

THE PORTRAYAL OF WATER  
AND  
WAVE PATTERNS IN THE  
MUSIC  
OF CLAUDE DEBUSSY

By

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No part of this thesis has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or any other university. Nor has it formed part of any sole or jointly-authored publications.

The length of the thesis is 49,652 words. After consultation with the Music School and Graduate Office, I was granted an extension of up to 10,000 additional words (50,000).

## Abstract

### The Portrayal of Water and Wave Patterns in the Music of Claude Debussy

My thesis considers the shaping of Debussy's aesthetic, the musical language he uses within an oeuvre that centres on the role of Nature as imaginative stimulus, and its particular relevance to his Water pieces within which I determine wave patterns.

An examination of his piano and orchestral pieces, with particular reference to *L'isle joyeuse*, 'Reflets dans l'eau' from *Images I* and *La mer* reveals these wave patterns on every level of composition. Debussy's use of modes to produce 'floating' harmonies that more easily suggest sliding curves and multiple lines above an equilibrium of water/key, together with his treatment of 'rhythmicised time' to evoke fluidity and the metamorphosis of spatial awareness, aid a perception of waves and liquidity within his Water music. This flowing organicism is supported by ternary-type forms when discernible (in an otherwise 'open' structure), and meticulous attention to musical instructions, particularly in the use of specific dynamic waves of sound, which repeatedly swell and contract. These elements contributed to the appearance of an improvisatory style that assisted the performer in the realization of Debussy's conception for a 'free' music, so that the listener in turn recognizes audible waves of sound. All of these aspects are supported by the composer's visual acuity, in the configuration and alignment of his notes and symbols on the written page, (which I have demonstrated on the relevant scores). Whether cognitively or intuitively based, they produce wave-like patterns that assist the spontaneity of Debussy's intentions for his music, traversing bar-lines and enabling the composer to truly communicate his feelings. These pitch contours and innovative use of musical language act as signifiers for new *correspondences* between Debussy's Water compositions and his twenty-first century followers, extending our knowledge of his genre.

(299 words)

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## **Portfolios**

### Appendix I

Chart, tonal/modal graph, dynamics graph, annotated score for **‘La Cathédrale engloutie’**

### Appendix II:

Chart, tonal/modal graph, dynamics graph, annotated score for *L’isle joyeuse*

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Chart, tonal/modal graph, dynamics graph, annotated score for **‘Reflets dans l’eau’**

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Chart, tonal/modal graph, dynamics graph, annotated score for *La mer*  
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富嶽三十六景 神奈川沖  
波裏

舟は馬の如し

### Key for Analytical charts

M	Major
m	minor
W.T	Whole-tone
aug.	augmented
dim.	diminished
R.H.	Right hand
L.H.	Left hand
enh.	enharmonically
hdsq	hemidemisemiquaver
guttcd	open chord-3 <sup>rd</sup> /5 <sup>th</sup> intervals missing
antic.	anticipating
rpt	repeat/repeated
b.	bar
fig	figure
seq.	sequence
cont.	continue
Mot.	Motive
sig.	signature
max	maximum
incl.	including
trem	tremolo
beg.	beginning
antic	anticipating
intro	introduction
Mvt.	Movement
cf	In comparison to/compare

### Key to Scores

Yellow line – creation of musical waves/pictorial wave on stave/pitch contour evoking waves.

Blue line – dynamics/dynamic wave.

Green line – key signature/time signature changes/strategic bass harmonies.

Orange line – main musical lines/instruments with main line. In Reflets dans l'eau, denotes pitch set of Motive A (L.H.) and its echo in R.H. sonorities.

**Annotated scores therefore denote visual wave patterns discernable in the music.**

**Graphs demonstrate overall flow of dynamic wave patterns and tonal/modal wave patterns above equilibrium of main tonal theme/representation of water's surface.**

**Motivic chart denotes main Motives/themes within each piece, based on Roy Howat's model.**

*Music is the art that is in fact the closest to Nature...It is the musicians alone who have the privilege of being able to convey all the poetry of night and day, of earth and sky. Only they can recreate Nature's atmosphere and give rhythm to her heaving breast.<sup>1</sup>*

## **The Portrayal of Water and Wave Patterns in the Music of Claude**

### **Debussy**

#### **Introduction: The Importance of Nature and Other Inspirations**

In this paper, I examine the profound and central role that the element of water plays in Debussy's instinctual response to inspiration, examining the piano pieces *L'isle joyeuse* (1904,) 'Reflets dans l'eau' (from *Images I* in 1905,) and the orchestral piece *La mer* (1905) in detail,<sup>2</sup> documenting the use of wave patterns within them, and their possible significance and function both with regard to the Debussy aesthetic and his psychological makeup. I specifically deliberate upon the character of these wave patterns and how they might aid our perception of Debussy's music. Encompassed within these questions, I contemplate the 'liberation' of Debussy's piano techniques as a potent new orchestration for that instrument, enabling far greater evocation of emotions and 'feelings,' I place the composer in his artistic context, documenting his affinities to the (particularly poetic) Symbolist movement, and draw analogies with the drive of contemporary Impressionism and other influences that must surely have contributed towards his passionate declarations and love of both Nature and Music. Debussy saw himself as a channel for the sounds of nature, which formed a correspondence with the soul and imaginative powers of man. In evoking these allusions in his compositions, he aimed far deeper than mere

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<sup>1</sup> Debussy speaking in the *Revue musicale S. I. M.* in November 1913, in *Debussy on Music: The Critical Writings of the Great French Composer Claude Debussy*, Collected and Introd. by François Lesure, Trans. and Ed. by Richard Langham Smith (London, Secker & Warburg, 1977), (Published in French as *Monsieur Croche et autres écrits* by Editions Gallimard, Paris, 1971), p. 295.

<sup>2</sup> In addition, Appendix I contains an analysis of 'La Cathédrale engloutie,' (from *Douze Préludes I* in 1910). An exploration of the part water and wave patterns played in Debussy's other piano pieces, his songs, and in *Pelléas and Mélisande* – his only opera is beyond the remit of this paper, but I provide brief details of these aspects at a later point.

imitation. Within his ethos, the element of water formed an important constituent, since its very fluidity made it the ideal feature of Debussyan composition, enabling elements within form, colour and shape to transcend hitherto traditional orthodoxies and pave the way for the latter's many innovatory musical responses. Flexibility of line and the mercurial aspects of 'arabesque' and whole-tone/pentatonic harmonies allowed him to create a feeling of liquidity in his music, which lent itself perfectly to the portrayal of water.

Claude Debussy found his true inspiration within the freedom of Nature. It aroused in him the mood or emotion by which he found the impetus to compose; he 'saw himself as a conduit for the sounds of nature, (and) aimed to portray musically a "correspondence between Nature and the Imagination" rather than use nature as a tool for the expression of human emotion.'<sup>3</sup> Within its aegis he finds transcendence from the human condition, – a sensation of uplift and otherworldliness which propels the spirit towards ecstasy. In this sense, Nature is the passageway to divinity, intertwined with Debussy's poetic nature and love for music's 'mystical' heights.<sup>4</sup> He says,

I have made mysterious Nature my religion... To feel the supreme and moving beauty of the spectacle which Nature offers to her fleeting guests – that is what I call prayer.<sup>5</sup>

This pantheistic<sup>6</sup> view was to suffuse the Debussyan aesthetic of 'a pure, untainted world in which living creatures either are absent or play an

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<sup>3</sup> Potter, C., 'Debussy and nature', in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise S., (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, Sao Paulo: Cambridge University Press, 2003), ch. 8, p. 149.

<sup>4</sup> See Déirdre Donnellon's remarks in 'Debussy as musician and critic,' in which she refers to his uncompromising views, including 'a semi-mystical belief in the freedom of music and its oneness with nature,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 3, p.57.

<sup>5</sup> Cox, D., *BBC Musical Guides: Debussy Orchestral Music* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1974), p. 60.

<sup>6</sup> The term employed by David Cox to denote Debussy's belief that God is present in everything, and used with specific reference to the composer's work *Printemps*, written in Rome during 1887, in which he aims to write 'a work of a particular colour which would cover a wide range of feeling...not a descriptive Spring but in human terms. I should like to convey the slow and miserable birth of beings and things in nature, their gradual blossoming out, and finally the joy of being born anew,' in *ibid*, p. 55. Also see a reference to 'his pantheistic vision of the fusion of music and nature,' by Déirdre Donnellon, 'Conservative and revolutionary:

unimportant part,<sup>7</sup> although Barbara Kelly refers to his concern with ‘le côté humain’<sup>8</sup> in a more philosophical sense. Many of Debussy’s works demonstrate the evocation of natural phenomena in their titles, – often placed at the end of pieces, – and water-related subjects form a significant part of his oeuvre, particularly seminal works such as *La mer*.

In a consideration of other components that affected Debussy’s inspirational faculties, the composer also took pride in being ‘un musicien français,’<sup>9</sup> and an innovator of musical form and colour. He felt an antipathy towards the hackneyed last days of Romanticism,<sup>10</sup> forging new paths in every conceivable musical direction, – the extension of tonality, the fluidity of keys through modality, radical new harmonies, rapid and frequent modulations, – all suggestive of a freedom for music that directly reflected his sensitive and sensual character and were the ideal medium by which to characterise his water pieces. He expounds this view in comments such as

I am all for liberty. Music by its very nature is free’... It is ‘an open air art, an art boundless in the elements, the wind, the sky, the sea!’<sup>11</sup>

To his ‘disciples’ he stresses the importance of individuality and independence, that

Discipline must be sought in freedom...take counsel of no man but of the passing wind.<sup>12</sup>

Debussy also changed perceptions as to the roles of consonance and dissonance, since he declined to recognize their function as the ‘fixed’

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*musicien français*’ in ‘Debussy as musician and critic,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 3, p. 54.

<sup>7</sup> Potter, C., ‘Debussy and nature’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 8, p. 149.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Debussy to Emile Baron, *Correspondance*, p. 49, in Kelly, Barbara L., ‘Debussy’s Parisian affiliations,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 2, p. 31.

<sup>9</sup> Vallas, L. *The Theories of Claude Debussy: Musicien Français*, Trans. by Maire O’ Brien, (New York: Dover Press, 1967 and London: Oxford University Press, 1929).

<sup>10</sup> See Déirdre Donnellon, who documents Debussy’s antipathy towards Wagner’s influence on French musicians, and the demise of ‘taste’ in current French music, together with the neglect of role-models such as Couperin and Rameau, in ‘Conservative and revolutionary: *musicien français*,’ in ‘Debussy as musician and critic,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 3, pp. 53-4.

<sup>11</sup> Vallas, L. *The Theories of Claude Debussy: Musicien Français*, Trans. by O’ Brien, M., p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 18.

territories of previous times. Textures and timbres were explored in radical innovations and ‘exoticisms,’ together with irregular forms and rhythms. Debussy’s writing gave the illusion of being improvisatory to the ear, – but although often at least *semi*-impervious to the analytical mind, – has been proven to be highly structured, according to the work done by Roy Howat in analyzing ‘Golden Section’ potentialities within certain works.<sup>13</sup>

Juxtaposed against these radical ideas, Debussy frequently expressed his disdain for contemporary academia at the Paris Conservatoire, and their formulaic constructions. He stresses his dislike of musical complication and excesses, reiterating his ‘hatred of classical development whose beauty is only technical and can only interest the highbrows among us,’<sup>14</sup> and rails against the influence of the Romantic composers in general, particularly those of Germanic origin, (whose ‘otherness’ by default, he felt should not be an example to the French composer):

Music until the present day has rested on a false principle. There is too much *writing* of music. Music is made for its effect on paper although it is intended for the ear. Too much importance is attached to the writing of music, the formula, the craft... Composers seek their ideas within themselves when they should look around for them. They combine, construct, imagine themes in which to express ideas. These are developed; they are modified... All this is metaphysics, it is not music. The latter should be spontaneously registered by the ear of the listener without his having to discover abstract ideas in the meanderings of a complicated development.<sup>15</sup>

Again, the composer is extolling the virtues of natural sound and its impact upon the imagination. Music thus enters the ear unaffectedly, without any pretensions and unmitigated by the intellect, not unlike the Impressionist who paints what he sees in front of him. Paradoxically, Debussy’s secretive nature and dependence on the inner response to composition, is predicated on his

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<sup>13</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis* (London, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Ch. 1-2. See Roy Howat’s seminal book on the subject of Golden Section and symmetrical proportions based on the Fibonacci series, which do seem to infer that a certain degree of GS planning was involved, particularly in his examination of the Sibley manuscript. Golden Section is ‘the way of dividing a fixed length in two so that the ratio of the shorter portion to the longer portion equals the ratio of the longer portion to the entire length...’

<sup>14</sup> Vallas, L., *The Theories of Claude Debussy: Musicien Français*, Trans. by O’ Brien, M., p. 15.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 14.

reaction to that which surrounds him, – the elements of Nature in all their glory. For Debussy, Establishment music had become immune to the element of surprise, and for that reason, he says:

I do not like specialists. For me, to specialize is to limit the boundaries of one's universe. One becomes like the wooden horses on a merry-go-round: they die to the well-known strains of the 'March –Lorraine.'<sup>16</sup>

Debussy's aesthetic is clearly visible in his pedagogical writings,<sup>17</sup> where he expresses his passion for the secret forces of music allied to the 'rhythms of the soul,' and where dreaming<sup>18</sup> and musical alchemy are antidotes to the boredom of the concert hall.<sup>19</sup> In effect, he espouses the view that the ecstasy of nature is comparable to the ecstasy of music in their direct appeal to the soul, and in his music creates what Vladimir Jankélévitch refers to as *Charme*, or 'mystical transaction,'<sup>20</sup> – the 'very operation of beauty...the unknowable something that is divine...' a joy analogous to human love in its 'transformational force'.<sup>21</sup> The apparent indiscernible difference between musical 'perfection' and the *charme*

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<sup>16</sup> Lesure, F., *Debussy on Music: The Critical Writings of the Great French Composer Claude Debussy*, Collected and Introd. by François Lesure, Trans. and Ed. by Richard Langham Smith. p. 46.

<sup>17</sup> As Monsieur Croche, an imaginary critic, Debussy gave full vent to his feelings on a wide range of subjects, such as his love of music and nature, musical education, French music and the theatre. His articles were first published when he became a writer for 'La Revue Blanche' in April, 1901 – a populist magazine reflecting *fin de siècle* Paris. It fostered the idea of a brotherhood of artists, almost as an echo of the English Pre-Raphaelites, but crystallized the idea of 'Individualism.' Paul Valéry's 'La Soirée avec Monsieur Teste' is believed to have been the blueprint for Debussy's M. Croche, - rewritten in the form of musical criticism. In E. Lockspeiser's *Debussy, His Life and Mind*, vol. 2 (London, 1965), in Lesure, F., Lesure, F., *Debussy on Music: The Critical Writings of the Great French Composer Claude Debussy*. Foreword, p. x.

<sup>18</sup> The role of dreams is an aspect examined by Edward Lockspeiser in his book *Debussy: His Life and Mind*, Vol. II. 1902-1918. (London, Cassell & Company Ltd. 1965), pp. 280-281. Howat also refers to 'this aspect of Debussy as an explorer and communicator of the remoter corners of dream consciousness, where emotions tell their truths unstifled by intellectual prejudice or inhibition.' In *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 178.

<sup>19</sup> See Vallas, L., *The Theories of Claude Debussy: Musicien Français*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>20</sup> Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, Trans. by Abbate, C., (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003. First ed. of this work published in France under the title *La Musique et l'Ineffable* in 1961 by Éditions Armand Colin, then Éditions du Seuil, Paris, 1983), p. 125. The author cites Henri Bremond as his source for the concept of *charme*, as well as the term itself.

<sup>21</sup> This force or summons made by a work of art lies in understatement – rather like the biblical arrival of the Creator 'as imperceptibly as a breeze.' In *Pelléas and Mélisande* 'God arrives on tiptoe, furtively pianissimo, just like Death in act 5: an almost-nothing, an imperceptible sigh,' in Davidson, Arnold I. in 'The *Charme* of Jankélévitch,' in Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, pp. viii-x.

of music such as Debussy's lies in its particularly spiritual distinction, its soul expressed in its *doing* or performance. This "enchantment," is not a 'perpetual ecstasy,' says Jankélévitch, but a temporary intoxication, – an ineffable 'celestial instant' that 'rekindles a spark of joy... and makes each human being a demi-god, before 'immortal listeners' become 'finite beings'<sup>22</sup> once again.

This idea of bliss in a divine unity of nature and music seems to form part of an eternal dream for Debussy. His music appears to be plucked from the ether, – as though it is always there, without a beginning or ending. This 'timeless' feature of his compositions supposes a type of circularity, the art of perpetual renewal, – of the music ever changing and 'becoming,' in its 'creation' during a performance, – much like the passing of the seasons. Music's sole aim, says Debussy, should be to 'humbly seek to please...' and 'above all to give pleasure.'<sup>23</sup> It alone is capable of suggesting and communicating what is inexpressible in any other less fluid medium. Schopenhauer had declared that music alone was the 'direct expression of the Will, that is to say the Essence of Being,' and could give 'direct expression to the affective life of the soul.'<sup>24</sup> Existing in a spatial dimension, it could better express the stuff of floating thoughts and formless dreams, as well as the aspirational hopes and dark nights of the troubled soul. Debussy describes this mysterious secret of musical composition as lying in

The Sound of the sea, the outline of a horizon, the wind in the leaves, the cry of a bird – these set off complex impressions in us. And suddenly, without the consent of anyone on this earth, one of these memories bursts forth, expressing itself in the language of music. It carries its own harmony within itself. However much effort one makes, one could not find anything better, anything more sincere. Only thus does a soul destined for music make such beautiful discoveries.<sup>25</sup>

In continuation of this theme, he declares that:

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<sup>22</sup> Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, pp. 127-8.

<sup>23</sup> Vallas, L., *The Theories of Claude Debussy: Musicien Français*, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> See Taine in Jarocinski, S., *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*, Translated by Rollo Myers (London: Eulenburg Books, 1976, originally printed in Polish as *Debussy, a impresionizm i symbolizm 1966*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Muzyczne. French edition 1970, Edition du Seuil), p. 71.

<sup>25</sup> Lesure, F., *Debussy on Music: The Critical Writings of the Great French Composer Claude Debussy*, p. 248.

Everything which can be perceived by a fine ear in the rhythm of the surrounding world can be represented musically. Some people want most of all to conform to the rules; I, on the other hand, want only to render what I hear.<sup>26</sup>

Drawing again 'a parallel between the freedom of nature and an idealised free music, based on an imaginative transformation of nature,'<sup>27</sup> Debussy comments that:

We don't pay enough attention to the thousand noises of nature around us; we don't listen for this music which is so varied, which she offers so generously...This, according to me, is the new path (which young composers should follow).<sup>28</sup>

Debussy further championed music as the *closest* art to nature, since it was not bound by literal associations such as those experienced by writers and the painting fraternity, but he found imitative compositions (derived *directly* from the sounds of natural sources) to be displeasing. He had no wish to build on the programmatic ideas which were currently circulating, and disliked Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony due to its evocation of 'realistic' bird and animal sounds. His interpretation is rather that of the *imaginative* emotional response to natural stimuli. As he maintains,

I wanted music to have a freedom that she perhaps has more than any other art, as it is not restricted to a more or less exact reproduction of nature, but instead deals with the mysterious correspondences between Nature and the Imagination.<sup>29</sup>

And in 1903, in an explication of the beauties of wooded landscape, reflecting on their true charm, or 'the invisible sentiments of nature,'<sup>30</sup> he asks,

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<sup>26</sup> In *Monsieur Croche et autres écrits*, December 1910, p. 308, in Potter, C., 'Debussy and nature,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 8, p. 138.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, ch.8, p. 137.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with *Comoedia*, 'La musique d'aujourd'hui et celle de demain', (4 November 1909), p. 296, in *Monsieur Croche et autres écrits*, in Potter, C., 'Debussy and nature,' in *ibid*, ch. 8, p. 137.

<sup>29</sup> 'Pourquoi j'ai écrit *Pelléas*' (April 1902), p. 62, in *Monsieur Croche et autres écrits*, in *ibid*, ch. 8, p. 139.

<sup>30</sup> Lesure, F., *Debussy on Music: The Critical Writings of the Great French Composer Claude Debussy*, p. 118.

Does measuring the height of the trees reveal the mystery of the forest? Isn't it actually the immeasurable depth of the forest which stimulates the imagination?<sup>31</sup>

These words about 'Programmatic music' seem to provide 'a key to those of his own works that deal with the natural world,'<sup>32</sup> and probably helped propagate the idea of Impressionistic music with regard to his pieces, – particularly works such as the two sets of piano *Images* and *La mer*. Nature, Debussy held, should be represented in all her glory, rather than in an artificial cloak of respectability according to books and 'the folds of a romantic cloak,'<sup>33</sup> since this was a manufactured ersatz. Nothing less than purity and truth<sup>34</sup> could be countenanced for the might of Nature, which for Debussy perhaps represented his closest feeling to bliss and ecstasy on earth. It is also an enduring feeling, continuing throughout his life, (though ephemeral in its 'celestial moments'), irrespective of personal circumstances, which could on occasion be tumultuous.

Whilst Debussy was concerned with questions of eternity and possessed an almost religious awe of Nature's grandeurs, Caroline Potter further explores his belief that above all music should 'provide instant pleasure,'<sup>35</sup> and be accessible to a wider audience, rather than an elitist occupation. As far back as his student days at the Paris Conservatoire, Debussy told his harmony teacher Emile Durand that the only rules he obeyed were 'mon plaisir,'<sup>36</sup> and he states that music 'should impose on our senses or insinuate itself into our nerves without

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<sup>31</sup> Review 'Monsieur F. Weingartner', *Gil blas* (16 February 1903), p. 96, in *Monsieur Croche et autres écrits*, in Potter, C., 'Debussy and nature,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 8, p. 140.

<sup>32</sup> Lesure, F., in Notes to an article about the 'Revival of La Traviata at the Opera-Comique' in *Gil Blas* 16 February 1903, in *Debussy on Music: The Critical Writings of the Great French Composer Claude Debussy*, p. 121.

<sup>33</sup> It is possible that Debussy was responding to Berlioz's enthusiastic response to the *Pastoral Symphony*, when he states that 'one never sees the world of nature except in books.' Berlioz had taken the opposite view about Beethoven's work, extolling it as reality – 'It is with Nature herself that he is concerned here.' *Ibid*, n. p. 121.

<sup>34</sup> Monet shared this ideal with the composer, commenting on the importance of keeping responses and impressions pure – 'I have always worked better alone, guided solely by my own impression...' reportedly spoken in 1884, in the Notes to an article 'At the Société Nationale: Orchestral Concert on 16 March' in *La Revue Blanche* 1901, in Lesure, F., *Debussy on Music: The Critical Writings of the Great French Composer Claude Debussy*, p. 17.

<sup>35</sup> Potter, C., 'Debussy and nature,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 8, p. 138.

<sup>36</sup> Kelly, Barbara L., 'Debussy's Parisian affiliations,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 2, p. 27.

us having to make any effort whatsoever to grasp its meaning.<sup>37</sup> In effect then, it requires no analysis, and he rejects formalism as a means of composition.

From his early days, Debussy had aligned himself with the ideas of the poet Baudelaire (1821-1867) and the Symbolists,<sup>38</sup> for whom the concept of ‘mystery’ was of paradigmatic importance. When writing to Henri Vasnier<sup>39</sup> from Rome, about the difficulties in completing his first *envoi*, *Zuleima*, in 1885, (the required composition), he declares:

I want music that is supple and concentrated enough to adapt itself to the lyrical movements of the soul and to the undulations of reverie.<sup>40</sup>

This was to become a most important tenet in Debussy’s composition of water pieces such as *L’isle joyeuse* and *La mer*, where he uses instructions such as *ondoyant et expressif*<sup>41</sup> and *souple*<sup>42</sup> to bring such ideals to fruition. It also appears to be a direct allusion to Baudelaire’s ideas of ‘*correspondences*’ between artistic and literary ideals, as a dedication from the poet to Arsène Houssaye, director of *La presse*, refers us to the very similar words:

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with *La revue bleue* (2 April 1904), p. 279, in *Monsieur Croche et autres écrits*, in Potter, C., ‘Debussy and nature,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 8, p. 138.

<sup>38</sup> The part played by Symbolism began with its manifesto appearing in 1886, drawn up by Jean Moreas, – but its literary renaissance harked back to the great poet Baudelaire. His *Correspondences*, – the celebrated sonnet in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, – ‘became the gospel of the new poetic movement. The language of Baudelaire appeals as much to the intellect of the reader as to his physical sensibilities. It does not directly represent things and feelings; it offers a choice of the most suggestive correspondences among the analogies which exist between words and sounds and their atmosphere – a choice which tends to create a harmonious poetic substance which acts upon the imagination, not only through its meaning, but also through its sound.’ Following on from this ‘Verlaine transposes, with an astonishing felicity, the slightest sounds in Nature into an extraordinary musical poetic language.’ In turn, Debussy uses this language to produce musical works of art, – songs which use a soundscape to reflect his love of Nature back to the listener. In Jarocinski, S., *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>39</sup> The husband of his first lover and accomplished soprano, Madame Vasnier. Debussy continued to stay in touch with the first family he worked for after he won the Prix de Rome, where he lived for two years at the Villa Medici.

<sup>40</sup> *Correspondance*, p. 39, in Kelly, Barbara L., ‘Debussy’s Parisian affiliations,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 2, p. 29.

<sup>41</sup> Bar 67 onwards of *L’isle joyeuse* in *Œuvres Complètes de Claude Debussy*, Série 1, Volume 3 Ed. de Roy Howat (Paris: Durand-Costallat, 1991), p. 58.

<sup>42</sup> See bar 1 of *Jeux de vagues*, Movement II of *La mer*, where the instruction ‘Allegro (dans un rythme très souple)’ is given, in *La Mer: Trois Esquisses Symphoniques*, Claude Debussy (Paris, London, Philadelphia: Durand & Cie, Éditeurs), p. 32.

Who among us has not...dreamt the miracle of poetic prose without rhyme and rhythm, which is supple and striking enough to adapt itself to the lyrical movement of the soul and to the undulations of reverie?<sup>43</sup>

Jarocinski traces the lasting impression that these words had on the Debussyan *id*, drawing an intellectual parallel between Baudelaire's literary struggles for a continuous and supple line with the composer's own musical endeavours for that corresponding aim, seen to such great effect in compositions such as *L'isle joyeuse* and *La mer*. Debussy's own quest for an 'ideal musical form and expression'<sup>44</sup> was also influenced by the poet's ideas on connections between music and colour.<sup>45</sup> He describes the early symphonic suite, *Printemps* (1886) as 'a work with a special colour, recreating as many sensations as possible,'<sup>46</sup> – and one where the composer first uses a choir for its orchestral and timbral qualities, as he was later to do again in the water piece 'Sirènes,' the third of the *Trois Nocturnes* (1898).

Debussy's lifelong fascination with colour and its possible connections with orchestral and pianistic timbral qualities was stimulated by Baudelaire's ideas of 'the colour spectrum (and) its musical equivalents, which he finds in the gradation of colour from shade to light in nature.'<sup>47</sup> The slow development of timbres over time were allowed to dictate structure, – thus form and colour are synonymous in works such as 'Feuilles mortes' and 'Ondine' (water sprites) in

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<sup>43</sup> Baudelaire, *Petit poemes en prose, le spleen de Paris* (Paris: Garnier frères, 1958), p. 26, in Kelly, Barbara L., 'Debussy's Parisian affiliations,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 2, p. 29.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, ch. 2, p. 30.

<sup>45</sup> Baudelaire's essay, *Du vin et du hachish* describes 'a particularly vivid experience of music as numbers' which no doubt influenced Debussy as well, since he was an 'ardent reader' of the poet. Howat refers to this in support of his claim for proportional structure and GS within Debussy's music, in *Debussy In Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 171.

<sup>46</sup> Letter from Debussy to Émile Baron, in *Correspondance*, p. 49, in Kelly, Barbara L., 'Debussy's Parisian affiliations,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 2, p. 30.

<sup>47</sup> Baudelaire, 'De la couleur', p. 423, in *Le Salon de 1846*, in *Œuvres complètes*, vol. II (Paris: NRF Gallimard, 1976), in *Ibid*, pp. 30-31. Also see Claude Abravanel's summation of 'Impressionism and Symbolism' in which he remarks 'What is remarkable about symbolism is its admixture of the arts, a fusion that was cherished from Baudelaire onward. The arts are unified because they explain each other in reciprocal fashion. In effect, ordinary language turns out to be completely insufficient to describe the manifold nuances of color, verbal expression, or musical sound.' They are interdependent upon each other. In Abravanel, C., 'Symbolism and Performance,' in Briscoe, James R., Ed. *Debussy in Performance*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1999), ch. 2, pp. 29-30.

the *Préludes*, book 2.<sup>48</sup> This was to form an important aspect of Debussy's originality, as he comments to Durand in 1907: 'Generally speaking, I feel more and more that music, by its very essence, is not something that can flow inside a rigorous, traditional form. It consists of colours and of rhythmicised time...'<sup>49</sup> Form, rhythm and colour were to become inseparable within the Debussyan approach to composition, and this is notably demonstrable in his works suggesting water and fluidity.

The followers of the Impressionist and Symbolist movements were at the forefront of nineteenth century aesthetic activity. The shared vocabulary of artists, writers and musicians led to a cross-fertilization of ideas, which have initiated debate as to Debussy's ethos and compositional approach, but for him it was the *sound* that mattered, – and the feelings and emotions it evoked. His fierce integrity of thought made the composer a striking idealist, – visionary in his outlook and approach to composition. I shall demonstrate that it was these qualities which resulted in the prodigious and charismatic nature of his water pieces, whose fluidity and suppleness relied on such an innovative approach, whether written for the piano, orchestral repertoire, or his compelling oeuvre of songs. The critic Suarès maintained that 'he (Debussy) is not the slightest bit an Impressionist. He is, on the contrary, the musician who makes use everywhere of symbols.' He declares *La mer* to be

The greatest and most beautiful poem in French music...Do not let us speak foolishly here of impressionistic art. Music is in any case never an affair of simple impression. The sonorous landscape itself is always closer to Rembrandt than to Claude Monet.<sup>50</sup>

Although some have made a sound argument for Symbolist ideals as the driving force of the Debussyan spirit, and the composer denied the

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<sup>48</sup> 'Debussy's interest in timbre and spatial organisation of sound was further stimulated by the exotic sounds of the gamelan, which he encountered at the 1889 Paris exhibition.' Roy Howat reveals the impact of this on Debussy's piano writing in Howat, 'Debussy and the Orient,' in Notes, p. 290, in Kelly, Barbara L. 'Debussy's Parisian affiliations,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 2, p. 31.

<sup>49</sup> Letter from Debussy to Durand, in *Debussy letters*, p. 184, in Kelly, Barbara L., 'Debussy's Parisian affiliations,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. Trezise, S., ch. 2, p. 31.

<sup>50</sup> Thompson, O., *Debussy Man And Artist*, (New York, Dover publications, Inc. 1965. Previously Dodd, Mead & Co., Inc. 1937), pp. 18-19.

Impressionistic tag, it is easy to see why this perception has persisted. As Thompson remarked, Debussy ‘achieved with chord successions much what the painters achieved when they place colour strokes side by side,’<sup>51</sup> and he was similarly concerned with the effects of light, – particularly with the effects of light on water. He was certainly a poet expressing the nuances of Nature at her most intimate, whether it be in landscape or seascape, and as Jarocinski maintains, occupied a unique place in musical history.

Debussy spent much of his time in the early years frequenting Parisian café society and numbered far more poets and writers among his friends than artists, although he knew Whistler, and Toulouse-Lautrec and Gauguin were among his acquaintances. By 1890 Debussy had encountered the most famous poet of that movement, Stephen Mallarmé, who clarified the position of Symbolist literature, which was that:

To name an object is to suppress three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem, which is meant to unfold little by little.<sup>52</sup>

Thus,

Musical symbolism (falsely termed “impressionism”) according to Claude Abravanel, ‘aims at exactly the same goal, but its state of being is completely indeterminate. Sounds are neither landscape nor object nor idea; they have no signification if not that of producing affective and emotional states in the listener... the symbolist must continually apply an expression of sound to explain a colour, an expression of colour or luminosity to indicate a nuance of sound, or a sonority or colour to give a word a particularly affective state,’<sup>53</sup>

since ordinary language is insufficient to deal with such nuances. The expressive value of such sound, to the musician, goes far beyond its literal one; it symbolizes the emotional domain of the creator. Henri Bergson defined this in such terms: “Above all creation signifies emotion,”<sup>54</sup> which perfectly

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<sup>51</sup> Thompson, O., *Debussy Man And Artist* p. 21.

<sup>52</sup> Mallarmé speaking in Abravanel, C., ‘Symbolism and Performance,’ in Briscoe, James R., Ed. *Debussy in Performance*, ch. 2, p. 30

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, ch. 2, p.30.

<sup>54</sup> Henri Bergson, *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France, 1982), 42, in Abravanel, C., ‘Symbolism and Performance,’ in Briscoe, James R., Ed. *Debussy in Performance*, ch. 2, p. 31.

accorded with the Debussyan ideal, representing a ‘neutral sensibility’ or a depersonalized representation to the listener, so that:

Instead of speaking of “hearing” a sound, it is necessary rather to say “feeling” a sound. For the listener, this kind of auditory sensibility is the affective state that he or she experiences when hearing sounds.<sup>55</sup>

And Debussy was a master at conveying ‘feelings,’ intermingling musical emotions and the emotions of whatever character (human or otherwise) he was portraying simultaneously. This applies as equally to his opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* as to his great ‘symphonic’ work *La mer*, where he characterizes the sea in so innovative a manner.<sup>56</sup> This is the paradox that lies at the centre of Debussy’s music, and which has led to the long-standing debate between adherents of the two movements. It is this emotional state, triggered by a creation of ‘neutral sensibility’ – an ‘inner hearing,’ – which is used to ‘feel’ the sound in musical Symbolism. Debussy alone understood this language, and knew that it could not be accommodated in the existing musical framework. He advanced a personal language in which he used ‘multiple Debussy techniques...every work possessing its exclusive theoretical system and particular structure.’<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, contrary to contemporary opinion, Debussy did not abolish the musical language of his time. He enlarged it substantially, recombined elements in different ways, and enriched it with new dimensions and potentialities. With regard to melody, Debussy is closest to the French recitative tradition, adapting rhythms directly from the spoken language whilst providing for great

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<sup>55</sup> Abravanel, C., ‘Symbolism and Performance,’ in Briscoe, James R., Ed. *Debussy in Performance*, ch. 2, p. 31.

<sup>56</sup> As Jankélévitch maintains, taking ‘impressionism’ in its wider context as ‘feeling’, ‘It is with Debussy’s impressionism that inexhaustible nature appears in its most immediate form, and that the truth of a blade of grass or a drop of water asserts itself to us in the most hallucinatory way of all; we live it, touch it, sense its presence in the miniscule black marks that race and shudder, like telegrams, over the staves of the *Rondes de Printemps*. For Debussy is so brilliant that he outstrips even the hyperrealism of his contemporaries...Debussy put a stethoscope to the ocean’s chest, to the tide’s lungs, to the heart of the sea and the earth; thus his symphonic poems never behave like narrative, with proper closure. In *La Mer* the human person’s face has utterly disappeared.’ In Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, p. 36.

<sup>57</sup> Lesure, F. Foreword to Cobb, M. G. *The Poetic Debussy: A Collection of His Song Texts and Selected Letters collected and annotated by Margaret G. Cobb*, Trans. by Richard Miller. (Boston.: Northeastern University Press, 1982). p. xvii.

suppleness and ‘plasticity’ in the lines. His adoption of a ‘freer’ sound was also bound up with the Symbolist conception of time, which moved away from normal linear considerations. Debussy’s music was not predicated by cadences. Instead, the material resonates, sounding in time and space, appearing and disappearing in a sort of circularity or static nature, as if it is part of a perpetual continuum, like the everlasting course of Nature’s seasons; such ideas resonated throughout the artistic world in a wider sense at this time, probably affecting Debussy’s conception of timelessness within *Pelléas and Mélisande*, for example.<sup>58</sup>

It is also probable that Debussy was familiar with the writings of the mathematician Charles Henry.<sup>59</sup> The latter believed in the idea of a ‘universal formula’ governing all things, and his theory of shape concerning line appears to have had a concomitant effect on Debussy’s own ideas in this regard. Henry believed that an ascending line had positive implications and a descending one the opposite. He maintained that ‘the agreeable directions from low to high, down to up and from left to right are found to coincide with the tendencies of man towards the light,’<sup>60</sup> drawing a parallel with the growth of plants. As Caroline Potter suggests, Western European music generally infers darkness and depth with low sounds and light and elevation with higher-pitched ones, a device which Debussy uses to great effect in the castle vaults of *Pelléas*, Act III, scene II, to denote the odour of death and gradual ascent to light.

Henry was particularly concerned with the numerical relationships that he felt could be ‘linked with such sensations as ‘harmonious’ and ‘inharmonious’ combinations of colour,’ and by extension their application to ‘the curves and

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<sup>58</sup> In the artistic world at this time, Marc Chagall (1887-1985), a Belorussian –born French painter, printmaker and designer, was to produce a painting entitled ‘Time is a river without banks,’ – regarded as one of his most surreal works, although he was not a Surrealist. Chagall ‘composed images based on emotional and poetic associations, rather than rules of pictorial logic,’ and was one of the most popular major innovators of the twentieth-century School of Paris, presenting dream-like subject matter in rich colours and in a fluent, painterly style. In ‘Marc Chagall,’ 1994-2000 *Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc.*, in [www.SearchBiography.com/articles/MarcChagall-9243488](http://www.SearchBiography.com/articles/MarcChagall-9243488) (Accessed 10/05/11).

<sup>59</sup> Henry was the mentor to the ‘Hydropathes,’ a group of experimental artists, as well as being a presence in the Symbolist movement. Debussy is known to have followed avant-garde literary and artistic developments, and the two had influential friends such as Jules Laforgue and the Ysaÿe brothers in common. A frequent visitor to Edmond Bailly’s bookshop and publishing house ‘L’Art Indépendant,’ – as an *ésotériste* Debussy was also linked to the Rosicrucian movement. See Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, pp. 164 -172.

<sup>60</sup> *Monsieur Croche et autres écrits*, p. 101, in Potter, C., ‘Debussy and nature’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 8, p. 142.

angles of a musical melodic line.<sup>61</sup> His notable publication on aesthetics, the *Introduction a une esthétique scientifique* of 1885, specifically considered the ‘shape of melodies considered as curves, or as a line turning through a different angle with each new note,’<sup>62</sup> quoting at length from Eduard Hanslick on ‘the subject of ‘arabesque’ and its aesthetic importance.’ Given the composer’s propensity for Symbolism and his esoteric leanings, it seems probable that his interests took in Henry’s theories as well, which are pertinent to my exploration of wave shapes in Debussy’s water scores. Furthermore, the Art Nouveau movement was concerned with theories which developed the ideas of line and particularly curved shapes. Lockspeiser believes that these were very influential on the young Debussy, stating that in the 1890’s ‘we have much evidence showing that Debussy’s musical and artistic sensibility at this stage was a reflection of the theories of the Art Nouveau movement. His conception of melody as an “arabesque” was the direct musical counterpart of these theories.’<sup>63</sup> This became a term which Debussy was fond of using – its appropriation from the architectural and painting world coming several centuries after its probable introduction during the Moorish invasion of Spain. It appears that Debussy associated the word ‘as indicative of a flowing and decorative type of piano writing...he associated arabesque with continuously evolving melodic lines and with music that grows organically rather than being divided into periodic phrases.’<sup>64</sup> His writings refer to the aforementioned ‘primitives’ use of “that divine arabesque.” They

...discovered the principle in Gregorian chant and supported its delicate intertwinings with firm counterpoint. When Bach took over the arabesque he made it more supple and fluid and, despite the severe discipline that great master imposed on Beauty, it was able to move with that free, ever fresh fantasy which still amazes us today.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy In Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 165.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p. 166.

<sup>63</sup> Cited in Lockspeiser, *Debussy: His Life and Mind*, vol. I, 118, in Potter, C., ‘Debussy and nature’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., p. 143.

<sup>64</sup> Potter, C., ‘Debussy and nature’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., p. 144.

<sup>65</sup> *La revue blanche*, May 1901. Cited in Nichols, R., *The Life of Debussy: Musical Lives* (Cambridge University Press, New York, Melbourne: 1998), p. 101. Also see Debussy’s opinion of the great master’s lines – that they are ‘the essence of all music’...resulting in ‘an undreamed of flowering’... in *Musica*, October 1902, in Lesure, F., *Debussy on Music: The Critical Writings of the Great French Composer Claude Debussy*, p. 84.

Debussy revered Bach due to this perceived link between the “old master” and nature, writing *Deux Arabesques* of his own for the piano, – the first displaying the curved shape of legato melodic lines, and the second demonstrating the more decorative associations of the term. It becomes a short distance from this to discern wave shapes both on the staff and as musically dynamic ‘waves’ entering our ears, as I shall prove in this paper. For Debussy, music was an organic art, truly experienced only in its performance, in a timelessness that echoed nature. He expressed ‘an idealistic view of a life lived in tune with the rhythms of the natural world,’<sup>66</sup> – probably influenced at some point by Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s ideas of the ‘noble savage’<sup>67</sup> in French literature, and the intellectual move away from Nature which had taken place during the Age of Enlightenment. This perceived loss of a mythical Eden was to colour Debussy’s reception of other musics, leading to a particular admiration for the ‘Primitives,’ – Renaissance artists such as Palestrina, Vittoria and Orlando di Lasso, who all preserved a sense of nobility in their intertwining contours, and their divine sense of the ‘musical arabesque.’ Their ornamental line, based on natural curves, can be seen as akin to the wave pattern adopted by Debussy in several of his water pieces. The composer frequently expressed his admiration for Bach, for just these reasons, and it seems plausible to surmise that he was searching for a twentieth century model of a similar ‘arabesque,’

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<sup>66</sup> Lesure, F., *Debussy on Music: The Critical Writings of the Great French Composer Claude Debussy*, p. 138.

<sup>67</sup> See Cranston, M. W., *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1754-1762* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637 Viking/Penguin, Ltd., 1991), in which he mentions that paradoxically, (because he was already writing articles for Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*, ‘that monumental compendium of the ideas of the Enlightenment’), Rousseau’s *Discourse* ‘not only rejected the central message of the Enlightenment – that science and technology could save mankind – it argued that all such advances of knowledge were deleterious, taking men farther and farther away from their original innocence towards corruption.’ His tract *On the Social Contract*: ‘Man is born free, yet everywhere is in chains’ was also very influential on contemporary society.

Also see Grimsley, R., *The Philosophy of Rousseau* (Oxford University Press, 1973), in <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-rous.htm>. Born in Switzerland, but famous as a ‘French’ political philosopher and educationalist, Rousseau was also a musician, (although Rameau, whom Debussy extolled as a founder of French style, did not approve). Perhaps the greatest link between the two is their affinity with the natural; *Émile* is written as a treatise on people *being* natural, and later writings such as *Reveries of the Solitary Walker* document the philosopher’s isolation and alienation and possible routes to happiness: ‘But if there is a state where the soul can find a resting-place secure enough to establish itself and concentrate its entire being there...Such is the state which I often experienced on the Island of Saint-Pierre in my solitary reveries, whether I lay in a boat and drifted where the water carried me, or sat by the shores of the stormy lake, or elsewhere, on the banks of a lovely river or a stream murmuring over the stones.’ Shades of Debussy indeed!

which would produce a new and innovative sound. Associated with this concept of waves engendering more waves, Jann Pasler suggests that the main appeal of the Javanese gamelan<sup>68</sup> to Debussy was its link with nature and its fundamental use of line, when she says

What attracted Debussy to...the sixteenth-century ‘primitives,’ Bach, and Javanese music, was what results from a multiplicity of simultaneous lines...Rather than the emotive power of a single line, as in a melody, it was lines in relationship to other lines and in constant metamorphosis that he understood as synonymous with musical beauty.<sup>69</sup>

This love of line and arabesques can also be associated with Charles Henry’s ideas of ‘continual autogenesis,’ a link that was explicitly made by the mathematician. A commentator on his writings, José Argüelles, describes this as a ‘dynamically creative, or procreative, energy principle,’ and defines an arabesque as ‘often intricate, repetitive, self-productive, and, ideally self-mutative,’<sup>70</sup> – words which readily come to mind when considering works such as *L’isle joyeuse*, *Reflets dans l’eau* and *La mer* and their perpetual flow of wave formations, especially those of *Jeux de vagues*.

