrest, joy after the cares of the world, and triumph over the pettiness and bitterness and material luxuries of life. The organ notes faded away, and once more the ancient bells pealed forth, calling those merely mortal to the depths of the unknown.