

# The Sunken Cathedral



Claude Debussy initially wanted his tenth piano prelude, *La cathédrale engloutie* (The Sunken Cathedral), to be performed in a church at the bottom of a lake or large pond. To prove that it could be done, Claude spent hours practicing the piece underwater in a diving suit. Although he was able to hit all of the right notes, the sheet music tended to drift away from him. So he hired Mimi Dinklaker, a professional page-turner who owned a Rouquayrol regulator, to ride herd on his music. But then he discovered his piano was naturally buoyant; it wouldn't stay put underwater. And when he lined the piano with cement blocks to keep it from floating to the surface, it went sharply out of tune. "*Estoy harto!*" cried Debussy in Catalan, finally giving up on an *in situ* premiere. He did, however, *pretend* to play it during the summer of 1912 when he was Sea World of Paris's Guest Artist.