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<sup>68</sup> Heard at the Great Exhibition of 1889, in Paris, their ‘instinctive need for art ingeniously satisfied; no trace of bad taste...there is no specially constructed theatre, no hidden orchestra,’ their affinity to nature appealed strongly to Debussy, in Vallas, L., *The Theories of Claude Debussy: Musicien Français*, p. 23.

<sup>69</sup> Jann Pasler, ‘Timbre, Voice-leading, Musical Arabesque,’ in Briscoe, James R., Ed., *Debussy in Performance*, ch. 11, p. 226.

<sup>70</sup> Cited in Argüelles, *Charles Henry and the Formation of a Psychophysical Aesthetic*, p. 131, in Potter, C., ‘Debussy and nature’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 8, p. 145.

## Chapter I

### **The Use of Wave Patterns within Debussy's Work**

If we consider the physical properties of a wave, it could be said to exist as 'one of a sequence of ridges or undulations that moves across the surface of the sea or a lake,'<sup>71</sup> or 'to have an undulating wavelike form or appearance / a ridge or swell moving along the surface of a large body of water and generated by the action of gravity or the wind / a moving curve or a succession of curves'<sup>72</sup> in or upon a surface.'<sup>73</sup> Just as sound is created by the transmission of energy (pressure) through a medium such as air or water, so a wave is created by the transmission of energy on the surface of a liquid such as water. This is analogous to Debussy's 'floating harmonies' which in the main do not follow the Romantic style of 'question and answer' periodic phrases, delineated by measures such as cadences. Rather, Debussy's music exists in flowing lines, above which waves of sound undulate across octaves in a continuous curve, their very fluidity conjuring up a watery ethos in those particular pieces. These harmonies aid the perception of waves of sound within certain works, assisted by various ternary-type forms and specifically wave-like dynamics that are carefully and rigorously applied. Not only this, but the visual shape of the music on the stave often provides a wave-like image that we may conceive when we think of this term. Sometimes it is reflected between the treble and bass in the piano pieces, whilst in *La mer* it can tumble across a variety of instruments, colouring the piece with different hues, or else be refracted elsewhere. In addition, Debussy's predilection for arabesques and phrasing marks that resemble waves abound in his music, whilst specific features such as the harp

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<sup>71</sup> *Collins Essential English Dictionary* (Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003), p. 894.

<sup>72</sup> It is interesting to cross-reference this wave definition with Jankélévitch's reference to music, which reads: 'Music prefers the curved line to the straight line, which as everyone knows, is the shortest distance between two points. Music prefers superfluous circular motions, notes for nothing...it is music in its entirety that is a fioratura, a detour, an exquisite efflorescence of life itself; it is music in its entirety that (like the nightingale's ornaments) constitutes the luxurious, graceful paralipomena of practical existence.' In turn, this invokes the concept of Debussy's curved arabesques and their wandering lines. In Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, pp. 67-8.

<sup>73</sup> *Reader's Digest Great Illustrated Dictionary: In Two Volumes* (London, New York, Sydney, Cape Town, Montreal: Reader's Digest Association Ltd. 1984), p. 1859.

glissandos of *Jeux de Vagues*, for example, are suggestive both visually and sonorously in this respect.

Debussy's music was able to sound so fresh and new to contemporary ears because he found ways to interpret moods and feelings that were far more interpretive, after the advent of Impressionism and Symbolism, in comparison to nineteenth century practices. He took this move towards greater abstractionism by fuelling mysterious and magical 'surface' aspects in his music, whilst employing strong structural strategies beneath, just as Monet had made every brush-stroke count in his paintings, but still used a pictorial frame to suggest their boundaries. His peers heard the innovation in Debussy's soundworld – its dissonances standing out against current practice, but they sound very 'tonal' to our ears, (regardless of these dissonances and modalities), not only because of the tonal tradition they built on, but because we hear them in the light of Stravinsky and Schoenberg, the Abstractionist artists, and all that came afterwards. Debussy was to move towards this direction at the end of his life, in the *Études* and the ballet, *Jeux*. Debussy's music – in its apparent representation of emotion – bridges the gap between music and nature, giving the impression of portraying its aspects in a manner that has a direct line to the soul.

Nevertheless, whilst contemporary listeners perceived Debussy's music as new and exotic-sounding, with its 'oriental otherness,'<sup>74</sup> its tonality assured an accessibility to the concert-going public. Retaining 'powerful and familiar resonances from the tonal language of his predecessors,' his music 'exhibits a strong sense of tonal centre, expressed through vividly projected attributes of tonal function both melodically and harmonically.'<sup>75</sup> However, analysts have found it problematical to apply traditional methodology to Debussy's tonal practices, since he evolved innovative ways of using these in an entirely idiosyncratic way that thwarted any attempts at traditional theoretical comprehension.<sup>76</sup> The formative years of Debussy's stylistic evolution enabled

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<sup>74</sup> See Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (eds.), *Western Music and Its Others* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2000), in Whittall, A., 'Debussy now,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* Ed. by Trezise, S., ch 14, p. 281.

<sup>75</sup> Pomeroy, B., 'Debussy's tonality: a formal perspective,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 9, p. 155.

<sup>76</sup> Richard S. Parks, for example, has defined much of Debussy's music in terms of 'pitch-class sets;' he does not consider Debussy's music as genuinely tonal since the tonic-dominant

him to graft an inherited Romantic chromatic tonality on to ‘a marked penchant for harmonic and tonal adventurism...’ most evident in his ‘fondness for juxtaposing remotely related chromatic regions with exotic-sounding uses of chromatic modality, and perhaps most of all in a characteristic penchant for certain non-diatonic pitch collection, especially the whole-tone and octatonic scales.’<sup>77</sup>

Boyd Pomeroy postulates the theory that the traditional tonic-dominant (I-V) polarity still applies to much of Debussy’s music, although as a feature that inhabits other layers beneath the surface, rather than as a foreground component. This accords with the idea of waves of sound flowing around the ‘surface’ of a line / level of liquid, in the water pieces. The composer’s use of modal scales (such as the Lydian in *Sirènes*) also pervades the surface detail of pieces to a great extent, conveying a similar impression and penetrating the orthodoxies of the traditional major / minor system, whilst the ‘pentatonic patina’ as Pomeroy describes it, often disrupts and undermines the ‘quality of goal-directedness’ that had defined earlier tonal styles. This is evidenced at the beginning of *La mer* in the pentatonic rising of the sun, and used to great effect in the piano pieces ‘Poissons d’or’ (*Images I* of 1905) and the elusive ‘Voiles’ (*Douze Préludes I* of 1910). Chords were often used for colouristic effect and as a textural thickening of the melodic line (such as the C major theme from *La Cathédrale engloutie*), rather than in a syntactical way, and kaleidoscope ‘collages’ of diatonic and chromatic pitches could be contrasted for their expressive possibilities. This in turn enabled Debussy to capture a far more flowing and elusive quality, that lent itself to the emotions of listeners and performers. With harmonic inactivity, the curves and contours of the melodic arabesque were heightened,<sup>78</sup> in an immediately identifiable stylistic trait that

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relationship (perfect cadence) is either radically transformed or missing from many of the composer’s pieces. This departure from tonal norms effectively excludes him from Parks’ definition of tonal music. In Parks, Richard S., *The Music of Claude Debussy: Composers of the Twentieth Century*, Allen Forte General Ed., (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 4-20.

<sup>77</sup> Pomeroy, B., ‘Debussy’s tonality: a formal perspective,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 9, p. 156.

<sup>78</sup> See an analogy to the Art Nouveau, with which Debussy’s musical aesthetic has been compared, in ‘La notion d’arabesque chez Debussy’ *Revue musicale* 241 (1958), pp. 17-20, in which Francoise Gervais compares Debussy’s decorative aesthetic to Islamic art. In Pomeroy, B., ‘Debussy’s tonality: a formal perspective,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 9, p.159.

possessed a ‘singular clarity of outline,’<sup>79</sup> which paradoxically appeared to give an ‘Impressionistic’ effect to listeners. This aided the sonorous perception of ‘waves’ that analysts as diverse as Lockspeiser and Howat have remarked upon, particularly in the ‘water’ pieces, as did Debussy’s hugely varied use of ternary form and what has come to be known as cyclic form – building on the recurrence of established sequences of material, which will be examined in my analysis of *La mer*. Where material ceases to develop in any regular alternation, it has been defined broadly as free development or continuously developing form.

It was Herbert Eimert who espoused the work *Jeux* (1913) as the archetypal ‘vegetative circulation of form,’<sup>80</sup> in a landmark article first published in *Die Reihe* in 1959, remarking that ‘Concepts such as antecedent and consequent are no longer applicable. If one tried to apply them, one would have to say that the themes of *Jeux* are made up wholly of antecedents.’<sup>81</sup> The melodic style that had characterized much of *La mer*, particularly *Jeux de vagues*, its second movement, was carried still further during the orchestral *Images*, and ‘reached its highest point of elaboration’ in *Jeux*, Movement II’s namesake, almost as if, posits Mark DeVoto, Debussy’s style had taken the intense decorative design of Couperin’s harpsichord pieces and transferred it to all parts of the orchestra, ‘greatly accelerated in tempo, like a speeded-up film, with much blurring of the musical surface.’<sup>82</sup>

During these years, Debussy spoke of his new ‘immaterial’ music,<sup>83</sup> and made reference to his work as ‘consisting of colours and rhythmicised time’<sup>84</sup> – an allusion which not only rebutted inherited formal stereotypes, but hinted at the new approach he was to take with regard to time in his pieces. Simon

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<sup>79</sup> Pomeroy, B., ‘Debussy’s tonality: a formal perspective,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 9, p.159.

<sup>80</sup> Eimert speaking from the viewpoint of the post-war avant garde, in Trezise, S., ‘Debussy’s ‘rhythmicised time,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* Ed. by Simon Trezise, ch. 12, p. 236.

<sup>81</sup> Eimert speaks about the ‘organic inexactness of vegetation (‘organische Ungenauigkeit des Vegetativen’) by which he seems to mean the resemblance of the motivic and formal growth of *Jeux* to the budding and leafing of a developing twig or branch at unsymmetrical, unspecifiable but inevitable points, in DeVoto, M., ‘The Debussy sound: colour, texture, gesture,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 10, p. 193.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, ch. 10, p. 194.

<sup>83</sup> Trezise, S., ‘Debussy’s ‘rhythmicised time,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 12, p. 251.

<sup>84</sup> Letter to Jacques Durand, 3 September 1907, *Debussy Letters*, p. 184, in *ibid*, ch. 12, p. 251.

Treize makes a case that from early in his career, Debussy used rhythmic momentum and ‘various blunting techniques’<sup>85</sup> to deflect linear progression in its hitherto accepted form, so that the harmonic phrase was no longer the force for impetus that it had previously been. He examines the argument that established ideas are propagated by passages devoted to ‘escalation,’ generated by a broadly favoured pattern of ‘interruption – alienation – preparation – escalation – confirmation’<sup>86</sup> that propel a piece forwards and enable its circuitous character to establish. Thus in undermining aspects of the previous tonal structure and voice leading, and ‘without the ‘rhythm’ of recurring harmonic events in the tonic-dominant grouping, other factors have to take their place...’ namely ‘shaping of the melody, dynamics, texture, agogic accent, dynamic accent, the number of voices playing, repetition of themes, recurring harmonies and other factors shape one’s perception of ‘phrase.’<sup>87</sup> These create a temporal world that is unique to each piece, formulated as ‘integral’ time by Julian Epstein, and generated from ‘the experience of each work,’<sup>88</sup> rather than a predetermined time. Its rhythms are therefore contextually-based, and arise in an almost improvisatory sense, meaning that ‘performed music, the individual work alive in real time, often with the bar lines dissolved in a ‘performative’ sense, inhabits the domain of integral time.’<sup>89</sup> In essence, this enables the listener / performer to hear far more flowing swells of sound, which I suggest are indicative of that sense of undulating waves moving across the surface of water in Debussy’s music. That is not to say that the composer does not use a regular pulse – indeed the vast majority of pieces establish it as a ‘near-universal background feature,’ that in some cases becomes ‘foregrounded as a gestural feature’ or two conflicting metres that are set against one another, only for one to establish by the end<sup>90</sup> – but perhaps this becomes part of the composer’s ‘layering’ technique as previously discussed, enabling Debussy’s

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<sup>85</sup> Treize, S., ‘Debussy’s ‘rhythmicised time,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* Ed. by Treize, S., ch. 12, p. 243.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, ch. 12, p. 244.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, ch. 12, pp. 241-3.

<sup>88</sup> This is in contrast to ‘chronometric’ time, which is ‘purely mechanistic,’ the emphasis being on ‘material accent, largely mechanical and virtually automatic, associated mainly with those beats of a measure (or larger dimensional levels) that are strong.’ Julian Epstein speaking in *Beyond Orpheus* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1979), p. 56, in *ibid*, ch. 12, p. 234.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, ch. 12, p. 234.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, ch. 12, p. 236.

music to achieve a far greater flexibility and in turn affect the human psyche via suggestibility. In his doctoral thesis Aysegül Durakoglu accords with this view, commenting that the composer's piano music makes extensive use of 'contrapuntal lines (in the) stratification of piano sound in layers...At the source of his conception lies Debussy's treatment of rhythm in each line,' derived from such widespread influences as ancient Greek theory, Renaissance polyphony, arabesques and ornaments, as well as Gregorian chant 'and the use of ties over bar lines giving a sense of measureless time;' <sup>91</sup> all serve to perpetuate Debussy's 'eternal moment,' which can be correlated with the 'waves' of his water music.

Another analyst, David Lewin, expresses similar views with regard to Debussy's 'mysterious' abnegation of contemporary harmonic and tonal theory, stating that our understanding of such music no longer arises through a 'hierarchically stratified context,' but rather through "transformational networks," which treat the musical material as a mixture of motivic and harmonic components in a logically evolving...context.<sup>92</sup> Arnold Whittall suggests that such models are complementary to traditional theories, offering a 'special formal flexibility' in their ability to help 'chart a process in which continuity and change interact' <sup>93</sup> in the Debussyan world – hitherto appropriated by Boulez's description of an essence that 'precludes all academicism.'<sup>94</sup> This move away from the analysis of teleological goal-directed phenomenon helps illuminate the evolutionary processes of pieces which are 'characterized by perpetual metamorphosis from one relatively self-contained idea to another,' which is applicable in a much wider sense to much of Debussy's music. <sup>95</sup> Whilst Boulez captured the spirit of this 'moment' with the

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<sup>91</sup> Durakoglu, A., 'Contrapuntal Lines and Rhythmic Organization in Selected Debussy Piano *Études*: A Structural Analysis with Performance Implications' (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University 1997), p. ix, in Trezise, S., 'Debussy's 'rhythmicised time,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 12, p. 253.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, ch. 12, p. 233, and Whittall, A., 'Debussy now,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* Ed. by Trezise, S., ch 14, p. 280-1.

<sup>93</sup> Whittall, A., 'Debussy now,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* Ed. by Trezise, S., ch 14, p. 280.

<sup>94</sup> Pierre Boulez speaking, in *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, Trans. by Stephen Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 276, in *ibid*, ch 14, p. 280.

<sup>95</sup> This was applied to Debussy's 'La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune,' by Jann Pasler, in 'Timbre, Voice-leading, Musical Arabesque,' p. 234, in Briscoe, James R., Ed. *Debussy in Performance*, in Whittall, A., 'Debussy now,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* Ed. by Trezise, S., ch 14, p. 280.

words that it was ‘Incompatible with any stereotyped order, with any dispensation not created on the instant,’ and rejected ‘any hierarchy outside the musical moment itself,’<sup>96</sup> perhaps concepts such as Lewin’s ‘transformational networks’ will aid critique of Debussy’s structures in the future.

Debussy’s music has been approached in a plethora of different ways, in the search for meaning within, whether it lies in ‘the score itself, or at least the sound-image that the score projects; or the sound-image in the composer’s mind at the moment of composition; or an interpretative performance; or the listener’s temporal experience of a performance...’<sup>97</sup> Early analytical exemplars such as E. Robert Schmitz and Oscar Thompson took a far more poetic line within their formal analysis, whilst Simon Trezise aims for a precision and clarity that informs the literary and historical associations of *La mer*. Roger Nichols follows a similar path. In contrast, Roy Howat has adopted a more clinical and mathematical approach, necessitated by his seminal investigation of Golden Section and symmetrical proportions within various pieces of music, producing many diagrammatical aides to prove his theories. But the inherent nature of music, existing in time but not in a material sense – unless on a stave or a recording – means that it is immeasurable in any ordinary way. Music is not tangible. As Jankélévitch asserts, ‘directly, in itself, music signifies nothing, unless by convention or association. Music means nothing and yet means everything. One can make notes say what one will, grant them any power of analogy: they do not protest.’<sup>98</sup> Its essence cannot be captured, therefore, except in its moment of being, its performance,<sup>99</sup> and in the joy (or other feeling) it evokes: ‘Music exalts the faculty of feeling, an abstraction assembled from all feelings..... Music awakens in us affect per se, affect that is unspecified and

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<sup>96</sup> Pierre Boulez speaking, in *Stocktakings from an Apprenticeship*, Trans, by Stephen Walsh, p. 276, in *ibid*, ch 14, p. 280.

<sup>97</sup> I. D. Bent and A. Pople, Oxford University Press, 2007-2011 in ‘Analysis: The nature of Musical Analysis in <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/41862pg1?print=tr...> (Accessed on 08/02/2011), p. 3.

<sup>98</sup> Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, p. 11.

<sup>99</sup> Jankélévitch refers to Henri Bremond’s assertion that ‘one must interpret the poetic experience by *remaking* it.’ He says: ‘The performer is similar to a lover in re-making the primordial act as if he or she were the first to do it, as if there had never been anyone before who had done so...Music does not exist in itself but only in the dangerous half-hour where we bring it into being *by playing it*. Eternal truth becomes a temporal operation and submits itself to happening...Music has this in common with poetry, and love, and even with duty: music is not made to be spoken of, but for one to *do*; it is not made to be said, but to be “played.” No. Music was not invented to be talked about.’ In *ibid*, p. 79.

unmotivated.’<sup>100</sup> Debussy’s music was remarkably effective in delivering sensuality to its listeners. Possessing an elusive quality that slipped away from preconceived ideas, it became easier to codify as the embodiment of dreams and the misty, shadowy world of the visionary. Debussy’s music appeared to deliver an alchemical metamorphosis between nature and music in a mystical, hidden process, (aided by its improvisatory qualities), which still remains ‘veiled’<sup>101</sup> a hundred years later, though almost incredibly complex if Howat’s reading is accepted. The composer’s references to harmonious proportions and *le divin nombre*,<sup>102</sup> for example, as indicated by Howat, would infer his use of more exact architectural proportions, whether he was consciously aware of them or otherwise.<sup>103</sup> As Simon Trezise attests in his article on ‘Debussy’s ‘rhythmicised time,’<sup>104</sup> the belief by some analysts of ‘the unknowable intangibility of his music would have suited him very well...’ and Debussy would doubtless have relished ‘the mystery he had created in his musical universe for posterity’<sup>105</sup> – the quandary over proportional devices aroused by Howat’s research being wholly concerned with issues of time and space.

Richard S. Parks has analyzed the conspicuous use of repetition within Debussy’s music,<sup>106</sup> concentrating on its *moving* aspects and dynamic and rhythmic propensities, concluding that its ‘fluid nature’ is what conveys impressions to us. It is this vitality, he notes, that in turn bears meaning to listeners and performers.<sup>107</sup> It is this *moving*, I contend, that animates in us

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<sup>100</sup> Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, p. 58.

<sup>101</sup> The other connotation to ‘Voiles’ (*Douze Préludes I* 1910), in which Debussy expressly denies that the piece is a photograph of the beach, – ‘Nor a postcard for 15<sup>th</sup> August!’ In Long, M., *At the Piano with Debussy*, p. 66. Its Symbolist association perhaps equates with transparency, separating the viewer from the looked upon or the listener from the composer, or possibly a dream-like sequence of the otherworldly, in another dimension. Schmitz refers to “mysterious veils enveloping palpitating feminine forms,” in Schmitz, E. Robert, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, p. 133.

<sup>102</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, pp. 7 and 170.

<sup>103</sup> See Howat’s arguments for such structural rigour in *ibid*, ch. 1 and ch. 11.

<sup>104</sup> Trezise, S., ‘Debussy’s ‘rhythmicised time,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 12. p. 232.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, ch. 12, p. 232.

<sup>106</sup> See details of the dynamic and rhythmic aspect of *Syrinx* (1913), *Première rapsodie* (1910) and *Sirènes* (1897-9) in an article ‘Music’s inner dance form, pacing and complexity in Debussy’s music,’ by Parks, R. S., in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 11, pp. 197-231.

<sup>107</sup> Richard Parks draws upon various sources in promulgating the ‘concept of musical form as dynamic rather than static’ but particularly the work of Wallace Berry, in writings such as *Structural Functions in Music* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976); also *Musical Structure and Performance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); also Parks, *The Music*

impressions of ‘ebb and flow,’ ‘rise and fall,’ ‘climax and release,’<sup>108</sup> that allude to the inclinations and undulations of waves in the water pieces. The mutability of liquid form is aided by Debussy’s complex musical events, which in their ‘collage’ of ‘intensification versus subsidence’<sup>109</sup> create that feeling of motion within, so that dramatic and expressive rhythmic events, such as those from *Jeux de Vagues* cannot help but conjure up the feel of waves at play. Repetitive memories, aided by Debussy’s complex textures, assist this feeling of intensity and ‘knowingness’ that we take from the music,<sup>110</sup> its diversity and ‘voluptuousness’<sup>111</sup> capturing a multifarious pattern of changes that evoke an eternal circle, forever free in metaphysical terms – rhythms beneath the surface mirroring those seen in natural phenomena such as the atmosphere and water, like clouds and the sea. It is hardly surprising that ripples and wave patterns fluctuate in the minds of Debussy’s listeners and perhaps most of all his performers, who bring these musical effects into being through physical action – the ‘inner dance’ adduced by Richard Parks. Debussy’s ‘sense of organicism and his concern to integrate non-musical and musical elements’<sup>112</sup> enabled the music to flow in a supple and organic way, developing according to its subject and evoking the sonorous values of its theme, such as the ‘doux et fluide’ instruction for *La Cathédrale engloutie*.

This evocation of water and the sea is inextricably bound up with Debussy’s piano music. Many pieces were composed for this instrument. The keyboard

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*of Claude Debussy*, Ch. 11, ‘Kinetic Forms,’ pp. 235-55. In addition, ‘the conception permeated the work of nineteenth-century theorist Ernst Kurth. An introduction to his ideas is provided by Jan L. Tripe, in ‘Ernst Kurth’s Dynamic Formal Process and Sonata Design in Bruckner’s Sixth Symphony’ (London, Ontario: master’s thesis, The University of Western Ontario, 1997), pp. 10-47. In Parks, R, S., ‘Music’s inner dance: form, pacing and complexity in Debussy’s music,’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy* Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 11, p. 197.

<sup>108</sup> See Lewis Rowell, *Thinking about Music* (Amherst, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 222, in Parks, R, S., ‘Music’s inner dance: form, pacing and complexity in Debussy’s music,’ in *ibid*, ch. 11, p. 197.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid*, ch. 11, p. 197.

<sup>110</sup> Parks likens this process to a myriad of impressions, which he depicts as a series of brief journeys in the case of *Syrinx*, giving it its ‘protean quality.’ In contrast, the water piece *Sirènes*, almost wholly comprised of ostinatos, alternates ‘two important and related motto themes that are stated and repeated, over and over, separately and together,’ in *ibid*, ch. 11, pp. 214-225.

<sup>111</sup> Quoted from a letter to Paul-Jean Toulet dated 8 & November 1901 in reference to a performance of *Nocturnes*, in which Debussy states ‘I think you would have enjoyed their voluptuous rhythms,’ in *Debussy Letters*, p. 123, in Parks, R, S., ‘Music’s inner dance: form, pacing and complexity in Debussy’s music,’ in *ibid*, ch. 11, p. 230.

<sup>112</sup> Parks, Richard S., *The Music of Claude Debussy: Composers of the Twentieth Century*: Allen Forte, General Editor p. 20.

lent itself to a flowing, unbroken line, and demanded a physicality that suited Debussy's piano style where he entered into every nuance it was capable of producing. It is apposite, therefore, to briefly consider the instrument's role in producing the watery fluidity that is so evocative in pieces such as *L'isle joyeuse*.

Marguerite Long, a pianist pupil and contemporary of Debussy, reflects on the composer's particular talent in portraying water:

His prodigious love of nature plunged him into that life-giving element, water. Not a reflection nor a current in it, not a caress nor a treacherous movement escaped him. In his music this all adds up to a series of nuances that are not to be defined unless they are felt, and which are represented by *rubato* that is as much part of the interpretation of Debussy as of Chopin<sup>113</sup>

Debussy's piano pieces particularly gave the misleading appearance and sound of improvisation, (another aspect of liquidity), yet in reality hide a deep concern for both 'form' as he freely conceived it and inner construction. As Long comments, 'both conscious technique and subconscious instinct make up his lands...'<sup>114</sup> – contemporary perceptions revealing Debussy's sensuous essence and the large part it was to play in his art. The piano is a 'suggestive' instrument in the right hands, and so 'became in every way a natural part of him (as it was with Chopin) – a living and sensitive extension through which every shade of the musical personality could find complete expression, at the same time exploring all the possibilities of timbre and contrast available'.<sup>115</sup> Thus the piano and orchestra eventually became interchangeable in Debussy's search for a means of expression. Debussy revolutionized the way the piano was played thereafter, by attuning his audience to 'the infinite vibrations of his emotions,'<sup>116</sup> (akin to Mallarmé's<sup>117</sup> description of music as the 'naked flesh of

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<sup>113</sup> Long, M., talking about *Reflets dans l'eau* first of the piano *Images I* 1905, in *At the Piano with Debussy*, Translated by Senior-Ellis, O., (London, J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1972), p. 25.

<sup>114</sup> Long, M., talking about *Reflets dans l'eau* first of the piano *Images I* 1905, in *At the Piano with Debussy*, p. 6.

<sup>115</sup> Cox, D., *Debussy Orchestral Music: BBC Publications*, p. 8.

<sup>116</sup> Long, M., *At the Piano with Debussy* p. 19.

<sup>117</sup> Debussy is likely to have come across Theodor de Wyzewa's article on Mallarmé's *L'après-midi d'un faune* entitled 'M. Mallarmé: Notes' (5-12 July and 12-19 July 1886). Discussing the musicality of the poet's writing in this piece, he opines: 'I believe that...the poetic writing of M. Mallarmé remains today the best model that exists of the music of words.' In Theodor de Wyzewa, 'M. Mallarmé: Notes,' *La vogue* (5-12 July and 12-19 July 1886), p. 375; see also Wyzewa's discussion of the same work in *La revue indépendante* (January 1887) in Kelly,

emotion,')<sup>118</sup> and as an incomparable pianist, Debussy followed in Chopin's footsteps, his caressing touch 'floating over the keys with a curiously penetrating gentleness,' aiming for 'nothing less than total euphoria.'<sup>119</sup>

In the subsequent collaboration between Debussy and Mallarmé, the composer was able to take his ideas of 'evocation' further, building on the exploration of inner feeling and the Symbolist goal of suggestibility rather than description. These links between music, love, the dream world and nature, were further explored by Schopenhauer, whose philosophical creed emphasized the importance of music in providing release from humanity's endless cycle of desire and fulfilment. Debussy was to develop all these ideas and build on Mallarmé's impressions of light and shadow in the *Prélude à L'Après -midi d'un Faune*:

Music is close to nature in borrowing such effects, but also more obscure and mysterious than nature or poetry in its imprecision and detachment from the phenomenal world.<sup>120</sup>

Its implicative style realised a new concept of time in the frequent rhythm changes, which seem to achieve both a constant moving onwards as well as suspending time completely in some sections, presaging the similar metamorphoses of passages in *La mer* seven years later. Debussy referred to this process as 'interminable flow'<sup>121</sup> – its evocation of Mallarmé's poem suggesting the dualities of reality and allusion in a perpetually moving dreamlike state.

In a metaphorical sense, light and shadow are themselves analogous to the peak and trough of a wave, whether a literal expression of waves on the sea, or those which are invisible to the eyes and ears. Debussy's ideas regarding the

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Barbara L., 'Debussy's Parisian affiliations', in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 2, p.33.

<sup>118</sup> Debussy talking to Robert Godet about the aims of composition, insofar as he is able to describe the creative process, in Abravanel, C., 'Symbolism and Performance,' in Briscoe, James R., Ed. *Debussy in Performance*, ch.2, p.39.

<sup>119</sup> Long, M., *At the Piano with Debussy* pp. 19-20.

<sup>120</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé, 'Mystery in Letters', in Austin, *Poetic principles*, p. 62, in Kelly, Barbara L., 'Debussy's Parisian affiliations', in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 2, p. 34.

<sup>121</sup> Gunnell, J. *Commonalities between Mallarmé, Debussy, and their L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, p. 2, in <http://jonathangunnell.com/?p=125> (Accessed on 08/01/2010)

arabesque, which feature often in his writings,<sup>122</sup> enabled him to find a new means of providing ‘forms’ in his music. Jarocinski concurs with this innovative interpretation, that ‘the arabesque, as he understood it, is an undulating melodic line, independent of any notion of the development of themes or ‘motifs.’<sup>123</sup> These fleeting moments – typified by ‘short phrases, flexible rhythmic patterns, and an ever-changing sonorous and harmonic background’,<sup>124</sup> – perfectly captured Debussy’s *correspondences* in nature and the undulating portrayal of water in capricious weather conditions, most notably in *La mer*.

Edward Lockspeiser noted that ‘Debussy’s life coincided with a golden age of piano music in which he played the most important part.’ Only Ravel ‘was able to vie with Debussy in this sphere.’<sup>125</sup> The latter wanted the fingers on the keyboard to appear to ‘penetrate into the notes’<sup>126</sup> so that the piano appeared not to have percussive hammers, and therefore would create the ultimate illusion. His caressing style insisted that the notes must be ‘struck in a peculiar way...otherwise the sympathetic vibrations of the other notes will not be heard quivering distantly in the air. Debussy regarded the piano as the Balinese musicians regard their gamelan orchestras.’<sup>127</sup> Piano techniques at the beginning of the twentieth century were radically altered by the innovative Debussy, in that his work enlarged the range of tonal colour, most evidently towards softer sounds, as he effectively orchestrated the instrument. The physical requirement of holding the hand close to the keys, so that the note was struck with minimal movement, diminished the impact of the hammer, and allowed each note to ‘speak’ with a hitherto inconceivable ‘air of intimacy.’<sup>128</sup> Thus Debussy was able to revolutionize contemporary thinking, making the piano the medium for his finest work.

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<sup>122</sup> Jarocinski, S., *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*, p. 146, in Kelly, Barbara L., ‘Debussy’s Parisian affiliations’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 2, p. 35.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, ch. 2, p. 35.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, ch 2, p. 35.

<sup>125</sup> Lockspeiser, E., *Debussy: His Life and Mind*, Volume II 1902-1918, p. 33.

<sup>126</sup> Marguerite Long speaking, in *ibid*, p.45.

<sup>127</sup> Nichols, R., *The Life of Debussy: Musical Lives*, (Cambridge University Press, New York, Melbourne: 1998), p. 133.

<sup>128</sup> Rosen, C., *The Hidden World of the Pianist: Piano Notes*, (Allen Lane, an imprint of Penguin Books: 2003), (USA, The Free Press, 2002), p. 211.

Music is realized in its *doing*, says Debussy, in its act of performance, akin to its elusive act of ‘Becoming.’<sup>129</sup> In its operation it transcends and gains access to the spirit. As analysts, we may strive to understand the formal coherence of a piece; we may compare and contrast with similar/different pieces to broaden our knowledge; we may listen for poetic insights and suppose certain philosophical truths like Jankélévitch, and feel our souls soar in the presence of that music which so nearly accords with the disposition of our own being, but no one approach will provide definitive knowledge and the answers to all our questions. In reality, the analyst ‘works with the preconceptions of his culture, age and personality...’ attempting to keep value judgements and subconscious assessments at bay because ‘ultimately, the very existence of an observer – the analyst – pre-empts the possibility of total objectivity.’<sup>130</sup>

In this reading of Debussy’s music, wave patterns are discernible as tonal/modal diversions occurring just above the surface level of stability, so that his ‘colours’ and ‘forms’ are interchangeable and provide textural excitement, and the music has about it a sort of circularity, as though it emerges from Nature itself and floats away on the air into another dimension. It emerges in ‘half-tint,’ or ‘half-life’ ‘with a lowered voice,’ exemplifying ‘the heroic held-back quality of ...Debussy,’<sup>131</sup> and usually disappears at *ppp* to enhance this impression; the overall *pp* sound of *Reflets dans L’eau* and *La Cathédrale engloutie* are a lesson in reticence – ‘the force of shielded emotion, which owes nothing to wild gesticulation.’<sup>132</sup> Beginnings and endings appear indeterminate, as if carried to our ears by the voices of the mythical *Sirènes*, in what Jankélévitch refers to as the art of ‘Becoming.’ This is a constant process that ‘assumes the form of a continuous alteration,’<sup>133</sup> which is especially pertinent

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<sup>129</sup> Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, Transl. by Abbate, C., pp. 92-100. See note 133. Also see Abbate, C., ‘Jankélévitch’s Singularity,’ p. xvii.

<sup>130</sup> I. D. Bent and A. Pople, Oxford University Press, 2007-2011 in *Analysis: The Nature of Musical Analysis*, in <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/41862pg1?print=tr...> (Accessed on 08/02/2011), p. 4.

<sup>131</sup> Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, Trans. by Abbate, C., p. 50.

<sup>132</sup> Jankélévitch refers to Van Lerberghe, who says that ‘Emotions “in a penumbra” do not express themselves in capital letters,’ in “En un pénombre,” *Le jardin clos*, no. 6; see Verlaine’s poem ‘En Sourdine,’ (Muted) in *ibid*, pp. 48-50.

<sup>133</sup> Jankélévitch expresses this experience of ‘lived time’ as ‘the arrival of the future, without excluding memory (that) prevents the circle from ever being closed.’ Further, he explains, in words perfectly suited to and descriptive of Debussy’s elusiveness:

to the eternal lines of Debussy's music, and a noticeable feature of pieces such as *L'isle joyeuse* and later *La mer*. Innuendos and allusions provoke reminiscences that appear to 'play and hover in the branches of trees and in the light of the free air.'<sup>134</sup> This continual circularity and ever-present 'instant' is analogous to the waves of the sea, in that both are ephemeral within their eternal motion, ever moving onwards and not entirely 'present,' (in material terms). Their reality is perhaps a natural expression of Debussy's conception of water's mercurial quality. Noticeable ascents and descents would spontaneously echo the pattern of waves.

I now proceed to analyse the piano pieces in detail – *L'isle Joyeuse*, 'Reflets dans l'eau' from *Images I*, along with the great orchestral piece *La mer*. I have provided charts for the formal analysis of each composition, against which I discuss the ideas contained in the music, and my opinion regarding the particular impression and function of wave patterns within them. I explore those aspects which give credence to this principle, supplying pictorial graphs illustrating the immediately obvious dynamic waves, and the tonal/modal examples that are created when the level of water is taken as the surface and the 'floating harmonies' are taken as 'waves,' in support of my contention.<sup>135</sup> These operate in a totally different way to nineteenth century models, providing a 'wave' that emerges above the equilibrium of the general tonal character of each piece. In a sense, the water operates as the calm skin of that equilibrium, (the key/main tonality) – its balance in effect – whilst ripples causing 'waves' on the surface are made by the music's journeys into other tonal/modal regions.

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'Such wandering is always a bit dream-like and nocturnal: this is Becoming. Fluid and without an itinerary: such is music. The dimension it assumes is made of all that is least palpable and most evanescent, and this dimension, Becoming, is a state that Aristotle has already declared to be quasi-nonexistent, since one does not conceive of it except in twilight thought, as if through the mist of dreaming. Becoming does not permit the object to be divided into sectors, according to its corporeal limits; it is much more the dimension according to which the object undoes itself without end, forms, deforms, transforms, and then re-forms itself...' in Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, Trans. by Abbate, C., pp 92-100.

<sup>134</sup> Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, p. 30. Also see *Monsieur Croche, antidilettante*, where, in his adopted persona, Debussy waxes lyrical about the possibilities of open-air concerts, which would prove efficacious to the spirit, and freely express the *correspondences* between Nature and Music. See Lesure, *Debussy on Music: The Critical Writings of the Great French Composer Claude Debussy: Collected and Introd. by Francois Lesure, Trans. and Ed. by Richard Langham Smith*, p. 119 and pp. 152-155.

<sup>135</sup> See Appendixes II-VI.

I have also annotated the scores for each piece to demonstrate the obvious wave shapes that emerge pictorially from such an exercise, although let me say immediately that I have not plotted *all* the waves in *La mer*, on all levels. I deliberate upon my perception of wave-like influences in Debussy's music, and whether these exist solely in the minds of listeners, or whether Debussy did indeed build such wave-like effects into his 'water' pieces, whether intuitive or cognitively-based.

## Chapter II

### An Analysis of Wave Patterns in Debussy's Piano Pieces

#### *L'isle joyeuse* (1904)

This solo piano piece – coming after works such as *Clair de lune*, from the *Suite Bergamasque* in 1890 for the same instrument, and the orchestral *Trois Nocturnes* from 1898 – features Debussy's growing armoury of musical techniques, which were to culminate in *La mer* and the first of the *Images I* pieces, – *Reflets dans l'eau*. Allusions to natural themes and watery subjects were by now prevalent, and *Sirènes*, the third piece from the *Nocturnes*, already evokes the sway and swirling undulations of the sea in waves of surging sound.<sup>136</sup> Mark De Voto classifies *L'isle joyeuse* and *Reflets dans l'eau* as Debussy's 'first unmistakably aquatic pieces,' in a category that is predominantly related to piano music, apart from 'that most important non-piano aquatic work, *La mer*'.<sup>137</sup>

*L'isle joyeuse* was to continue *Sirènes*'s emotive outpouring with the development of the form that Roy Howat refers to as 'Debussy's preoccupation ...with extended symphonic structure,'<sup>138</sup> which was perhaps a rehearsal for the 'structural techniques' which were to engross him in *La mer*. Ravel apparently referred to the piece as 'an orchestrated reduction for the piano,'<sup>139</sup> and E. Robert Schmitz comments that the piece is 'one of the most orchestrally

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<sup>136</sup> Debussy had already explored a much freer form of development in these pieces, moving away from the previous musical systems of conflict and resolution in his suggestion of natural phenomena, such as clouds, the wind, waves and light on water. The ever-shifting atmosphere of *Sirènes* was evoked by an undulating, wave-like figure of two notes that 'rise or fall a tone, with something of the fixity and monotony of waves, but with harmonies as changing as the incessantly moving sea...' discerns Oscar Thompson, with the later 'exoticisms' of sharpened 4ths and flattened 7ths already prevalent in the shimmering harmonies. Apart from the unworldly voices of the mythical sirens, tremolando strings, arpeggiating woodwind and shimmering harps provide the sort of 'static' colour later to be found in *La mer*. In Thompson, O., *Debussy Man And Artist*, pp. 321-2.

<sup>137</sup> DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No. 4*. (Hillsdale, New York: Pendragon Press, 2004). p. 185.

<sup>138</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 46.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, p. 46.

conceived piano works,'<sup>140</sup> with a 'modern texture' reminiscent and equivalent to the Lisztian model. He alludes to the possible stimulus of Watteau's *The Embarkment for Cythère*, recalling similar qualities of gaiety, animation and sensuality; – 'the enchantment of the "land of love" pervades the music, culminating into triumphant dance rhythms, a glorious fanfare in honour of the goddess. It is veritably the isle of joy,'<sup>141</sup> but this is hardly surprising given that Debussy was engrossed in his passionate elopement to Jersey with Emma Bardac at this time. Along similar lines, Oscar Thompson conceives the piece as 'one of the most carefree and most sensual of Debussy's compositions, as well as one of the more ambitious... it contrives not only to be suggestive of its subject but to serve the virtuoso purposes which Debussy the pianist sometimes urged upon Debussy the composer'<sup>142</sup> – a symbiosis of the instrument's technical and emotional possibilities. Although composed in 1903 and revised the following year, *L'isle joyeuse* appears to have been intended as a finale to another triptych, – a second *Suite Bergamasque* including *Masques* and *D'un cahier d'esquisses*, argues Howat.<sup>143</sup> Be that as it may, the result was a piano work that was 'by far the most symphonically conceived...which has clear spiritual, musical and structural connections with *La mer*, the 'Trois esquisses symphoniques' on which he was working at exactly the same time,'<sup>144</sup> according to Nigel Simeone. The piece was completed whilst Debussy was in Dieppe, - a coastal town, – its melodies redolent with 'the exultant simplicity of folk songs, and the infectious carefreeness of Mediterranean tunes,'<sup>145</sup> as interpreted by Schmitz, the composer's friend and fellow pianist.

*L'isle joyeuse* was described by Long as a piece full of colour, a 'gorgeous vision, inspired with joy and prodigious exuberance: a 'Feast of Rhythm' in which, on the vast waves of its modulations, the virtuoso must maintain, under

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<sup>140</sup> Schmitz, E. R., Foreword by Virgil Thomson, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, (New York, Dover Publications, Inc., 1966. Originally published by Duell, Sloan & Pearce, Inc., 1950), p. 94.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, p. 94.

<sup>142</sup> Thompson, O., *Debussy: Man And Artist*, p. 259.

<sup>143</sup> See Howat, R., 'En Route for *L'Isle joyeuse*: the Restoration of a Triptych,' *Cahiers Debussy* 19 (1995), pp. 37-52, in Simeone, N., 'Debussy and expression,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 6, p. 106.

<sup>144</sup> *D'un cahier d'esquisses* has particularly striking musical links, since it is 'written in D flat, the tonic of *La mer*, and makes extensive use of a rhythmic figure that dominates the cello theme of the second principal section (first movement).' In Trezise, Debussy: *La mer*, p. 9, in Simeone, N., 'Debussy and expression,' in *ibid*, ch. 6, pp. 106 and 298-9 of Notes.

<sup>145</sup> Schmitz, E. R., Foreword by Virgil Thomson, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy* p. 94.

the sails of his imagination, the precision of his technique.<sup>146</sup> Written as a paean to his elopement with Emma in late July 1904 – ‘the *Isle Joyeuse* of his most extrovert piano piece’<sup>147</sup> – it contributes to the formation of Debussy’s mature piano style, with its ‘ecstatic lyricism and symphonic breadth...’<sup>148</sup> Its proportional structure is, on the evidence of Howat’s analysis, ‘as carefully wrought as *La mer*’s and it too makes use of the acoustic extent. Oscillating between C sharp and G natural, there are parallels in the opening with *L’Après-midi*, but the piano gives it a percussive element’<sup>149</sup> and Nichols points to a design that has a much bolder arabesque. The importance of wave patterns is seen again in a buoyant episode, which prefigures a similar passage in *La mer*. The sea as a great force of nature is utilized to create a springy triplet-type rhythm moving in a boldly diatonic manner. As in *Reflets dans l’eau*, the two themes are synthesized in the culminating bars, the final pianistic flourish travelling the length of the keyboard.

*L’isle joyeuse*, like many of Debussy’s pieces, is largely indefinable in orthodox formal terms, since its unusually complex structure and ‘exuberant dynamic shape,’ which is an ‘overall wedge-shape’<sup>150</sup> – perpetuate a continual gradation of sound from *p* and *pp* at the beginning, through to a treble *fortissimo* in bars 252-5, which traverses the length of the piano in the culminating bar. Howat postulates that this shape, which has ‘an undefined rhythm and tonality,’ is an immediate reference point for the piece, since its overall genesis is contained within the opening bar, with its long trill set a tone apart.<sup>151</sup> The piece sees an abundance of thematic and tonal returns that continually evolve and propel the music onwards, which render it into an organic whole, in an innovative style.

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<sup>146</sup> Long, M., *At the Piano with Debussy*, p. 37.

<sup>147</sup> The chain of events leading to this flight and subsequent repercussions in Debussy’s life is documented by Robert Orledge, in ‘Debussy the man’, *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 1, pp. 21-3.

<sup>148</sup> Long, M., *At the Piano with Debussy*, p. 37

<sup>149</sup> Nichols, R., *Debussy: Oxford Studies of Composers (10)*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 55.

<sup>150</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 46.

<sup>151</sup> C sharp to D sharp gives rise to reminiscences of Chopin’s Waltz no. 6 in D flat, where the A flat/B flat trill beginning at bar 69 also opens out into a dynamic *crescendo*, - albeit with a different conclusion; - 7 bars of small undulations similar in shape to bars 19-25 of Debussy’s ‘*L’isle joyeuse*’.

*L'isle joyeuse* also possesses 'a strong ternary tendency,'<sup>152</sup> which permeates its large-scale form, and the receptor's listening, despite its idiosyncratic design. An additional episode at bars 28-51, within the first main part, forms 'in effect a smaller ternary system within the larger one' since both the remaining sections are also marked 'by two transitions to 3/8 metre, at bars 28 and 67'.<sup>153</sup> Whereas this is highly unusual, the piece does not fit a rondo analysis either, since the themes and motives recur in an unpredictable order and the ternary feeling remains persistent. For these reasons, it might be classified as 'an amalgam of rondo and ternary elements'...since its size makes 'both small-scale accumulation and large-scale formal stability'<sup>154</sup> necessary, in Howat's estimation. If this ternary sequence is accepted as a type of wave in itself, it should also be understood that the 'ternary-within-ternary' scheme Debussy utilizes is also redolent of a 'wave-within-a wave' scenario, which would perfectly fit with the composer's aesthetic ideas for a piece entitled *L'isle joyeuse*. These waves not only exist in a structural or formal dimension, but in dynamic escalations of surging and recoiling, and in the undulations and wave shapes present on the staves. The latter can certainly be seen as analogous to the whole-tone language and modes that form so great a part of Debussy's idiom, and which are evident from the very first trill of *L'isle joyeuse*. Constantly pushing at the boundaries of 'accepted' tonality, Debussy's augmentations and flattened sevenths in this piece are referential in their allusions to a force that cannot be controlled and is ever powerful and unpredictable. The latter, in particular, are effective in avoiding a goal-oriented tonality, since leading notes would create a drive to resolve up to the tonic, and thus flattened sevenths are an aid to the continual autogenesis of the piece.

In order to analyse the methods Debussy employed, I have utilized the following divisions. The overlapping of sections and their 'dual' purposes can immediately be seen:

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<sup>152</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 47.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, p. 47.

Introduction	Exposition/ Section A	First Additional Episode	Transition	Central Section B	Section C (Recapitulation)	Coda - Climax and Resolution
Bars 1-6	Bars 7-67	Bars 28-51	Bars 52-66	Bars 67-159 (incorporating Bars 105-145 as Developmental Section and Bars 145-159 as Initial Recapitulation)	Bars 160-219	Bars 220-255

An annotated copy of the score is provided at Appendix II, demonstrating the wave patterns made by configurations of notes, together with a formal analysis and dynamic and tonal/modal wave charts, to accompany my argument. In an examination of the latter, it is interesting to note the fluctuating waves that occur above the equilibrium of what may be taken to be the surface of the sea, represented by the A major tonic. Whilst I have documented these effects in detail within my analysis, it is compelling to view their visual representation both in the music and in the model I have perceived. Debussy's attention to the visual impact of his work was well known.

### Synopsis

#### Introduction Bars 1-6

#### Rhythm and Expression

The improvisatory quality of *L'isle joyeuse* is immediately apparent in its elongated trill between C sharp/D sharp – the passage being marked 'Quasi una cadenza.'<sup>155</sup> These fluctuating undulations of sound instantly evoke the impression of waves, which are carried forth by the rising and falling character of the three arpeggiating augmented triads which follow. This thematic shape

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<sup>155</sup> Robert E. Schmitz refers to the introduction as being 'in the form of a free cadenza...with a free improvisatory shape.' See Schmitz, E. R., Foreword by Virgil Thomson, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, pp. 95-96.

forms Motive A at bars 1-2, which not only delineates a wave-like shape oscillating between C sharp and G natural, but creates a dynamic wave with *piano* swelling via *crescendos* first to *forte* and then to *sforzando* at bar 6. The nature of the running semiquavers and demisemiquavers, mainly in groups of four, is also evocative of running water emerging from the waves of the trill, whilst the slower quaver whole-tone chords of bar 3 provide a steady influence beneath the surface. As the introduction draws to a close, continual repetition of the whole-tone trill sets the scene for the rest of the piece, emphasising as it does the initial rhythm and tonalities which are entirely undefined, apart from the very Debussyan augmented harmonies.

### Melody and Harmony

The piece is set in A major, the C sharp/D sharp trill creating an augmented 4<sup>th</sup> within this key. This ambiance is repeated in a set of 'mysterious' tones containing three ascending augmented triads (B-D sharp-G natural/ A-C sharp-F natural/ G natural-B natural-D sharp) and the addition of B flat and A flat, which render an eerie tone from the outset. Each set of four demisemiquavers descends a tone each time, from the initial dotted C sharp, to B, A, and G natural – bars 1 and 2 being identical repeats, in order to emphasize the enigmatic tonal sounds and the liberated nature of the trill, before bar 3 discards what might be seen as the pinnacles of waves and descends directly, and bars 4 and 5 play with the idea by repeating it an octave lower. The added depth of this last effect is juxtaposed against the left hand of bar 3 making an excursion into the treble clef, crossing hands to deliver an added injection of high whole tone chords, in thirds, which only serve to amplify the feeling of brooding mystery and preternatural atmosphere.

### Register

The initial register of the piece is in the upper half of the keyboard, thereby exhibiting an overall joyous feel as soon as the music begins, particularly as the semiquavers soar upwards to G and F naturals. These points could be seen as pinnacles of waves or denoting feelings of joyous climaxes, running away from the equilibrium of the trills. The interjection of the left hand in bar 3 is a steady influence, being predominantly quaver orientated, but at the same

time soars to a top B reinforcing a mysterious whole-toned wave. Subsequently, bars 4-5 repeat the first two bars an octave lower, – the descent of the initial note to each grouping seemingly more pronounced (C sharp-B-A-G natural) – thus lending the passage a feeling of subsiding into the troughs of waves.

The first 6 bars of the piece thus form an open-ended dynamic shape, together with an unusual complexity of structure, which concentrates on mood and aura rather than predetermined form. Waves of sound evoke watery themes, whilst shapes of note patterns add to the illusion of waves. Physical positioning of the hand to play these passages on the piano also necessitate an ‘entering into’ the keys, such as that practised by Debussy himself, when he caressed the instrument whilst playing his own pieces. This would have been imperative, since the work is scored ‘Quasi una cadenza,’ a marking usually reserved for a passage near the end of a concerto, where the playing requires a florid brilliance to show off the technical skill of the performer. As a term it is also suggestive of a freedom, flexibility and suppleness (reiterated by the words ‘Tempo: Modéré et très souple’ at bar 7), indicative of Debussy’s wishes for the piece. Waves do not follow a rigid pattern. *L’isle joyeuse* requires virtuosic playing throughout, from its first bars – its speed demanding a new type of playing and expression, which only serve to augment the feeling of surging waves which permeate throughout.

From the beginning, the piece has a fluid, organic quality – perhaps evoking the lines and whiplash curves of the Art Nouveau movement, which characterized European styles during the *fin de siècle* years of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The rippling right hand with its very fast demisemiquavers frequently induces a ‘watery’ feel to the work, and the curved pattern of the notes naturally impel us to hear surges which are obvious waves of sound, compounded by their speed, shape and dynamics.

#### Exposition / Section A Bars 7-27

##### Rhythm and Expression

Whilst the trills continue for a further 8 beats, the bass is anchored by demisemiquaver rhythms (and tonic harmonies I-V-I-V-V-I) which culminate

on longer quaver beats, giving a breezy, high-spirited feel to this section. It is accompanied at bar 9 by a jaunty, joyful dotted rhythm, which establishes a regular quaver beat/pulse for the first time, in 4/4 time,<sup>156</sup> and introduces Motive B. This is reminiscent in character of a traditional sea-shanty, but remains at *p*, *léger et rythmé* up to bar 12, which sees crescendos introduced to mark the triplet rhythm (initially introduced at bar 9) which recommences at bar 11. These have the effect of evening out the swell rhythmically, so that a much smoother line initially ensues, even with wider intervals, until motive B's dotted rhythm is reprised at bar 15. However, these triplet scale runs operate diatonically to produce elements of instability within the even wave patterns.

Dynamically, although bar 9 begins *pianissimo*, and each run of triplets begins *p*, bars 12-15 all *crescendo* within this framework, indicating a light swell, before the jovial rhythm of B returns again in bar 15, and then proceeds to do the opposite. *Mezzo forte* swells lapse to *piano*, from bar 17, perfectly balancing the previous bars and the ever-rolling buoyancy and sway of the sea. These many devices are all reflecting on the theme of an ever-rolling sea set around the *L'isle joyeuse*.

Bar 19 continues the triplet runs for 6 bars, this time reverting to the scalar modes of bar 11, but inverting their shape again to echo bar 17 – that is, a descent/ascent shape which emphasizes their plunging character, from D sharp to A. These fluent and curving bars, clearly visible as a continuous wave of sound in their graphic representation on the staff, highlight the harmonic volatility that is taking place and which is discussed below. The use of a transformational rhythm in the bass, juxtaposed against a free-flowing treble, emphasizes the far more languorous and dangerous unplumbed depths below in an analogy to the sea.

As the first dynamic peak is reached at bars 24-5, a hiatus of sorts arrives with the insertion of two overwhelmingly joyous frissons of sound, arpeggiating upwards via C sharp-E natural-G sharp-F sharp to major chords set an octave apart and reaching the heights of ecstasy, perhaps redolent of Debussy's own initial joy upon his elopement. The ensuing sextuplet rhythms

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<sup>156</sup> It is interesting to note that this tune is very suggestive of one that Debussy later uses in bar 5 of *The Little Shepherd* in his *Children's Corner* piano solos, dedicated to Chouchou, his daughter, in 1908.

and repeat of the joyous chords at bar 27 deliver us to a change in tempo, which becomes 3/8, adding to the overall complexity of structure after the 4/4 timing of the first 27 bars, and an accompanying change in character for the piece. In short, it appears to be an amalgam of both ternary and rondo forms, there being three main sections structurally, but these being amalgamated with the episodic nature of rondo composition.

### Melody and Harmony

Even after the arrival of the tonic A major, in bar 7, the C sharp/D sharp whole tone trill continues above the A tonality for two bars, indicating the dual harmonic nature of the piece and the fact that even here the tonic is modified by the augmented tones. Motive B is introduced in bar 9, also containing the D sharp/C sharp cell as a grace note above tonic A major third. The left hand traverses the lower keyboard in arpeggiated tonic runs – A E A E, emphasizing I-V-I progressions (in contrast to the augmented tonalities), which extend over 5 bars in an ascending direction, evoking playful wave-like peaks and troughs, before plunging downwards using the same harmonies in bars 12-13. The triadic chords of bars 7-11 are also preceded by tied grace notes, which ensure that each bar rises in an arpeggiated upward trajectory, giving an intensified feeling to the music.

Meanwhile, at bar 11 whole-tone scales reiterate, rising and falling before chromatic scales within the left hand layers of sound at bars 12-13 tether the mood to that of the ‘mysterious depths,’ anchored by an E/B (V) dotted chord. An ‘ascending-by-steps’ unstable chromatic scale passage in bar 14, (left-hand), delivered in sets of two quavers, unhinges the mood further, – before the left hand reverts to its previous tonic arpeggiated runs and the right hand reprises Motive B at bar 15, which has a stabilising effect. These episodes of stability and instability engender much of the tension that drives the piece onwards, towards its thrilling conclusion.

Motive B, the main theme, (incorporating the C sharp/D sharp tonality), is seemingly based on a mode that Debussy used on various occasions,<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Roy Howat refers to the work done by Arnold Whittall (1975) and Jim Samson, (1977, 38-9) in identifying the modes Debussy used to colour his pieces, and it is apparent that the piece is ‘an amalgam of Lydian and Mixolydian modes characterized by a sharpened fourth and

encompassing sharpened fourths and flattened sevenths. Its easy malleability towards the whole-tone scale made it a favoured tool of Debussy to engender passages of instability, which could immediately threaten tonality and give a ready feeling of shifting sands within a piece. Its purpose again becomes obvious after the recall of the *piano* dynamic in bar 19, – where the right hand once again darts away in a trickle of running water, – sets of 6 semiquavers repetitively moving downwards from D sharp to A (an augmented 4<sup>th</sup>) and back again, throughout bars 19-25, the opposite of bar 11 in direction of undulation. These are tethered by an augmented 5<sup>th</sup>, formed by the G natural semibreve to the initial D sharp, whilst both pivot against a perfect 5<sup>th</sup> interval in the bass, again pointing up the harmonic duality of the piece. Since Debussy’s sensory perception was acute, perhaps this is suggestive subliminally of the marriage Debussy left behind and the attendant furore, against the far more intellectually satisfying union with Emma. The attendant physical waves – are thus comparable to his emotional ones at some level.

The emphasis on augmented 4ths and 5ths is initially accompanied by a bass linking device in A major at bars 19-20, but at bar 21 with the arrival of an F natural in the bass, (the augmented 5<sup>th</sup> of that key) the piece is brought to a precipitous height tonally. Six F naturals appear in that bar, interspersed with the same figure at bar 22 but raised a tone, so that the G naturals become flattened 7ths. Bars 19-24 demonstrate the Debussyan design of whole-tone volatility and instability within the general fluidity of the piece, as the tonality is endangered by these augmented intervals and flattened 7ths.<sup>158</sup>

The new melody in the bass, referred to as Motive C by Howat, emphasizes the significance of the F natural, making the whole-tone scale the epitome of dramatic piano playing and scene painting. This shift between stability and instability is easily achieved by the use of the whole-tone/acoustic scale – the

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flattened seventh... identified as the sixty-fourth of the Hindu ‘karnatic’ modes, the ‘*Vachaspati*.’ This mode is most similar to the harmonic series, and often known as the ‘acoustic scale,’ whilst with one substitution, – that of an augmented fifth above the root, in place of the fifth and sixth degrees, – Howat demonstrates that it becomes a whole-tone scale. See François Gervais (1971, vol. 41,) in Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 48.

<sup>158</sup> This interlude can also be seen in itself as a linking device, which evokes images of the sea at shoreline of the island, and repeats in some form throughout the piece. (Examples occur such as the version at bars 148-157 and its exact tonal recall at bars 166-174 albeit in a different time of 3/8, before a suggestive leap of an octave and the introduction of F natural in bar 176 restates the pivotal tonal point of bar 21.)

augmented fifth substitution sliding easily into more tonal passages to generate increased drama and build tension and resolution towards the final coda. Overall, these five bars (21-5) produce a clear undulating wave pattern, both visually on the page and to the ear. The alternating F and G naturals in the left hand only serve to heighten the feeling of shifting moods and eerie sensations, before bar 23 first sees a restoration of the A major bass, and bar 25 rescues the threatened tonality with a return to the tonic in chords and arpeggios. A general mood of joyous elation ensues, as arpeggiated thirds in tonic key travel upwards, accompanied by a dynamic peak and repetition to emphasize this.

The introduction of seconds at bar 26 prefigures their use as greater points of dissonance at bars 137-140, when the whole-toned texture of the piece suddenly awakens from its more static mood and bursts into an ‘explosive diatonicism’<sup>159</sup> at the third dynamic peak, (bars 142-6), with the gradual build to the climax. The note grouping at the end of bar 27 is a typical overlapping device that carries us into the middle register of the treble for the whole of bars 28-51.

### Register

Whilst the exposition continues the mid tones of the trill, the bass for the first time is heard in a lower register, its rocking motion providing a shape and depth redolent of the profundity beneath the surface of the waves. The treble at bar 11 onwards slips into a slightly lower level in accordance with the melodic content (whole-tone moodiness), and chromaticisms at bar 14 see the return to a treble line in the left hand, which further underlines its dissonances and hints at the pivotal F naturals of the climactic bar 21. The hypnotic mid-tone waves of bars 19-24 appear as the foil to the ‘precipice’ beneath, which although lower on the stave, is actually higher in pitch. The imagination conjures up rip tides beneath smooth surfaces, – again analogous to both the sea and the emotions.

The introduction of seconds at bar 26 prefigures their use as greater points of dissonance at bars 137-140, when the whole-toned texture of the piece suddenly awakens from its more static mood and bursts into an ‘explosive diatonicism’<sup>160</sup> at the third dynamic peak, (bars 142-6), with the gradual build to the climax.

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<sup>159</sup> Schmitz, E. R., *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, p. 97.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*, p. 97.

### First Additional Episode Bars 28-51

These shorter episodes participate within the general ambient of the ternary shape. Bars 28-51 create a ternary wave effect within the first main part, set at 3/8 spatially, and with almost every bar marked dynamically with frequent swelling and contracting *crescendo* and *diminuendo* indications, which lend this episode a rolling motion evocative of the sea swell. Motives A and B recur ‘in a quite unpredictable order,’<sup>161</sup> as elements which might be perceived as rondo-like, yet the overall ternary feel of the piece prevails. Howat’s contention is that the size of the piece to some extent predicates its necessity for both ‘small-scale accumulation and large-scale formal stability.’ As he says, ‘if the element of departure and return inherent in ternary form is understood as a type of wave, this gives us here a smaller structural wave preceding a larger one, leading into the final culmination of the coda.’<sup>162</sup> Thus, the piece’s structural elements combine with precise dynamic markings to emphasize a marked wave effect in all its layers.

### Rhythm and Expression

Most of the piece is in 3/8 – a clear quaver count providing the most apt figure for the intricate groupings, but the ‘overlapping’ device at bar 27 was typically used by Debussy to extend subjects, so that the piece could continue seamlessly as in *La mer*, and the coexistence of levels within the music often aids this expansion. The 3/8 time signature itself has the effect of driving the piece forward, in a spurt of growth away from the 4/4 metre. Propelled onwards, the sets of three triplets move against a chromatic development in the left hand, which drives relentlessly onwards, ascending into bar 35. The right hand rises and falls in wave-like motions, all in three sets of three triplets per bar, juxtaposed against 6 semiquavers in the left-hand, in a ratio of 6:9. Not only is the effect cross-rhythmic, it operates within clear two-bar phrasings in the main, necessitating virtuosic piano playing abilities, until the mood is broken at bar 52.

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<sup>161</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 47.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.* p. 47.

### Melody and Harmony

The section opens with chromatic developments, the bass melody clearly progressing in a general wave shape boosted by swelling dynamics, but the treble also reiterates a descending chromatic cell – C sharp-C natural-B, (the first of each group of triplets), until bar 34. After this modulations begin, which take the harmonies towards the diatonically related B major and a variety of C flat major, all building dynamic swells of sound and exploring potential harmonies before eventually arriving at bar 52.

Whilst this ‘episode’ has a clear character of its own, Debussy’s brilliance in effecting organic transitions between each note and each ‘variation’ of mood ensures that each piece contributes to a seamless whole, driving the music onwards.

### Register

The move away from mid register at bar 35 – when modulations start to hint of a change to a brighter, major key – initiates the substitution of the treble clef on the bass stave. As the register is then raised to a higher level than the notes on the treble stave, the effect becomes startlingly more joyful and expectant, boosted by the *mezzoforte* and *crescendo* dynamic markings that occur throughout these bars. The effect is therefore of a happy and jubilant interlude leading directly into a climax at bar 52.

### Transition Bars 52-66

#### Rhythm and Expression

This second peak of sound leads the way into the long central section at bar 67, and after the running triplet layers preceding it, forms a strongly rhythmical passage. The beginning of the transition signals the return of Motive A at *forte*, accompanied by the undulating trill of the opening bars – a significant reintroduction that leads us on to a continual climax over the following 14 bars, marked with continual *fortes*, *crescendos* and *diminuendos*. The crochet hemiola at bars 62-63 prepares the way for a brief change in time when the 4/4 time signature is reinstated, temporarily anticipating the change in atmosphere that is about to commence at bar 67. The sudden contrast in dynamics with the

*piano* indication also forms a contrast between the previous section and the next. Small undulating swells bring us to the 3/8 predominating figure at bar 67.

### Melody and Harmony

The initial C sharp/D sharp trill at bars 52-54 and 56-58 transfers us in our imagination to the start of the piece, whilst the E sharp component indicates an excursion into C sharp major (an augmented 5<sup>th</sup> of A major), at bars 52-4 and 56-8, with the addition of D sharp at bars 55 and 59-63 forming an augmented 4<sup>th</sup> of the tonic, but the latter is never really endangered, and is clearly restated in the bass by the time we arrive at bar 64 with A major arpeggios. The following three bars act as a kind of interlude in themselves, since they not only return us to the tonic, but their slower nature, with the restitution of the 4/4 time signature, prepares the way for the character of the long central section.

### Register

The first eight bars of the transition occupy the same register as the beginning of the piece, except for the middle trills, which straightaway indicate a more buoyant mood, since they are placed an octave higher. High forays into the treble regions by the bass line lend a lighter feeling to these bars culminating in the very high bars of 61-4, which maintain the rolling wave pattern established early on in the piece. These factors all seem to prepare the music for the expressive and ‘open’ theme that is to follow, its shaping leading to a far broader impression both aurally and visually.

Central Section B    Bars 67-159    Including Developmental Section    Bars 104-144 and Initial Recapitulation    Bars 145-159

### Rhythm and Expression

Interestingly, Debussy’s instructions for this mid part to his work require *Un peu cédé. Molto rubato*, – a yielding or giving feeling, together with much rubato, which provides a complete contrast to what has gone before. The music is also marked *ondoyant et expressif*, clearly indicating Debussy’s wish again for a freer, flexible feel to the music, and for an undulating and wave-like

impression. His use of the word ‘ondoyant’ above the 2-bar surging waves of the A major arpeggios, (with added sixths in the inclusion of F sharps), rising and falling in the left-hand as Motive D, suggests a rolling swell, which proves expansive over the following bars, right until the *a Tempo* is reached at bar 99.

Debussy’s propensity for ‘doubling’ for effect should be noted – another means of extending his musical language – both in tied and untied examples over the bars up to bar 99, and thence occurring within bars up until bar 134. At this point, the build up to peak III dynamically progresses without this feature, perhaps because of its unconscious restraining effect hitherto, which is no longer required. This additional ‘episode’ seems strongly ‘romantic’ in the modern sense of the word – almost jazzy in its feel. It suggests a calmer and more serene phase for the music with strongly arpeggiated wave-shaped patterns summoning up impressions of the depth and swell of the sea, in predominantly 2-bar phrases, aided again by the surging dynamics. A change of rhythm and colour is wrought by light and airy demisemiquavers that plunge downwards over two octaves at *a Tempo* from bar 99, in a much wider-sounding spatial hiatus and introducing a faster developmental section within the central part of Section B. This continues with three sets of four demisemiquavers per bar, until the triplets that are linked to the next dynamic peak are gradually reintroduced from bar 115, finally assuming the foreground again at bar 133, maintaining their place as the much livelier rhythm of Motive B reappears. The *Peu a peu animé e molto cresc* marking given at bar 145 drives this process together with the triplets that are clearly allied to the dynamics, suggesting a more urgent feeling against the cross-rhythms and dissonant flat harmonies of the left-hand.<sup>163</sup> The *forte* markings of peak IV leads to an exciting climax, as the central section draws to a close at bar 159.

### Melody and Harmony

The bass line of bar 67 makes a clear statement that we are in A major, continuing the return to the tonic that began at bar 64. The E major open triad of this latter bar also hints at the added D sharp that is to appear in the treble at the beginning of the central section – an augmented fourth set against the tonic,

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<sup>163</sup> (These triplet runs evoke memories of similar rhythmic patterns at bars 11, 15-16, and 19-24, although the earlier examples ascend first.)

which brings to mind a ‘reaching’ sensation. The sea, too, is never contained within limits. Its buoyant waves surge ever onwards. At bars 79-81 the B reaching longingly upwards to top E, an 11<sup>th</sup> above, before bar 99 modulates to E major, which forms deep troughs of waves on the page, covering two octaves, in sustained diatonic movement.

Whilst the bass develops Motive B at bars 105-108, the treble cascades down another two octaves from G sharp, in sets of 4 demisemiquavers, embarking on a roller-coaster ride of deep troughs and peaks, clearly simulating a rougher sea with the tumbling and rising of peaks of pitch. The addition of A sharp and B sharp might lead us to suppose we are in the key of C sharp major, but the harmonies are only temporary, and this expansive sound is replaced by a C major pitch at bar 112, before E tonalities predominate again, followed by C sharp. Whilst the rhythmical shaping continues after bar 114, the tritone move by the bass from C sharp to G and the loss of the A major key signature at bar 115 marks the transition from diatonic to whole tone harmony, and the injection of a far more melancholy mood and eerie subtext. The disjointed shaping of both register and increased doubling of notes echoes this, adding to the sense of suspense and mystery that is redolent of the sea.

The higher bass line begins a run of whole tone notes spanning across bars 117-20, which build on the secret, hidden sensations we might suppose beneath the surface of the waves, whilst tonally the shifting pitches bring to mind fluctuations of currents beneath the surface of the sea, and the ebbing and flowing of tides on the sea bed, with its murky, intangible opaqueness. After several bars of tumbling triplets in the right hand (from bar 133), that echo the earlier C sharp/D sharp tonalities of the bass, a strong sequence of 2nds overwhelms these pitches, seemingly arriving out of the bass A at bar 136. Their minor character is overwhelming, yet paradoxically they lead into a surprising (because it is unexpected) C major climax at bars 141-44, suggesting that they are IV/V and VI/VII of that key rather than A minor tones. Their dual nature provokes an understanding of the very essence of the sea – its character in the right circumstances, such as a sunny day, suggesting it is to be enjoyed, tamed even, yet the unknown quality that is for ever present with the onset of

sudden squalls and tempests (like the boat trip Debussy took to Cancale),<sup>164</sup> emphasizing its ambiguous nature.

The passage from bars 145-157 contains thirteen bars of Motives B and C in alternation – Lydian and Mixolydian modes – characterized by sharpened 4ths and flattened 7ths, which are as much developmental as a recapitulation of the theme. They build anticipation, but delay the arrival of the *finale*, enabling the piece to continue onwards.

### Register

The romantic chordal theme that ensues at bar 67 is aided by the ascending and descending arpeggiated runs by the bass. It helps to build the longing, yearning nature of the section, as does the indication for the treble to be played an octave above in the very high reaches of the piano. The *a Tempo* section, where the notes tumble over both staves leads to an even greater impression of fluidity and waves tumbling to a greater depth, before the patterns of the developmental section beginning at bar 105 invoke an altogether more measured feel to the music.

The register of the seconds, played by the left hand but set on the treble clef, is pertinent to their insistent character at bars 137-140. They ring out in tones that are almost malevolent in their intensity, which is even more surprising given their development into the C major climax. In the most emphatic climax to date, they are indicative of the sea's capriciousness if we believe their obvious allusion to sudden changes of temperament. This reverberates through bars 141-144, where the left hand travels across both staves enabling vast leaps to cover in excess of 4 octaves, causing huge wave-shaped leaps that traverse the keyboard momentarily before the theme recapitulates in a compressed form. The whole tones are again given a treble line so that their importance just beneath the surface of the treble (visually) actually breaks through the upper line in terms of pitch during bars 148-151. As the dynamics build in preparation for peak IV, the left hand continues to ring in the treble clef, until bar 158 juxtaposes B flat and C chords against one another in a lower bass register,

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<sup>164</sup> See notes 360 and 373.

reiterating the earlier 2nds and marking their huge dissonance, consequential perhaps in Debussy's flight to the island.

### Section C Recapitulation Bars 160-219

#### Rhythm and Expression

The return of A major, which has already been anticipated by the previous selection of Motive B, means that the tonal recapitulation from bar 160 at '*Plus animé*' is also part of a sequence overlap, in that it has already been anticipated from bar 145 onwards. Its animated and extremely rhythmic and jaunty style has the effect of building up the piece towards its conclusion. Bar 166 onwards (in the right hand) recapitulates bars 19-24 in both rhythm and tone, but now it is a full 16 bars and the left hand is slightly different. Not only this, but the rhythm and therefore the configuration of the triplets has changed because the earlier example is set in 4/4 time and the latter in 3/8, meaning that the tempo has substantially quickened to move the music towards its conclusion, and the triplets are now in sets of four rather than three so that their articulation is quicker. Their accompaniment by the *Plus animé* sign completes this process.

Waterfalls of undulating sound, reminiscent of the harp part in *La mer's* 'Dialogue', finally reach Peak V in bar 182, in 3 sets of 5 demisemiquavers per bar, expanding the impression of tumbling waters still further. Debussy's array of special effects builds, with a procession of octave 'guttled'<sup>165</sup> chords in the bass (bars 186 onwards), and Motive B descending and ascending in various guises to bar 200, before the arrival of wave-like whole tones at bars 204-207. This pattern is then repeated a note higher at A, new tones jumping in thirds over dynamic peaks of sound and continually emphasizing octave A's, before we arrive at the powerful resolution of the piece at *ff*.

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<sup>165</sup> That is, they are minus their 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> degrees. This is a term used by Robert E. Schmitz: 'Another peculiarity of chordal usage is what we have called the "guttled chord"; this usage in Debussy is quite typical, and has much to offer in transparency of harmony, in that it omits the third in a triad, or alternate thirds in chords of the ninth or thirteenth, leaving superimposed fifths. Besides the clarity of colour it offers through the omission of the acoustically out-of-tune, and opaque third of the triad, it also has the advantage of leaving the modality (whether major or minor) undetermined for the moment, opening two horizons to the listeners' ears.' In Schmitz, Robert E., *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, p. 30.

### Melody and Harmony

The recapitulation is marked by a strong return to A major and Motive B. Just as the rhythm at bar 166 echoes the earlier bars 19-24, so do the tonal values. The D sharp-C sharp-B-A-B-C sharp rolling wave of whole-tone pitches which form a wave-shaped curve in the melodic line are again hypnotic in their surging forwards. Leaping an octave at bar 174 the harmonies continue towards F natural two bars later, answering left-hand tonalities from bar 170. These continue to insinuate themselves above a strong A tonic pedal, which is present for the complete 16 bars of this section – a metaphor perhaps of a timeless seabed above which disparate currents ebb and flow. (The significance of the F natural as pivotal augmented 5<sup>th</sup> is repeated in the right-hand by a G-D sharp, itself another augmented 5<sup>th</sup> interval). These tones are immediately suggestive to the memory because of their prior association with the same rhythm pattern.

A frenzy of whole-tone scales increase the harmonic tension and instability in a *forte* climax, which prepares for the final bars. A short excursion into B flat major/B flat minor tonalities followed by whole-tone ripples at bars 204-207, reminds us of the dualism inherent in the piece, the series of highly articulated note A chords proceeding from bar 208 building tension and more whole-tone undulations, giving us the impression of a surging sea before we reach the beginning of the Coda at bar 220.

### Register

A main feature of this section is the left-hand's continual appearance on a treble stave, (which we have seen earlier in the developmental and retransitional phases). Particularly applicable to Motive C, (bar 166 onwards), this has the effect of stressing the whole-tones even further, and darkening them when the bass clef is reinstated. This pattern operates as a contrasting image over bars 166-181, giving the effect of further waves rising and falling. Following scale passages build on this impression aurally, whilst their wave configuration on the page is clear. The additional episode of Motive B in a lower register (with the insertion of the bass clef on the treble stave) continues this contrasting wave, until the arrival of more whole-tone scales, their high undulating character furthering the wave analogy.

## Coda Climax and Resolution Bars 220-255

### Rhythm and Expression

Again, ‘*un peu cédé*’ is marked – a little yielding/giving. The passage is related to the second melodic strain of the central section, beginning at bar 75. This ‘romantic’ quaver/dotted quaver/semiquaver chordal theme continues at *fortissimo* in a sustained climactic plateau lasting 36 bars, continually swelling and developing up to bar 252, which becomes *fff*. Perhaps the rhythm of the dotted bars can also be seen as wave-like, in their natural stress on the middle beat, coupled with their fuller vertical character, since every dotted quaver is accompanied by a full chord in the left hand. In addition, the second inversion A major chords, tied across bass bars for the first half of the Coda aid its flexible, slightly yielding nature, yet this is a grand and sweeping theme. The last bars of the piece at *Tempo: très animé jusqu’à la fin* return us to its beginning, as the dynamic and harmonic climax continues throughout bars 244-251 and Motive A reaches its zenith – continual waves of pitches ascending and descending at *fff* until bar 252. The music both resolves and evolves to its very end, tremolos and a waterfall of sound ranging across the keyboard bringing the piece to a close.

### Melody and Harmony

The Coda sees the final return to the tonic key, with the bass triad appearing immediately at bar 220, (and repeating throughout the following bars), as well as the diatonic major mode, E flat major at bar 238, completing the dynamic sequence. At bar 244, the tonic appears overlain with the original Motive A in the right hand, and another whole-tone series in the left-hand ensues. Thus the piece continues to evolve to the very end (augmented 4ths appearing in bars 252-3), whilst resolving at the same time, as 3 tonic chords and arpeggios to the tonic complete the piece. These, complete with tremolos, naturally evoke wave-like sounds as they traverse across the keyboard.

### Register

Both treble and bass lines are set in the higher echelons of their staves, which has the effect of heightening anticipation and excitement, particularly

when combined with the dynamic climax and harmonic developments. The tied second inversion A major chords in the left hand provide a steadying effect for the small waves travelling over each barline, providing additional fluidity to the bass line. With the reversion to *très animé* (a time wave), at bar 244, Motive A builds in a very high register, an effect continued by the bass line, which eventually rises into the treble clef again, until its conclusion in the depths of the keyboard. With the dual nature of music both resolving/evolving and A major/whole-tone aspects, we are left with the impression of music in the process of ‘becoming,’ with neither a beginning nor an ending as it resonates in our ears at the end.

### Conclusion

Arnold Whittall has suggested that in this piece Debussy was deliberately ‘playing off one type of mode against others, building forms from a delicate drama of tensions, oppositions and resolutions.’<sup>166</sup> Roy Howat speaks of two types of polarity which appear in some passages – the ‘symmetrical against asymmetrical, and symmetrically static against symmetrically propulsive,’<sup>167</sup> such as in bars 145-166, before the Coda, concentrating the music’s weight towards the conclusion by preventing too firmly a sense of arrival at any stage prior to it. The anticipation of the finale is also made probable by the recapitulation of Motive B at bar 160, as a sequence overlap, to drive the music onwards.

While Whittall and Howat are right to point out the carefully judged stresses of weights and balances in the piece, my analysis further shows that the quality of wateryness as portrayed by Debussy deserves greater analytical attention than it has hitherto received. ‘*L’isle joyeuse*’ has a pervading sense of mystery about it, exudes eeriness, and its fluidity immediately brings to mind the feature of all islands – water. Debussy’s depiction of this element – dynamically, in patterns of undulating tones and intervals, in contrasting episodes within overall dramatic sections, with the use of exciting peaks and troughs – seeks to demonstrate his own feelings for the sea and its hold on his imagination. It was in endeavouring to find a more genuine expression of his emotions that led the

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<sup>166</sup> Whittall, A., speaking, (1975, p. 264), in Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion*, p. 61.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, p. 63.

composer towards an organic design. Debussy sought not to imitate, as he perceived programmatic music to do, but to harness the powers of his imagination to his *emotional* response to natural stimuli, to capture his true feelings for *L'isle joyeuse*, (Jersey) in this case, and its representation as a haven to himself and Emma when they eloped to their island idyll in 1904.

The representation of the sea as eternal and infinite, its rhythms and colours forever changing and contrasting, delivers wave-like surges of sound that are clearly seen in both the visual articulation of *L'isle joyeuse*, and in an analysis of its rhythmic, dynamic, melodic and harmonic dimensions, as I have demonstrated. The possibilities of whole-tone modalities coupled with the use of textural complexities saw the development of a Debussyan language that would better evoke the soundscape he was searching for to portray his feelings. The use of modes led him to push against the boundaries of Classical tonality, which held no sense of surprise or mystery in his estimation, in order to obtain a far more nebulous sound, perfectly suited to the evocation of water and waves. Perhaps this was part of the Debussyan quest for the infinite.

The use of overlapping sections in an overall ternary form, and the continual recapitulation of similar or identical-sounding passages helped the music to evolve as a continuous melodic line or arabesque, which appeared to arise and subside as an example of the 'ever-present'. Profuse markings of dynamics, phrasing of passages and the articulation of notes provide explicit performance instructions that enable the music to sound like a succession of waves to the ear. Interdependent with the fluidity of the visual impact of the notes on the page, the two are interwoven together creating a cyclical effect. Together they operate as an ephemeral moment of 'being' as Debussy spontaneously abandons himself to 'grace' – the 'request of the musical Charm.'<sup>168</sup> The variation of motives and rhythmic joyousness of the piece all contribute to its realisation as the exultant and exuberant piece that it is. Debussy's tonalities, too are telling. As Jankélévitch points out, 'spelling with flats corresponds to a wish to shield, while spelling with sharps is an unveiling.'<sup>169</sup> Never is this clearer than in the augmentations of *L'isle joyeuse*, where Debussy unveils the joys of the piece in

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<sup>168</sup> Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, p. 102.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid*, p. 113.

every 'celestial instant,' these facets unveiling the sonorous island in the middle of the sea.

### Chapter III

#### An Analysis of Wave Patterns in Debussy's Piano Pieces

##### 'Reflets dans l'eau' (Images I of 1905)

'Reflets dans l'eau' was composed in Eastbourne, England, in August 1905, the last of the *Images* to be completed, although it forms the opening of the first series. It is known from correspondence with Durand, his publisher, that Debussy had been dissatisfied with an earlier version, and had sought to 'compromise on new ideas and according to the most recent discoveries of harmonic chemistry.'<sup>170</sup> After the completion of *La mer* earlier in the same year, the *Images* consolidated the composer's techniques and innovations, realizing the same 'breadth of architecture' in conception, as Howat refers to it,<sup>171</sup> and marking an important point in Debussy's musical development.

Roger Nichols determines that there are recognizable patterns 'which pervade the texture' and convey the impression of a sort of circularity in the piece, the ending linking to the beginning in an indeterminate way. Each 3-note pattern in the right hand, he discerns, 'is that of a wave' in its distinctive contours. In a broader sense, so too is the shape of each 2-bar phrase as it rises and falls. At the same time, the left-hand notes form their own pattern in isolation, but are also rhythmically 'an augmentation of the right hand's 3-note patterns,'<sup>172</sup> the pedal acting as support and reinforcement to the left hand harmonics. The 'second germinal phrase in the piece' (bars 24-27) also 'begins with a wave shape but curls back up to a foreign note, suggesting a change of harmony and possibilities of dramatic development.'<sup>173</sup> Both are combined with consummate skill until the climax of tonal and non-tonal forces comes to rest on an E flat major triad momentarily (bar 56). The remaining portion of the piece ripples away in a continuous *diminuendo* of widening water rings, evoked by a final very widely placed major triad.

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<sup>170</sup> Schmitz, E. R., *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, p. 101.

<sup>171</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 23.

<sup>172</sup> Nichols, R., *Debussy: Oxford Studies of Composers (10)*, p. 51.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, p. 51.

The musical metaphor linking the ‘physical affinities between this piece and the actual reflections in water’<sup>174</sup> express more than anything Debussy’s feelings for his subject – the ever-important gauge of his compositional temperament. Both the use of wave patterns and their distorted likenesses – refractions of light – are played out within the confines of *Reflets*, yet the stillness portrayed by this water is very different to the motion of the sea pieces. The coherence of *Reflets* thus becomes ‘one of organic development and the assimilation of all themes into a wave pattern,’ using this ‘new-found predominance of shape over interval,’<sup>175</sup> which freed the form that Debussy’s solo piano pieces were to take. Whilst the ‘subtle interplay of diatonicism with whole-toned series and short passages in pentatonicism’<sup>176</sup> make up its structures, Schmitz suggests the developments he employed in this case were purely in order to achieve the ‘poetic-emotional climate of the composer’s conception... a unified basis for the kaleidoscope effects of water and light, the reflection of clouds or trees, the concentric ripples of drops in the water, the nearby forest from which a distant horn call is heard toward the end.’<sup>177</sup> Melodic fragments imbue *Reflets* with an immense variety of shades, as Debussy portrays his subject in its ever-changing glints and movements.

The *Images* employed continuous free variation to propel their musical impetus, and are examples of Debussy’s growing links with abstractionism, in both their imagery and design. Imaginatively, ‘Reflets dans l’eau’ demands a greater understanding of the imagery that inspired its inception – the multifarious effects of which brought about an almost improvisatory character to the piece. As E. Robert Schmitz remarks about the significance of water in the Debussian *id*:

What he (sic) saw in the water was the reflection of his own love of subtle design – a very characteristic French admiration for the amazingly varied opalescence of play of light and water, and the diaphanous deformations of realities viewed through these two fluctuating media.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Nichols, R., *Debussy: Oxford Studies of Composers (10)*, p. 53.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 53-54.

<sup>176</sup> Schmitz, E. R., Foreword by Virgil Thomson, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, p. 101.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid*, p. 102.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid*, p. 101.

The fluid element of water and the play of light upon it, stirred both visual and impressionistic feelings and emotions, together with the symbolism of deeper analogies that occupied the composer's mind. This 'poetic-emotional climate' is conceived as the ultimate goal of Debussy's conception for the piece, whatever purposes he used to achieve that realization.

Roy Howat also notes that the piece's fluctuating 'rondo-sonata alternation'<sup>179</sup> of musical themes and variations produce a surge of wave-orientated tendencies, which dominate our hearing and understanding of the work. Chord passages are made up in a type of mosaic style – 'minute contrapuntal movements of patterns superimposed, crossing each other, complementing or supplementing each other in their delineations, and in their freedom bringing the rich by-product of dissonance.'<sup>180</sup> Howat's assessment of *Reflets* is that the piece is both 'irregular' and 'an unusual species of rondo form built on two recurring motives, A and B.'<sup>181</sup> He surmises an ABABABA construction, with B as 'a more melodic development of A' – the Coda making up bars 81-94. He opines that this cavalcade of alternative motives and delays in completion (which nevertheless is always 'inevitable' in sensation), provides the piece with an undulating wave-like feeling thematically as well, an intuitive impression of the concentric circles denoted by the original Motive A. Howat's assertion that 'the piece's formal layout is important in defining and giving maximum impact to its structural surge'<sup>182</sup> is central to our understanding of *Reflet's* procedural apparatus, but Schmitz's recognition of these effects as a means to an end perhaps allows an additional summation to be made, and I propose to demonstrate more specifically the importance of wave formations in this piece to its audible reception. The interplay of the two themes in itself provides a type of irregular wave pattern, yet the themes are in effect two sides of the same 'cell.' The first appearance of B, for example, at bars 24-25, contains Motive A expanded by a major third. The two are polarities of one another, developed in contrasting episodes. In addition, Motive B – D-E-A flat-G flat-E-D – is a clear undulating wave shape both in sound and visually on the staff. Elements such as mirroring, augmentation and diminution are all

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<sup>179</sup> Schmitz, E. R., Foreword by Virgil Thomson, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy* p. 101.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, p. 101.

<sup>181</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 23.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid, p. 24.

employed as a means of portraying water and light, and the refraction of the latter on a liquid surface, to produce manifold diversity of effects in Debussy's music. These act as unobtrusive unifying devices so that the outlines of the themes are less distinct and blurred further by a tonal and dynamic plan operating independently to the thematic one. Motive A (A flat-F-E flat) occurring as concentric droplets of sound in the left-hand at the start of the piece is mirrored in the accompanying chords of the right hand, and again, at bars 35-44, the arpeggios further embellish the Motive, in elongated melodic impressions. These textural strategies allow an all-pervasive flow of sound to build up, culminating in two overall peaks or waves, the first encompassing bars 30-31, and the second at *Reflets*' main climax, where a much larger wave builds and reaches its pinnacle over bars 56-61.

An annotated copy of the score is provided at Appendix III, together with a formal analysis and dynamic and tonal/modal wave charts, to accompany my argument.

The following table gives a structural overview of the piece:

Introduction	Theme B	Theme A	Theme B	Theme A	Theme B	Coda Theme A
Theme A Bars 1-23	Bars 23-4	Bars 35-49	Bars 50-70	Bars 71-77	Bars 78-80	Bars 81-94

### Synopsis

#### Introduction Theme A Bars 1-23

#### Rhythm and Expression

The beginning of the piece (bars 1-2), exemplifies the complete wave shape of 'Reflets dans l'eau' by displaying an initial rolling wave covering two and a half octaves of the treble stave, in a chordal theme. It could be said that this opening 'anticipates in miniature the piece's dominating dynamic wave

form,<sup>183</sup> just as the wedge shape at the beginning of *L'isle joyeuse* was to determine its overall shape. Bars 3-4 see the first swell of dynamics over a slightly higher undulating form, which forms the thematic motive of the piece, before this wave is repeated again (bars 7-8). For most of this unusual rondo-type form, the time signature is 4/8; the quaver beat enabling cascades of semiquavers and demisemiquavers to ripple across the keyboard in swells of sound against the slower crochet beats of Motive A. Howat suggests the missing quaver at bar 11 however, (in 3/8 time), is accounted for musically by the extended bar 23, the cadenza-like flourish effectively completing the former.<sup>184</sup> Musically speaking, perhaps the top layer of sound reveals the perpetual change of light shining on water, and its fluctuating patterns, whilst Motive A suggests the eternal nature of water, concentric rings pulsing outwards. Certainly the improvisatory character of the beginning of 'Reflets dans l'eau' comes to the foreground of the 'Quasi cadenza' section.

Dynamically, *crescendo* waves continue to permeate bars 7-13, aiding the rising thematic wave with sudden injections of *pp* before the *Rit.* at bar 15, swelling and subsiding in wave-like contours of sound. At bars 18-19 rippling textures of hemidemisemiquavers appear to be operating as a small hiatus before the 'Quasi cadenza' passage at bar 23, which tumbles over the treble stave in another clear wave contour, aided by its absence of bar line. The 49 notes it encompasses can therefore be delivered in as flexible a manner as the music demands, the *poco a poco cresc. e stringendo* dynamic marking facilitating the melodic shaping of the bar, assisted by the grouping of the notes in sixes and the clear articulation of waves given by the phrase marks. This last point is particularly apparent in the single phrase groupings of bars 22-3, making each a wave-like entity in itself. In its entirety, the episode from bars 20-30 builds rhythmically on these very short notes, the watery surge building up at *pp* across the (predominantly) treble keyboard. Their register and speed naturally require a light and rippling rendition in performance, portraying the whole of this first section as an overall wave, building to its consummation in bars 29-31, where dynamic peaks rise and subside over a textured bass and dominant pedal line.

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<sup>183</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 28.

<sup>184</sup> See Howat's argument in *ibid*, p. 28.

### Melody and Harmony

The piece begins with a rolling thematic motive in D flat major, a key to which Debussy was particularly partial.<sup>185</sup> Whilst the bass covers the main A motive – the left-hand juxtaposed in single prominent notes of A flat-F-E flat, (5, 3, 2), itself a descending wave – the treble undulates across the keyboard, evoking circular movements of sound in a clear wave-shaped melodic phrase. The right-hand patterns appear to reveal the mirroring of theme (A) in diminution, as noted above, so we might see this as a wave within a wave once again in terms of overall shaping.

The ‘aquatic fluidity’<sup>186</sup> of the initial eight bars is opposed by a series of chord progressions at bars 9-10, which, containing chromatic undertones, introduce an element of depth and dark secrets to the mood. Yet overlaying these, come delicate hints of a shimmering surface as a *staccato* top A flat traces its way downwards an octave, as a prelude to the curious 3/8 bar 11, where a light descending wave is repeated. Melodic fragments traverse each other across both staves, before the contrapuntal texture of open or ‘gutted’ chords in fifths and eights arrive at bars 16-17, the first departure from tonic-based harmony. With ‘translucid pentatonism and consecutive fifths,’<sup>187</sup> these build and subside in opposite directions on the staves<sup>188</sup> before they break into another dynamic wave. This prepares the way for two further rippling waves at bars 18-19 where the harmonies modulate away, traversing the treble and bass staves in one movement. Their clear trajectory towards a wave-type pinnacle is visually striking, particularly since both these forms coincide with dynamic swellings, and are preceded by huge 3 octave leaps down the keyboard, which serve to act as preparatory waves. Their tension has been carefully graded as the harmony begins to move away from the tonic, to prepare the way for the entry of Motive B at bar 24, but perhaps the most striking aspect of these bars (18-19) is their ability to be both ‘static and dynamic’ at the same time. As Roger Nichols demonstrates,

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<sup>185</sup> (One which he also used for the first and third movements of *La mer*).

<sup>186</sup> Schmitz, E. R., *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, p. 102.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid*, p. 102.

<sup>188</sup> Roger Nichols refers to this figure as ‘one of the most original passages in the piece...approaching the border between sound and noise.’ In Nichols, R., *Oxford Studies of Composers (10)*, p. 53.

the diminishing note values anticipate the 'stringendo' marking by their built-in accelerando... the short-long note rhythms reduce the linear flow but at the same time the overall tempo is increased until the music bursts from its static confines...<sup>189</sup>

The high register aids the ethereal sounds that ensue from bar 21. These include a C flat and F flat (bars 22-3), that might indicate minor tonalities, given the mysterious tones we hear, but these are created by the left hand ascending in steps whilst the first right-hand note of each group is an ingenious augmented 4<sup>th</sup> distant. Thus the major sound of the right hand is tempered each time by the tritone interval from the bass, and appears to flow in wave-like sequences away from it. The cadenza-type passage then propels the piece away until bar 24 is reached.

### Register

Apart from Motive A, which is placed within treble lines, much of the first section occurs on two treble staves, aiding the perception of light reflections in water. The tonic and dominant feature as anchoring points in a clear bass line, and the chromaticisms of bars 9-10 and 13-14 are similarly placed, suggesting refractions beneath the surface. The contrapuntal texture of bars 16-17 encompasses much of the keyboard, bringing together chords from the furthest reaches of treble and bass, perhaps in an inclusive statement before the musically evocative *Quasi cadenza* that follows. Subsequently, the cadenza reaches further and further into the highest register, this aspect fuelling its improvisatory nature and aiding the wave-like perceptions that we are left with.

### Theme B Bars 24-34

### Rhythm and Expression

The introduction of Motive B in the bass provides a contrasting episode to Motive A, with the varied lengths of demisemiquaver groupings ensuring that the music has a fluctuating, rolling feel to it – (two sets of 13 demisemiquavers followed by two 14s and a 15 set with the last 13, at bars 26-28), altering their speed slightly in an improvisatory fashion. Their articulation in single bar

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<sup>189</sup> Nichols, R., *Oxford Studies of Composers (10)*, pp.54-5.

phrases is also moderated by the ‘Mesuré’ marking, the *ppp* of Debussy’s ‘half-tint’ and *doux et expressif* indicating a rounder, more giving and suggestive impression, prior to the dynamic climax of bars 29-31. The latter contain four groupings of shorter-length notes again, (in 10, 9, 8 and 8 sets), altering the rhythms in accordance with the dynamic accumulation and the heightened textures that appear in the bass, interspersed with additional groupings of 4 hemidemisemi-quavers. These are repeated at bar 33, but at ‘Rit.’, so ensuring their slower speed and the transformation of time. At bar 34, four quavers (plus a tied one from the previous bar) at *piu p* confirm a much slower speed to follow, and effectively halt the flow in a hiatus before the next instalment. This signifies the culmination of the first overall wave shape of the piece, which in itself contains many features of that effect, not least the appearance of notes in clear wave-like structures on the page.

#### Melody and Harmony

With the introduction of strange harmonies for Motive B in the bass (bar 24), above a strong dominant pedal, the harmonic densities of this section can be compared to the refraction of light on water and the rippling waves it produces, particularly with their immense spread of octaves through bars 24-30, into the top reaches of the keyboard. The whole-tone theme ensures that the feeling engendered is one of rising agitation, fuelled by Debussy’s ‘half-tint’ and elongated note groupings that enable the right hand to deliver supple, continuous runs of bright tones against Motive B’s disturbing whole-tone atmosphere of suspense. The consequence is the first main climax, building in audible peaks of sound over bars 29-32, and bringing in many accidentals as well as a C flat – the culmination of the first overall wave shape.

The dominant A flat pedal, which began to sound at bar 24, and has been a continual low presence, continues for the following three bars after the climax, (bars 32-35), 44 quaver beats in all. In a sense, this is a further interlude, linking the following passage, as the harmony has changed to a predominantly dominant one, after the refractions of the whole-tone section, although the harmonic nuances of the latter half of bars 31 and bar 32 introduce an F (augmented 5<sup>th</sup> of V), over the tied *pp* A flat bass.

### Register

These bars are in the main composed of very high treble passages at the top of the keyboard, which, when accompanied by long groupings of notes and the *ppp* dynamics at ‘Mesuré’, give a flowing overall undulation set against sustained whole tones of the bass, making the analogy to trickling water hard to resist. The dissonant -sounding harmonies of bars 30-31 are placed at a lower register in order to emphasize their ‘refractions,’ before a last series of groups of 4 hemidemisemiquavers moves over both staves of bars 32-33, visually recalling descending wave-like figures.

### Theme A Bars 35-49

#### Rhythm and Expression

The tonic pedal reasserts itself at bar 35, before Motive A reappears, the right hand continuing in translucent sets of triplets. Further dynamic peaks follow, interspersed with *pp* bars at 39-40, reiterating light triplets in the right hand and Motive A in the left, evocative of falling drops of water. Additional peaks at bars 41-2 swell the dynamics still further, producing the perception of frothy tips of waves and light refracted at increasingly staggered angles. Fluctuating parameters of triplet groupings and swelling dynamics in the following bars further increase the flexible, improvisatory effect.

A much larger wave now builds up, each set of eight triplets per bar comprising 4 repetitive descents and 4 matching ascents, reiterating the urgency of the ‘En animant’ marking. Rhythmically, these series build tension, in a conglomeration of mini waves that drive the music onwards towards the climax, over wide-spaced ‘guttled’ chords that deliver a spacious bass line as the smooth undertow to what is occurring on the surface of the water. This is emphasized by the flowing 2-bar phrase marks that operate in the left hand, in contrast to the 4 in the treble, on the relentless drive to the main climax, shortly before the harmony changes. Two remarkable sets of swelling and contracting *crescendos/diminuendos* occupy the whole of bars 48 and 49 and are visually intrusive on the page, angled upwards and downwards in such a configuration as to make their ascent and descent with the register very noticeable. The articulation of the notes by the performer is thus guaranteed to render the

sensation of a wave-like episode, perhaps emphasizing the tumbling nature of water falling, articulating the feelings of Debussy's imagination.

### Melody and Harmony

The first return of Motive A at bar 35 sees the re-establishment of the tonic key, and the beginning of a much larger wave of sound which eventually culminates at bars 56-61, as the main climax of the piece. As mentioned earlier, the right-hand arpeggios are melodic culminations of the powerful Motive A, occurring in varied elaborations of the A flat-F-E flat cell, transporting us between sections and building a platform to the piece's huge dynamic climax, as well as operating as a unifying device. An examination of the score at Appendix III demonstrates just how prevalent these tonalities are in bars 35-44, particularly in those bars with dynamic accumulations. As the harmony begins to modulate away in preparation for Motive B to reappear at bar 50, it is aided by the sonorities and texture, which also evoke a sense of urgency and build towards the climax. Augmented 4ths (G natural) and augmented 5ths (A natural), are accompanied by C flats, (flattened 7ths) in the 'guttured' chords, creating an ascending intensity to the passage.

All these devices form part of the Debussyan armoury for extending tonality and evoking mystery, and help to engender the excitement and watery ethos of the following bars. The 'soundscape' is a continuum of layers of sound – an 'arabesque' flowing until the very end of the work. By its very nature, it therefore resembles the element of water in its fluidity, musical peaks and troughs reflecting the effects of air and light upon and beneath the surface. The change to whole-tone harmony becomes complete at bar 48, when the key signature is dropped - a decisive musical turning point in the piece.

### Register

The treble moves from the middle reaches of the piano, where it is almost immediately undercut by Motive A in the same register, to much higher tones at bars 38 and 42, as the dynamics build and sets of triplets increase numerically – a further aid to driving the music forwards. The 'En animant' section introduces a new pattern for the overall descent/ascent of these triplet groupings, gradually increasing with the intensity of the dynamics and harmonic changes to a much

higher version again, demonstrating that each of these aspects is inextricably linked to the character of the piece as it proceeds. This is particularly borne out by the climax at bars 48-9, when both hands travel over the treble staves and ascend to their highest points in the melody since bar 42 – a top B, at the apex of the dynamic swell. After this the notes subside, returning to the middle tones of the keyboard as the *diminuendo* reaches *p* again.

#### Theme B Bars 50-70

##### Rhythm and Expression

With the sudden return to tempo, the left-hand arpeggio appears much slower than the preceding treble ripples. Not only this, but the note values are now broadened slightly, accompanied by two highly visual *crescendo/diminuendo* markings again. Bar 54 produces a small change of emphasis – *mf cresc. molto* – before the full scale ‘assault’ begins, assisted by the high textural chords of the right-hand, driving the music towards the E flat modulation at bar 56. At this point, both hands arpeggio up the keyboard to top G and B flat, where the dynamics peak and form a singularly clear wave shape, before an *ff* climax at bar 57 onwards reaches a plateau of crashing waves. Open ‘guttured’ chords producing another version of Motive B above a rippling left-hand evoke an emotional feel to the accumulation, hiding another version of Motive A at an inner layer – E flat/C/B flat. Dynamically, *ff* builds even further over the next five bars, delaying any return for as long as possible to extend and amplify the climax.

As whole-tones come to the fore, bars 60-64 emphasize both the sweeping demisemiquaver wave patterns in their climbing scales and the dotted rhythm redolent of Motive B. Both of these cross staves, emphasizing their continuous, elongated natures, and invoking Debussy’s use of dramatic curved phrase markings, these too crossing the staves. Their occurrence 3 times at bars 60, 62 and 63 are visually arresting, in that they resemble overlapping waves on the page, their curves soaring and plunging in an evocation of sweeping arcs. In addition, the D flat which originally appeared at bar 58 is now tied over much of the bar each time, designating its importance as a stabilizing factor as other tones swirl and crash around it. Dynamic markings now alter the feeling of the

piece, as a *Molto rit.* and *p* changing to *pp* then *ppp* introduce a quietly lyrical passage, arpeggios glittering on the surface of the swelling harmonies.

### Melody and Harmony

The establishment of Motive B over bars 50-51 now dominates the harmonies right up to bar 71. This huge wave of sound continues to build over the following bars, whilst the left hand produces arpeggio-type rolls of sound emanating from a bass B for 6 bars. With the inclusion of C sharp at bar 50 we are misled into thinking that B major is the imminent destination, but the lack of an F sharp soon discounts this idea, and when one arrives at bar 52, it is in the right hand as the last note of Motive B. Coming whence it does as the final upturn of this phrase, the interval has a very 'brightening' effect on the harmonies, just as another huge dynamic swell appears. Not only that, but the F sharp is a minim beat, lasting throughout the bar, and then duplicated further. Augmented tones co-exist with more conventional harmonies, broadening out to match the 'au Mouvt.' rhythmic alteration and the swelling of the dynamics to highlight top C sharp enabling one of Debussy's favourite devices, the dissonant 2<sup>nd</sup>, (against B), to stand replete at the top of the wave, so to speak. These runs and the high chords that follow in bars 54-5 possess a Rachmaninov-like romanticism to them as they pursue their quest in clear wave-like structures, slightly softened and ascending to the heights of the keyboard before falling away again. They herald the bright triumphant entry of the supertonic II at bar 56 at *forte*, and the beginning of the main climax with the sudden modulation to E flat major and change of key signature. The peak of the wave swells and contracts with running arpeggios, the following two bars extending this apex – with the focus of bars 59-60 being the dominant 9<sup>th</sup> interval and whole tone harmonies that now take centre stage. In addition, the D flat which originally appeared at bar 58 is now prevalent over the following bars, appearing in the bass line at bar 63-4, so designating its eventual return as tonic at bar 75 (with D flat M key signature at bar 69).

A change of mood and key signature at bar 65, ostensibly in A major, brings a variety of shades that pervade the 'floating' harmonies of the next few bars, highlighting the dramatic shape of the piece, and transforming its colours with enharmonic substitutions towards the home key of D flat major at bar 69. Bar

67 particularly acts as a transformational passage with the substitution of flats and naturals, before the C sharp (D flat), G sharp (A flat), and D sharp (E flat) return us to the tonic key. The re-establishment of the five flat key signature and the return to tonality, however, is accompanied by the chord of the Dominant 7<sup>th</sup>, V<sub>7</sub>, at the beginning of bar 69, not a straightforward return to the tonic chord.

### Register

The first part of this section continues with two treble staves, the upper of which plays Motive B in a high upper register at bars 50-51. Two bars (52-3) then arpeggiate up to a high C sharp, (enharmonically D flat), their register ensuring this 2<sup>nd</sup> (against the B in the left-hand), does not jar. The treble sounds of this section ensure a light, running shimmer to the arpeggio passages, before the upper chords of bars 54-55 bring a radiance and sense of arrival to the dynamic E flat major climax. Alternations of treble and bass clefs in the left-hand now bring a smooth traversal over the keyboard, whilst by placing the open chords in the mid to upper range Debussy allows them to ring out, stressed by the dynamic peak. The register of the aforementioned ‘overlapping waves’ at bars 60-64, climbs into the very top reaches of the piano, emphasizing their glittering nature. A last frisson at *ppp* covers bar 67, reminding us of the previous excitement, before transforming the next passage towards the conclusion to the piece.

### Theme A Bars 71-77

#### Rhythm and Expression

The return of the *Rondo* shape, (bars 1 and 71), is now drawn out to signal much calmer waters, initially with long tied minims in the bass. Overall we see the diminution of the wave pattern, dynamically, and in the general shape of the tumbling chords, which take on a downwards shift in bars 73-81. This occurs together with tied D flat major tonalities, further slowing the tempo down, although the triplet configurations of bar 77-78 with its visually wave-like phrase marks to accompany the D flat chords, reminds us of the very nature of the piece.

### Melody and Harmony

Although Motive A reappears in octaves at bars 71-72, Debussy delays the appearance of the tonic chord as long as possible, right until bar 77, completing this diatonic progression when it unobtrusively resurfaces in conjunction with unstable 6<sup>th</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> intervals and Motive A again in the middle layers. Up until this point, the V7 tonalities continue to resurface, perhaps indicative of those refractions which do not quite follow the light we see elsewhere on the water's surface.

### Register

The lower registerial minims that begin this section lend a feeling of calm and distance to the music. Texturally, the chords that began in bar 68 continue throughout, recalling the opening theme, providing a feeling of 'luminous purity and resonance'<sup>190</sup> to echo their fragmentary renewal as the piece draws to a close.

### Theme B Bars 78-80

#### Rhythm and Expression

At the end of bar 78, the left-hand leads us into the dotted rhythms of Motive B again, this time on the treble stave and accompanied by a 'Rit.' as well as *diminuendo* markings to *pp* echoing thematic return, all of which produce an eerie sense of mystery.

### Melody and Harmony

The thematic motive at bar 78 immediately reminds us of its forebear at bars 4 and 8, in effect bringing the music full circle before the concluding ripples. Its wave-like nature sets its stamp upon all the waves preceding it, before Motive B reappears, this time in the treble and predominantly on the D flat tonic.

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<sup>190</sup> Schmitz, E. R., *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, p. 104.

## Register

From the heights of the thematic motive, we descend to the mid reaches of the keyboard, tones that perhaps recall the ‘soft pungency of a distant muted horn,’<sup>191</sup> heard in the distance. This could be viewed as the last of the surface designs that Debussy uses in a piece that manifests any number of wave-like ripples on the skin of a still water, overlain with floating harmonies, dynamic fluctuations and rhythmic and textural complexities to show the effects of light on water in all their many guises.

## Coda Theme A Bars 81-94

### Rhythm and Expression

It remains for the Coda to complete this piece, where the dynamic and dramatic shape of the music is more important than conventional notions regarding clarity of formal outline. The last bars are composed predominantly of minims, overlain with crochet layers, in support of the ‘Lent’ (*dans une sonorité harmonieuse et lointaine*) instruction that contributes to an atmosphere of lingering remoteness, sounding distant and far away. Glissando markings are suggestive of elongated ripples and refracted light glistening on watery wavelets and the *ppp* dynamic ensures a mysterious quality as the music withdraws. Tied markings enable the chords to resound underneath the other layers. The use of vertical spacing/layering was an important innovation which the composer made full use of texturally and to develop his themes,<sup>192</sup> such as the echoes of Motive B that are heard among the chord harmonies from the start of bar 81. The substitution of a crochet rest at bar 84 ensures a complete structural break, in the manner of Debussy’s orchestrated piano, drawing a line under what has gone before and the final murmurings of this whispering water piece.

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<sup>191</sup> Schmitz, E. R., *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy* p. 104.

<sup>192</sup> See Nichols, R., *Oxford Studies of Composers (10)*, pp. 49-50 in which he discusses the ‘magical’ effect’ that accompanied Debussy’s new use of vertical spacing, perhaps influenced to some extent by Ravel and his *Jeux d’eau*. Also referred to by Lockspeiser as ‘The technique of Illusion,’ in Lockspeiser, E., *Debussy; His Life and Mind*, Vol. II, ch. 2, pp. 33-51.

### Melody and Harmony

The Coda in effect draws a line under the outpourings of what has gone before. The final arrival of the tonic chord at bar 77 precedes its lingering statement, which as Howat says are 'deliberate plagal meanderings...merely decoration... not a new tonal departure.'<sup>193</sup>

Motive A returns at the beginning of the Coda, at bar 81, immediately after the completion of B, but echoes of B linger in the background, both in the initial chord of this section and the B flat/F chords that appear in the treble, bringing the tonal themes to a harmonious conclusion. There is also a distinct 'Oriental'-type feeling to the way these open *glissando* octave chords are articulated. After a full crochet rest (bar 84) intervals of a 4<sup>th</sup> provoke further allusions to Motive A, before the final ascent to the last chord, which dies away into the distance on the tonic.

### Register

The basis of the Coda lies in its much lower sounds, with hints of Motive B even as A comes to the fore again. Many of the chords are sustained by tied markings, underneath the glissando and crochet notes that ripple over the top, perhaps indicating refracted light on the water. Some of these are particularly diffuse, brushed in very high sounds at the top of the keyboard, as the music fades away.

### Conclusion

Tonally, the piece follows a sequence of I-I-II-V<sub>7</sub>-I (bar 35 tonic, bar 56 supertonic/E flat M, bar 69 dominant seventh, bar 77 tonic), which provides reinforcement for its dramatic shape,<sup>194</sup> combining with dynamic qualities to particularly enhance the central climactic section. The ABABABA rondo-type shape of *Reflets* is lucid enough, and may perhaps be viewed as a structural wave in itself due to its alternations, but the piece is given its overall wave shape by its dynamics and its tonal sequences. These are documented in Appendix III, the dynamic wave chart particularly demonstrating the pinnacles

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<sup>193</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 27.

<sup>194</sup> In Howat's estimation these are linked to the piece's GS and Fibonacci ratios. In Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis* ch. 3, pp. 23-29.

of these waves, and how they relate in turn to the tonal fluctuations. These dynamic oscillations appear in two overall swells, as mentioned previously, but they do not coincide with the themes, and by operating independently propel the piece forwards in a wholly distinctive and organic way, innovative in conception for the early twentieth century era.

The undulating thematic pattern heard right at the beginning of the piece (bars 4 and 8), also reappears at bars 73-4 and 78 near the end, creating the impression of recognizable wave themes, as do the 3-note textures created in the right hand (bar 1 for example), and the triplet accumulations of bars 35-47. The configurations of elongated groupings on treble staves in the 'Quasi Cadenza' passage and the *Mesuré* one following, lend themselves aurally and visually to perceptions of waves, whilst Debussy's phrasing marks, particularly just after the main climax at bars 60, 62-3 are a clear indication of the wave-like motion he wished the hands to take and the notes to follow. Startlingly angled *crescendo/diminuendo* markings are another definite expression of his precision, building the dynamics to a peak at the highest points of arpeggiating notes. All of these devices were such a departure from the 'Romantic' viewpoint that they made Debussy's music appear as if it existed on another plane, without beginning or ending, – its multi layered effect creating feelings from Nature that were entirely impressionistic and full of emotion.<sup>195</sup> Whereas its impact created these opinions, however, it was conceived and written down only by the application of a particularly different sort of genius.

Marguerite Long refers to Debussy's 'mysterious rapport between nature and the imagination.'<sup>196</sup> She remembers Debussy's words that liken Motive A's three notes – A flat, F, E flat, to 'A little circle in water... with a little pebble falling into it.'<sup>197</sup> Her own estimation of these tones is that that they are 'reminiscent of a clock which, by its pure tones, awakens a liquid echo...'<sup>198</sup> whose nuances are central to 'Reflets dans l'eau.' The two opening phrases of the piece indicate the overall wave shape that the whole composition is to take, (an effect also used in *L'Isle Joyeuse*), and the music itself seems to indicate the

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<sup>195</sup> Though not in any sense 'vague,' – an epithet sometimes used by early critics, unfamiliar with the structures used by Debussy to attain such effects.

<sup>196</sup> Long, M., *At the piano with Debussy*, p. 55.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid*, p 25.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, p.25.

reflections and refraction of light on the surface of water – particularly the geometric use of the B theme as the ‘cyclic motive,’ taken from *La mer* and Motive A as the ‘retrograde inversion’ of the basic motive that forms the first and last climaxes of its first movement, *De l’Aube*.<sup>199</sup> The two compositions thus had overlapping ideals, as well as their watery themes in common, hinting at the mysterious ideals of Symbolism’s ‘hidden truths’.

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<sup>199</sup> See explanation in Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 29.

## Chapter IV

### An Analysis of Wave Pattern in the Orchestral Piece

#### *La mer* (1905)

If some contemporary critics condemned Debussy as a miniaturist,<sup>200</sup> the ‘vagueness of Debussy’s sense of tonality, compared to that of Brahms, or even of Wagner’<sup>201</sup> led to accusations of musical Impressionism. Yet the principles of tonality remained intact, despite Debussy breaking down the rigidity of their order. His *Préludes* retained their original keys, despite remote excursions, in comparison to Schoenberg’s Song-cycle *Das Buch der hangenden Garten*, dating from the same period (1908) in which the latter expounded that he was ‘conscious of breaking all barriers with aesthetics of the past.’<sup>202</sup> Debussy’s impact, in contrast, lay in his ‘isolated, sensuous chords, varied in intensity, or of fragmentary themes pursued in improvisatory fashion,’ but as Lockspeiser declared, ‘the distinctive achievement of Debussy was not so much his novel, ambiguous harmony: it was his recognition of the fact that since an advanced stage in harmonic development had been reached the older forms of music could not be maintained...’ leading to the ‘organic development of themes’ in several of Debussy’s large-scale works, particularly the second movement of *La mer*.<sup>203</sup> In general the composer adopted a ‘largely empirical’<sup>204</sup> technique, in line with his musical aesthetic, aimed at capturing the feelings he wished to

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<sup>200</sup> See an article entitled ‘M. Claude Debussy et le snobisme contemporain,’ in which an article written by Raphaël Cor and originally printed in October 1909, is reprinted in ‘Selections from Le Cas Debussy,’ ed. C.-Francis Caillard and José de Bérys, 1910. In B. Hart, “Le Cas Debussy,” Reviews and Polemics About the Composer’s “New Manner,” in *Debussy and His World*, Ed. by Fulcher, Jane F., (Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2001), Pt. III, pp. 370-372. In this, Hart asserts that Cor, a writer on philosophy, ‘dismisses Debussy’s art as a passing fashion which takes interest only in fleeting harmonic and timbral novelties instead of ‘deep,’ ‘moving’ and ‘profound’ expressions conveyed by melody. As a result, Cor contends, Debussy’s music is fundamentally insignificant and ephemeral.’

Regarding *La mer* itself, Cor expounds ‘Théophile Gautier... found himself more inspired by pictures than by nature itself. But at least his descriptions, which are so full of variety, had merit because of the richness of an incomparable palate. Nothing like that with M. Debussy, whose art is totally monochromatic. Really, in describing the sea, only he could succeed in giving us an impression of smallness – events within an aquarium, a tempest of ornaments, immensity in miniature.’ Elsewhere, Debussy is condemned for his ‘tiny art.’

<sup>201</sup> Lockspeiser, E. *Debussy: His Life And Mind*, Volume II 1902-1918 p. 229.

<sup>202</sup> H. H. Stuckenschmidt maintained that this work represented ‘the liquidation of tonality, in *ibid*, p. 230.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 230-231.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid*, p. 231.

engender.<sup>205</sup> Speaking in approximately 1960, Jean Barraqué documents the composer's departure from contemporary practice:

Beginning with *La mer*, Debussy created a new formal concept which one could call *open form*, which would find its fullest flowering in *Jeux* and the last works: a developmental process in which the very notions of exposition and development co-exist in an uninterrupted burst, which allows a work to be self-propelled, so to speak, without relying on any pre-established model.

Such a conception of a work of art obviously strikes at the decayed state of traditional analysis. Indeed, in *La mer*, musical technique is reinvented, not in the details of the language, but in the very concept of musical organization and *sonorous becoming* (taking a step that might be joined with Mallarmé's). In it, music becomes a mysterious world which, to the extent that it evolves, contrives itself in itself and destroys itself.<sup>206</sup>

This different and innovative direction was elucidated by M. D. Calvocoressi, who in reviewing *La mer* for the *Guide musical*, shortly after its premiere observed, 'The impression (is) that Debussy, who had studiously explored the domain of possible sonorities, here has considerably condensed the mass of his discoveries, and his music acquires an absolute harmonious unity that characterizes the masterpieces...the detailed and decorative side of Debussy's work subsides and the evocative force appears clearly.'<sup>207</sup> For all the explicitness modern analyses have found contained therein, however, the music

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<sup>205</sup> In a probable reference to *La mer* in 1907, the Belgian composer Paul Gilson, refers to this exploratory approach: 'Incidental clauses are linked together as motives in a tapestry but then suddenly the whole scheme is broken (for no other reason than that a new idea is desirable) though the original motive may be taken up later...This is ornamental music in the broadest sense of the term... Such works have to be heard many times before the listener is aware of their architecture...when all this is done the listener will grasp very little of the overall plan and he will be affected only by the impression of the moment,' in Lockspeiser, E. *Debussy: His Life And Mind*, Volume II 1902-1918, p. 232.

<sup>206</sup> Jean Barraqué speaking, in "*La Mer de Debussy, ou la naissance des formes ouvertes : essai de méthodologie comparative : la forme musicale considéré non plus comme un archétype mais comme un devenir*," *Analyse musicale* 12/3 (June 1988), pp. 15-62. A footnote says that the preparation of this text dates from the beginning of the 1960's, which coincides with André Hodeir's recollections, in *Since Debussy: A View of Contemporary Music* (Grove Press, 1961), of Barraqué's analysis. Barraqué published, in 1962 (Paris, Editions du Seuil; new printing, beautifully illustrated, 1994), a short popular biography of Debussy that included, within a few pages, some of the essential propositions of this larger analysis of *La mer*. In De Voto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music*: pp. 144-146.

<sup>207</sup> Calvocoressi, M. D., quoted in Rolf, 'Debussy's *La Mer*,' p. 315, in Briscoe, James R., 'Debussy and Orchestral Performance,' in *Debussy In Performance*, Ed. by Briscoe, James R., p. 78. Roger Nichols also refers to 'that absolute rhythmic rightness (eurythmie) which is the hallmark of masterpieces,' in Nichols, R., *The Life of Debussy: Musical Lives*, p. 118.

still becomes a ‘sequence of mirages’<sup>208</sup> in performance, and for many years the nebulous qualities of Debussyan harmony led to epithets which concentrated on their illusory aspects, – what Trezise alludes to as ‘a music carried on the wake of dreams.’<sup>209</sup>

Lockspeiser indicates his belief that the whole-tone scales ‘used systematically in *L’isle joyeuse* and ‘Voiles’, from *Douze Preludes I* appeared ‘to have been designed for the express purpose of blurring the precision of tonality,’ the ‘oscillations of key’ in the latter reflecting ‘a model of the ambiguities in Debussy’s work of key relationships.’<sup>210</sup> He also refers to Vladimir Jankélévitch’s suggestion that ‘many dragging rhythms and pedals used by Debussy indicate a preoccupation in his work with stagnation and possibly the stagnation of water.’<sup>211</sup> As mentioned previously, the Art Nouveau attached much symbolic significance to the floral and plant designs of the movement, and their connection to the ‘flowing lines of women’s hair.’ Jankélévitch takes this allusion a step further, in finding a parallel between Debussy’s melodic designs and geotropism – a phenomenon in botany ‘which causes the roots of plants to gravitate towards the centre of the earth.’<sup>212</sup> Lockspeiser perceives that many of the typical arabesque designs of Debussy ‘appear to be propelled by a downward-moving force’ which is highly significant, in that he uses it symbolically to illustrate ‘indolence and languor, particularly sensuous languor,’ and ‘fear and flight.’<sup>213</sup> Aspects of *La mer*’s wave patterns can be discerned in the same light – scalic plunges of notes evoking a pictorial image of descent and foreboding on the written page.

Debussy’s articles had long criticized both the technical and aesthetic deficiencies that he perceived in the symphony. As Brian Hart explains, ‘Since Beethoven achieved the fullest possible expression in the symphony Debussy

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<sup>208</sup> Harrison, M., ‘Such Stuff As Dreams Are Made Of: Debussy’s Orchestral Works,’ on CD liner notes, p. 3, on *Debussy Orchestral Music including: Prélude a L’Après-midi d’un faune, Images, La Mer, 3 Nocturnes*. (Philips Classics, 1993.438 742-2) Also see a reference to ‘recorded performances’ as ‘accurate representation of the score,’ – their limitations providing only ‘an imprecise aural experience,’ in Trezise, S., *Debussy: La Mer: Cambridge Music Handbooks* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 97.

<sup>209</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy: La Mer: Cambridge Music Handbooks*, p. 51.

<sup>210</sup> Lockspeiser, E., *Debussy: His Life and Mind*, Volume II 1902-1918 p. 234.

<sup>211</sup> He cites *Pelléas*, Act III, Scene ii as the most important reflection of this, when Golaud speaks about stagnant water, and whether Pelléas can smell the increasing odour of death it brings. Does he perceive the abyss opening up? See *ibid*, p. 234.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid*, p. 237.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 237-239.

argued that theorists thereafter converted his personal style into immutable principles. To write an acceptable symphony today, one must write it ‘correctly...’<sup>214</sup> By 1909, he had asserted:

We are making metaphysics, but we are not making music. Music should be recorded spontaneously by the listener’s ear; it should not be necessary for him to have to try to decipher abstract ideas in the meanderings of a complicated development.<sup>215</sup>

Following no orthodox style, it is nevertheless possible to permit some analogy between *La mer* and the symphony, particularly if one sees the blending of the latter with the symphonic poem as an abstract course of action, in which content is the instigator of form. This provides the impetus for such a piece, since ‘in each movement the conventional form, to the extent that it appears, serves to *illustrate* the title (the ‘content’), which in turn is inspired by Debussy’s contemplations of the sea. However one views the form of *De l’aube a midi*, it proceeds from continual growth toward the climax, mirroring the progression from dawn to noon on the sea. The fast, continuous and unpredictable evolutions of motives in *Jeux de vagues* suggest the overlapping of the billows and the constant mutations of the watery surface; and a *scherzo* is of course an appropriate choice for a piece about the *play* of waves. In the last movement, a rondolike alternation of two thematic blocks makes the ‘dialogue’ of wind and sea musically apparent,<sup>216</sup> Debussy neither followed tradition nor designated his work as ‘sketches’<sup>217</sup> in the final analysis, although his glimpses of various aspects of the ‘unchanging yet ever-changing sea and the emotions

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<sup>214</sup> Hart, B., ‘The Symphony in Debussy’s World: A Context for His Views on the Genre and Early Interpretations of *La Mer*’, in *Debussy and His World*, Ed. by Fulcher, Jane F., Pt. I, pp. 187-188.

<sup>215</sup> From an interview in ‘La musique d’aujourd’hui et celle de demain,’ *Comoedia*, 4 November 1909; *Croche*, p. 296, in Hart, B., ‘The Symphony in Debussy’s World: A Context for His Views on the Genre and Early Interpretations of *La Mer*’, in *ibid*, Pt. I, pp. 189-190,

<sup>216</sup> Hart, B., ‘The Symphony in Debussy’s World: A Context for His Views on the Genre and Early Interpretations of *La Mer*’, in *ibid*, Pt. I, p. 195.

<sup>217</sup> ‘Many *fin-de-siècle* French musicians sought to create multimovement alternatives to the symphony. ‘One option was the ‘symphonic suite,’ a term coined by Rimsky-Korsakov for *Antar* and *Sheherazade*. Such a genre can be seen as a hybrid between symphony and picturesque orchestral suite; symphonic suites consisted of three or four integrated and non-detachable movements, whereas the *suite d’orchestra* generally eschewed standard symphonic forms and was unified only by suggestive titles. Symphonic suites thus combined the descriptiveness and structural liberty of symphonic poems or suites with the unity and internal logic of a symphony. By this measure, we might consider *La mer* the finest example of a *suite symphonique*,’ in *ibid*, Pt. I, p. 201.

they stir within him'<sup>218</sup> were to some extent descriptive of his changeable character. As Charles Malherbe argued, 'One will hardly find the development of themes in the technical and academic sense of the word. There is more independence in the thought and more suppleness in the realization; here imagination has priority over rules.'<sup>219</sup> Mark De Voto responds in similar manner, concerning the colouristically brilliant and cohesive nature of *La mer*, also commenting on its 'formal expansiveness' and 'rich and subtle' complex detail at every level:

On the one hand it is about narration, about one idea following another in a way that suggests Beethovenian inevitability and naturalness. On the other, it is as far as could be from the Austro-German tradition of motivic development; there is no sequentiation, no liquidation or imitative counterpoint to push the music ahead, and especially, there is almost no dominant-to-tonic progression – so little, indeed, that the exceptional V-I motions are dramatic events. Like his other works, *La mer* features Debussy's beloved paired repetition of motives, semiphrases, even whole phrases without anything in between; outside this special limitation, repetition occurs relatively seldom, and usually strategically, for special sectional emphasis. Indeed what develops in succession is not really the melody nor even the motives, but the tonality and texture.<sup>220</sup>

This is particularly noticeable in the first movement of *La mer*, – *De l'aube à midi sur la mer*, whose allusion to time passing (From dawn to noon on the sea,) is echoed in the textural phrases rather than in melodic detail. Themes that are at the forefront of solo passages can equally become submerged in the interior 'complex heterophony'.<sup>221</sup> The 'chorale' melody<sup>222</sup> for example, initiates the Coda to the first movement, reappears in the middle of the third, before emerging at the height of the finale, in a strikingly thematic connection, archetypal of Debussy's method of interweaving disparate fragments that together make up a unified whole. Even though a larger trajectory of the piece

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<sup>218</sup> Hart, B., 'The Symphony in Debussy's World: A Context for His Views on the Genre and Early Interpretations of *La Mer*', in *Debussy and His World*, Ed. by Fulcher, Jane F., Pt. I, p. 196.

<sup>219</sup> Charles Malherbe, *Programme des quatre concerts d'orchestre de musique française moderne* (Paris, 1910), pp. 39-40. According to Trezise, Malherbe may have received this explication from the composer himself (p. 39), in *ibid*, p. 196.

<sup>220</sup> De Voto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No. 4*, p. 145.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid*, p. 146.

<sup>222</sup> Howat's Motive E, which later becomes his 'Codetta' to the middle of the third movement.

clearly suggests an overall plan (the first and last movements being centred around D flat major tonalities, though *De l'aube* with more tenuous associations; the middle, *Jeux de vagues* associated by the related key of E major – the flattened mediant enharmonically) – it is the sense of flowing movement through *La mer* that binds it into an innovative entirety. Progression through these ‘movements’ appear preordained to the listener – *De l'aube* inaugurating the cyclic themes that will reappear later, *Jeux* providing an interlude between the first and last movements in the form of a highly unconventional type of *scherzo*, whilst *Dialogue du vent et de la mer* carries the weight of the finale, in another unusual ‘type’ of *rondo*, all appearing to be carried forward in an inevitability that can only end with the final climax and reprisal of the principal theme. The wave-like flow of the three parts seems to transcend its formal divisions, yet builds in its intensity towards a colouristic whole, aided by dynamic waves and motives that continually develop, reinventing themselves at different levels within the music. The listener perceives these textures and forward developments as waves upon waves of sound, in a direct connection to Debussy’s emotions for the sea.

The ‘subtle acts of continuity’ identified by analysts including Roy Howat and Jean Barraqué, such as the ‘curious *diminuendo*’ on the final chord of the first movement, actually aid interdependence with the following section, since ‘However static, this doesn’t give the impression of an end... but on the contrary of a door opening on to a new universe.’<sup>223</sup> The obscure endings of the two main sections thus only serve to highlight the strength of the new beginnings that follow, creating contrasting scenes of the same all-encompassing subject. Despite these contrasts – the first movement containing clear boundaries of an ABCBA-type pattern, with ‘simultaneous changes of metre tempo and key,’<sup>224</sup> in comparison to the much steadier 2/2 rhythm with its flexible line in the *Dialogue* – the movements nevertheless merge in a strong sense of tidal pull, whose ebb and flow through the piece, together with the return of distinctive motives, engender an atmosphere of ocean currents pulling at the emotions. Set against these strong outer forces, is the ‘highlight,’ as it were, of *Jeux de vagues*. Its sudden volatility and unpredictability provide the play of light on

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<sup>223</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, pp. 64-5.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid*, p. 64.

water that was the Impressionist ideal, its froth and flecks atop the might of the wave beneath, as *The Wave off Kanagawa* depicts. Incapable of formal analysis, the fragmentary nature of *Jeux de vagues*, like its namesake, the ballet *Jeux* of 1913, marks Debussy's complete preoccupation with soundscape – his attempt to capture his feelings for his subject regardless of musical 'form' as it was then conceived. The title of the middle movement provides all the clues that are needed to discover the composer's intentions, beyond those that exist in the music itself and its visual impact upon the printed page.

Herbert Eimert's view was that Debussy was 'a precursor of post-war electro-acoustic music,' who maintained a hidden impetus of current, creating 'a new organic coherence, that of flowing form, an ornamental kinetic form...'<sup>225</sup> *Jeux de vagues* does 'hint suggestively at Eimert's 'vegetative circulation of form,'<sup>226</sup> containing as it does a continual stream of new material, yet as Trezise maintains, the impetus through *La mer* is also one of self-propagation, Debussy building on loosely derived previous elements. His imagination thus worked in a kinetic way, operating in an entirely fluid form that could be perfectly represented by the eternal motion of waves of sound. That this was so has already been demonstrated in my discussion of his piano pieces. In *La mer*, his direct evocation of the sea itself, it becomes a truism. It is in the leap of imagination that Debussy's *La mer* lives. Not only do we *hear* waves when we listen to this music but an examination of the score leads to the perception of visual waves, which come alive when the music is played. They are in effect a detailed subtext of the other musical figures, their supple line charting a visual representation of waves of sound, closely allied to the dynamic waves of the piece and its 'musical soul.'<sup>227</sup>

On the accompanying scores at Appendixes IV-VI, I have marked in the main technical analytical points, together with dynamic and tonal/modal wave patterns, whose trajectory I plot on separate graphs. I also provide a guide to

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<sup>225</sup> Eimert quoted in Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 52.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid*, p. 52.

<sup>227</sup> For a discussion of musical 'perfection' that lacks nothing yet lacks everything without 'charme' – 'the summons made by enchantment,' – in other words a musical 'soul,' see Arnold I. Davidson's 'The *Charme* of Jankélévitch,' in Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, p. xi. Also for text regarding music's transformational powers, see Abbate, C., in 'Jankélévitch's Singularity,' in Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, p. xviii.

motivic activity based on Howat's example.<sup>228</sup> Debussy's predilection for marking almost every bar dynamically to achieve his intended purpose clearly demonstrates the fluctuations and overall waves that he wished to evoke in his piece. The visual waves represented in note patterns on the staves may be the result of an intentional co-existence with the music's dramatic intentions, or perhaps more likely a synchronous partnership between the composer's imaginative and auditory impulse and his visual acuity, which combined in intellectual activity to produce music that brought 'enchantment' to life, as Debussy's imagination participated in the play of waves on the sea. The will of performers in choosing how to play motives, groups of notes and passages to best express this music, together with how listeners choose to hear it, combine with dynamic swellings and subsidings to equate with waves in the listener's ears.

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<sup>228</sup> See Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, pp. 68-69.

## **Movement I: De l'aube à midi sur la mer**

‘From dawn to midday at sea’ was originally entitled *Mer belle aux Îles Sanguinaires*, perhaps after Camille Mauclair’s short story of the same name, published in 1893, and evoking the character of the sea off Corsica and Sardinia. It illustrates ‘a fusion of the arts, and a fusion of nature and art’<sup>229</sup> – a multi-faceted view, in other words, of the myriad impressions of light on water represented in musical form.

The piece is thoroughly innovative in its conception, existing in an ever-rolling, unceasing layer of sound – capturing the eternal nature of the sea, ever-moving yet ever-changing in its course.<sup>230</sup> Musically, it therefore exemplifies and extends ‘the principle of continual exposition through to the last movement...’ where development co-exists ‘in an uninterrupted stream, permitting the work to be propelled along by itself without recourse to any pre-established model,<sup>231</sup> as Trezise expounds. With this lucidity one is tempted to recall the famous lines, ‘Time like an ever-rolling stream (Bears all its sons away; They fly forgotten as a dream Dies at the opening day),<sup>232</sup> such is the nature of the composer’s mosaic of lines and themes, which bear the listener relentlessly onwards, not only to the end of the movement but beyond.

We can find five clear sections delineated in the progressive or open form of the first movement, which are as follows:

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<sup>229</sup> Cox, D. *Debussy Orchestral music: BBC Publications*, p. 27.

<sup>230</sup> This accords with the conductor Ansermet’s view, that whilst Debussy’s music has the tonal substance and allure of an *allegro* its content departs radically from earlier models; – ‘Debussy does not develop themes... If he repeats the first motif three times it is to show it in a new light and base an argument on it... With Debussy the music is always moving on without going back on itself.’ Ansermet, writing in *Ecrits*, (Paris, 1962), p. 206, in *Notes & Design*, in Trezise, S., Debussy, *La Mer*, p. 53.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid*, p. 53.

<sup>232</sup> These lines come from a hymn ‘O God, Our help in ages past,’ which was composed in 1719 by Isaac Watts the ‘Father of English Hymnody’ and was originally part of his *Psalms of David*, in a book written and published by him in that year. In <http://www.en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/> and <http://www.en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/IsaacWatts> It was set to the music called *St. Anne*, written by William Croft in 1708.

Introduction	First Principal Section	Second Principal Section	Transition or Interlude	Coda
Bars 1-30	Bars 31-83	Bars 84-121	Bars 122-131	Bars 132-141
Key/Tonality	Key/Tonality	Key/Tonality	Key/Tonality	Key/Tonality
B m/M	D flat M > E	C/B flat M	> D flat M	D flat M

### Synopsis

Howat refers to the ‘simultaneous changes of metre, tempo, tonality, modality and thematic content’<sup>233</sup> which set these sections in ‘sharp relief’ – an unusual feature of Debussy’s mature work. As both he and Trezise agree, each section is constructed differently, producing various types of ‘form,’ including various ternary and arch examples and a Coda that ‘is essentially an extended plagal cadence, incorporating some thematic returns.’<sup>234</sup> The main controversy for Howat lies in the coherence of these passages as a unity, particularly in reference to ‘the movement’s apparently deliberate obfuscation of any clear recapitulation towards the end,’<sup>235</sup> although the reappearance of the motive does return us tonally and thematically to the First Principal Section (bars 31-3). The tonic chord in bar 135 of the Coda is also a recapitulation, but ‘sharply compressed and...obscured’ – the reprise of the motive in the woodwind moved to an accompanying role, as fresh material on the trumpets and trombones produces a new focus, derived from a new chorale-like motive in the brass which proceeds from fig. 14. This section, full of awe and intensity, builds until bar 138, almost the conclusion of the first movement, thereby taking us forward to the next.

Unifying devices that lend the piece coherence and enable the music to roll onwards are provided by strategies such as *La mer’s* cyclic motif, referred to as Motive X. Its use as the dramatic gesture is clear, as it forms the pinnacle of the arch form in the introduction, (6/4-4/4-6/4) – in itself a type of wave form, and

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<sup>233</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 70.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid, p. 70.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid, p. 70.

is played by the cor anglais and trombones initially at figure 1. Its shape is a clear wave both in configuration on the stave and dynamically, as well as the ternary shape of the metre alluding to this form. Apart from the return of this motive at figures 8 and 12, dynamic climaxes at bars 76, 105, and 135-139 also act as a link between sections, producing ‘a broad, tidal three-part wave sequence,’<sup>236</sup> acting as the large-scale swell of the sea. Other intricate motivic relationships aid the overall tonal progression of the piece, as does the general symmetrical sequence of tonality, D flat-E-B flat-D flat, which Howat notes, ‘with its pendulum effect, forms another large-scale tidal impulse.’<sup>237</sup>

From these broad points, it can be seen that Debussy’s characterization as ‘Impressionist’ was hardly surprising, but if the nature of his music seemed nebulous to the ear, it was in reality full of complexity, involving obscure relationships between themes, tonalities, dynamic and structural features. Perhaps the slowly unfurling nature of the piece manifests the sea in its true untameable state – its endless eternity in breadth and depth as well as its temporal dimension depicting man’s quest to know the unknowable – to reflect on the perpetual spiral of life. According to Barraqué and Howat, the movement’s ‘chronological element in the title suggests a succession of the sea’s varying moods portrayed through a display, or exposition, of different sensations and forms.’<sup>238</sup> Debussy’s task in effecting this spectacle was to merge the ‘delicately judged polarity between unity and open-endedness.’<sup>239</sup>

### Introduction (Bars 1-30)

### Rhythm and Expression

The timing to *De l’aube à midi sur la mer* is given as 6/4 with a crochet pulse of 116, set at *Très lent*. Although the 116 might seem too fast for the

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<sup>236</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 71.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid*, p. 71.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid*, p. 71. Also, see an account of Debussy benefiting from his friend Louis Laloy’s greater knowledge of Chinese philosophy and non-Western music, in particular Chinese, Japanese and Cambodian music. *Pagodes*, from 1903, dates from soon after their friendship began, and Debussy dedicated *Et la Lune descend sur le temple qui fut*, to him. Descriptive titles such as this were, says Laloy, in ‘de style chinois,’ and *La mer*’s first movement seems to accord with this style. In *Louis Laloy (1874-1944) on Debussy, Ravel and Stravinsky*, Trans. with an introduction and notes by Priest, D. (Aldershot, Brookfield USA, Singapore, Sydney: Ashgate 1999), p. 10.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid*, p. 71.

instruction, the underlying rhythm is that of a minim, and thus the metre is still very slow.<sup>240</sup> The early use of semiquaver/dotted quaver rhythms by the cellos at *pp* in bars 3-5 immediately sets up a feeling of mystery and unearthliness, over which the middle strings ascend in an initial wave of pentatonic sound. There is no regular pulse, the harps echoing an obscure, indefinite atmosphere that is merely present. At bar 6 the oboe echoes this dotted rhythm thematically and swells dynamically, being joined by the clarinets and bassoons over repeated descending strings. Almost immediately afterwards at figure 1, the first cyclic motive, X, moves in a more expansive announcement (comprised of crotchets and minims and sustained dynamics) of the sea's power, before interweaving with the dotted rhythm again.

The rhythms and ascent of the woodwind at the 'animez' section, together with the repeated condensed nature of their surges, build excitement towards the most complex section of 'De l'aube,' as the strings ripple almost menacingly in the background and all parts are propelled onwards in repeated *crescendos*. Figure 2, (bar 23), has the effect of driving the music on towards the first principal section, despite the fact that it follows the peak or crown of the wave /arch form and therefore might be expected to subside. The *animez*, which has the effect of an *accelerando*, sets up the first main movement, and provides what Trezise calls the Introduction's 'inner dynamic'<sup>241</sup> – thus operating in a highly innovative fashion.

### Melody and Harmony

The introduction appears to consist of an ABCBA arch form, which follows an exact symmetrical curve, containing a smaller wave within a larger one – a format which Debussy used repeatedly.

We are aware from the outset that a full-scale symphony orchestra is used to affect the expansive sound of the piece, with harps and cor anglais providing additional colours and timbre for which Debussy is renowned. The quiet drum-roll and pedal note of B in the double basses, could be said to symbolize 'pentatonically the sun rising in the East,'<sup>242</sup> so conveying the impression of a

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<sup>240</sup> See Trezise's explanation of this in Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 29.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid*, p. 54.

<sup>242</sup> Cox, D., *Debussy Orchestral music: BBC Publications*, p. 27.

temporal narrative which is ‘to culminate in the radiant vision of the midday sun in the movement’s coda.’<sup>243</sup> At bar 6 the oboe presents the first wave-like thematic episode. Various derivatives of this recur throughout the work, used in a cyclical fashion throughout both outer movements. Almost immediately, at bar 12, the main cyclic Motive X appears, (see fig.1) – used as a dramatic gesture, or as Howat suggests, ‘set on a pedestal.’<sup>244</sup> This effect is augmented as it is used by the cor anglais and trumpets at *pp. expressif et soutenu*. Its position at this point – midway between the 6/4–4/4–6/4 temporal curve, ‘at the crown of the arch form,’<sup>245</sup> represents a clear peak of the wave initiated at bar 3 originally, and is heightened by its almost ‘stand-alone’ position, whilst the strings provide an undercurrent of descending tremolos, perhaps symbolic of a deep swell in the depths of the sea. Trezise refers us to its ‘melancholy call, in an instant summoning up the kingdom of the wind to our gaze.’<sup>246</sup>

After this summit, the oboe, clarinet and bassoons state the theme further at bars 17-20, before the strings again produce a succession of falling waves – reminiscent of waterfalls of sound. At figure 2, the harps provide a background of surging waves, each oscillating between two notes B and A, not A sharp as we would expect if this were really the key of B minor as indicated by the key signature. In fact, there is little evidence of clear major/minor tonalities other than the bass B to provide any sense of stability; rather, Debussy employs a free use of modes to achieve a background of obscure tonalities approaching ‘noise’ above which the main themes and motives operate and the various tonics ‘float.’ The woodwind are subsequently enlivened by ‘*animez*’ instructions to ascend in clear peaks of whole tones and widened intervals towards the first principal section at bar 31.

The lack of cadential progression together with obscure tonalities, – what DeVoto refers to as ‘a vagueness of major and modal minor’<sup>247</sup> – and a main cyclic motive fixated on C whilst the bass emphasis rests on B, makes the initial movement an indicator of Debussy’s truly revolutionary character. The B tonal centre makes no further appearance ‘with any certainty in ‘*La mer*,’ although

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<sup>243</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 54.

<sup>244</sup> Howat, R. *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 71.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid*, p. 71.

<sup>246</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 54.

<sup>247</sup> DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No.4*, p. 147.

it's relative, G sharp minor / A flat minor, appear abundantly, especially in the first two movements.' <sup>248</sup> It is certainly a quandary that has no definitive answers other than the creation of a tonal perplexity that perhaps echoes the whole *ambiance* of the work atmospherically. <sup>249</sup>

The pedal note B <sup>250</sup> is aurally part of the 'larger scale tidal impulse' which sees a progression from B to D flat-E-B flat-D flat, in the first movement. The latter is in effect the home key, linking up with the harmonies of Movement III, and completing the piece. Before we reach bar 31, however, and the move to D flat, the cyclic motive is accompanied by mysterious tonalities and ambiguities, which eclipse any feeling of validity, since they contain G sharp, and an undulating B/A figure. Thematic ideas appear unrelated to the 'hovering B' that De Voto mentions, although he also refers to 'a similar motive in *Sirènes*,' rhythmically. <sup>251</sup> However, the following bars, 14-17, contain A flat (V) and G flat (IV), and a bass progression to D at bar 17, (taken up by the percussion), indicating a move towards the first principal section.

### Register

The initial low register of the first six bars in the alto string parts sets the scene for the rising of the sun, initially muted over a B pedal before the insistent figure in the middle regions of bar 6 suggests a mysterious motive that will continually resurface. Its character insinuates itself into a generally foreboding atmosphere, hinting perhaps at the tenuous miracle of life were it not for the daily occurrence of sunrise. The middle oboe tones taking the lead perfectly

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<sup>248</sup> DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No.4*, p. 147.

<sup>249</sup> De Voto postulates another theory, related to this, – that 'the B major at the beginning of *La mer* is an aural image, a psychological holdover from *Sirènes*, (the third of the *Nocturnes*), Debussy's most recently composed orchestral work before *La mer*, and next to *La mer* the most oceanic of his compositions.' It is certainly a tantalizing allusion. In *ibid*, p. 147.

<sup>250</sup> (I of B minor, VI of D major, and V of E major, as perhaps suggested by the presence of G sharp in the harps and cellos and later movement towards this key at bar 57, – or I of B major, III of G sharp minor, or enharmonically III of A flat minor).

<sup>251</sup> See the diagrammatic analysis of the B/A alternation in DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No. 4*, p. 149. Also note De Voto's contention that the 'tonally unstable' Introduction, contains three most important pitches, – B, D and A, which 'constitute a Basic cell that in different configurations and permutations, is a primary thematic resource for the entire movement,' in *ibid*, p. 148. In addition, see Trezise's account of Debussy's use of modes above which 'the tonic pitch is allowed to float,' and his diagram of main pitch collections in the Introduction, which he posits are B, C sharp, F sharp, G sharp. In Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, pp. 87-8.

evoke this ‘turning’ theme, as it ascends and descends in a clear swell above high descending violins. The cyclic motive at figure 1 that follows soon afterwards uses the cor anglais and trumpets to evoke an altogether broader ‘melancholy call,’<sup>252</sup> suggesting the wind perhaps, in a tidal wave that follows the shape of the first theme but reaches slightly higher.

Figure 2 sees an almost static rippling line from the harp parts, playing bass B/A oscillations as a background to the same low tones on percussion, whilst the strings sketch out the middle ground. Meanwhile, all the woodwind parts traverse upwards in an ascending trajectory from bars 23-30, their pentatonic rising tones driving the music forwards continually. The clarinet crotchet figure of bar 27 visually resembles a wave, which then spreads into the other woodwind parts as well as the harps, aided by string and timbral repetitions in a range of bass and treble registers.

#### First Principal Section (Bars 31-83)

This may be viewed as the most complex section, possessing a more clearly defined structure than the other parts, as well as a greater tonal range and ‘motivic variety’ that make up a ‘complex thematic order.’<sup>253</sup> Howat’s analysis of these highlight a ‘strong arch-form tendency,’ both in the two small-scale ‘preparatory’ ternary sequences he analyzes, which build momentum, and in the overall larger arch form, ABCBA which encloses them. As he says, ‘a ternary or arch sequence is essentially a wave form, and in this case the large-scale wave of the complete arch sequence could be considered to have its impetus built up gradually by the formal momentum generated by the two preparatory ternary sequences – the whole section being an expanding sequence of three wave-like arch forms.’<sup>254</sup>

The build up of these wave forms may be shown as follows:

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<sup>252</sup> Louis Laloy speaking, in a review of the first performance in *Mercure musical* (1 November 1905), p. 488, in Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 54.

<sup>253</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 73.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid*, p. 74.

## Motivic Arch Forms

Bars 31-83	Main ABCBA arch form containing derivatives of A motives, Motive B and Motive C, highlighting Motive X and the climax after figure 8 (bar 72).
Bars 31-58	ABA smaller-scale ternary sequence of which Motive B forms the central part, with A2 at fig. 5 completing the arch.
Bars 33-42	A1A2A1 ternary grouping of motive (derivatives of A), within the aegis of the initial A segment. A3 enters as a ‘transition to the following segment of the larger arch form.’ <sup>255</sup>

### Rhythm, Register and Expression

The first main section of the movement ensues at ‘Modéré, sans lenteur (Dans un rythme très souple),’ this time at a quaver = 116 in 6/8 compound time. The strings exhibit a rippling texture in their middle regions – the cello initiating the start of the semiquaver triplets and tied notes at bar 32 which leads into the A1 motive marked on the score at bar 33. The cellos repeat the tied semiquaver pattern of the woodwind, echoing their shape in a rolling swell that continues to bar 41, thence taking up other wave-like patterns as the violas shift to the former. The harps meanwhile, employ a descending wave pattern across the bass stave at bars 35-39, aided by precise phrase markings to achieve this effect. Thirds, fourths and fifths at figure 4 (bar 43 onwards) rock in further undulations in the strings, whilst another derivative of Motive A, this time A3, appears in the woodwind, harps and strings, transforming the piece onwards. Although the section begins at *forte*, the dynamics have subsided to *pp*, before allowing all parts to build with the ostinato strings at bars 41-2. From bar 47

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<sup>255</sup> See Howat’s diagram of ternary sequences within the First Principal Section at Figure 7.1, in Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 74.

Motive B introduces semiquaver triplets set against a predominantly quaver accompaniment elsewhere, in rather ‘static’ tones.

Henceforth, short spurts of material develop intermittently with attendant dynamic *crescendos*, but soon return to their potent *pp* base, which helps to drive the music on, together with instructions such as *Un peu animé* and *au Mouvt.* The string repetitions that aid this process are played in a very high register, in a descent with a slight curl upwards again, (see bar 53 onwards), set off by the horn theme (originally from figure 3) once again at figure 5 onwards. Its octave acoustic tones continue to build against this background, with the addition of repetitive *glissando* chords from the harps, which in themselves suggest sliding wave-like arpeggios. At figure 6, the oboe Motive C solo stands out against the other textures, although the arpeggiating harps cover a wide distance in their ascending wave sequences. The instruction *Cédez un peu* also aids the yielding, mysterious tones of the ‘erotic’ violin solo that cuts in at the same time,<sup>256</sup> its very high tones bringing it into the spotlight temporarily, before the rather ‘static’ string section that follows in a far more symmetrical accompaniment to the flute solo at figure 7. The time change to 9/8 at bar 67 leads to a rhythmic ‘opening out,’ before a whirlpool of string activity (heralded by the move to G flat major) and a more expansive return of Motive A1. This time its pentatonic pattern ends on an upbeat *crescendo* like the crest of a wave (in comparison to bar 33), as well as containing higher tones that set off a frenzied amount of activity in all regions of the orchestra. The woodwind is given ascending swelling surges until at figure 8 they travel in palpable waves across the page in all parts, ascending and descending in a clear vortex of activity. Meanwhile, the strings produce tempestuous *sforzando* tremolos dropping to a *piano* indication repeatedly, in their own drive onwards. The horns A2 motive also joins this tumultuous peak, adding to the excitement. By these means, Debussy builds the atmosphere of suspense and exhilaration on the way to the euphoria of the huge climax at bar 76. Dynamic peaks swell in every bar through the woodwind and strings in ‘a complex contrapuntal

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<sup>256</sup> See my comments on the nature of the violin solo and its relationship to that of the flute solo at note 264.

texture,<sup>257</sup> of interacting rhythmic layers, until they culminate in three huge *sfz* chords at the pinnacle of the arch or wave, which finally breaks (bar 76).

### Melody and Harmony

The flutes and clarinets herald the move to the first main motive at bars 33-4. This is a bright pentatonic wave pattern that cascades downwards to a tied A/E fifth before taking the same route upwards and then falling again but this time broadening out to higher quavers. It appears to be an answer to the rising crotchet figures of bars 27-30, in effect answering their questing nature. Trezise refers to these initial bars as an ‘elaborate polyphony of accompanimental figures,’<sup>258</sup> the second violins’ undulating chords that centre upon B flat and E flat overriding D flat harmonies. At bars 35-6, the principal theme is taken up by the four horns as the acoustic tones of Motive A2, a derivative of A, which appears as the climactic three *sforzando* chords of bar 76 (fig. 5), at the eventual climax of the movement. The theme has both a serene expansiveness and an insinuating quality that impacts upon the ear of the listener, forming a continuous wave whilst the cellos continue their lulling insistence beneath. Meanwhile the harps seek to reinforce a D flat harmony from bar 32, descending in open sweeping gestures until bar 41, when the woodwind combine forces in an exposition of thematic grandeur, in a gradual *crescendo* to *mf*. Although the harmonies Debussy uses reflect a somewhat ‘nebulous quality’ in this section, based upon acoustic and pentatonic scales, as Trezise comments, ‘the overriding impression is of an inexorable surge founded upon three layers of semiquaver or semiquaver-triplet figures,’<sup>259</sup> that continue to spread outwards into other motivic areas.<sup>260</sup>

The acoustic scale resurfaces, relevant to Debussy’s use of pentatonicism in this section, although it is anchored by the tonic D flat pedal in the bass, thus forming no tonal threat. The initial woodwind theme contrasts with the ‘long-

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<sup>257</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer* p. 57.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>260</sup> Debussy’s enthusiasm for the textural complexities of gamelan music, which had a great influence upon him at the 1889 Paris Exhibition, can be seen in the multi-layered effects of these bars, – the pentatonic figures of the woodwind operating in consecutive fifths, the *glissandos* and arpeggiating harp parts tumbling in waves, the rippling strings and acoustic octave horns presenting the main theme in unison from figure 3.

breathed horn motif' of bars 35-7, which Trezise believes to be a distant relative of the first cyclic motif at figure 1. To the ear, 'slight parallels between the motifs account for the uncanny feeling that the horn motif is at once familiar and unfamiliar, as so often happens in *La Mer*.<sup>261</sup> Mark DeVoto refers to the elongated motive's three-note cell, which he discerns 'is prominent,' as 'a haunting, even unearthly sound that is just one of the many remarkable timbral events in *La mer*.'<sup>262</sup> The continuation of D flat major harmony does, he believes, set the stage for another version of Barraqué's '*forme ouverte*' – analogous to the essence of Impressionist paintings, which contain an 'unboundedness,' – going beyond the picture frame that is a mere arbitrary limit, and permeating the atmosphere. Following this, the earlier pentatonic motive reappears in the woodwind, carrying the piece onwards with alternations of instrument and texture, and introducing new elements in an oboe, harp and cello motive, referred to as A3 at bar 43. The C flat that had been added to the pentatonic texture (figure 3) reappears at bar 43, with the oboe melody, thus indicating the possibility of a departure to A flat minor, which is established in the bass at bar 47, before further forays into C flat (enharmonic B) harmonies. This escalation of ideas builds waves of sound which continue to shape the ascending arch, until 'short anacrusic gestures,' such as that of the clarinet and bassoons in bar 46, 'begin to appear that are born out of the kinetic energy of the one-bar exchanges.'<sup>263</sup> Despite their voice-leading capacity and driving of the music upwards, however, the effect is limited by the appearance of a new motive at bar 47, which appears to have no relationship to either A or X. The previous bar ends on a driving upbeat operating against an anacrusis in the oboe and viola parts, but the new figure at bar 47 appears to cut in with an arabesque-type figure as a totally new voice. Indeed, 'A sensuous flute melody in semiquaver triplets languorously recalls *Sheherazade*'s erotically-charged

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<sup>261</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p 56. In a further reading, Mark DeVoto terms 'the assertion of a root-position D flat major (as) one of the most important pillars of the entire work,' establishing a tonally definite First Principal Section, but which 'vanishes as a significant gravitating tonic... when it changes to B flat major' at bar 83, being 'projected through pentatonic harmony' and not returning to a true five-flat version until the Interlude at bar 122. The upper parallel fifths melody at bars 33-34 is, he notes, also derived from the foregoing bass accompaniment, where the fifth contracts to a third, in DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No. 4*, p.149.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid, p. 150.

<sup>263</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 56.

violin solo,<sup>264</sup> insinuating itself into the subconscious in a similar way. The addition of a fuller chordal accompaniment across the entire strings and harp sections containing dissonant harmonies is in a sense ‘static’ against the questing flute theme, which is expanded with variation. On reaching bar 51 we have the reintroduction of the ‘anacrusic figure’ from bar 46, inducing an energy and excitement that propels the piece forwards again and heralds the ascent to the climax with the reintroduction of the principal theme again. By this point, there is no trace of the D flat major harmony, but rather an F in the bass, which when it moves to F flat at bar 57, (enharmonic E), becomes a clear indicator of A flat minor again, against the untransposed horn motif, lending a mercurial, shifting atmosphere to the section.

At figure 6, (bar 59), a slight giving way or yielding in the tempo highlights the melancholy sound of the oboe, in a stabilized A flat minor, which is accompanied by a sensuous and erotic violin solo taking up the mood of the flute as it reaches upwards. This trajectory is echoed by the harps in an ascending arpeggiating wave. The oboe motive, C, clearly follows a rippling wave pattern, sounding mysterious and gripping in its solemnity.<sup>265</sup> Trezise identifies this development as ‘the centre of the arch and a moment of reflection, a foil to the reckless intensity of the surrounding music.’<sup>266</sup> The flute arabesque motive is repeated at bar 64 with slightly different tones – a minor 3<sup>rd</sup> lower and accompanied by a less dissonant harmony, (A flat and C flat acting as central components to diminished 7<sup>th</sup> harmony) – before a bar with 9/8 key signature both signifies an end to this with shifting harmonies, and the beginning of motive A1 again, all the time building dynamically.

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<sup>264</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer* p. 56. The tender, sensuously winding violin solo from Rimsky-Korsakov represents the theme of *Scheherazade*, linking all four movements in this story. As a new wife from the harem, she avoids her demise by telling exotic and erotic stories based on the fantasy of 1001 Arabian nights. The violin solo is representative of eros and encompasses the water symbolism of the sea themes. In [www. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scherazade\(Rimsky-Korsakov\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scherazade(Rimsky-Korsakov)) and [www. saddlebrookeProgress.com/1108toc.cfm?frame=24](http://www.saddlebrookeProgress.com/1108toc.cfm?frame=24)

<sup>265</sup> Although ‘prominently featured,’ after bar 61 DeVoto points out that it never appears again, although ‘the consequent semiphase, m. 60, chromatically sliding in the flutes and clarinets, reappears cyclically in the third movement in several transformations (especially mm. 203-204), and perhaps in *Jeux de vagues* as well (m. 56), but here it is one of Debussy’s hidden themes, a quiet answer, in the interior of the texture, to the oboe melody of the measure before, and overshadowed timbrally by the solo violin melody.’ In DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No. 4.* p. 151.

<sup>266</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 57.

‘A strong authentic cadence,’ with clear bass indication, establishes the key as G flat major, in ‘significant contrast to A flat minor,’ and ‘a texturally more turbulent version of m. 33.’<sup>267</sup> Flutes, Cor anglais and clarinets express a broadening out, expansive gesture, redolent of the top of the wave with the reintroduction of the A1 motive, in a higher guise (a perfect 4<sup>th</sup> up), and accompanied by the strings in a variety of wave patterns (see the visual effect at bar 68), before the horn motive re-enters at bar 69, at its original pitch, but in new surroundings. As opposed to what Trezise calls their previous ‘pointillist manner,’<sup>268</sup> the horn motive now overlaps the first cyclic motive, X, in the trumpet part, as well as the pentatonic A1 in the woodwind parts, at bar 72 (figure 8) creating a maelstrom of sea effects. After figure 7, which heralds the turning point of the arch form supported by the static ‘measured’ bars of the rest of the orchestra, the music appears to open out into a frenzy of swirling textures and string repetitions that plunge downwards in the bass and generally provide the passage with ‘a strong evocation of a vortex.’<sup>269</sup>

At this juncture, it is perhaps pertinent to mention the movement of the bass to E at figure 8, with acoustic harmony above. Its removal at bar 73 provides the later F of bar 84 (V of B flat major) with the maximum effect after the section of unstable acoustic harmony emanating from the horn motif and the build up to the climax. Thereafter, ‘the move to B flat major in bar 84 is thus the logical linear outcome of the modality of the preceding section.’<sup>270</sup>

Apart from the clear configuration of ternary sequences, at the same time modal pitch collections and the nature of the motives ensure that the mind subconsciously recognizes fragments of sound in a build-up to the climax at bar 76. At a more diminutive level still, I would contend that groups and sequences of notes are built up in a deliberately wave-like orientation, so that they not only sound ‘wave-like,’ with appropriate dynamic markings, but appear so printed on the page. This would accord with Debussy’s known character, since he was meticulous about his scores.<sup>271</sup> This point is particularly significant for

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<sup>267</sup> DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No. 4*, p. 153.

<sup>268</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 57.

<sup>269</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Propotion*, p. 77.

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid*, p. 75.

<sup>271</sup> See Roger Nichols’ collection of reminiscences: ‘Debussy had an ear that was ultrasensitive when someone else was interpreting his music. Once he came to one of the concerts I gave in

performers, because it is in their playing and articulation of specific dynamics and phrase marks that these wave sounds are realized.

### Second Principal Section (Bars 84-121).

#### Rhythm, Register and Expression

A change from compound to simple 4/4 time, and a different, lighter and brisker tempo – ‘Un peu plus mouvementé’ – marks the beginning of this second section. Bar 84 introduces a new musical environment, with the appearance of ‘a striking figure in triple rhythm, suggestive of the heaving motion of the sea,’<sup>272</sup> and yet it is brighter than the preceding section, with a dance-like air. It appears initially in the cello parts in four groups – 16 of the instruments and therefore innovative in scale – entering just before figure 9, being taken up by the woodwind at figure 10. The new articulation of dotted rhythms and a ‘Très rythmé’ instruction (crochet = 104, after the previous 69) given almost straightaway at bar 86 and combined with upward sweeping and soaring, culminates in a climax at figure 11, with the piccolo trilling at *ff*, as the lower parts surge underneath, and the strings swell and subside in their role as eternal waves. The overall impact is one of increasing joyousness and abandon in the music; the skipping dotted rhythms providing continuous small waves whilst the theme plays out against a continual variety of texture, the strings flowing ever onwards whilst ‘diverse motivic material is presented in spurts, building every so often to a short-lived climax from which events rapidly decay and return to the muted dynamics prevalent in this section.’<sup>273</sup> Again, the dynamics and phrasing of these dotted groupings ensures that performers and listeners hear their articulation as lines of dancing waves, particularly in the

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Paris, when I was conducting the orchestra there. We played his *La damoiselle élue*. During the rehearsal an oboe played the wrong note. Debussy said nothing about it; but as soon as the rehearsal was over he came up on the stage and, picking up the score, felt through the pages, not looking at them. Then he put his finger down at random and, with the other hand, pointed to the oboe player.

‘You played *that* wrong,’ he said.

When I looked over his shoulder at the place on which his finger was resting, I found that it was on the very spot where the oboe player had made the mistake. Debussy knew even the feel of the pages of his score.’ E. Robert Schmitz speaking in Nichols, R., *Debussy Remembered* (London, Boston: Faber and Faber Limited, 1992), pp. 169-70.

<sup>272</sup> Cox, D., *Debussy Orchestral music: BBC Publications*, p. 28.

<sup>273</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p 55.

jaunty ‘au Mouvt’ section from figure 10. Ascending ostinatos in the strings from bar 100, building with continual crescendos, augment the mounting climax which is intensified by a movement to 12/8 timing for the next nine bars. As the horns also build up to figure 11 the strings subside downwards in cascades of sound, before resuming their *ff* wave patterns from this point, in jaunty abandon. Their undulating form through bars 105-121 is visually arresting on the page, the bass parts moving in opposition directionally to the violins and violas. The cello motive of quaver/dotted quaver/semiquaver allows the rhythms to oscillate with what Trezise calls ‘the physical impact of a boat rocking from side to side,’<sup>274</sup> especially as the configuration of the notes moves in an arpeggio-type figure and at very high register in the first violin part. The cymbals are also reintroduced in bars 100-102 to heighten the atmosphere of the strings’ scale passages, and gauge the mounting intensity up to bar 105, where an *ff crescendo* and trilling piccolo plays out across the new variation. Descending rolls of arpeggios in the harp parts from bars 105-108 join them, cascading into nothingness by bar 107 when the momentum of the piece gradually drains away, despite the continuous rolling waves of the string triplet theme. At figure 12, Motive X reappears in the woodwind and brass sections, allied to chromatically unstable tonalities, before bar 121 sees a return to the whole tone opening of *La mer* and a much calmer atmosphere.

### Melody and Harmony

Debussy uses a tritone to B flat major (from the E at figure 8) with a new key signature to introduce the second principal section, which is largely strophic in character (an additive method whereby a piece of music is elaborated upon). Immediately, we are conscious of ‘a bold new beginning in every sense.’<sup>275</sup> The atmosphere and perception of the movement is completely altered, by a tonal change to B flat major, – ‘with little or no perceptible connection from before... (it) is one of the biggest surprises of *La mer*’<sup>276</sup> – signalling a much brighter and euphoric feel to the music. With the move to bass F (V) at bar 84, another contrasting theme to the horn one, Motive D

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<sup>274</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 58.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid*, p. 57.

<sup>276</sup> DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No. 4*, p. 154.

(figure 9) appears across all the string parts, the major key adding to the joyous feel of the dancing rhythms. (Bar 87 contains the scale of B flat major in the cello part, finishing on the C supertonic).

As Motive D is picked up by the flute part 'En animant' the bass moves towards bars 95-7, where C major appears, identified by Trezise as the 'latent tonic,' (and by DeVoto as according the supertonic 'special emphasis'<sup>277</sup>). It provides a new peak of intensity, creating another wave of Debussy's 'floating' harmonies, after the maximum impact also given to the bass F, the dominant. A subsequent variation on the cello theme is presented at bar 98, when the triplet motif is introduced across the woodwind section, bolstered by the violins and cello *sfz* on the dominant again.

Bar 109 juxtaposes a new tonal focus on the piece, with the introduction of whole-tone arpeggios – C sharp at bar 109 and C at bar 110, after the relatively stable C-B flat focus. As the tonality merges into a 'harmonic mist'<sup>278</sup> at figure 12, unstable A flat /B flat violin and flute harmonies accompany the B flat of the cor anglais. This is a version of the original cyclic motif (X), also reintroduced into the trumpet part. Throughout this section to bar 120, the strings maintain a rocking triplet version of the cello theme in disturbing harmonies, as varying fragments of other figures appear in the woodwind. Trezise points out that 'the rising tritone harmony that grows out of the whole-tone harmony is only loosely connected with previous motifs; yet it does not sound unfamiliar (perhaps because the filled-in fourth forms part of the first cyclic motif)',<sup>279</sup> and it is prevalent elsewhere in various guises. At bar 115, the bass again takes up the F flat/enharmonically E figure, and after a short passage 'Presque lent' reduces the tempo to a becalmed mood as harmonic and motivic elements are dispersed. Bar 121 seeing a return to the opening tonality, and a transition to the home key of D flat major in bar 122. This bar also incorporates the same tritone, this time falling.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No. 4*, p. 154.

<sup>278</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 58.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58.

<sup>280</sup> DeVoto notes that the section 'dies away, with little or no perception of a cadence, very much like the vanishing ending of *Nuages*, and with no inkling that anything is to follow. The dramatic suspense results from the prolonged uncertainty of whether this is a premature ending, or whether anything can indeed continue at all,' in DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No.4*, pp. 153-4. Also note that

### Transition or Interlude (Bars 122-131).

#### Rhythm, Register and Expression

The transition carries over the lingering whole tone harmonies of the preceding passage, but this 6/4 section exudes an inscrutable serenity, as the sea appears to be becalmed by the long minim/semibreve rhythms. These enable the cor anglais and violas to transform what has gone before into the build up that concludes the movement. Their notes only indicate the slightest swell, topped by the flute whole tones, before we reach the Coda. Only the violins inhabit the upper region of the register, so that their dissonances permeate the atmosphere.

#### Melody and Harmony

With a change to D flat major once again, we are returned to the equilibrium first established at bar 31 and the drive towards the next wave which will come in *Jeux de vagues*, whose opening key is C# minor (enharmonically D flat major). An expressive and sustained passage for the cor anglais and two cellos playing in unison beneath follows, with the bass pedal on A flat appearing on the surface to function as the dominant, but in reality Debussy uses it in a highly untraditional way, to ‘transform’ rather than ‘progress’ his sections, one to another. Whilst the pedal appears stable, the ‘upper voices retain a complex web of dissonances, with the F natural, an upper thirteenth, suspended from the preceding whole-tone harmony. The C natural, a tenth above the bass, is actually like an appoggiatura to the B flat that is already the ninth of this complex sonority,’<sup>281</sup> posits De Voto. When this brief section expires at bars 130-131, Debussy uses the A flat to transform the passage into the G flat triad, ‘shifting pitches by a tone or a semitone...Debussy’s alchemy changes what looks like a dominant-subdominant progression in D flat major...into a harmonic example of ‘vegetative circulation.’<sup>282</sup> By not resolving any of the

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Debussy took out one bar here in the revised score of 1909, so that it became a single bar 83 in later editions.

<sup>281</sup> DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No.4*, p. 155.

<sup>282</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer* p. 59. See also p. 52, where Trezise elucidates Herbert Eimert’s influential essay in which he claims Debussy as a precursor of post-war electro-acoustic music as it was practised in Cologne in the 1950’s. In it he suggests ‘Debussy’s handling of form is a withdrawal,’ and that this ‘new organic coherence, that of flowing form,’ presents ‘no intensification or return of forms.’ Trezise refutes this, however, discerning that *La mer*, for

harmonies contained at the end of the Interlude, Debussy ensures that the dissonances are somehow present in the ether, awaiting their moment,' fog over the calm sea...in subtly smoothed-out'<sup>283</sup> mysterious whole-tones, whilst all momentum has abated and tonal impetus neutralized. The sea remains almost dormant before the Coda.

### Coda (Bars 132-141)

#### Rhythm, Register and Expression

The solemn and sustained chordal passage that now ensues – *pp, mais très soutenu*, at 'Très lent, quaver = 80' in a new time signature of 4/4, (a reversion to that of bar 6 and bar 84 where it introduced the triplet rhythm and completed the climax of bar 76) – possesses a power 'suggestive of awe and intensity.'<sup>284</sup> Beginning in the bassoons and horns, it progresses to the might of the trombones at bar 133, accompanied by a continuously 'trilling' cymbal and a clear wave pattern in the harp line, ascending and descending repetitively in a rolling action. The fact that the cymbal is marked unusually with a trill indicates its marked undulations against the chordal theme, perhaps to denote the reverberating vibrations of the ocean as the sun extends to a mid-day height.

Treize views this 'chorale,'<sup>285</sup> Motive E, as the 'call of the deep;' it 'symbolises the midday sun bursting through the sea mist after the stillness and passivity of the interlude.'<sup>286</sup> Rhythmic similarities to the first cyclic Motive X are apparent, yet Debussy's use of the woodwind's pentatonic motive from the first principal section (Motive A1 at bars 33-4) and a version of the first motive

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example, contains motives that are 'constantly propagated by derivation from earlier motifs, and repetition becomes increasingly important as the work proceeds.' He does concede that *Jeux de vagues*, the second movement, exhibits 'an unprecedented level of exposition of new material.... hint(ing) suggestively at Eimert's 'vegetative circulation of the form.'

<sup>283</sup> DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No.4*, p. 156.

<sup>284</sup> Cox, D., *Debussy Orchestral music: BBC Publications*, p. 29.

<sup>285</sup> Bar 132 is called the 'midi' by Barraqué, its serene G flat major whole-tones evoking a sonorous passage, which DeVoto believes is analogous to a 'Nietzschian poetic conception; – 'one can see in it an allusion to a continued progression that culminates, with the entrance of the brass in the final section, in a complete dislocation from the universe that has preceded it. The brilliance of noon joins in an apotheosis.' DeVoto speculates that the 'chorale' is so named probably because of the 'majestic harmony, mostly in triads, scored for unmated bass.' In DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No. 4*, p. 156.

<sup>286</sup> Treize, S., *Debussy, La Mer* p. 59

at bars 6-9, resist any easy classification. The frenetic harp arpeggios building in fives throughout bars 132-134, followed by their scale passages at bars 135-6 do, however, augment the atmosphere to that of a maelstrom of swirling activity and exhilaration, enabling the listener's imagination to feel the sights and sounds of the sea. The dynamics begin to build in bar 134 and swell continually throughout bars 135-141, from *ff* and *crescendos* to a resonating *ffz*, before dying away abruptly at *p*. Debussy uses copious dynamic marks to achieve the huge climax at bar 139, before it drops to a whisper again.

### Melody and Harmony

In the bass line the A flat of the Interlude changes to G flat, not just as the 'subdominant,' but employed in a circularity of shifting pitches to evoke the subject matter more truly, in the Debussyan way. This could be said to neutralize most of the tonal momentum towards the tonic chord. Bar 135 sees its return, with strong reiteration of the pentatonic motive, A1, though it overlaps the horns Motive E and swirling harp figures that soar upwards as the movement is brought to a close. New material in the horns, trumpet, trombones and tuba relegate the reprise of the pentatonic A1, in Howat's view, to an accompanying role, but it is perpetuated over bars 135-137 almost to the end in a theme which seems to sum up the entire movement, and is played by the upper four woodwind parts. The movement is brought to a close alongside a broad, tidal 3-part wave sequence of Motif X. The mix of sounds reverberate against one another in 'a striking example of Debussy's use of exposition right up to the final moments of the movement,'<sup>287</sup> exemplifying his ability to produce both unity and open-endedness within the composition.

The movement completes on a D flat major triad, which has gradually emerged to form the final flourish. Even the tonic key's return here is ambiguous, however, as B flat remains aloft the final chord for two beats, signalling a somewhat tenuous end to '*De l'aube à midi sur la mer*,' doubtless because two movements are to follow, and Debussy had no intention that any of its parts be performed separately. Trezise also posits the view, clearly true, that the assertiveness of the E flat /D flat/B flat motivic gesture of bar 139 parallels

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<sup>287</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p.59.

the C sharp/B/G sharp dynamic climax at bar 76 – the zenith of the first principal section – and derives its cadential power from this source, rather than providing an end in itself. The significance of the B flat sixth is taken up again in the following movements, and only in the ‘*Dialogue du vent et de la mer*’ is the D flat major triad subsequently established as the tonic harmony, in effect the tonal equilibrium that holds the entire piece together as other tonal/modal harmonies swirl around Debussy’s accomplishment of this water piece.

### Conclusion

Tonally, the piece begins and ends in D flat major, with coherent modulations in between – the C flat (with A flat minor / G flat major key suggestions) being clearly related to the B major introduction. It is difficult to deny Barraqué’s assertion that *La mer* exhibits both exposition and development processes *simultaneously*, even if this is difficult to comprehend in classical analytical terms.<sup>288</sup> In this sense, *De l’aube a midi sur la mer* is a narrative, portraying the sea over a portion of time, and redolent in this way of an Impressionist painting taking a temporal ‘snapshot’ but extending far beyond its frame. The aforementioned arch forms can be intuited as wave forms that are impelled by huge dynamic swells, boosted by continually undulating and curving figures across the orchestra. That the listener hears these as waves of sound in a direct correspondence with the sea, is a result of Debussy’s intricate scoring of dynamics, expression and phrasing marks, as well as his manipulation of time and space. The dynamic trajectory which builds to a sharply focused climax at bar 76 suggesting the ascent of the sun to its peak, is built up by the repetition of wave-like motives such as the cyclic Motive X and Motive A1 – the pentatonic swell and subsidence together with rippling string textures, cascading harp arpeggios, tremolo and glissando undulations and arabesques demonstrating the composer’s use of curving lines as expounded by Charles Henry to evoke a mood or feeling. The pentatonicism is a vehicle for Debussy’s sense of ‘mystery’ with its perceived ‘oriental’ overtones and its allusion to the

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<sup>288</sup> As DeVoto expounds, ‘one feels that thematic material is explicated, but it is the tonality that develops – at the same time,’ in DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No.4*, p. 158.

sun rising in the east at the very beginning of the piece. Insinuating rhythm patterns such as the cellos theme from bar 32 onwards help to drive the music forwards in wave-type patterns, as does the change to a 6/8 time signature the bar before. The urgent configuration of notes on the stave as we approach figures 4-6 and the drive forwards to bar 76 present us with a swirling eddy of notes, a frenzy of churning textures with rhythmic diversity and changes in tonality. These rhythmic contretemps increase the overall propulsion towards the climax. The Motive B arabesque figure at 7 (perpetuating that of bars 47-50) takes centre stage, aiding the ‘opening out’ of the music into a wider, euphoric sense of joy as we reach the crest of a huge dynamic wave. Registral considerations such as the very high string parts at figure 5 for the start of their ‘au Mouvt.’ section and their oscillating patterns at bar 68 help to build intensity towards the first climax, together with the dynamics instructions provided at several points in every bar from this point until we reach the *sforzando* chords of bar 76, the apex of the movement. All build in patterns of waves and multiple lines that suggest a self-perpetuating, organic flow through the material in the way that Herbert Eimert suggested, even though we are aware of the devices that Debussy used to create such coherence. We do not ‘hear the joins’, however. As the dynamics build again at bar 84, heralding a brightness signified by the tonal release and dancing dotted triplet rhythm in the strings, we are transported to a sensation of the sun high overhead. The peak of musical intensity therefore occurs at the highest dynamic wave of sound over these bars – the synthesis of these coming as the sun reaches its zenith. It is ostensibly the ‘new beginning’ of a new day, Motive D ‘penetrating to the centre of the soul.’<sup>289</sup>

By figure 12 it is Motive X, the cyclic theme, which dominates the foreground until the ‘chorale’ (Motive E) arrives at figure 14 invoking feelings of homecoming in the listener, perhaps substantiated by the initial triplet rhythm.<sup>290</sup> These returns or elements of them are the means by which the listener hears or intuits overall waves of sound, building in a never-ending

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<sup>289</sup> See this quote from Plato in ‘The “Ethics” and the “Metaphysics” of Music’ in Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, p. 1, and Arnold I. Davidson’s ‘The *Charme* of Jankélévitch’ who speaks of the ‘transformational force’ of *charme*, in Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, pp. vii-xii.

<sup>290</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 59.

continuum. It is almost as if the waves have catapulted the piece to its final climax, yet it has a clear sense of the unfinished. It is the motives – sometimes operating in a solo capacity as in the flute arabesques, sometimes superimposed as with the horn’s Motive E at bar 135 – that lead one figure into another throughout the piece, as both binding and transformative elements in *La mer’s* art of Becoming.<sup>291</sup> This ‘quality of temporal fluidity,’ the ‘timeless Now,’<sup>292</sup> is what aids the piece’s sense of continuity and together with its final plagal cadence impels its forward motion into *Jeux de Vagues*.

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<sup>291</sup> The continual is ‘that which prolongs previous sounds into the next ones, and, in realizing the fusion of past and present, the past’s survival or resonance within the present, in a word, creates the immanence that we call “Becoming,” in Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, p. 44.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 94-5.

## Movement II: *Jeux de vagues*

This movement is aptly named *Jeux de vagues* – Games of the waves – since it evokes both their ephemeral and yet permanent dualities so well, in what could be termed a free-wave form. The listener is lured into the sound of their perpetual play, to bask in profuse musical impressions suggestive of light shimmering on water, or as David Cox remarks, ‘to relax and allow the varied and delicate patterns of exhilarating sounds to produce their immediate effect.’<sup>293</sup>

Analysts have expressed varying views on Debussy’s intentions and the conception of this second movement. It is certainly more intricate and complex than *La mer*’s outer sections, and could be said to represent ‘a kind of scherzo form,’ encompassing ‘textures which change and overlap too quickly for development in the traditional sense and therefore become fragmented, decorative, moment-to-moment in a way that is new and prophetic.’<sup>294</sup> Barraqué’s ‘open-form’ and Eimert’s ‘vegetative circulation’ come to mind. Lines weave in multiple short bursts among sections that almost have a ‘Hollywoodesque’<sup>295</sup> feel to them in their chordal sounds, as ‘waves of every colour and mood’ joust and dance ‘in a capricious sport of wind and spray.’<sup>296</sup> In addition, Debussy’s innovative use of *timbre* as a vital component of his composition marks his talent out as an ‘extraordinary genius that he was able to unify, to bind together consistently, the extremely diverse textures and timbres, the ever-changing tonalities...’<sup>297</sup> which makes the movement a coherent whole.

Debussy’s own words on the subject succinctly demonstrate his quest for spontaneity and drive towards ‘the distinctive atmosphere...’ by means of

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<sup>293</sup> Cox, D., *Debussy Orchestral music: BBC Publications*, p. 29.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid, p. 29.

<sup>295</sup> Some chordal sections, such as that in the horns at figure 22, seem to be predictive of this future style. DeVoto remarks that ‘there is irony, too, in the role of *La mer* as the most important forerunner of the Hollywood style three decades later,’ in DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No.4*, p. 160.

<sup>296</sup> Thompson, O., *Debussy Man And Artist*, p. 325. He takes a very poetic line, whilst agreeing that this is a scherzo ‘in a contrastive sense.’ He maintains that ‘About all is an aura of the remote and unreal. This is a world of sheer fantasy, of strange visions and eerie voices, a mirage of sight and equally a mirage of sound. On the sea’s vast stage is presented a trancelike phantasmagoria so evanescent and fugitive that it leaves behind only the vagueness of a dream.’

<sup>297</sup> Cox, D., *Debussy Orchestral music: BBC Publications*, p. 29.

‘delicacy rather than blatancy, allusiveness rather than explicitness,’<sup>298</sup> when he declares in April 1902:

I wanted from music a freedom which it possesses perhaps to a greater degree than any other art, not being tied to a more or less exact reproduction of Nature but to the mysterious correspondences between Nature and Imagination.<sup>299</sup>

Many later composers have been influenced by Debussy’s indefinable appeal, the elusiveness of his ‘atmospheric’ impressions defining a new approach to musical form.<sup>300</sup> Richard Parks also refers to a ‘quality of impulsiveness in Debussy’s music,’ which ‘is manifest in dramatic changes in the sensation of motion from moment to moment as the music halts suddenly, veers off in some unexpected direction, stumbling here, gliding there.’<sup>301</sup> We can see this in the sudden time changes of *De l’aube*, for example, which help to drive the music forwards and imitate the sudden transference of energy in the direction and nature of the waves, driven by capricious winds and currents. This impulsiveness accords with the improvisatory character of Debussy’s music, where ‘an exquisite orderliness is often disrupted by moments of delicious chaos.’<sup>302</sup> On occasions, the absence of clear metric patterns contribute to an impression of circularity and other worldliness, – as if the music emerges out of the ether, from nowhere. Debussy achieves this nebulous quality by playing with the metre, obscuring it by ‘accents, articulations, and melodic-harmonic patterns whose durations do not coincide with those of the metric units – either

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<sup>298</sup> Whittall, A., *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century*, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 17.

<sup>299</sup> Cited by Roger Nichols, ‘Debussy,’ *The New Grove*, ed. S. Sadie (London, 1980), v. 307, in *ibid*, p. 17.

<sup>300</sup> Pierre Boulez, for example, states that ‘what interested me in Debussy was not his vocabulary itself but its flexibility, a certain immediacy of invention, and precisely the local indiscipline in relation to the overall discipline,’ and Arnold Whittall remarks that ‘Debussy’s balance between old and new...’ led him to become ‘a seminal example of progressive thought’ in the years that have followed, since ‘his dialogue with the past did not involve rejection of the past,’ both in Whittall, A., *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 18-19. Richard Parks also comments on the way this flexibility was able to promote a radical attitude to the established forms and textures of music at the time: ‘He subordinates the customary role of continuity as a means of grouping like events into coherent entities to that of discontinuity, as a means of separating disparate events: discontinuity defines formal units from without, by determining their boundaries,’ in Richard S. Parks, *The Music of Claude Debussy* (New Haven, 1989), p. 204, in *ibid*, p. 18.

<sup>301</sup> Parks, Richard S., ‘Structure and performance: Metric and Phrase Ambiguities in the Three Chamber Sonatas,’ in *Debussy in Performance*, Ed. by Briscoe, J. R., ch. 10, p. 193.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid*, ch. 10, p. 193.

measures or beats.<sup>303</sup> His use of overlapping devices will be outlined in the following analysis, as an apparatus for maintaining both the momentum of *Jeux de vagues* and its sense of tension through to bar 261, these strategies becoming typical Debussyan characteristics as the years passed.<sup>304</sup>

Douglass Green suggests that we ‘abandon the traditional concepts of statement, development, and restatement (and listen) to the work as a coherent flow of short moments merging from one to the next.’<sup>305</sup> Laurence Berman also expressed a similar viewpoint, suggesting that the run up to the climax of *Jeux de vagues* sets ‘up an alternation of impediments and forward impulses, before the final forward sweep towards 38 gets properly underway.’<sup>306</sup> In other words, the movement becomes self-generating by Debussy’s use of a myriad of devices, which overlap and constantly build towards the huge dynamic peak of figure 38.

Both the tonal stability of *Jeux de vagues* and the nature of the movement’s themes are illusory; any ‘clearly defined formal centres’ or tonal definition in a traditional sense being compromised by thematic returns that follow many different routes. The E major first established at figure 19 is not finally stabilised until the Coda, ‘and then only at the movement’s final cadence at figure 41.’<sup>307</sup> The fragmentary character of *Jeux*’s numerous small sections thus become an ‘enigmatic mixture of open-ended and closed formal aspects...a type of architectural counterpoint’<sup>308</sup> that further point to the dualities and seemingly irreconcilable disparities that analysts have attempted to explain in the piece. Mark DeVoto comments that ‘more than any other composer before him, Debussy went to the limit of sharp-key notation,’ using ‘the seven-sharp

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<sup>303</sup> Parks, Richard S., ‘Structure and performance: Metric and Phrase Ambiguities in the Three Chamber Sonatas,’ in *Debussy in Performance*, Ed. by Briscoe, J. R., ch.10, p. 223.

<sup>304</sup> Parks notes that these qualities were common in the later works of many composers such as Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Brahms, Wagner, Franck and Mahler. They would ‘maintain a constant tension and sense of momentum throughout by blurring phrase boundaries and occasionally confounding notated metric schemes.’ This was a feature Debussy shared with both his antecedents and contemporaries, in spite of the originality of his own compositional language. In Notes to Parks, Richard S., ‘Structure and performance: Metric and Phrase Ambiguities in the Three Chamber Sonatas,’ in *Debussy in Performance*, Ed. by Briscoe, James R., pp. 224 and 281.

<sup>305</sup> These words are from an unpublished paper recalled by Rolf, ‘Debussy’s *La mer*, p. 157, in Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, pp. 61 and 102.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid*, p. 61.

<sup>307</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 110.

<sup>308</sup> Howat’s ‘overlapping binary system’ considers the two formal layers of motivic/ thematic and tonal repetition, operating in a ‘disjunction’ with one another at Fig. 9.1, in *ibid*, p. 111.

signature in ten different works.<sup>309</sup> In the case of *La mer*, it is centred on D flat major (C#) from sunrise in the first movement until the middle and end of the third, yet the composer chooses to use seven sharps rather than five flats for the foregoing C# major section, (bar 18), a key which has historically been the rarest of key signatures due to both its visual and practical demands.<sup>310</sup> In view of the music's mood at this stage, it may be Debussy felt the key lent itself to an evocation of unstable and supernatural tonalities. DeVoto mentions that Debussy may have attached mystical or astrological connotations to sharp notation, 'with the seven sharps corresponding to the seven stars of the Pleiades.'<sup>311</sup> Regarding the remainder, the tonality 'ranges furiously over the entire chromatic spectrum, but from bar 163 to the end, representing more than a third of *Jeux de vagues*, the signature remains with four sharps, with much fluctuation between E major, C sharp minor, and C sharp major, concluding on an E-major triad with added sixth C sharp, a clear echo, in the absolute-pitch sense, of *Faune*.'<sup>312</sup>

If we look at a visual representation of the tonal themes for *Jeux de vagues*, (Appendix V), taking the key of D flat as *La mer*'s tonal equilibrium (or in another sense the sea's horizon), we can see that from a C# minor (D flat) beginning, the tonal values hover around this point as 'floating' tonalities until the key becomes a more determined E major at figure 19. From this point, until A major is reached at figure 25, and the E tonality is (re-) established at figure 33, a huge wave is formed, that in appearance is not indistinct from the Hokusai wave on the original cover for *La mer*. Perhaps it is not entirely coincidental that this should be so, given Debussy's visual acuity and his intuitive instincts.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>309</sup> DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No. 4*, p. 159.

<sup>310</sup> For a full account of the difficulties encountered in the use of C sharp major, see DeVoto's account in *ibid*, pp. 158-159.

<sup>311</sup> Apparently the *Blèssed Damozel* had 'trois lys a la main, / et sept étoiles dans les cheveux,' in notes to 'Tonalties of darkness and light,' in *ibid*, p. 159.

<sup>312</sup> According to DeVoto, not only are their endings tonally similar, but the D flat major / C sharp minor and E major tonalities of *La mer* are contained in 'identical tonal outlines' in *Faune*, but are turned 'inside out' and produced on a much larger scale in the 'symphony', in *ibid*, p. 160.

<sup>313</sup> A discussion of Debussy's knowledge and use of proportional schemes, particularly Golden Section in his music, and whether this was by conscious design or 'highly refined subconscious instinct' is contained in Roy Howat's book, *Debussy in Proportion*, Ch. 1, pp. 1-10.

Debussy's 'language of extended flexibility' – created using modal, whole-tone, diatonic 'white-note' and even octatonic areas<sup>314</sup> – was particularly useful for *Jeux de vagues* in its interplay of themes and motives. It could extend the range of possibilities far beyond that of earlier composers. The tonalities of darkness and light, for example, which had been utilized in *Pelléas and Mélisande*, could now be employed in orchestral motives to depict the moods of the vast ocean. The 'overlapping' device identified by Howat, could be used extensively by the composer to heighten the textural ambiguities of consecutive musical segments, so that the 'rhythmic and orchestral texture of the new segment (would) enter before the phrase of the previous one has finished.'<sup>315</sup> Examples of this are at bar 8, where *staccato* semiquavers in the trumpet part anticipate the new rhythm after figure 16, and then at figure 21, where it is difficult to determine whether the new segment begins at this juncture, or two bars later, and at figure 33, where violin trills precede the new portion by ten bars, but continue after it by another eight. Figure 29 also features a harp ostinato on A sharp leading into and over it, whilst the new scale theme in the flute does not begin until bar 134. These 'smooth transitions' enabling a constant flow of waves to propel the piece onwards, are even more emphasized because of the way Debussy contrasts the 'subsequent sharp break(s) ... which stand out in relief,' at figures 25 and 26.<sup>316</sup>

If my graph of the dynamic wave patterns for *Jeux de vagues* is examined, it is immediately apparent that it contains many dynamic highlights that are sharply focussed until the last two examples at figures 32 and 38, where the climaxes become broader, taking on a more fundamental role in the drive towards the movement's conclusion, in comparison to the earlier highlights of the more 'surface' dynamics.<sup>317</sup> In contrast to the graph for *De l'aube*,

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<sup>314</sup> Nichols, R., and Langham Smith, R., *Claude Debussy: Pelléas et Mélisande* Cambridge Opera Handbooks (Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 85.

<sup>315</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 112.

<sup>316</sup> The former heralds the point where the themes start to return, according to Howat, whilst 26 appears to reiterate their return but in a different order. He also believes that the dynamic sequences affect the character of these segments, – that those resulting in climactic culminations lead to a greater sense of 'renewal' and thus impel the surge forwards. In this sense, Howat notes, 'the movement also breathes in a series of dynamic paragraphs,' despite 25 and 26 which 'jump the gun,' – 25 by cutting in 'to prevent an incipient culmination, and 26 conversely supplies one without any preparation,' in *ibid*, p. 112.

<sup>317</sup> See Howat's argument for this, using Schenkerian terms, in *ibid*, p. 113.

(Appendix IV), which charts the slow rise of the sun over a given time span, my sample for *Jeux de vagues* demonstrates multiple dynamic waves that feature peaks of intense drama, that run concomitant with the dramatic emphasis of the piece.

Debussy's use of the tritone motive as a self-generating impetus within *Jeux de vagues* is *immediately* noticeable on a first listening, alongside the peculiarly mesmeric whole-tone *glissandos* of the harps. These evocative tones immediately conjure up the feelings of waves and the sea. Pierre Boulez noted the innovative line of Debussyan form and its overlapping devices in enabling the continuous line to perpetually regenerate: 'A component section of a theme is defined as another is suggested; another phrase is added and we have the beginnings of a form. More material is added and we have a structure.'<sup>318</sup> It is in the *way* these components are melded together that brings us the innovative opus of Debussy.

In view of *Jeux de vagues*' fragmentary nature during its earlier sections, my analysis will fall into the following parts, delineated mainly by motivic content and returns:

<u>Part I Introduction</u>	<u>Part II</u>	<u>Part III</u>	<u>Part IV Coda</u>
Bars 1-8	Bars 36-47	Bars 163-218	Bars 219-261
Bars 9-27	Bars 48-59		
Bars 28-35	Bars 60-71		
	Bars 72-81		
	Bars 82-91		
	Bars 92-103		
	Bars 104-117		
	Bars 118-123		
	Bars 124-146		
	Bars 147-162		

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<sup>318</sup> Cox, D., *Debussy Orchestral music: BBC Publications*, p. 29.

## Synopsis

### Part I

#### Introduction Bars 1-8, 9-27 and 28-35

#### Rhythm, Register and Expression

The movement begins with *piano* string tremolos, above which the woodwind play a sustained chord, and harps and glockenspiel provide ‘delicate splashes of colour,’ after which the flutes and clarinets introduce ‘a sinuous chromatic figure,’<sup>319</sup> which reverberates through both parts in a descending and undulating fashion correspondingly. The harp and string parts in bars 1-4 form huge waves on the staves, clearly illustrating the momentum of the piece, and given extra impetus by the instruction *dans un rythme très souple*, emphasizing their improvisatory quality.

As the strings reverberate, the trumpets produce a bar of rapidly repeated notes that anticipate the new 3/8 rhythm and the introduction of the haunting first principal motive, H, at bars 9-10 in the cor anglais. It follows the two-bar phrases that characterized the opening, and thematically it is linked to the 3/8 change in time signature. The tritone motive elongates from a two-bar phrase into a seven-bar one, building on the triplet theme with attached grace notes at *Animé* dotted crochet = 72, swelling and diminishing in waves of sound. It follows a clear wave-type arabesque until bar 18, where the oboe takes up the melody in the sharpened major key. Again, the arabesque trajectory is a clearly undulating one, and accompanied by cello *glissandos*, which I determine as vertical arpeggios/waves, along with the harp figures and glockenspiels operating together in short phrases as waves at bars 19-22. At bar 16, however, the cor anglais and flutes consisting of triplet-orientated semiquavers merge in counter rhythmic timings to each other, (9 semiquavers against 6) – a common feature of Debussy’s which he frequently used in his piano music, (such as the early 1<sup>st</sup> Arabesque), and which he now juxtaposes instrumentally in *Jeux de vagues*. The mysterious nature of this device introduces indeterminate and fluctuating boundaries, together with the heterophony of bars 16-17.

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<sup>319</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 61.

The short section from bars 28-35 (figures 18-19) contains excitable wave figures cascading downwards at *forte*, their dotted articulation and semiquaver triplet character forming a noticeable contrast with the next section at Part II.

### Melody and Harmony

Although the key signature is given as C sharp minor, (E major enharmonically), the movement in reality begins in F sharp minor, almost immediately changing to C major at bar 9, and then to C sharp major at bar 18, for a mere 10 measures, before changing back to C major at bar 28 (figure 18). The unpredictable sounds evoke an eerie and mysterious atmosphere, which gives no discernable hint of a tonal centre or motivic direction at this point. Disparate other sonorities and ethereal wisps of unnatural sound elicit a spectral, almost preternatural sensation in the listener. Along with the cancellation of the key signature after bar 27, the effect of the augmented 4<sup>th</sup> tritone again, F-C# is made all the more poignant (bars 9-10). Howat refers to this as Motive H, which remains disassociated from the tonic until the end of the movement (see Motives for *Jeux de vagues* at Appendix V). Thematically, bar 9 introduces the main beginning to the piece, and continues until figure 19, (bar 36), although bars 1-8 may be seen as the introduction in a tonal sense.

The tritone motive elongates from a two-bar phrase into a seven-bar one, building on the triplet theme with attached grace notes – swelling and diminishing in waves of sound to figure 17. Even the cellos operate a sort of vertical wave, repetitively *glissandoing* upwards through C chords. The motive, meanwhile, runs away in an arabesque style phrase, and is joined by the flutes at bar 16, which bring us to C sharp major. Much of the motivic run is then repeated, but it has been transposed by a tritone and now the oboe takes centre stage. A further negation of key signature at bar 28, figure 18, issues in an abrupt dismissal of this idea, with the muted trumpets playing in triplet chords at *fortissimo*. A very exciting character is ushered in, arpeggiating downwards in all the woodwind parts on the dominant ninth, whilst a 3-note horn figure accompanies the trumpets, strings and cor anglais, (still with its tritone motif) which ascend in a mirror image – the upbeat making a stirring contrast of swirling waters, stirred by depth and currents beneath, and falling waves on the surface. The B flat harmony is later taken up as a functional dominant to the

more stable E major section that follows, and ‘becomes increasingly identified as the tonal centre.’<sup>320</sup>

## Part II Bars 36-47 Bars 48-59

### Rhythm, Register and Expression

After the preceding brief climax, a sense of renewal prevails, with the *piano* dynamic. ‘A gently animated passage,’<sup>321</sup> for woodwind and strings ensues – the latter developing motivically from bars 36-43. This is Motive J, which is alluded to in the cello trills of the previous section (bars 31-35), and which is now taken up by the violin parts. Later on, at bars 138 onwards, it is associated with faster tempos. Its repetition and subsequent legato line prevent any break in texture, but the harps (at figure 20) disrupt the tonality in an entirely unpredictable way. Their tonal remoteness and remarkable pitch sounds are matched by their singular appearance in the score, where they are accompanied by *glissando crescendos* angled to match their ascending/descending trajectories in a way that reminds us of the visual aspects of similar figures in *Reflets dans l’eau*. Debussy clearly intended this figure to stand out as a phenomenon that projects its own character on to the piece, wiping clean the way for a different feature to emerge. It is a visual and auditory surge, in effect a huge wave affecting everything around it. Not only is the figure unaccompanied by any other parts, but it is repeated at bars 52-3, before a new chordal theme in the horns does indeed emerge. Beginning at bars 50-51, this is then reasserted in a strong crochet/dotted crochet triplet figure, which ‘will eventually lead to the triumphant lyricism that brings this movement to its glowing climax.’<sup>322</sup>

### Melody and Harmony

Now at 19, the tonic E major is at last established, but undermined immediately within the first chord, which contains C natural (B#). The bass rests on E, but only a limited amount of tonal security exists, as an augmented

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<sup>320</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 63.

<sup>321</sup> Cox, D., *Debussy Orchestral music: BBC Publications*, p. 29.

<sup>322</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer* p. 64.

fifth (on B sharp) alternates with a perfect fifth, and C natural resolves over several bars in a shape resembling the trough of a wave in the woodwind (at bars 38-9 and 42-3 particularly). After a relatively short twelve bars, where the violins appear to be developing a stable melody (Motive J), ‘Debussy decisively pulls the rug out from under us with the harp glissandos at bar 48,’<sup>323</sup> which alternately ascend and descend in scaled passages, again full of whole tones that tie them to reminiscences of the first motive. This has the effect of underlining the whole-tone harmonies in the piece, and tonally cleansing the palette again. The excitement of the phrase and its texture when played by the harps means that it injects a wonderful eeriness to the section. In addition, it stands alone, unaccompanied by other instrumentation, and its surging wave effect has the effect of leading the ear on towards the huge climax at figure 33. With a minimum of action elsewhere, their theme is repeated at bars 52-54, the dynamics swelling to *mf* before dying away again – all possibilities of closure denied.

The bass has moved to B at bar 48, where it resides for the following ten bars, accompanying the whole-tone harmonies, yet it does not fulfil a normal dominant relationship to the tonic E major. Trezise’s view is that the disruption by the harps is so great that ‘the B is heard as a lonely relic of a harmonic order that has yet to define a dominant-tonic relationship,’<sup>324</sup> along traditional lines. The impetus is towards the following motivic action in consequence, which leads to more activity and development rather than building on the previous bars. (The ‘altered’ dominant harmony does, however, make a return in the Coda, leading to the E in a powerful concluding cadence).

## Part II Bars 60-71 Bars 72-91 Bars 92- 103

### Rhythm, Register and Expression

At figure 21, the flutes and clarinets introduce a rapid set of quaver/semiquaver chords, in a sense picking up the horn’s emphatic texture, and according to Howat, providing an ambiguity as to whether the new segment

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<sup>323</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer* p. 63.

<sup>324</sup> In fact, he maintains that the insinuating prevalence of B flat is ‘the more likely dominant’ and that it is of greater syntactical importance,’ in *ibid*, pp. 63-64.

begins here or two bars later. This is an example of the ‘overlapping’ of sections, which impels them forwards in a continuous line, aided by the lighter arpeggiated figures in the descending waves of glockenspiel and harps. Both sets of instruments continue in this vein, right through to figure 22. This section does, however, introduce a timbral change with a new motive, so the previous two bars (60-62) are in a sense an introduction to it. Now the tempo gives way in a ‘Cédez un peu’ marking, as the cor anglais is again given an important theme to play, smoothly and expressively – Motive K, whose long and lyrical phrases are set in relief against the other fast *staccato* woodwind parts, the cascading harps and glockenspiel, and the trilling violins. Berman’s name for this motive was therefore ‘smooth sailing.’<sup>325</sup> However, the motivation for this serene and equable material developing is only temporary. The form of the first four notes is passed around between the horns and strings, but at figure 22, the woodwind suddenly cease their chordal repetition, along with the oboe’s Motive K, leading immediately to a heightened string texture and a conspicuous change of timbre, but all of this ceases at bar 72.

Meanwhile, the dynamics build to a *fortissimo* peak, and an episode of huge excitement in the woodwind, with swirling eddies of falling demisemiquavers ensues, their descent clearly articulated by the phrasing and 6 sets of 4 groups, accompanied by trill undulations in the rest of the woodwind. These ideas spread into the strings again, affecting a dialogue between the two, whilst the horns are juxtaposed in a restraining mode, perhaps to reign in the forward momentum of the ‘smooth sailing’ motive. Almost unnoticed, the clarinet at figure 23 introduces a slightly different motive, L1, marking a slowing down of the proceedings.<sup>326</sup> Perhaps in Debussy’s mind, the slower speed emphasizes the density of the water, provoking greater heights of power and exaggerating their importance, analogous to the pure force of Nature at its most terrifying. Howat too remarks on the ‘slowest stretch of the movement’ corresponding with ‘the highest density of (the) dynamic peaks.’<sup>327</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 64.

<sup>326</sup> According to Howat, this motive, which he calls L1, marks a *crochet* = 112 tempo, which was missing from the Durand editions but later added by Debussy, – and its introduction elsewhere is used to indicate a slowing down. It also makes sense of the ‘Cédez’ marking at bar 72, just prior to this. For an explanation of this original omission, see Howat, R. *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 113.

<sup>327</sup> *Ibid*, p. 113.

After an answering call from the horns, (bars 80-81) ‘with a figure that ingeniously incorporates the cor anglais’ tritone,<sup>328</sup> we should take note of the flute and clarinet figures at bars 80-81 because of their propensity, either side of a quaver rest, to reflect additional wave forms, as do the harps and violins and long bassoon trill from bar 86. After a brief ‘Animez’ section when the tritone becomes dominant again, we arrive at figure 25, whose ‘incipient arrival’ we mentioned previously. The textures recall previous episodes but they also completely interrupt the previous harmonic and melodic flow, and are accompanied by a lowering of speed (to ‘au Mouvement’, crotchet = 112,) and dynamics (25 opens at *p* and *pp* after an *mf* *crescendo* at bars 90-91). It is at this point that the earlier themes start to return, beginning with Motive H in the bassoon part, (bar 92). Whilst the harps undulate gently in rocking waves above a descending string part, the latter take up a similar calm swell at bar 97, whilst flutes and harps gaily surge onwards, only to be interrupted yet again by figure 26, which again cuts in incipiently. These fluctuating tempo and dynamic gradations allied to textural and motivic variations all seek to drive the music onwards in waves of building sound.

### Melody and Harmony

The main melodic voice remains with the woodwind, particularly the oboe which delivers the ‘smooth sailing motive’ mentioned previously – its tones particularly suited to the supernatural sensations we are experiencing – above an A sharp in the bass. At figure 22 however, a heightened string texture appears at a faster speed and with C # major harmonies. These issue in the shift to a C major climax at bar 72, although F (IV) resides in the bass, and additional C# major tonalities build alongside potential E flat major variables as we approach figure 24, these tonal variants matching the shifting wave shapes in the score. At the ‘Animez’ section the tritone Motive H is once more in evidence in the violins and harp, as well as augmented harmony in the horns, before the rising passages of harmonic and melodic fluidity are waylaid by figure 25. The oboe’s Motive H makes an immediate reappearance as ideas from the beginning resurge, this time in A major, as the key has changed too.

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<sup>328</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 65.

Thus we reach a reprise thematically, which acts to prolongate the movement whilst recalling its opening – thereby obstructing the forward impetus which had previously been underway. Trezise sums up these elements, with the return of the tritone motive at 25, as marking ‘a turning point in the sense that the endless stream of new material (or transformations of previously stated material) is... counterbalanced by an element of recapitulation.’<sup>329</sup> A brief interlude of *très expressif* beauty develops in an undulating line across all the strings, evoking further wave patterns, but at 26 the next sharp break interrupts, without any sense of preparation.

Part II Bars 104- 117 Bars 118-23 Bars 124-146 Bars 147- 162

Rhythm, Register and Expression

Repeatedly diminishing dynamics are offset by the strings playing at *sfz*. Possibly Debussy is proclaiming that the themes have returned once again, but not in the same order that they previously appeared. Berman amplifies this argument, in a paper that notes the ‘dominance of the final climax at 38 over the movement’s shape and form.’<sup>330</sup> The passage between figure 26 and bar 117, the ‘smooth sailing’ Motive K in the cellos, is generally representative of forward motion towards the climax (at figures 32 and 38) with its *legato* line and longer notes, in contrast to the use of Motive H at figure 25, which has an uneven rhythm and much shorter note values. The cello and viola lines are also deeper and more resonant in projecting this forward impulse ‘En serrant,’ (grippingly), accompanied by three dynamic swells up to the *fortissimo* of bar 115. As the motive is developed, with harmonic changes at bars 112-113, its flowing nature persists as a sort of undertow of sea current, its shape taking us forwards in an almost inevitable line, until the staccato semiquaver chords of bar 116 again lead to the dissolution of textural and rhythmic patterns.

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<sup>329</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 65.

<sup>330</sup> See details of this unpublished paper, given in 1974, in which he points out that ‘various events on the way there set up an alternation of impediments and forward impulses, before the final sweep towards 38 gets properly underway,’ in Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 114.

At bar 118, Motive H in the oboe again obstructs the forward impetus, along with other material from Part 1; (bars 95-6 are echoed at figure 28, although articulated differently), before the introduction of the trumpet solo at bar 123, which goes from *p* to *ff*, acting briefly as a ‘breaking action’.<sup>331</sup> A spurt of speed is indicated in the onwards progression, instead of which the ‘bright’ sharpened chord at bar 126, full of dissonant harmonies halts all movement, held over for nine beats. These become a lull in the action, effectively suspending what has gone before and made more so by the attendant *Ritenuito*, which occurs directly before another return to ‘Au Mouvement’ (crotchet = 112) at figure 29. It is as if the sea has stopped still for a moment – a snapshot in time as it were, waves glinting in the sun.

Motive L2 is introduced at bar 134, to be repeated twice and alternating with a longer noted trumpet solo, which leads to elements of a ‘miniature rondo.’ From bar 142, a one-bar dialogue between the strings and woodwind replaces longer phrases, using ‘variants of the clarinet motif,’ which accelerates the pace and provides ‘the beginning of the metamorphosis of time in *Jeux de vagues*.’<sup>332</sup> The ‘trilling’ cymbal over figure 31 assists in this change of atmosphere, as the clarinet motive departs a new timing is ushered in at ‘Peu à peu animé pour arriver à 138 = crotchet.’ Cello and bass roll in a distinct wave-like motion for the following 6 bars, joined by the viola for the last 2, against which the strings descend by steps and the woodwind ascend in scales of chromatic harmonies. The bass drives the passage on, helped by horn figures that appear at bar 149, until in a carefully gauged escalation of drama and dynamic focus a broad dynamic peak is reached at figure 32, which does not culminate until figure 33. Dynamically the section continues to swell, with trilling minim/dotted minim imposing chords continue for some 11 bars. The woodwind’s surging figures towards the higher register from bar 149 and the harps’ arpeggiating harmonies upwards, particularly their elongated wave over the bar lines at bars 155-6 and 159-60 aid this process of arrival and the effect of flowing waves.

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<sup>331</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 66.

<sup>332</sup> *Ibid*, p. 66.

### Melody and Harmony

As Motive K is taken up and developed, the intrusion of different harmonies at bars 112-113 – a G# and B# indicative of C# major – help to unsettle the flow, which is disrupted by textural chords at bar 116, leading to a further change of emphasis at the ‘au Mouvt.’ section. With the advent of the tritone motive again, we are impelled towards the dissonant harmonies of bar 126, when the A sharp harp ostinato leads into and over 29, on the ‘bright’ prolonged chord. Its augmentations can perhaps be seen as a tonal wave, crescendoing upwards to provide an interlude of luminous intensity on the sea. This is yet another example of the ‘overlapping’ Howat mentions, in order to continue the seamless line, despite the harmonic action of the chord. The arrival of the G minor triad at bars 130-131 (figure 29,) incorporating the harp’s A# note which changes enharmonically to B flat, can be regarded as ‘portentous’ for the future of the movement, Trezise posits, and a typically Debussyan evolution harmonically – as keys alter and swirl through the eddies of *Jeux de vagues*. He notes that this is the first clear minor triad so far. A playfully chromatic clarinet motive L2, appears at bar 134, in a harmony encompassing the aforementioned G minor, against the woodwinds tritone/whole-tone harmonies. The undulating bass *staccato* line at bar 147 is derived from an extension of the A flat-B-D (augmented 4<sup>th</sup>) bass line of bars 142 and 144, although it sounds new to the ear and acts as the impetus in driving this passage on. This is also true of horn figures, (bars 149-150), which produce repeated single-bar phrases that are related to the tritone motive. The eventual climax from bars 151-62 incorporates elements of both whole tones from the C scale and the B flat dominant ninth, V9, that has previously been seen.

### Part III Bars 163-218

#### Rhythm, Register and Expression

Bar 163 heralds the return of the material from the beginning of Part II, (bars 36-47), except now Motive J is transferred from the violins to the flutes and oboes. This motive is associated with the faster tempo, (Animé 138 = crochet), and leads directly to the eventual climax at figure 38, giving it much

of its force, but it is a long approach, and any early thoughts of resolution are withdrawn.<sup>333</sup> The principal voice is initially confined to the flutes, as three layers of strings form a repeated arpeggio and chromatic scale, all in various wave patterns. The violins repeatedly trill on G sharp, retained from bars 153-162, evoking an impatient feeling to this section of four-bar units, and thus driving it on with the aid of a semiquaver figure at bars 166 and 170. Eight bars of expanded ‘statement and counterstatement’ bear a close resemblance to the beginning of Part II. They are joined by a new motive in the second violins and cellos, (two sets of four bars), which ‘is developed in waves of mounting intensity for the next forty bars... radiating an ecstatic sense of wellbeing.’<sup>334</sup> Motive M<sup>335</sup> thence lends an even broader sweep to the soundscape, encouraging acceleration towards figure 38.

After disruptive episodes from the trumpets and tritone motive, the ‘canonic augmentation’ and multiple waves of the string and harp parts give ‘a final increase to the breadth of stride leading into figure 38,’<sup>336</sup> where a huge dynamic peak sweeps us into the main climax of the piece aided by a *Très animé* marking at bar 207. The strings supersede the other instruments’ dynamics, by moving to *fff* at bar 215, thus forming the greatest swell, whereupon the flutes reiterate motive L, applying a brake to the proceedings, whilst the harmonies of the disruptive trumpets return to disturb the climax once again. Earlier very high harp *glissando* chords provide another layer of ‘impulse’ which will take the piece on to a reiteration of the original extraordinary harp motive at figure 39.

At this point, it may be pertinent to mention Howat’s belief that the dynamics of the movement are built up in a dualistic way – those prior to figure 29 appearing with suddenness and a ‘minimum of crescendo preparation,’ whilst the final two at figures 32 and 38 being ‘irreversibly led to by the entire content of the longer segments preceding them, building up their tension through pedal points and ostinatos.’<sup>337</sup> He refers to this process in Schenkerian

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<sup>333</sup> Berman calls it ‘a rebeginning...a huge consequent phrase.’ Quoted in Rolf, ‘Debussy’s *La mer*,’ p. 219, in Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 67 and n. 102.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid*, p. 67.

<sup>335</sup> See my version of *La mer*’s motivic content, adapted from Howat’s model, in Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid*, p. 124.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid*, p. 113.

terms as dynamics that ‘clearly move from a foreground (surface) role in the form before 29 to a background (fundamental) one after 29. This procedure is clearly imitative of wave action on and in the sea, which is mercurial by nature. The spontaneity of waves and their indecipherable pattern at play changes with the effects of the wind, which can affect their density and capacity to change from the lighter froth of the surface to the heaving might and majesty of the towering *Wave off Kanagawa*. The powerful dynamic peaks of Debussy’s climaxes in *Jeux de vagues* are fundamentally analogous to these huge heights of pure force within Nature.

### Melody and Harmony

This section begins with a ‘return’ to the E major harmony of the beginning,<sup>338</sup> and is accompanied by trilling violins and subsequently aided by the G sharp pedal, which appears at bar 171 in the bass, thus anticipating the finale’s eventual home key.<sup>339</sup>

The cello and 2<sup>nd</sup> violin melody, introduced at bar 171, develops in a surprisingly traditional way in varying repetitions – ‘all of it over an unmoving pedal note (G sharp), suggesting the unchanging depth and stillness beneath the moving surface.’<sup>340</sup> Meanwhile, Motive J in the oboe and bassoons is swept away, its attempts to re-establish E major diverted towards the new G sharp minor, as A sharp appears from bar 183, perhaps indicative of the surface tensions and rip tides just below the water’s veneer, as tides pull in different directions. The trumpets from bar 123 re-emerge in a lower register, and the harps conduct an expanded swelling G# arpeggio sequence, resembling deep waves on the staves that we first saw at bar 150, but which really developed from the initial figures at bars 2 and 4. The first violin takes up the mantle of Motive M at bar 180, whilst the long pedal point and sustained melody of the

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<sup>338</sup> (Although the four sharps at this point combined with disparate sonorities and chromaticisms over an F# minor bass at bar 1 might have been considered to be C# minor).

<sup>339</sup> G sharp is part of the E major triad which eventually appears in the Coda at figure 39, but it does not confirm the tonic harmonies yet, despite the preceding climax. Instead, it acts as another point in the floating harmonies that hover around the tonic equilibrium, creating additional tonal waves. It is also part of the tritone dominant 9<sup>th</sup> on B flat, which came to function as the dominant to earlier harmony on E. See Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, pp. 63 and 67.

<sup>340</sup> Cox, D., *Debussy Orchestral music: BBC Publications*, p. 31.

strings is in direct contrast to the first half of the movement, with its fragmentary nature. As Howat remarks, the ‘forward-moving elements then gradually take precedence, leading the music steadily into the long-striding approach to the final climax. In this regard the delays in the central part of the movement provide a catapult-like impulse to what emerges from it.’<sup>341</sup> This avoidance of a sustained melody until late in a piece became a Debussyan speciality, and was obviously one device of many which he used to counter and impel the musical line forwards, and provide a sort of delayed musical gratification in terms of the movement’s internal impetus. In this sense it acts like an underlying current which suddenly surges with overwhelming wave power towards the shore, evoking the inescapable hand of destiny.

Disruptive harmonies are added by the trumpets and the augmented 4<sup>th</sup> tritone continues to be heard in the strings and flutes<sup>342</sup> above the continuing G# bass, until at bar 199 additional C# major harmonies appear in order to anticipate the forthcoming home key as strongly as possible. The B flat dominant ninth returns at bar 215 with disruptive trumpets permeating the main dynamic peak. With this, the movement subsides with only the murmuring ‘fragments of the melodic glories of Part III.’<sup>343</sup>

#### Part IV Bars 219- 261

##### Rhythm, Register and Expression

With the continuum so obviously terminated, the Coda at figure 39 seems intent on diverting our attention to the harp *glissandos*. Not only this, but the figure occurs twice again, – thereby emphasizing the atmosphere of whole-tone mystery and other-worldliness. However, the *legato* bass line ensures continuity – despite the return of the ‘out-of-sequence’ harps – and in Trezise’s opinion, it is this feature and the return of the tritone motive (in the solo clarinet part, and later in the oboe, trumpet and flute lines), which form Debussyan-type ‘cadential motions,’ and ‘give this entire section a unanimity of purpose that

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<sup>341</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 115.

<sup>342</sup> Interestingly Motive H at bars 191-3 in the flutes and the bass contain most of the E major scale, though incorporating a flattened 7<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>343</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 67.

roundly belies any sense of the fragmentation of Parts 1 and 2.<sup>344</sup> These appear to sum up the movement, which ends in tranquillity at *ppp*, the harps sashaying in wave-like motion till almost the last bar.

### Melody and Harmony

Whole-tone harps flood the remaining bars, arpeggiating across the stave in contrary motion to each other, accentuating their wave shapes, and anchored this time round by the E bass note whose duration lasts until the movement is completed. At figure 42 onwards, their last flourish moves across treble and bass staves, and is contained solely on ‘black notes,’ as is the flute’s last rendering of Motive H. The tritone motive appears three times in the run up to figure 41, where we hear a final cadence as a stable E major chord is at last established, with tonic E in the bass, all at a *ppp* whisper. It is still qualified, however, by a C sharp in the harmony of bars 245-50, (an added sixth,) which is retained in the final chord by the last note of the glockenspiel, despite prominence being given to the dominant B. Perhaps it is this hint of discord that was in Debussy’s mind, when he articulated his desire to achieve in this movement one that was ‘neither open nor closed.’

### Conclusion

The most notable feature of the second movement is its fragmentary nature, its maelstrom of sounds at the beginning emphasizing sonorities redolent of the wind and waves, their playfulness and insinuating qualities being perfectly expressed in the title *Jeux de vagues*. Motive H and its arabesque are used throughout in a bonding role, the augmented 4<sup>th</sup> ‘wave’ lending a brightening effect that is readily identifiable whenever it appears, particularly in its symbiotic relationship with the oboe, whose tones rise above the furor elsewhere. In addition, the astonishing *glissando* harp figures create an awesome ‘otherworldliness,’ reminding us of the vortex from the first movement, and seem to enclose this one within their aegis, setting their whole-tone seal upon the proceedings. Their visual promontory on the stave appears to

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<sup>344</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 68.

reflect their position within the piece as an innovative device that takes the place of the traditional cadence in Debussy's music. The harp part also contains other wave-like stratagems that aid the music's internal propulsion and summon up the sound of perpetual waves, from the initial arpeggios at bars 9-22 and descending figures of 60-67, to the flexible suppleness of its figures at 150-160 where they traverses bar lines in cascades across the registers. The harps expanded sequence from bar 171 right through to 198 sustains a series of huge undulations before the main dynamic peak at figure 38.

Other aids to wave composition such as repetitive string tremolos – particularly the initial graphic representation of the strings (in a supple rhythm) in the opening bars – contribute to the perception of an improvisatory piece of music, swelling and pulsating as Debussy provides copious expression marks and rhythm directives to ensure that it does so. Motive K, *doux et expressif*, takes on an almost swooning character, the chords following it at figure 22 in the horns and at bar 71 in the woodwind seeming to announce a feeling of love and hope amidst other chromatic and timbral changes, whilst the following dialogue between woodwind and strings climaxes in a flurry of descending wave figures.

The overall dynamic build up emphasizes smaller frolicking accumulations in the first half of the piece, (see my graph at Appendix V which demonstrates the cumulative build up of 11 dynamic peaks), but after the suddenness of figure 26's *forte* entrance, they become far more significant, their part integral to the proceedings. Huge waves of sound build and subside, particularly around figures 32 and the finale from 38, which exert a pull on everything else going on around them. This accumulative momentum is apt when combined with the effects of the last chord, since we instinctively feel that the music has not come to a rest; that the wave continues, questing onwards. The C# glockenspiel ringing softly over the E/B (V/I) tonic chord hints at dualities present in the movement, as well as being a VIth. The 'tonal' wave, taken purely as changes of key signature – C#m – CM – C# M – CM – EM – CM – AM – EM – demonstrates an obvious wave configuration when D flat, the key tonality of the outer movements and the unifying ingredient that binds them together, is taken as the equilibrium or surface of the water. These tonal/modal elements that 'float' over Debussy's music, containing dissonant harmonies, the dominant 9<sup>th</sup>

of B flat in an integral role, and multiple examples of the tritone *diabolus in musica* (and seemingly unrelated bass pedals), are integrated to form a huge wave that does not look unlike its Hokusai relation.

### Movement III *Dialogue du vent et de la mer*

The *Dialogue* derives much of its thematic material from the first movement, and is integral to the other two parts. Motives E and X (see Appendix VI) are incorporated closely into the symphonic structure of the finale, the former appearing in both the chorale at bar 133<sup>345</sup> and the Coda at bar 258, as well as at bar 132 of the Coda to Movement I. In themselves, therefore, these thematic reiterations form a sort of sonic wave binding the outer movements together in a circuitous whole. The finale also balances *De l'aube à midi* in a number of other ways, such as by restoring the D flat tonality and the cyclic motive, X, (first heard at figure 1, played by the cor anglais and trumpets, and picked up by the latter again at figure 44). In addition, the trombones and timpani are reintroduced, all of these having been 'absent in *Jeux de vagues*,'<sup>346</sup> lending the piece a symmetrical effect. The finale is thus the binding that lends this symphonic tone poem its coherence as an overall unit, prompting the ear to reminisce and hear the piece as an overall continuous wave.

Whilst the first movement contains clear sections, its themes separated and contrasted by changes of both metre and tempo, the third movement retains its 2/2 metre throughout, with only one sharp break at the end of the Introduction (bar 55, just before figure 46). In contrast to the divergence of themes in *De l'aube à midi sur la mer*, the *Dialogue* makes frequent returns to its motivic material, developing its themes so that the perfect cadence to the tonic D flat (at bar 157) becomes the central focus of the piece, and recalls its importance to the first movement. In Howat's opinion, the significance of this event after figure 54 when the perfect cadence is given centre stage, (and a rocking bass continues for 22 bars), is indicative of its momentous import. He states that 'no other movement in Debussy's output makes such an issue of the tonic key; here it is too large an event to be significant to this movement alone, and the purpose can only be to imply a recapitulative relationship, tonally at least with the first movement.'<sup>347</sup> This sense of eternal 'becoming'<sup>348</sup> or the ever-present in

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<sup>345</sup> See Howat's explanation for the positioning of this at bars 133 and 139 onwards, (at the end of his 'Exposition'), in his analysis of the movement as a highly unusual Sonata form; in Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, pp. 94-95.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid, p. 93.

<sup>347</sup> Ibid, pp. 93-94.

relation to the D flat lying dormant in the ether, can be seen as relating to a perpetual wave form that runs throughout *La mer*.

In terms of form, the movement is usually conceived in rondo terms – a principal theme (Howat terms this Motive F) alternating with contrasted interludes, based on different motives again, either in the tonic key or its enharmonic C sharp minor – its main divisions coming at bars 56, 157 (or 159) and 245.<sup>349</sup> Debussy's assertion that music must be free, however, permeates his writings: –

Let us purify our music! Let us try to relieve its congestion, to find a less cluttered kind of music. And let us be careful that we do not stifle all feeling beneath a mass of superimposed designs and motives,<sup>350</sup>

Likewise, Debussy disavows the notion that technique is the aim of composition,

That reeks of the workshop, and you can see the seams! The more of that I see, the more I am horrified by that intentional disorder that is nothing but an 'ear-deception.'<sup>351</sup>

Whilst the movement fluctuates between a principal theme and refrain and a series of other motivically identified interludes, these should only be seen as a means to fulfilling Debussy's purpose in expressing his feelings for the sea:

Do you hear the sea? To be face to face with the splendour of the ocean, that is music itself.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Jankélévitch, V., states that 'By "eternalizing" a present instant, art accomplishes the miracle of a smile that is always smiling, like the one hovering on the lips of the Mona Lisa.' In *music and the ineffable*, p. 43.

<sup>349</sup> Perceptions of potential forms, however, do not 'fit' as it were both the import of the D flat cadence with its huge dynamic event, nor its potential as sonata form. See Howat's contention that the *Dialogue* is 'an entirely logical, if very unusual, specimen of sonata form,' in Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 94.

<sup>350</sup> Debussy speaking in *S.I.M.* 1 November 1913, in Lesure, F., *Debussy on Music: The Critical Writings of the Great French composer Claude Debussy*, Collected and Introd. by Lesure, F., Trans. & Ed. by Richard Langham Smith, p. 295. Also see note 299.

<sup>351</sup> Claude Debussy, in a letter addressed to Robert Godet, in *Lettres a deux amis* (Paris: José Corti, 1942), 130, and *Correspondance* (1993), 298, in Abravanel, C., 'Symbolism and Performance,' in Briscoe, James R., Ed. *Debussy in Performance*, p. 39.

<sup>352</sup> Spoken in 1917, near the end of his life, in Long, M., in *At the Piano with Debussy*, p. 13.

That he used contemporary musical language to articulate those feelings, pushing it to the limits in terms of form, tonal and thematic development, identified him as a profound innovator and musical visionary. It is in this sense that I have identified the wave patterns that seem to me to permeate *La mer*, both on the written page and its articulation by the performer – a dual means of achieving Debussy’s wishes for a *living sea* – and that I shall return to later.

It may be enough to concur with Trezise that analytically ‘there is a subtle transformational process feeding through from section to section...’<sup>353</sup> throughout the third movement as well as *Jeux de vagues*, and indeed aspects of the whole of *La mer*. Barraqué too conveys his ideas of ‘two contrasting forces,’ implicit in the title of the *Dialogue*, ‘a rhythmically-oriented idea, and a singing, melodically-oriented idea...a motion from the rhythmic to the melodic element.’<sup>354</sup> This discourse of ‘ideas in motion,’ in a state of flux and perpetual change, better captures, perhaps, the composer’s intentions of a fluctuating ocean, and certainly evokes the mood of the waves, and the evolutionary character of the entire piece.

The main divisions I shall be making for the purpose of ease of analysis are as follows, and in line with Trezise’s ideas of a dialogue between two contrasting thematic groups, (regardless of other motives which occur therein).

Intro. First group	(X)	Bars 1-55
Intro. Second group	(F)	Bars 56-79
First group	(X)	Bars 80-132
Interlude with chorale		Bars 133-156
Second group	(F)	Bars 157-194
Climactic principal theme		Bars 195-210
First group	(X)	Bars 211-244
Second group with chorale	(F)	Bars 245-269
Synthesis of two groups	(F)and (X)	Bars 270-292

<sup>353</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 69.

<sup>354</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, p. 69.

## Synopsis

### Introduction: First group Bars 1-55 (X)

#### Rhythm, Register and Expression

The first direction for *Dialogue du vent et de la mer* is ‘Animé et tumultueux,’ in a much steadier tempo of 2/2. Taken together with the restoration of the percussive timbales and triplet feature of the cellos, the atmosphere is immediately a threatening one, exacerbated by tritone harmony. Repetitive string chords and tremolo violins operating at ever increasing heights regesterially help to develop the sinister atmosphere above which Motive X reappears at figure 44. This is further amplified by continual dynamic swells that evolve as waves of sound in the listener’s ears, particularly in the application of the timbales tritone at bars 18 and 35 onwards. The surging strings from figure 45 are highly effective in building continual waves progressing upwards to climax at the end of this first section. Already we are aware of a shift in dimension dramatically.

#### Melody and Harmony

Tumultuous and violent tones build in a low swell of cacophonous noise. The percussion restored from Movement I perpetuate a long trilled C against the F sharp of the lower strings. This tritone, *le diabolus*, evokes immediate memories of the same harmony that featured in both *De l’aube à midi sur la mer* and was prevalent in *Jeux de vagues* as Motive H. This time around, however, it is particularly associated with brass sonorities, such as in its appearance at figure 44, giving it a harsher sound like an omen or portentous culmination of all that the sea (and wind) can muster. It helps to build the waves to a thrilling climax. The tritone is also indicative of the ambivalence attached to the key signature – whether the four sharps indicate E major or the more subdued and tonally fitting C sharp minor, (despite the diminished C) – the volatility of the keys having been a previous component of *La mer’s* largely non-functional tonalities in the traditional sense. The C sharp minor feels a far more appropriate key, particularly with the use of F sharp (IV) in the bass, which culminates eventually in the tonic D flat major at bar 157. This makes the

interval a perfect 5<sup>th</sup> enharmonically, after a basic progression of IV-V-I, – thus the focus up to this point is ‘a deliberately long-drawn-out perfect cadence,’<sup>355</sup> which is linked to that of Movement I.<sup>356</sup> Debussy’s use of enharmonic language to depict the shifting movement of tides and swells, particularly in the impact of the wind on the waves and currents of the sea, is particularly apt. His intent to stir up a dialogue between the two forces is immediately visible in the very first bars of Movement III, with the prevalence of swelling triplets from the depths coupled with falling augmented 4<sup>th</sup> intervals, bringing to mind Attali’s book *Noise*.<sup>357</sup> The *sforzando* entry of the woodwind similarly evokes shifting wind tones at fig. 43, conjuring up a whirlwind of Nature’s force and inimitable power, reminiscent of Turner’s seascapes. Meanwhile, the percussion *tremolos* between F sharp and C strongly reinforce the tritone harmonies, supported by the bass line. We do not lose the F sharp until fig. 45, where G sharp, the dominant pedal of C sharp minor, is introduced. This basic IV–V progression therefore prevails for the first 42 bars of the piece.

The *Dialogue* introduction has long been viewed as having programmatic elements – Howat for example commenting on ‘the idea of passing through the eye of a storm,’ evinced by ‘its tonal clashes, occasional *subito* dynamics and uneven phrase sequences.’<sup>358</sup> Debussy conjures up mood and atmosphere, however, rather than a directly analogous programmatic experience. The trumpets renew our acquaintance with the ‘melancholy call’ of Motive X<sup>359</sup> at figure 44, and the trombones are restored, highlighting the disturbing atmosphere, which is all the more piercing because it is framed by turbulent motion on either side, and thus given dramatic prominence musically. The eerie whole-tone sounds of ascending string scales traverse 10 bars from figure 45, before the final *ff* resolution of V at bar 55. It is their momentum which carries

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<sup>355</sup> Howat, R. *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 93.

<sup>356</sup> Here, D flat major of bar 31 moves to F flat, enharmonically E, at bar 57, before returning to A flat – V of D flat major and C flat (B) – V of E major.

<sup>357</sup> Attali, J., *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, Translated by Brian Massumi (University of Minnesota Press, 1985), in which he postulates the opinion that what is noise to the old order is harmony to the new. The only thing in common to all music is that it gives structure to noise, and is both a mirror and a prophecy to society; music is ‘a repository of the social score.’ Prophetically, ‘its styles and economic organization are ahead of the rest of society because it explores, much faster than material reality can, the entire range of possibilities in a given code.’ See [www.mnstate.edu/gracyK/courses/.../attali'snoise.htm](http://www.mnstate.edu/gracyK/courses/.../attali'snoise.htm)

<sup>358</sup> Howat, R. *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 96.

<sup>359</sup> Trezise refers to its ‘leitmotivic character in a Wagnerian sense’...capable of numerous transformations’, in Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 70.

the first sea motive into the second group, F, at figure 46. Their natural ascending wave shape intuitively the sharp break at the brief percussion and string climax, before the commencement of a new idea. The G sharp pedal is the final resolution of that which ensued in the bass at bar 171 of *Jeux de vagues*, G# (A flat) being V of D flat Major and a component of the Dominant 9<sup>th</sup> on B flat. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> Movement, the G sharp is always propelling the piece forwards, and anticipates the finale's home key. In this sense, it is also a continuing wave of sound, acting as an undercurrent of sonority which helps bind the two movements together, and ensures their continuance in a strong wave-like motion of sustained melody.

#### Introduction: Second group Bars 56-79 (F)

##### Rhythm, Register and Expression

In a contrast to the cyclic motive, the character of Motive F is far more yielding and calm played at 'Cédez' – très légèrement et retrouvez. It contains tied minim beats to emphasize this aspect, along with longer phrase marks, so that the alternation between Motives X and F (bearing in mind their possible characterization as the wind and sea of the *Dialogue*), forms another layer of waves operating between the motives. The fact that F operates across several fronts with clarinets, bassoons and horns adding a chordal texture to the mix (from bar 60) serves to build the atmosphere temporarily, aided by more *crescendos* and *forte* expression marks. A further theme arrives with Motive G at figure 47, bearing similarities to F but associated with quieter sonorities and the loss of the lower strings temporarily. Instead, the first violin takes up a complex chromatic passage in higher undulating tones

##### Melody and Harmony

The entrance of Motive F in the woodwind at bar 56, figure 46, heralds the beginning of a far more giving but still impelling atmosphere, which marks a contrast against the highly evocative undulations of the harsher motive X. It clearly exudes a more melodious nature, beginning in the sinuous oboe part (as did the 'mysterious' tones of Motive H in *Jeux de vagues*), supported by the cor anglais and bassoon. Correspondingly, the bass is enharmonically restored to its

C sharp minor tonic tonality at figure 46 – yet its ‘soft’ arrival does not detract from the central climax and return of D flat major tonic at bar 157. Chromatic triplet ripples of sound move constantly upwards until at figure 47 a similar-sounding motive, G, appears, but sounding momentarily brighter. This time the flute and viola are paired together. The relative peace of this passage of diatonic harmony is accompanied by a complicated chromatic passage in the violins, clearly articulated in triplet runs evoking images of small waves as Motive G glides serenely over the surface.

#### First group Bars 80-132 (X)

##### Rhythm, Register and Expression

Motive G’s chordal theme is enhanced by higher registers which alter its character again, disturbing the waters with its tonalities (C sharp minor at bars 85-6). Tremolos and CM/Cm passages take the strings into a rolling wave pattern featuring quaver/dotted quaver/semiquaver rhythms that pitch backwards and forwards like Debussy’s boat off Cancale<sup>360</sup> for a total of 25 bars, firmly putting their stamp on the music as it reaches climactic heights. It operates, therefore as a continual wave as we are propelled forward by rhythmic and dynamic aggregation, harmonic movement having ceased.

A whole-tone version of Motive X is reintroduced in the bassoons and cello parts at bar 98, the piece seeming to pivot on the long augmented third note as the dynamics gradually build throughout this section in an immense elongation of the X theme that comes to an eventual climax over bars 118- 22, soaring into the heights of the register for much of the woodwind and upper strings, as well as high tones in the horns. Motive X is thus also like an unstoppable wave propelled onwards until it crashes in a sharply focussed 5-bar roar, its chordal nature adding to the explosion.

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<sup>360</sup> This was a sea trip taken from St. Lunaire to Cancale, via the choppy waters of the bay of Mont St. Michel, when Debussy relished the rather hazardous journey, commenting that the boat danced up and down ‘like a porpoise,’ in Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 1.

### Melody and Harmony

From bar 80, shifting harmonies combine with a section that is transposed upwards a perfect 4<sup>th</sup>, (between bars 82-3 and 92-3), suggesting more orthodox means of perpetuating rhythm. Theme G is encased in a chordal sequence, which brings us to figure 49. Now, whilst a derivative of G is played by unison horns, the repeated chromatic runs in the strings catapult us into the full-scale rocking wave pattern, in the viola and violin parts (bar 94 onwards). The harmonic momentum is halted as three-note dotted rhythms arpeggiate up and down the strings in a turbulence of whole-tone ostinatos, pivoted on octave A, D and octave F natural, which are based on the one we saw in Movement I at bar 86 onwards – thus enlarging an aspect of a longer-scale wave travelling onwards through the piece.

The bass moves from F at bar 98 up a major 3<sup>rd</sup> to A at bar 104, repeating this sequence in a wave-like motion, before moving up to B (another augmented 4<sup>th</sup> from F) at bar 110 (figure 50), in a repetition of the X motive, operating together as an increasing swell that builds continually up to bar 118. Each time the augmented 4ths impel the music forwards and evoke a wild terror to the heightening tones of a huge elongated X theme. As the woodwind – (flute and cor anglais) – incorporate the augmented interval in passing grace notes, the harmonies become increasingly chromaticized, until a semi-cadential progression occurs – A flat is reached in bar 113 – enharmonically G sharp, and therefore V of C sharp minor. The addition of C natural as VII of both C sharp minor/D flat major for 6 beats in the bass, leads us forwards to the chromatic explosion, at figure 51, as the wave breaks above these shifting wave-like ‘floating’ harmonies. This is perpetuated by the upper string dotted wave motive, which for most of the previous 25 bars, has see-sawed up and down on an ADA/DAD orbit in violin 1, (violin 2 and viola correspondingly lower), before concluding on top E at figure 51, (tonic of E major/III of C# minor) against F sharp (IV of C sharp minor) in the bass. Motive X’s development is chordal, and this chromatic climax is the culmination of the most turbulent and frenzied passage of the work, its tumultuous heights being reached before we have even returned to a D flat major key signature, which subsequently arrives at bar 133.

## Interlude with Chorale Bars 133-156

### Rhythm, Register and Expression

The hymn-like tones of Motive E in the horns extend a sense of homecoming to these bars – a tranquil respite from what has gone before and in character linked to the eventual conclusion to the piece. The minim motive can also be seen as a linking device (as in Howat’s reading of the third movement), its much steadier high-value notes perpetuating the music by acting as a counterbalance to the remainder of the faster, more frantic passages.

### Melody and Harmony

A passage of tranquil calm is introduced with the ‘tonic’ key signature of D flat major. Motive E, which first appeared in the Coda to the First Movement at figure 14 as a type of chorale, producing a mood of awe and intensity after a sustained and quietly expressive passage and just prior to the fireworks of that conclusion, now performs a similar function in the finale. It therefore seems to be related in an obvious link, particularly as it also introduces the eventual Coda to *La mer* at bar 258. Its serene and brightening character reasserts itself almost in a paean of optimism and joy, evoking a sense of homecoming that in itself produces a further wave running through the piece, as I show in the following diagram.

Movement I Coda b132      Movement III Interlude b133      Movement III Coda b258

Motive E ----- Motive E----- Motive E

The tonality further re-establishes itself in the Interlude. At figure 53 the E flat/F rolling bass is enharmonically related to D flat, and at bar 145 the A flat dominant pedal acts to end the section with a perfect cadence. As a structure, the groups form a powerful arch in both a tonal and dynamic sense.

## Second Group Bars 157- 194 (F)

### Rhythm, Register and Expression

The rocking bass and harp figure provide an undulating background to the static D flat/A flat harmonies and the quietude of Motive F, although the return to ‘au Mouvt’ tempo ensures that this will not last long. After several pulsating Cédéz / Reprenez alternations with fluctuating dynamics, the key change at bar 179 issues in a tonal departure centring on the tritone C-F sharp. This is accompanied by the cor anglais affecting a chromatic undulating figure, vertical *glissando* waves and then arpeggios across the staves in the harps, and the horns picking up the same dotted melody previously played by the cor anglais. Thence a repeated *staccato* figure develops, also featuring the same chromatic undulations, and becoming chordal at bar 189. Its character – ‘En animant’ and *poco a poco cresc.* – together with the melody now appearing in the violins, ensures that this passage is heard as a series of tonal and rhythmic waves running full pelt into the central climax at figure 56.

### Melody and Harmony

At figure 54, there is no thematic activity to distract the ear, as we reach a virtually static moment, before moving on to bar 157, and a huge tonic event. Howat contends that this is not only ‘the movement’s tonal centre of gravity’ but is ‘too large an event to be significant to this movement alone...the purpose can only be to imply a recapitulative relationship, tonally at least, with the first movement.’<sup>361</sup> The D flat major key appears as the tonic for the first time since Movement I, and after the bass A flat at figure 54, this would appear to be a V-I perfect cadence, but Debussy’s harmonies do not function conventionally. There is little sense of it, despite the triad at bar 157. Instead, an A flat/D flat rocking bass produce an unusual sense of grounding against the violin’s static moment on top A flat – both of which ensue for 22 bars at ‘Plus calme et très expressif.’ Overlying these, the main motive of the movement, F, which appeared at figure 46 – picking up the momentum after the introduction’s break – is reintroduced at *pp*. Its eeriness is initially peaceful and perhaps

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<sup>361</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, pp. 94 -5.

introspective, but little by little, gathering speed with *crescendos* accumulating and harps reiterating a semiquaver figure – an impasse is reached. Such is the significance of this section, acting perhaps as an overall tonal swell on D flat, that we may surmise its import to the entire piece, as well as its more localized consequence.

The cancellation of the key signature at bar 179 heralds the abandonment of the tonic and a further tonal departure, much of it based on the C-F sharp tritone we encountered earlier in the movement, now operating as a functional dominant. Initial hints of A minor are carried into the harps; their *glissandos* are evocative of rippling waves, as are the arpeggiated figures, which commence at the ‘En animant’ section beginning at bar 187. At this same point, undulating chromatic waves in the horn parts and second violins, particularly the triplet figures, are reminiscent of sea swell and tidal pull. Finally, the increasing of chordal parts and building *crescendos* erupt into a huge central climax at figure 56, bar 195.

#### Climactic Principal Theme Bars 195-210 (F)

#### Rhythm, Register and Expression

Undulating two-note ostinato waves are heard among the woodwind for the four bars after 195, accompanied by descending arpeggiated figures in the harps and bassoons, redolent of tumbling water. All the while, the flute plays an ‘ecstatic reprise’ of the principal theme, Motive F. This may be considered ‘a deceptive climax rather like an interrupted cadence,’ according to Trezise, for ‘it presages more integrated and characteristic climactic material...and perpetuates the ‘dialogue’ between the two motivic groups.’<sup>362</sup> After the first dynamic wave, (at figure 54), a second more lyrical one is set up at figure 57, where the bassoons and horns as well as the strings embark on an *ff* passage *au Mouvement*, which brings us to bar 211. In thematic terms, it can also be seen as perpetuating the wave image that is built up in so many ways throughout *La mer*.

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<sup>362</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 72.

### Melody and Harmony

With the C-F sharp tritone acting as the dominant in the bass at bar 187 onwards to the questing Motive F, we reach ‘the ecstatic reprise of the principal theme in the manner of a Romantic symphony or concerto,’<sup>363</sup> full of longing and yearning emotional heights, with a full brass complement to mark the magnitude of the event. The reinstatement of the D flat key signature with eight bars of tonic bass marks the tonal return, with two sets of 8:8 bars divided by the climax at figure 57. Above this, however, we reach a sense of grandeur as Motive F drives onwards through all the layers surrounding it towards an even greater goal. In this sense it is ‘deceptive,’ even as the duality of the tritone / D flat major alternation from the First Principal Section of *De l’aube a midi sur la mer* comes to the fore in this lyrical climactic event.

### First group Bars 211-244 (X)

### Rhythm, Register and Expression

It is at this point, immediately after the movement’s central climax and with ensuing rhythmic intensification, that we see ‘the beginning of a sustained dynamic accumulation leading right to the end of the movement,’<sup>364</sup> in a sense of relentless momentum.

All the components of the *Dialogue* are thrown into a ‘whirling vortex of activity,’<sup>365</sup> trumpet triplets impelling the piece forwards, rising chromatic scales in the strings obfuscating tonalities, and harmonic interruptions that render the music tonally unstable in frenzied, voracious energy. A third dynamic wave builds from bar 215 in cumulative agitation, galvanizing theme G into activity in the viola from figure 58 and alternating with theme X from bar 225, (although a previous version has already appeared in the cornets from bar 115). Motive G’s return at bars 221 and 230 concludes in a string *sforzando* at bar 237, as it re-enters in the woodwind and cello parts. This alternation

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<sup>363</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer* p. 72.

<sup>364</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 94. In his analysis, a ‘Recapitulation’ continues from bar 211 through to 257, taking into account the dramatic nature of this section. Also, see his analysis of bar 211 as a ‘structural pivot, balancing the two surrounding sections... (it) musically binds together the contrasted preceding sections,’ p. 100.

<sup>365</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 73.

reaches new heights in its cumulative effects, creating an immensity of scale to its final compelling climax.

The triplet figure that had built up from the beginning of the section is now silenced momentarily, allowing theme G to conclude expressively on *très vibrant* cello and isolated woodwind, in a yearning ecstasy of ‘return,’ supported by quavering tremolo strings.<sup>366</sup> By dint of the impassioned dynamic and rhythmic accumulations, building in a carefully graded process, the remainder of the piece can be seen as one huge dynamic wave, gyrating and escalating to the very end of *La mer*.

### Melody and Harmony

Initially the chromatic sequences and unstable tonalities point to a harmonic interruption with no sense of arrival in a recapitulative sense. However, the drive towards the C# minor tonality reasserted at figure 60 has been escalating since the flute’s entry with X at 225, bolstered by octave A/E chords in the bass, which begin an ascending/descending pattern at bar 230. As the dynamics peak with the *sforzando* in the strings, at bar 241, the harmonies become diatonic, ready for the move to the minor key at bar 245.

### Second group with Chorale Bars 245-269 (F)

### Rhythm, Register and Expression

The main theme, F, makes its return with the new key signature. Last appearing at figure 56, the theme in bassoon and cor anglais moves forwards in mounting dramatic intensity – starting at *piano* but soon escalating to *molto crescendo* in bar 249. By interjecting theme F near the end, it causes the dynamic and tonal intensity to shift towards the movement’s *finale*, so that this explodes in a cacophony of sound. Correspondingly, the three dynamic waves

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<sup>366</sup> Trezise refers to this section with its ‘conflicting channels’ as being Debussy’s ‘calculated effect...based upon a stratification of activity in which the components move at different speeds, all registering clearly by dint of the excellent balance that can be achieved when the score’s dynamic values are observed,’ in Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 73.

at figures 51, 57 and throughout the last two sections also behave in a sequential manner, according to Howat.<sup>367</sup>

Motive F is aided by a driving triplet rhythm divided between eight string parts, which at bar 258, where the Motive E chorale returns in the brass, suddenly take up the transformative F themselves, in a quaver/triplet configuration. After the small octave waves denoted before this point, the new repetitive descending figure intensifies the atmosphere, not least because of its *staccato* articulation, and the accompanying woodwind triplets. Motive E resounds through these textures in a chiming minim chorale, born aloft on the crest of a wave, as it were, in a tremendous sense of homecoming and familiarity, but taken to new heights with all the might that the brass can muster as *crescendos* augment to the *ff* of bar 270.

### Melody and Harmony

The key of C# minor (EM) is reached at bar 245. Motives G and X conclude, with theme F at figure 60 carrying with it the precipitous triplet motive. Finally, we move from G sharp bass (V) to the home key of D flat major at bar 254, with a dominant A flat pedal. The conclusion is held in abeyance, though, as bar 258 is marked by the reintroduction of Motive E, (Trezise's 'chorale,') lit up by the brass section playing *très sonore mais sans dureté*, which presages a final display of passion and euphoria. Bar 258 interjects to prevent an early arrival, as we pursue a bass pedal through various degrees – B flat-E flat-G flat and A flat, until at figure 61 we hear the D flat-A flat perfect cadence at an *ff* dynamic. This ushers in a finale which can be seen more as a synthesis of what has gone before than a coda to traditional forms. In a sense, E therefore acts as a 'cliffhanger' to the final bars of tumultuous agitation and excitement that conclude *La mer*.

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<sup>367</sup> In an explication of this theory, the author notes that the first is 'sharply focussed,' the second is 'more lyrical,' and the final one is 'cumulative,' analogous in character to the Exposition, Developmental and Recapitulative sections that he identifies in the movement's 'unusual sonata form.' In this reading of the developmental/thematic waves, that of the Introduction is viewed as an add-on to the Exposition, since its momentum is carried forwards after the shortest of breaks, in Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 95

## Synthesis of two groups Bars 270-292

### Rhythm, Register and Expression

With a *Très Animé* marking, and attendant falling semiquaver rhythm now in the strings, adding to their propulsive effect, the music powers to a conclusion in an exhilarating flurry of froth and spume. The string dynamics quickly reach *sforzando* at bar 272 on *staccato* quavers, followed by a drop to *forte* and *crescendo* on the semiquaver notes following, creating dynamic swells. Pizzicato and arco directions add to the excitement of their articulation, amid *staccato* woodwind parts.

The sustained tonic chord we hear at bar 276, at *ff*, is the last before the final chord. It unleashes additional semiquaver figures in the woodwind, as well as the high dotted couplets that complete the movement. Motive X appears in a maelstrom of activity throughout all the orchestra in different metres, and through which elements of Motive G appear in the brass sections. Not only do these form a synthesis of what has gone before – the cyclic motive taking us back to the very beginning of *La mer* and unifying the work as a whole – but they build and intensify the atmosphere to its last majestic chords, in a climax that is truly omnipotent.

### Melody and Harmony

The bass D flat tonic chord remains for only five beats as the strings plummet in huge surges, peaking on *sfz* A naturals at bars 272-3 and falling onto more sobering crochet tonalities at figure 62, Debussy again using augmentations and whole-tone passages to reverberate through the layers of half-remembered motives. At figure 62 repeated hints of Motive X in the cornets and cellos and then horns set up ‘a series of ostinatos in contradictory metres’<sup>368</sup> in rising and subsiding wave motives. Bars 283-6 in the bass move powerfully from B flat and then to G natural and D flat, in a typically Debussyan tritone gesture to the tonic. At figure 63 cellos complete their last undulating wave whilst the motivic elements X and F and the overall tritone / D flat major alternation triumphantly reach their zenith in a huge climactic wave

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<sup>368</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 74.

that has been built on both this duality and the swirling sounds of other modal sonorities that Debussy has used to evoke his feelings for *La mer*, concluding on an exultant *fff* tonic chord.

### Conclusion

It is perhaps simplistic to infer that the main cyclic motive, X, and its contrasting figure, F, are directly analogous to the themes of wind and sea which are inferred in the title of the *Dialogue* – yet the two possess very different characteristics, woven together in a sinuous sonority that recalls the perpetual ability of theme X to reinvent itself in diverse forms throughout the movement, whilst the recurrence of the F persona is more evocative of the yearning nature of the eternal sea. The cyclic motive is particularly associated with brass tones during the *Dialogue*, – its character summoning up portentous overtones of violence not unconnected to its distinctive tritone nature<sup>369</sup> and is supported by the drums at climactic moments such as figures 51, 62 and 63.<sup>370</sup> By contrast, F has a more appeasing, placatory function, partly as a result of its longer note values and phrase structure – its appearance at bar 159 continuing through the central climax to bar 202, embedded at this point in the flute and cor anglais lines, where questing tones with explicit expressivity resound. It proliferates in various forms throughout Movement III, maintaining the flow of the main theme, supported by Motive G, which appears to derive some of its character from that source.<sup>371</sup> G also alternates with X throughout bars 94-132 helping to build the dynamic wave as it is propelled onwards and supporting the hugely elongated theme X.

Motive E, the ‘chorale’ which was set with X ‘somewhat on pedestals’<sup>372</sup> during Movement 1, as Howat contends, is woven far more closely into the structure of the *Dialogue*, acting as a linking device. Intervening at bar 133, it

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<sup>369</sup> See figure 44, where it is accompanied by an F#-C timbale tremolo figure, and flattened 7ths in the string parts.

<sup>370</sup> Its end is ‘indeterminate as to cadence, it is capable of numerous transformations, and it falls outside the periodic phrase structure of the second group,’ – the theme F contrast, which is ‘powerfully evocative of the Romantic second-subject style of the Russian symphonists and French counterparts,’ in Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, pp. 69-70.

<sup>371</sup> Although as Simon Trezise points out it possesses a ‘neutrality’ that enables it to appear with either theme, in *ibid*, p. 70.

<sup>372</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 93.

brings the first sense of real ‘homecoming’ to the finale, its chords ringing through the other textures. When it joins the remnants of F at bar 258, it is to proclaim that sense of arrival – a full brass complement expanding its horizons to proclaim the euphoric destiny of *La mer*, as it builds in a huge accumulation of excitement to the very last climax.

This intertwining of motives taken in conjunction with their individual dramatic characters and their interjection at specific points of the *Dialogue*’s structural nature, helps to propel us through the linear progression of the piece. At the same time, they operate texturally to evoke certain characteristics of the ocean – lending some credence to the idea that they sonorously depict the twin notions of wind and sea in a dialogue. I would suggest, however, that this duality could be seen as one in which Debussy shows us two aspects of the same sea – its calmer, more serene totality as against the momentous tempest the composer never grew tired of observing.<sup>373</sup> He demanded an imaginative response from the listener; one in which he/she is prepared to be immersed,<sup>374</sup> to feel the music’s impulses and emotions. Earlier compositions such as the beginning of *Nuages* from the *Nocturnes* had made use of a cyclic wave-like motive. In *La mer* Debussy was to take this much further, using all the means at his disposal in the way of motives, dynamics and articulation, shifting tonalities and modal ‘mists’ to create a work that looked forwards as well as backwards in a ‘symphonic’ sense. Nevertheless, Debussy’s subtly allusive language should perhaps not be taken too literally in terms of isolating thematic characters, when the synthesis of both is so readily and expertly achieved.<sup>375</sup> The composer’s use of motivic development is led by the desire to reflect and explore the sea’s changing states, and on an external level, the music’s ‘swirling textures and circular alternations of motives and registers (were) equally evocative of

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<sup>373</sup> A further comment during the sea trip from St. Lunaire to Cancale, in which a storm blew up, rendering his friends sick and putting the party in considerable danger is as follows: ‘Debussy was thoroughly enjoying himself, but the boatman got furious and accused him of risking all their lives for the sake of ‘sensations fortes’. To which Debussy replied: ‘There is one powerful sensation I have never experienced, the sensation of danger! It is not unpleasant. You are alive!’ His friend René Peter described the events of this trip, here recounted by Keith Spence, in Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 1.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid*, Preface, p. x.

<sup>375</sup> It has been suggested that the two cyclic motives (X and F) are ‘aloof’ from the motivic action surrounding them, – downgraded as a product of the discourse rather than its determiner. See Barraqué’s term ‘thème objectif’ to describe the cyclic motive as ‘product of the motivic discourse rather than its subject,’ in *ibid*, p. 83.

vortexes and whirlpools,<sup>376</sup> perhaps influenced by J.M.W. Turner's seascapes. These were purportedly influenced by the spiral motive that Roy Howat also perceives in *La mer*,<sup>377</sup> its focus being at the heart of the work's cyclic motive in both the outer movements of the piece.

According to Mark DeVoto, the tonal discourse of the finale 'brings the dialogue between E major-C sharp minor on the one hand, and D flat major on the other, to a crux,<sup>378</sup> in the longest, loudest and stormiest movement of *La mer*. Certainly, Debussy had been influenced by the Russian composers and perhaps from them took the five-flat key signature, which was still a comparative rarity in contemporary orchestral music. Debussy's *Claire de lune* (*Suite Bergamasque*, no. 3), and his early *Nocturne for piano*, the slow movement of the *String Quartet* and the middle section of the *Faune* all used the key, but *La mer* is 'above all, emblematic of D flat major, most durably from the sunrise in the first movement and at the middle and end of the third,<sup>379</sup> thereby carrying a tonal wave through the work as a whole, above which floating modalities – the insinuating tritone and whole-tone passages – merge with E major/C# minor dualities to form copious ever-shifting impressions. Tonally and dynamically, the movement forms waves of sound – the central point of tonal focus at bar 157 forming the central point between the Introduction and Coda, according to Howat, thus making a 101:101 symmetrical division where the perfect cadence appears. This is notable because of the huge tonic event that is unparalleled in Debussy's oeuvre, thus marking an episode of immense import to the piece from which all else proceeds in an inevitability that reverberates like a tsunami through the remainder. The 22 bars of sustained tonic-bass prolongation against rocking A flat/ D flat cellos is a tonal recapitulation of the entire piece, and even though the tonalities are temporarily commandeered by other confusing or ambiguous

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<sup>376</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 96.

<sup>377</sup> These were purportedly influenced by the spiral motive that Roy Howat also perceives in *La mer*, its focus being at the heart of the work's cyclic motive in both the outer movements of the piece. For an explanation of the suggested spiral shape, see *ibid*, p. 96.

<sup>378</sup> Tchaikovsky had used the key in *Romeo and Juliet* and his first Piano Concerto, and Balakirev employed it in his piano works, in DeVoto, M., *Debussy And The Veil Of Tonality: Essays On His Music: Dimensions And Diversity No. 4*, p. 160.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid*, p. 159.

passages – the tritone C-F# acting as a functional dominant for example at bar 187 onwards, and the chromatic sequences in the strings from bar 213 – the tonic is never far away. With the G# bass at figure 60 leading directly to the A flat of bar 254, where the five flat key signature reappears, it is only a matter of awaiting for the final ‘impediments’ to resolve so that the D flat perfect cadence can put its stamp on proceedings at figure 61. With the aid of continuous dynamic fluctuations (figure 62 is at *p molto cresc.*), it can only be moments before the final *fff* return is upon us.

In a compositional sense, Trezise believes that Debussy ‘turned *La mer* into a many-stranded *étude* in compositional technique, by which he charted the relationship between past, present, and future in a way that scarcely any other twentieth-century work has attempted to do,’<sup>380</sup> implying a narrative of the passage of time, and its evolution musically from the present to the past. The author notes that this is particularly visible in the use of symphonic gestures, ranging from their ‘elevated form of dissonance in the first movement to their ‘modest levels of recapitulation’ in the second, and their full-scale ‘repetitions of the principal theme’ in the finale. Thus he maintains that *La mer* looks both forwards and backwards, ‘challenging preconceptions about musical style by successfully combining within one work ‘immateriality’ (Eimert’s ‘vegetative circulation of form’) and ‘materiality’ in the form of a crisp symphonic outline.’<sup>381</sup>

It is important to clarify *La mer*’s ‘freedom from convention’ however, despite its strong outlines. Each movement evolves processes to articulate the changing environment of the sea, the first using a variety of arch or wave forms to complement its varied moods and rhythms, *Jeux de vagues* using motivic diversity to evoke its mercurial nature in a display of innovative freedom from conventional forms, and the *Dialogue* synthesizing the main characters of *De l’aube* whilst also developing them with additional themes within a single time signature. Yet the movements are a coherent whole because of the harmony, motivic development and rhythms which develop in each, forming what Trezise alludes to as ‘narratives,’ not in a programmatic sense, but in ‘a sequence of musical events that echo narrative devices such as an introductory paragraph or

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<sup>380</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 96.

<sup>381</sup> *Ibid*, p. 97.

the speeding up of events as one reaches a climax.<sup>382</sup> The spatial element of these events is preordained in that rhythm is utilized in a developmental way. This is made explicit by the title of the first movement – *De l'aube à midi sur la mer*, which features the passing of time in a progression from one part of the day to another. Whilst neither *Jeux de vagues* nor *Dialogue* adopts the same process, 'at a musical level they develop and build on what is set out musically in the first movement.'<sup>383</sup> In this sense, the rhythm and spatial elements build a broad wave across all three movements, which are synthesized into an organic whole by the time the concluding bars of the *finale* are reached. Within this temporal assimilation, we can see waves of every variety that dance across the staves in a never-ending assortment of types and characters. Their configuration makes this immediately apparent, whether surging in ascending vortices as between figures 45-6, of the *Dialogue*, moving in octave jumps as at figure 60 or sailing smoothly over the surface as Motive F at figure 46 of the same. These are but the visual indicators of their existence, whilst beneath the surface waves propel *La mer* along at every level, as I have demonstrated.

Sensations of familiarity permeate the piece, prompted by intervallic and three-note subset figures, which taken together with the tritone motive in various guises help to contribute to the overall blurring of tonal definition. The principal theme of *Dialogue* and the two cyclic motives operate in the manner of the *leitmotif*, in that their characters are immediately clear and they are instantly recognisable, whereas other motives are more diffuse in character: 'they are malleable in rhythmic terms, capable of undergoing many metamorphoses, and likely to end up in the delicate tracery of motivically insignificant arabesque.'<sup>384</sup> Debussy's admiration for the 'divine arabesque' of Palestrina, Lassus and Bach, and Renaissance and Baroque music is well known. He is reported to have said he wanted to find

A music truly free of motifs, or formed of one continuous motif that nothing interrupts and will never go back over itself. So it will develop logically, tightly, deductively.<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>382</sup> Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 76.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid*, p. 77.

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>385</sup> François Gervais draws an analogy between some of Debussy's motives and decorative art – 'ornamental and not figurative': many of the former failing to continue 'in a rhetorical manner, trailing off instead into continuous, flowing lines that are insignificant in terms of intervallic or

As Trezise elucidates, ‘if one moves a little closer to the substance of the music – its real sound and notation – one soon realises that major-minor tonality has very little to do with the tonal materials of *La mer*’.<sup>386</sup> Rather, the ‘pitch collections’ used by Debussy are a greater clue to his tonal composition, featuring the free use of mediaeval modes, particularly the Dorian emphasizing the flattened seventh and the Lydian or acoustic scale with augmented fourths – so much a comment of *La mer*, particularly of *Jeux de vagues*, and also subject to modulations for effective colouring of passages. Another feature that should not be underestimated is Debussy’s emphasis on ambiguity for effect. Bar 105, of Movement I for example, focussing on both B flat and C, and the conclusion to that movement – although finishing on a D flat triad in the brass also contains a woodwind B flat – just as Movement II, whilst finishing in E major, despite continual flourishes of the tritone Motive H, also contains a C# (added 6<sup>th</sup>) on the glockenspiel.

*La mer* broke with the traditional nineteenth century cadential language of tonic, subdominant, dominant, based on a series of root progressions, substituting ‘chords’ of four or five notes containing dominant sevenths or ninths, ‘without leading to, or even implying, a tonic triad.’<sup>387</sup> His was rather a ‘cumulative, end-directed process,’ undergoing Schoenberg-type ‘transformations of...degrees in the tonic region...simply by semitonal changes or adding sevenths and ninths,’<sup>388</sup> yet Debussy did not stray into that atonal territory. Without major or minor scales (only acoustic, without the raised seventh), his harmonies progress in a fundamentally different way, – without cadential involvement, apart from a few moments of articulation when they do not fulfil a traditional role, having a motivic as much as a harmonic purpose. This is particularly noticeable in *De l’aube*, where cadences either linking passages or bringing them to a close are rarities. In the final movement,

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rhythmic definition. They do, however, particularly accord with the ideas of the *Art nouveau*, current at the time, and with Debussy’s unformulated and unfinished motives. These ‘arabesque-type’ figures existed alongside the ‘emblematic character of the cyclic motives and principal theme, as just one effect in Debussy’s armoury. They were particularly useful as background features out of which motives emerged, and a useful means of integrating material. In François Gervais, ‘La notion d’arabesque chez Debussy,’ *La revue musicale* (241, 1958), p. 14, in Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer*, p. 85.

<sup>386</sup>Trezise, S., *Debussy, La Mer* pp. 87-88.

<sup>387</sup>Ibid, p. 91.

<sup>388</sup>Ibid, n. p. 103.

Debussy creates frequent C sharp/D flat statements to provide some sense of dominant-tonic function operating against the ambiguities of the tritone, usually in its familiar C-F# incarnation.

It is these sliding tonalities, as much as his use of dynamics and a freely-evolving form that enabled Debussy to capture the elements of Nature he wished to portray. That he was able to ally his imagination to his mood and subject enabled him to apparently reflect the *correspondences* between the two, charming much of contemporary society with his arresting sonorities that spoke of Nature's magic and allure, particularly in the beguiling fluidity of the water music. The wave features that permeate Debussy's music at every level are self evident to both the attentive listener and the analyst who allows his integrity and imagination free rein.

*Who can know the secret of musical composition? The sound of the sea, the outline of a horizon, the wind in the leaves, the cry of a bird – these set off complex impressions in us. And suddenly, without the consent of anyone on this earth, one of these memories bursts forth, expressing itself in the language of music. It carries its own harmony within itself.*<sup>389</sup>

## Chapter V

### Conclusion

*Fin de siècle* France responded to both the programmatic elements of the period – following the Lisztian model of symphonic poem, or lent towards ‘absolute music’ represented by the symphony, sonata, and string quartet. Both Franck and d’Indy among others exemplified this dualism by migrating across the divide of both ideals. In contrast, Debussy followed neither path, forcefully expressing his opinions that the symphony was outdated – ‘an awful orthodoxy that robbed music of expression and freedom,’<sup>390</sup> and in this sense we may perhaps concur with Stefan Jarocinski’s summation that he occupied ‘a unique position in the arts at the turn of the century.’<sup>391</sup> He did, though, profess a fondness for Russian responses, particularly Rimsky Korsakov’s *Antar*, (1869) and later *Scheherazade*, (1888) – whilst he was composing *La mer*, which continually evolves in the manner of a freely organic structure – in the mould of Eimert’s ‘vegetative circulation’ – building linear and vertical layers of themes and elaborations that drive ever onwards in sliding modalities that slip through the memory in seemingly magical moments of recall, whilst also resting on the shoulders of the past.<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> Debussy speaking, in Rolf, ‘Debussy’s *La mer*’, pp.1-2, in Trezise, S., *Debussy: La Mer*, p.2.

<sup>390</sup> Nichols, R., *Debussy: Oxford Studies of Composers (10)* p. 46.

<sup>391</sup> Jarocinski, S., *Impressionism and Symbolism*, in Simeone, N., ‘Debussy and expression,’ *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., p. 111.

<sup>392</sup> As Simon Trezise has demonstrated, *La mer* does encompass a slow introduction to the first movement, with ‘mysterious and muted musical focus,’ which leads into a faster section via an *accelerando*, – features beloved by both Franck and d’Indy, – and by Schumann in his Fourth Symphony. The conclusion to *La mer* also ‘ends noisily with a chorale and assertive affirmations of the tonic,’ in line with the accepted norm. Even *Jeux de vagues*, to some extent offers a rapprochement with nineteenth century practice, recalling the nature and title of traditional scherzos. In Trezise, S., *Debussy: La Mer*, pp. 47-8.

The *Trois Nocturnes*, composed between 1892 and 1899, had already signified ‘all the various impressions and the special effects of light that the word suggests’<sup>393</sup> – the third piece, *Sirènes*,<sup>394</sup> describing the ‘sea and its countless rhythms’<sup>395</sup> in waves of undulating sound that were far more suggestive of the rolling ocean than previous examples, Suarès commenting that ‘Of course, nothing which has been a masterpiece in previous centuries ceases to be one; but this one palpitates and breathes in us.’<sup>396</sup> I contend that this ‘breathing’<sup>397</sup> was a direct consequence of Debussy’s evocation of waves, in the liquidity he brought to his music by adopting a free expression of his feelings, where ‘rhythmicised time’<sup>398</sup> and modal slipperiness become music of the moment, and in that sense, like waves, is part of the eternal ‘now.’ In 1907 Debussy had expressed his belief in the ‘inseparability of form, rhythm and colour,’ stating:

Generally speaking, I feel more and more that music, by its very essence, is not something that can flow inside a rigorous, traditional form. It consists of colours and rhythmicised time...<sup>399</sup>

Thus waves of sound transcend bar lines to induce fluidity and mercurial flow in his music. Time is no longer organized in measured beats held by ‘artificial’ constraints, nor in tonal sequences bound by classical rules of consonance and

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<sup>393</sup> Debussy speaking, in Samson, J., in CD liner notes, in *Debussy: Images, Nocturnes* Dutoit Montréal, p. 3. He also stated that the pieces were ‘an experiment in the various arrangements that can be made with a single colour – like the study of grey in painting,’ perhaps alluding to Whistler’s paintings, in Cox, D., *Debussy Orchestral Music: BBC Publications*, p. 19.

<sup>394</sup> Water sirens or sprites were to be a theme Debussy returned to in *Ondine*, in the *Douze Préludes II* in 1913 proving yet again Debussy’s love of the mystic and pagan Nature, – whether sea, wind or forests, – his music containing many ‘allusions to water, to its ripples and the flitting figures darting capriciously, splashing gracefully...’ in Schmitz, E. Robert, in *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, p. 178. The polytonality used over both wider expanses and applied to smaller motives aptly conveys the fluidity of the piece, and brings to mind the elusive nature of the water sprites as they are at play in the waves, making use of colour and timbre in such ways as they appear to dictate structure.

<sup>395</sup> Cox, D., *Debussy Orchestral Music: BBC Publications*, pp. 20 – 23.

<sup>396</sup> Thompson, O., *Debussy Man And Artist*, pp. 321-2.

<sup>397</sup> See also a reference to Debussy’s use of the pedal as a ‘sort of breathing,’ analogous to the ever-pulsating beat of waves, in Long, M., *At the Piano with Debussy*, p. 19.

<sup>398</sup> *Debussy letters*, 184, in ‘Debussy’s ‘rhythmicised time,’ by Trezise, S., in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 12, p. 233.

<sup>399</sup> Letter from Debussy to Durand, *Debussy Letters*, p.184, in Kelly, Barbara L., ‘Debussy’s Parisian affiliations’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 2, p. 31.

dissonance and cadential structures. As Long affirms, ‘It is living water that plays with the limitations of bars.’<sup>400</sup>

Whilst semiquavers and arpeggio figures were used to conjure up the fluidity necessary to suggest a scene of wateryness in piano pieces such as *Jardins sous la pluie* from the *Estampes* (1903,) and *Poissons d’or*, from the *Images II* of 1907, Debussy makes full use of whole-tone and pentatonic colours set against chromatic progressions in the latter, effectively orchestrating the instrument for two different piano noises over three staves, so that every nuance can be captured in the piano’s flowing lines of transparent water juxtaposed against the fishes darting movements. In the *Douze Preludes I* of 1910 and the *Douze Preludes II* published in 1913, each piece engenders its own inner self-propulsion, or impelling musical waves, Debussy being interested ‘not so much in the single tone... as in the patterns of resonance which that tone set up around itself’<sup>401</sup> and the resulting atmosphere, particularly relevant to the portrayal and soundscape of pieces such as *La Cathédrale engloutie*.<sup>402</sup> These were novel approaches that came to connote Debussy’s sensitivity towards watery subjects in their many guises, such as the curved lines of *Bruyères*<sup>403</sup> (heather) and the mutable, flowing sounds of *Brouillards* (fog).<sup>404</sup> In acts of seeming alchemy he used a plurality of keys containing ‘conflicting tonalities’ such as minor 2<sup>nd</sup> sonorities and harmonic textures as well as the aforementioned modes to depict scenes in constant evolution, like the shifting nature of his subjects. These were processes that Debussy developed throughout his life, whether engaged in his song cycles,<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> Long, M., *At the Piano with Debussy*, p. 86.

<sup>401</sup> E. Robert Schmitz, ‘A Plea for the Real Debussy,’ *The Etude* (December 1937) p. 782, in Dunoyer, C., in ‘Debussy and Early Debussystes at the piano,’ in *Debussy in Performance*, Ed. by Briscoe, James R., ch. 5, p. 115.

<sup>402</sup> The title is to be found at the end as a possibly ambiguous means of questioning the music’s allusion, or otherwise to enable the pianist to respond intuitively and individually, prior to determining Debussy’s own ideas for each work. It is a significant fact, because it lends the pieces a ‘programmatic’ element and hints at the ‘rationale’ and ‘feelings’ behind them, notwithstanding Debussy’s antipathy for generally ‘imitative’ music.

<sup>403</sup> It has a sense of the sea about it too, according to Long: ‘With his keen sense of smell, Debussy could feel the sea even from the midst of the woods. He united its odour with that of the ‘Celtic bushes’ which are so prolific under the great pines...’ often to be found growing on the coastal plains, such as in Brittany. In Long, M., *At the Piano with Debussy*, p. 68.

<sup>404</sup> Contemporaries such as Alfred Cortot and Suarès, commented that ‘Debussy makes harmony from all that is vaporous, fluid or cloudlike,’ in *ibid*, p. 67.

<sup>405</sup> These ranged from the *Fêtes galantes* of 1882-3 to the *Ariettes oubliées* of 1888, the *Cinq poèmes de Baudelaire* of 1890, the *Trois Chansons de Bilitis* of 1898, his own *Proses Lyriques* of 1893, a later *Fêtes galantes II* of 1904, *Trois Chansons de France* also of that year, *Trois*

which were integral to his oeuvre, or in his move towards greater abstraction in the ballet *Jeux*.

Debussy's extension of tonality, taken together with the importance of modality as a means of producing sonorous waves, was already permeating the atmosphere of songs such as *Le Jet d'Eau* (a Baudelaire poem) in 1889, where the composer uses the dominant ninth to great effect, (as in *Jeux de vagues*), so that 'if anything,' its chords became 'the consonances upon which the preceding dissonances resolve.'<sup>406</sup> The material itself is used as a means of emphasizing the spatial movement of sound, underlining Debussy's preoccupation with the flow of sinuous modes and the metamorphosis of time that was mastered in his rendition of Mallarmé's *Prélude de L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, (1892) and *Pelléas et Mélisande*,<sup>407</sup> his only finished opera, but was to come to fruition in *La mer* seven years later, embodying the composer's process of 'interminable flow'<sup>408</sup> – the augmentations and diminutions of his modal

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*Chansons de Charles d'Orléans* of 1908, and several later albums, continuing throughout Debussy's career. Mystical themes encompassing the composer's love of Nature and water in poems such as *En Sourdine* from Théodore de Banville, *Flots, Palmes, Sables*, and *Fleur Des Eaux* from Armand Renaud's *Poèmes de l'Amour et de la Mer*, Baudelaire's *Le Jet D'Eau*, Verlaine's *La mer est plus belle* and Tristan L'Hermite's much earlier *La Grotte* enabled the composer to portray the voice and piano in a new relationship which lent itself to fluidity and ever-shifting moods, echoing Mallarmé's aims for the 'Musicalisation of poetry.' Debussy's poems and the extent of his poetic nature to be found in Cobb, M. G., *The Poetic Debussy: A Collection of His Song Texts and Selected Letters*, Collected and annotated by Margaret G. Cobb, Transl. by Miller, R., (Boston, Northeastern University, 1982), particularly pp. xi-xx, and Lesure, F., in 'Debussy and the Currents of Ideas,' in *Debussy, Claude*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.csiisias1.uea.ac.uk> (Accessed on 06/10/2009), pp. 4-8.

<sup>406</sup> Nichols, R. *Debussy: Oxford Studies of Composers* (10), p. 12. He also comments that this particular chord became even more prevalent than the dominant 7<sup>th</sup> in acquiring a life of its own within Debussy's work.

<sup>407</sup> This was written in 1902 and based on Maeterlinck's play, – an 'ideal libretto, a grey dream-world sheltered from the shoutings of *verismo*,' in Nichols, R. *Debussy: Studies of Composers* (10) p. 34. Also see Richard Langham Smith's depiction of water as 'mirroring the different stages in the psychological development of the drama,' echoing similarities from the tales of Edgar Allan Poe:

'It is an aspect of *Pelléas* to which Debussy's reaction was strong. In the changing moods of the sea in Act I; in the love scenes by the well; in the stagnant tarns and the bright sea-air with which they contrast; even in the clouds passing over the entrance to the sea-cave – here are the sources of the water-imagery which was to preoccupy Debussy throughout his life.' Expressive musical language represents both the 'idea motifs' of the opera's love language and the dualism of the forest and water-places against which the action takes place, the whole-tone scale and chromaticisms subtly characterising the themes. In Langham Smith, R., 'The Play and its playwright,' in Nichols, R., and Langham Smith, R., *Pelléas et Mélisande: Cambridge Opera Handbooks* (Cambridge, New York, New Rochelle, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1989), ch. 1, p. 10, and Langham Smith, R., 'Motives and Symbols,' in *ibid*, ch. 4, p. 104.

<sup>408</sup> Gunnell, J., 'Commonalities between Mallarmé, Debussy, and their *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, 2008, in <http://jonathangunnell.com/?p=125> (Accessed on 08/01/2010), p. 2.

complexities enabled his music to slither into regions that he alone conceived on such a scale.

Debussy's preferences towards a free development of wave-like sonorities and arabesques and his visual inspirations are made clear in an article about the 'Prix de Rome from a Musical Point of View,' written in *Musica* in May 1903, when he opines:

Music is a mysterious mathematical process whose elements are a part of Infinity. It is allied to the movement of the waters, to the play of curves described by the changing breezes. Nothing is more musical than a sunset! <sup>409</sup>

Furthermore, in a letter to Edwin Evans he muses:

Perhaps it is better that music should by simple means – a chord? A curve? – try and render successive impulses and moods as they occur rather than make laborious efforts to follow a symphonic development which is laid down in advance and therefore always arbitrary, and to which one will inevitably be tempted to sacrifice the development of feelings...That's why there is no 'guiding thread' in *Pelléas*, and why the characters are not subjected to the slavery of the leitmotif. <sup>410</sup>

Debussy's knowledge of the writings of Charles Henry, the mathematician whose work was championed by the Symbolists, – brought to the fore ideas which contemplated music in terms of curves and shape, as mentioned previously; the composer's theories of 'mysterious harmony' were thus more than mere pedantry. As mentioned previously, he was particularly aware of the link between architecture and expression, – *forme et sensation*, – and explicit references occur in some of his correspondence, such as his review of Paul Dukas's Piano Sonata, which states,

If you look at the third part of this sonata, you'll find, underneath the apparently picturesque exterior, a powerful force that controls, almost imperceptively, the rhythmic tensions as if by a steel spring (*un mécanisme d'acier*). You could even say that the emotions themselves are a

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<sup>409</sup> *Debussy on Music: The Critical Writings of the Great French Composer Claude Debussy*, Collected and Introd. by François Lesure, Trans. and Ed. by Richard Langham Smith, p. 199.

<sup>410</sup> Langham Smith, R., 'Motives and Symbols,' in Nichols, R., and Langham Smith, R., *Pelléas et Mélisande*, ch. 4, p. 81. Letter printed in full in Appendix. (pp.184-6), written on the 18.IV/09 to the critic Edward Evans, prior to the English première of *Pelléas* at Covent Garden on 21 May 1909.

structural force, for the piece evokes a beauty comparable to the most perfect lines found in architecture.<sup>411</sup>

This links expression directly with form, and as Howat postulates, introduces the telling analogy of a spring.<sup>412</sup> Certainly the idea of curves/line in music can be applied directly to much of *La mer* and water pieces such as *L'isle joyeuse* and *Reflets dans l'eau*, and seems likely to have been a logical extension of Debussy's profound interest in the temperament of pieces, and their link with the arithmetical proportions and esoteric and mystical associations in Symbolism and other philosophical beliefs.<sup>413</sup> In an extrapolation of this, it would be difficult to believe that the continual wave-shaped forms and soaring/plunging contours on the staff were *not* a deliberate ploy to be used in Debussy's armoury of visual references and associations, as well as musical lines. As Jann Pasler remarks, his interest in musical line, which he referred to as the 'musical arabesque,' and as 'arabesques intertwining to produce *melodic harmony*,'<sup>414</sup> was stirred by hearing a Palestrina mass performed in the church of Saint-Gervais in 1893. Writing in the *Revue blanche* on 1 May 1901, he explains that

The primitives – Palestrina, Vittoria, Orlando di Lasso, etc. – had this divine sense of the arabesque. They found the basis of it in Gregorian chant, whose delicate tracery they supported with twining counterpoints. In reworking the arabesque, Bach made it more flexible, more fluid, and despite the fact that the Great Master always imposed a rigorous discipline on beauty, he imbued it with a wealth of free fantasy so limitless that it still astonishes us today...In Bach's music, it is not the character of the melody that affects us, but rather the curve. More often still

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<sup>411</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 173.

<sup>412</sup> Howat argues that this is linked to his perception of a GS spiral in Debussy's first and third movements of *La mer*, in *ibid*, p. 173.

<sup>413</sup> These included the possibly 'cabbalistic and other hidden connotations of ...numbers themselves on the one hand, and, on the other, the more practical use of numbers in shaping and balancing forms.' Howat discusses the evidence for this in support of his theory for Golden Section within Debussy's works. In *ibid*, p. 164.

<sup>414</sup> In a letter to Prince Poniatowski, cited in his *D'un siècle a l'autre* (Paris, 1948) and in *Claude Debussy, Debussy on Music*, Collect. and Introd. by Francois Lesure, Trans. and Ed. by Richard Langham Smith (New York: Knopf, 1977), n.1, p.31 in Pasler, J., 'Timbre, Voice-leading, and the Musical Arabesque in Debussy's Piano Music,' in *Debussy in Performance*, Ed. by Briscoe, James R., p. 225.

it is the parallel movement of several lines whose fusion stirs our emotions – whether fortuitous or contrived.<sup>415</sup>

Subtle and often unconscious integration of ideas played a part in the composer's perceptions – influences such as the Javanese gamelan, with its multiplicity of simultaneous lines – which he sought to emulate in compositions such as *La mer*. These lines 'reflect a variety of principles – melodic, timbral, and abstract linear – all of which contribute to a constant renewal of balance and equilibrium in Debussy's music,'<sup>416</sup> and formed the building blocks to his experiments with musical form. They propel each section onwards and aid the formation of a 'coalescence' of sound-colour, as Pasler describes it. Debussy emphasized the curves and arabesques in his music to achieve a merging of 'colours' that would evoke the feelings he wished to convey. In the main his preference was for a French art, as exemplified by Couperin and Rameau<sup>417</sup> – in short lyrical, elegant, and with a lightness of spirit and wit. Debussy achieved an integration of design and purpose in *La mer* from an 'essentially mosaic structure' building multiple lines and textures that portrayed the ocean's fluidity and temperament.

Debussy's love of music and nature were synonymous. He professed radical ideas concerning the expansion of music's expressive potential, responding in *La revue blanche* on 1 June 1901 with an article entitled 'Open Air Music' proposing 'the composition of music as an act of communion with nature':<sup>418</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> Claude Debussy, 'Good Friday,' *La revue blanche* (May 1901), in *Debussy on Music*, 27, in Pasler, J., 'Timbre, Voice-leading, and the Musical Arabesque in Debussy's Piano Music,' in *Debussy in Performance*, Ed. by Briscoe, James R., pp. 225-226. Also see pp. 19-20 of this paper.

<sup>416</sup> The *Arabesques* for piano (1888-91) and the *Suite Bergamasque* (1890-1905) exemplified this, with their 'delicately balanced waves of sound arching several octaves,' to drive forward the music's momentum, as well as the orchestral *La mer*, completed the same year, 1905, in Pasler, J., 'Timbre, Voice-leading, and the Musical Arabesque in Debussy's Piano Music,' in *ibid*, pp. 226-227.

<sup>417</sup> This was characterized by 'formal conciseness, more episodic expression, clarity of thought and feeling, careful and precise craftsmanship... an uncomplicated love of pleasure... a voluptuous enjoyment of sound as sound... an enjoyment too of colour for its own sake,' in Cox, D., *BBC Musical Guides: Debussy Orchestral Music*, p. 25.

<sup>418</sup> Simeone, N., 'Debussy and expression,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Simon Trezise, ch. 6, p. 115.

I envisage the possibility of a music especially written for the open air, flowing in bold, broad lines from both the orchestra and the voices. It would resound through the open spaces and float joyfully over the top of the trees...<sup>419</sup>

Debussy declared his passionate love for music again towards the end of his life:

And it is out of love for it that I try to release it from those sterile traditions which stifle it. It is a free, vibrant art, an open-air art, an art which measures up to the elements, to the wind, the sky, the sea! We must not turn it into a closed and academic art.<sup>420</sup>

Debussy's awareness of the problems of notation in meeting such an ideal, led him to be exceedingly resourceful with regard to musical directions. He sought to bring the music of *La mer* to life by annotating dynamic instructions for virtually every bar, in a precision that was hitherto unprecedented; the 'Très soutenu – Retenu – au Mouvt – Cédez – En animant' section between bars 133 and 187 onwards of the *Dialogue* actualises a temporal moving wave. The directions 'Quasi una cadenza' and *ondoyant et expressif* from *L'isle joyeuse*, and the 'doux et fluide' from *La Cathédrale engloutie*, ensure the freedom he desired for such sections, bringing the performer nearer to the composer's aspirations.<sup>421</sup> However, his search for truth is in the end defined by feelings – the all-important barometer for Debussy.<sup>422</sup>

In the main, Debussy preferred to create his own musical language in the depiction of water. Jean Barraqué, an early biographer, uses the term 'open form' to refer to Debussy's music from *La mer* onwards, and because of this

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<sup>419</sup> Lesure, F., Collect. and Intro. *Debussy on Music: The Critical Writings of the Great French Composer Claude Debussy*, Trans. and Ed. by Richard Langham Smith pp. 40-1.

<sup>420</sup> Interview with *Excelsior* (18 January 1911) in *Monsieur Croche et autres écrits*, in Potter, C., 'Debussy and nature', in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 8, p. 151.

<sup>421</sup> Debussy also used metronome marks, but sparingly, since he had no confidence that the essence of a piece would be interpreted correctly if they were followed religiously: 'you know what I think of metronome marks: they're right for a single bar, like "roses, with a morning's life." Only there are "those" who don't hear music and who take these marks as authority to hear it still less!' In a letter to Jacques Durand sent from Pourville on 9 October 1915, in *Debussy Letters*, p. 305, in Simeone, N. 'Debussy and expression,' in *ibid*, ch. 6, p. 107.

<sup>422</sup> On 13 January 1907 he wrote to Manuel de Falla about the problems he was experiencing in relation to the score of the *Danses* for harp and orchestra: 'It's not possible to write down the exact form of a rhythm, any more than it is to explain the different effects of a single phrase! The best thing, I think, is to be guided by how you feel...The colour of the two dances seems to me to be clearly defined.' Falla was about to give a performance of a piano version of the *Danses*. In *Debussy Letters*, p. 176, in *ibid*, ch. 6, p.116 and n. 58 p. 299.

organicism it has been less obvious for analysts to determine what structures ‘hold it up’ – how the contrasts of delays and propulsions are achieved. New fields of musical ‘architecture’ make it possible to see Debussy’s water music as waves of sonorous sound,<sup>423</sup> their improvisatory flexibility intuitively felt in an experience of perpetual ‘Becoming’ that resists easy classification.<sup>424</sup>

Debussy’s music does not go back on itself in the repetitive sense, rather it continually unfurls in an evolutionary way, creating the effect of waves in the listener’s mind. As I have shown, this is due to the myriad of devices used by the composer to propel the music onwards. Ternary forms naturally evoke an impression of waves, as already defined by Howat with regard to *De l’aube à midi sur la mer*,<sup>425</sup> since their statement and return contain a swell of ‘otherness,’ whilst the thematic use of motives in rolling patterns and multiple lines do the same on a large scale. But Debussy’s waves are in the detail as well as the overall impression. The score of *La mer* particularly is demonstrative of this fact. The configuration of notes/groups of notes on the stave show clear wave delineations ascending, descending and forming patterns of waves, such as the woodwind figure at bar 69 onwards of *De l’aube*, on its way to the climax of bar 76, and the rising cellos from figure 8 that accompany these, as well as their ascending ostinatos at points such as bar 100 when they are used to build tension together with dynamic accumulation. The motivic development of the pentatonic Motive A1 of this movement is also demonstrable as a swelling wave figure at bar 68. Likewise, harp figures are often used by the composer to portray the liquidity of passages, such as the climax at figure 11 onwards. The harp in fact plays an inimitable part in *La mer*; not only does it produce huge arpeggiating figures that create immense visual waves on the page – at figure 14

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<sup>423</sup> See p. 89, n. 206 of this paper.

<sup>424</sup> ‘In other words the naked past-ness of the past, prevents the “same” from remaining exactly the same; this continuous conditioning, in the process of Becoming, assumes the form of a continuous alteration...In concrete terms, the return of the theme signifies,...the poetry of recollection, fulfilled expectation, the joy of finding a friend whom one has missed. ...hearing again, playing again, become modes whereby to discover, interminably, new relationships or subtle correspondences’ ... in Jankélévitch, V., Trans. by Abbate, C., *music and the ineffable*, p. 24.

<sup>425</sup> See Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 74, in which he identifies this phenomenon in relation to *La mer*’s first movement: ‘As already seen in *L’isle joyeuse*, a ternary or arch sequence is essentially a wave form, and in this case the large-scale wave of the complete arch sequence could be considered to have its impetus built up gradually by the formal momentum generated by the two preparatory ternary sequences – the whole section being an expanding sequence of three wave-like arch forms.’

onwards of the first movement for example – it is used as a unique determinant of *Jeux de vagues*' identity. Its appearance as an enormous wave at figure 20 of that movement, isolated on the stave from other protruding sounds, gives it an incomparable quality and importance as the fluid expression of water at its most volatile. At bar 229 it similarly affects a closure, in a sense acting as a cadence, before finally moving over sets of treble staves, continuing over the barline at bars 247 onwards – a device also used by Debussy in the bass at bar 72 onwards of *La Cathédrale engloutie*, to achieve the supple freedom of flowing water.

The rising waves of strings at figure 45 of the *Dialogue* infer the sea's mysterious duality of eternal presence as well as constant evolution, in their whole tone passages of sustained eeriness. Their spectral scales unleash a climbing episode of momentum that carries the introduction of the third movement into the full passions of turbulence to follow. The tonality of *La mer* in fact plays a large part in realising its fluidity and wave formation. Since the pentatonic theme of the opening bars, the acoustic scale of Motive A2 at figure 3 and whole tone harmonies of bar 28 onwards, Debussy makes it clear that these 'floating' harmonies operate to conjure up his feelings for the ocean. They are seemingly independent of any firm 'tonalities' designated by the key signature, although my graphs in Appendixes IV-VI demonstrate an interesting selection of waves that are formed when D flat major is taken as the equilibrium.<sup>426</sup> It functions as the surface of the water, as it were, whilst Debussy's tonal/modal harmonies perform as waves above and below the level of that water. This is why Motive E in the chorale of the last movement possesses such a sense of homecoming and euphoric return within the music, as the diatonic harmonies of D flat major are reached. The seductive powers of Motive H's tritone in *Jeux de vagues*, the C-F sharp tritone occupying the first 44 bars of the harmony to *Dialogue*, and the prevalence of augmented 4ths to almost the last bar of the piece – (G natural appearing in the bass at 284 before the final undulating wave of A flat/D flat harmonies at bar 286) – help to ensure that the dualities of Debussy's harmonies continue to the very end of *La mer*. Motive H is especially insinuating as it percolates through the layers and

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<sup>426</sup> (The overall key that links *De l'aube*'s First Principal Section and its Coda with the *Dialogue*'s Interlude with chorale at bar 133, its central climax at figure 56 and the piece's final climax and finale at bar 254 onwards).

textures of the second movement, whilst Motive X's cyclic nature aids the onward progression of themes and musical narrative, culminating with a huge regenerative wave to the final climax. It not only accumulates to the very end of the piece, but is accompanied by dynamic waves of mounting intensity. Thus tonal and thematic waves are heard because of the intricate relationships Debussy forges between every aspect of his music's composition. Careful gradation of dynamics allied to tonalities and themes allowed for such a synthesis. Nothing is left to chance, with performers given explicit instructions and phrasing marks that ensure the listener hears the music as waves of sound. This is also evident in *Reflets dans l'eau*, where the phrase marks form crossing waves on the page from bar 60, which is visually very striking, and the hemidemisemi-quavers of bars 48 onwards display slanting *crescendo/diminuendo* marks that are themselves evocative of an expanding wave. These are reminiscent of the harp parts already mentioned in *Jeux de vagues*, at figure 20, their unearthly call made all the more so because of the *glissando* direction.

Other tonal/modal artifices Debussy uses to link the movements include the B flat held aloft at the end of *De l'aube* – taken up as a dominant ninth in *Jeux de vagues* at bar 28 and the glockenspiel C# of Movement II's final chord – perhaps as a lead in to the aforementioned tritone harmony of Movement III. As I mentioned previously with regard to the *Faune* and *Pelléas*, as well as his piano pieces, Debussy's use of modes to expand creative potential within works enabled him to capture the effect of what sound to the ear like series of sonorous waves, their colours helping to form an overall cohesion to the piece as well as highlighting its peaks and troughs, so redolent of wave form. Apart from these strands of affinity, 'overlapping' devices such as the chordal texture in the flutes and clarinets at figure 21 of *Jeux de vagues* look both backwards and forwards to the next section in their ability to straddle both, in an intentional ambiguity that helps to meld new segments with older ones. This example in particular is used to introduce the new 'smooth sailing' K motive, whereas the trills of figure 19 are anticipated by those at the end of the introductory section at bars 31-5. The copious use of trills throughout *La mer* – which even begins with such a marking for the timpani, and extends for the first ten bars of 6/4 time, can be seen as an undulatory wave effect – as another means of suggesting water and waves. It is an unusual instruction for percussive

instruments, but given again at bar 132 for the cymbals on the lead-in to the finale of *De l'aube*, and performs a similar function at bar 126 of *Jeux de vagues*. Violin trills in the latter are used again as an 'overlapping' form at figure 33 and the ten bars which precede it. Their role in the introduction to *L'isle joyeuse*, accompanied by pauses, sets the tone of the whole piece and immediately suggests a watery ethos to reflect the title.

Debussy's arabesques, such as the flute exemplar evolving at bar 47 of Movement I, follow a weaving line that could be termed an 'erotic' wave that extends and develops but ultimately returns to its source. Its elusiveness perhaps captures the ephemeral nature of the individual wave and ties it to pieces such as *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, *The little shepherd* and *Syrinx*, whilst encapsulating its changeable nature. It does not seem coincidental that the 1<sup>st</sup> violin follows with a similarly charged solo at figure 6, in the yielding and mysterious 'Cédez' section of *De l'aube*. Even Debussy's chromatic extracts often follow an undulating path that traces a wave outline, such as that of bars 189-90 of the finale, or the earlier complex passage beginning at figure 47, both in the violins.

As mentioned previously, the essence of Debussy's art lies in the detail he employed, as well as the large-scale dynamic waves and tonal/thematic considerations. The augmented 4<sup>th</sup> interval/tritone that is present throughout can be seen as a wave in itself, both in its shape on the page and in its execution. The grace notes appearing across the woodwind parts from bars 104-118 of the *Dialogue* in descending tritones are evocative of falling waves, the crochets and minims they are attached to redolent of the troughs between, whilst Motive X in the bassoons and cellos has a highly articulated version of the tritone. The use of dotted rhythmic passages to elicit a rocking wave pattern (from bar 94) continues in the ostinato strings, accompanying the themes for a total of 25 bars in a visually striking quaver/dotted quaver/semiquaver figure that falls and rises in octave leaps over the stave, somewhat reminiscent of a similar figure at bars 105-121 of *De l'aube*. Along with the scalic accumulations of the strings at bars 100-103 of the latter and passages such as the wind/string dialogue of *Jeux de vagues* at bars 72-76, one cannot but help think of waves and feel their exciting crashes, just as the emotion contained within *La Cathédrale engloutie* suffuses the spirit with its shimmering chords.

Other devices that help to determine the watery ethos of *La mer* are the frequent use of tremolos, especially in the strings to capture varied effects, such as the very gradual undulations in the introduction to the piece, whereas those at bars 1-6 of *Jeux de vagues* are set out as two huge waves on the stave ‘dans un rythme très souple’ with individual dynamics to each note, highlighting its flexible, mutable qualities. The 22-bar rocking tremolo bass from bar 157 of Movement III is an elongated oscillation of tonalities, further encouraging this pictorial association. Extended *glissando* passages such as the harps at bar 179 of the *Dialogue* or those in the concluding ‘Lent’ bars of *Reflets dans l’eau* stimulate the imagination of the listener to hear trickling water, expressed vertically by small waves printed on the page. Arpeggiating glockenspiels and harps at figure 21 of Movement II and the harps traversing across staves and barlines here and at bars 155-160, as well as their expanded sequence at bar 171 onwards of *Jeux de vagues* are additional examples of Debussy’s imaginative ingenuity.

Pierre Boulez regarded *La mer*’s central movement – *Jeux de vagues* – as its most interesting, being ‘bold and radical’ in its conception and in its ‘elegant, condensed, and elliptical timbre,’ at a time when its ‘elegance of syntax was so revolutionary.’<sup>427</sup> Multiple patterns appear to operate within a ‘thematic wilderness,’ so that Roger Nichols asks, ‘Have the motivic procedures of the *String Quartet*’ and of *Pelléas*’ been so refined as to evade almost completely the clumsy investigations of the human intellect?’<sup>428</sup> For Debussy, sound was always enough though, whatever analysts might make of his work.

I have taken a different approach to Debussy’s music from that of previous analysts by endeavouring to show an alternative means of exploring his psyche and imaginative discourse. Roger Nichols identified the pervasive pattern of three notes in *Reflets dans L’eau*,<sup>429</sup> as being a ‘wave’ and Marguerite Long uses a ‘wave’ analogy when writing about *L’isle joyeuse*;<sup>430</sup> many other commentators including Lockspeiser and Howat have made similar observations. However, I have taken the idea of waves to be far more pervasive

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<sup>427</sup> Nichols, R., *Debussy: Oxford Studies of Composers (10)*, p. 57.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>429</sup> See page 66 and note 172 of this paper.

<sup>430</sup> See page 40 and note 146 of this paper.

in Debussy's music in general, but particularly so in the water pieces, where the composer uses every possible means at his disposal to produce the fluidity necessary to truly communicate his feelings to the listener. He ensures that this is realized in performance by conveying *all* aspects of musical instruction on the written page, even to the extent of a visual consciousness in the alignment and pattern of his notes and symbols. On an 'interior' level, I have shown how Debussy used modal spontaneity to create flowing lines and curves which audibly become waves of sound, helped by ternary and free forms as well as motivic and thematic developments which bolster this effect of 'continual autogenesis.'<sup>431</sup> Huge dynamic swells aid a largely *pianissimo* palette to arouse those feelings of waves within us which perhaps accord with the human heartbeat. Listeners to Debussy's music – especially his representation of water themes – thus hear the boundless waves that prevail within them, which I have shown to exist in my examination of his piano pieces and *La mer* in a myriad of different ways.<sup>432</sup>

Whether Debussy's music really contains waves, or whether they are audible and visible to me because of my own views and feelings for the music is a matter for conjecture. Certainly the organic developments within the music, its fluidity and state of Becoming, coupled with Debussy's improvisatory style and known antipathy to academic analysis all encourage a different way of looking at his work – one that is led by feelings. Debussy's own playing of the piano was notably sensual, Karl Lahm writing that 'There was in his gentle playing a narcotic/erotic note, a sweet dreaminess like that of a woman's hand.'<sup>433</sup> When he played – invariably his own compositions – he 'entered into' the piano keys in a way which was both innovative<sup>434</sup> and was fully a reservoir for his own feelings. For Debussy his emotions were central to his own performance, and to

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<sup>431</sup> See Howat, *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, pp. 164-167, and pages 16-20 and 178-9 of this paper.

<sup>432</sup> Caroline Potter refers to these 'multitude of water figurations' as 'musical onomatopoeia,' in Potter, C., *Debussy and nature*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 8, p. 149.

<sup>433</sup> Lahm, K., 'Erinnerungen an Claude Debussy,' *Melos* 21 (November 1954), in Nichols, R., *Debussy Remembered*, p. 123, in Mc Quinn, J., *Exploring the erotic in Debussy's music*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., p. 121. Also quoted by Langham Smith, R., in 'Performance: Sound and Unsound ideals,' ch.1, in Briscoe, James R., Ed. *Debussy in Performance*, p. 3.

<sup>434</sup> (Although it built on Chopin's pianistic legacy). See Long, M., talking about *Reflets dans l'eau*, 1905, in *At the Piano with Debussy*, pp. 24-25.

his method of composing, of portraying those mysterious *correspondences* between Nature and his imagination. Indeed, in recollecting the master's words on how to play music, George Copeland states that he agreed:

It is necessary to abandon yourself completely, and let the music do as it will with you,<sup>435</sup> and all people come to music to seek oblivion.<sup>436</sup>

In this interpretation of Debussy's music, Roland Barthes has explored 'the sensual physicality of music in performance,' and the pleasure quotient that can be attached to it if musical history is viewed in such a way, calling for Julia Kristeva's 'notion of the *geno-song*' and markers such as 'the voluptuousness of its sounds-signifiers' to act as a different level of musical comprehension and experience.<sup>437</sup> If Debussy's music is perceived on a physical level, as 'something to be felt, not analysed,' then we may accord with Julie McQuinn's belief that he 'nudges us into the *geno-realm*, a realm in which his music resides naturally.'<sup>438</sup> Accepted rules of analysis do not help us to *know* such music, which is nearer to the 'dreams' of Lockspeiser in its essence and more akin to Debussy's own ethos, where he proclaims a desire for 'floating' chords through which one can 'travel where one wishes and leave by any door'<sup>439</sup> to provide a far more satisfactory sense of recognition and understanding. Because the pitch contours of Debussy's music evoke feelings, they are the nearest equivalent to the subject matter Debussy contemplated in his imagination, thus his water music directly portrays the ripples, waves, plunging torrents, eddies and whirlpools and the overwhelming powers of the deep evinced so realistically in

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<sup>435</sup> George Copeland, 'Debussy, the man I knew,' *The Atlantic Monthly* (January 1955), in Nichols, *Debussy Remembered*, p. 167, in Mc Quinn, J., *Exploring the erotic in Debussy's music*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 7, p. 120.

<sup>436</sup> Claude Debussy, 'The Orientation of Music,' *Musica* (October 1902), in *Debussy on Music*, p. 85, in *ibid*, ch. 7, p. 120.

<sup>437</sup> Julie McQuinn examines these points in her discussion of the erotic in Debussy's music. She notes: 'Kristeva's *pheno-song* refers to everything related to 'communication, representation, expression, everything which it is customary to talk about, which forms the tissue of cultural values (the matter of acknowledged tastes, of fashions, of critical commentaries); in Barthes, *Image – Music – Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977) p. 182, in *ibid*, ch. 7, p. 121.

<sup>438</sup> Mc Quinn, J., *Exploring the erotic in Debussy's music*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, Ed. by Trezise, S., ch. 7, p. 121.

<sup>439</sup> Debussy speaking, ref. in Lockspeiser, E., *Debussy: His Life and Mind*, vol. 1, pp. 206-7, in *ibid*, p. 122. Also see Lockspeiser, E., *Debussy: His Life and Mind*, vol. II, 1902-1918, pp. 240-243, in which the author talks about the sensuous use of chords that 'merely exist in space, or more precisely in musical time,' such as the 'rootlessness' of chords in *La Cathédrale engloutie*, – only their direction relieving 'the bleak hinterland of the imagination.'

*La mer*. That the twenty-first century listener is more in touch with his/her feelings than matters of musical analysis means that Debussy's music speaks directly to the *geno-type* of the modern psyche, occupying a privileged place therein.

In conclusion, 'the enigmatic way Debussy "captures pictorial associations of sound in the identity of space and time"<sup>440</sup> was more than providential. Debussy certainly took enormous trouble to achieve the precise effects of mood and atmosphere that he desired. His evocation of 'feelings' was only achieved through a rigorous compositional process, and whether this made use of entirely intuitive knowledge or involved careful schematic procedures is currently a matter for debate.<sup>441</sup> An amalgam of the two seems probable in view of research to date. The numerous evolutions of dynamic and thematic wave patterns as delineated hitherto, their kaleidoscope of discrete impressions that filter through all levels of Debussy's music, and not least their very visible physical representation by the shape of notation upon the stave, only serve to perpetuate this debate of realities and illusions as perceived by Debussy's devotees.

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<sup>440</sup> Eimert, 1961, 9, speaking in Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 105.

<sup>441</sup> See note 13 of this paper.

## Appendix I

### 'La Cathédrale engloutie' (Douze Préludes I 1910)

*La Cathédrale engloutie* is the tenth of the first set of piano *Préludes*, written in 1910, and generally felt to have been more brilliant than the second set of 1913, particularly in their orchestration of the piano. Schmitz remarks that 'In writing *préludes*, Debussy continues the natural evolution of this form,' to which he 'added a complexity of materials and a completeness of form, which, without losing its essential characteristic of brevity, brought the prelude to its highest form of development.'<sup>442</sup> Their structural framework is not 'preconceived,' although it often outlines a basic ternary form; – perhaps this is responsible for the outcome, which appears to be organic, 'generated by the materials, by the palette Debussy elects – waves of engendering waves, an unbeatable logic within the structure of which the end product, under Debussy's control, attains on all points the demands of classical aesthetics.'<sup>443</sup>

Within the music to *Cathédrale*, Debussy uses Phrygian modality with 'guttled' chords in parallel fourths and octaves, seemingly to evoke this structure from the mists of the past. It is only allowed to rise again and be seen at sunrise according to legend, and the use of this mode and the pentatonic conjures up the sound of 'archaic plainsong,'<sup>444</sup> whilst the later sonorous colouring by C major brings the apparition of the Cathedral into full view.<sup>445</sup> Overlaying this tonal centre of C, Debussy uses one of his favourite devices, that of major seconds, to resonate as his depiction of bells sounding. The pedal is used with infinite variety, both in the layers of voices and in their emphasis, bringing increased depth to harmonies or aiding modulations – but perhaps of most interest to this paper are the moving points – reminiscent of waves lapping around the ancient stones.

Howat surmises that *La Cathédrale engloutie*, as one of several 'larger, complete musical edifices more akin to the *Images*,'<sup>446</sup> rather than the brevity

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<sup>442</sup> Schmitz, E. R., *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, p. 129.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid, p. 130.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid, p. 156.

<sup>445</sup> See analysis in *ibid*, p. 157.

<sup>446</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 158.

typical of the genre, ‘with one exception follows an arch form, ABCBA, with the main divisions at bars 28, 47, 72 and 84... the two outer portions forming introduction and coda.’<sup>447</sup> A clear arch form is visible in the structural proportions of the piece, although the 27-bar introduction is a departure from the purest form, creating its own individual ternary sequence as well, (divisions being at bars 6, 13 and 27,) with bars 7-13 forming an anticipation of the central C section, (bars 47-72,) – a ‘wave within a wave’ as Howat postulates. The ABCBA form itself is a distinctive wave-shape, particularly when viewed in conjunction with the ascending/descending chords that swell from the beginning and are most noticeable in bars 14-15, 22-25 and 28-41 for example. Dynamically, too, *La Cathédrale* produces two clear climactic waves at 22-41 and 60-63, accompanying the chordal theme, as well as wave-like projections by the left-hand as it undulates over the keyboard at bars 16-21 and in a notable prolongation of the C major theme from bars 72-83. The latter of these is marked *Flottant et sourd*, (floating and muffled/quietly), like an echo of what has gone before, indicating the relationship between this rolling pattern and that of bar 18, where almost the same figure is played out. Other instructions such as the *doux et fluide* example at bar 7 are particularly significant, coming as it does when the minim changes to a crochet beat, in another of Debussy’s ‘mysterious’ elements, since the tempo instructions are not given. Roy Howat discusses the import of this in his book *Debussy in proportion*,<sup>448</sup> but suffice to say, this clearly indicates the movement of water, *fluide* suggestive of its mercurial nature after the ‘Profondément calme’ of the cathedral’s structure. The directions are thus integral to the nature of the piece and its correct performance implications.

Tonally, the piece moves towards the tonic C major, but the key does not appear until bar 28. *La Cathédrale* begins instead on the dominant G in the bass, progressing gradually via F to E major at bar 7, with C sharp minor (enharmonic) tonalities in attendance. Both hands meanwhile are ascending within on ‘white’ notes (bars 1 and 3) making up a horizontal set of whole tones that only move further at bars 4-5 onwards, when E octave chords are restated before the harmonies modulate. After this, bar 13 sees the first B harmonies,

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<sup>447</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 159.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 159-162.

and a chordal wave that develops horizontally on white notes (*sans nuances*), juxtaposed with C major at bars 14-15, which are followed by a move to E flat major at bar 19. From this point, we arrive at G major in bar 22 and at a *sff* tonic entrance at bar 27. A rolling harmonic wave is therefore formed by two alternating passages, each with harmonic poles that are eventually resolved by the climax at C major (bar 28). The first falls by a third, from G (bar 1) to E (bar 5), whereas the second rises from B (bar 16) to G (bar 22), stressing the two polarities of possible E major/C sharp minor tonalities. Both of these blur the surroundings of the tonic key, aesthetically perhaps evoking the mystery and nebulous atmosphere of the sea haze enveloping the Cathedral, whilst aurally and visually producing a clear wave pattern. (See my tonal/modal graph and score for a clear demonstration of this).

The following chart illustrates the movement of these polarities.

<u>Descending</u>		<u>Rising</u>	
Bass G	Bars 1-2	Bass B	Bars 13-18
Bass F	Bars 3-4	Bass E flat	Bars 19-21
Bass E	Bars 5-13	Bass G	Bars 22-27

These two shifting waves thus move from the dominant towards the structurally sound chords of the tonic C major at bar 28, (although C tonalities have already appeared at bars 14-15 and bars 22-7). If Debussy had only used a C-C#-C progression on a long approach and descent, graphically there would only be a slight rise above the equilibrium of pitches, provided by the C# minor at almost the mid-way point, with other tonalities providing slightly bigger waves. By introducing bars such as 42-5 (B flat and A flat – enharmonically A# and G#), and 47-50 (A# perhaps indicating G# minor), he produces a piece that is distinctively different, – and very ‘Debussyan’ in flavour.

Given the above evaluation, the following table provides a structural overview of the music to *Cathédrale*.

<u>Section A</u>	<u>Section B</u>	<u>Section C</u>	<u>Section B</u>	<u>Section A</u>
Introduction				Coda
Bars 1-6	Bars 28-46	Bars 47-71	Bars 72-83	Bars 84-89
Bars 7-13				
Bars 14- 27				

### Synopsis

#### Section A Introduction Bars 1-27

##### Bars 1-6

##### Rhythm and Expression

The first instruction for *La Cathédrale engloutie* (The Cathedral engulfed/swallowed up) is ‘Profondément calme (Dans une brume doucement sonore),’ translated as profoundly/deeply calm, (in a gently sonorous /ringing/resonating mist). Continuous chords conjure up a soft, misty atmosphere at *pp*, and together with the pedal evoke a ‘hung over’ sound of time in perpetuity. This chordal structure, which Oscar Thompson refers to as the ‘tangible echo of medieval organum,’<sup>449</sup> is aurally predictive of the Cathedral, but is not fully evolved. The layers of sound give an orchestral effect, although they are not yet written on the three staves, which were to become a mark of the *Douze Préludes II*, and no direct tempo instruction is given.<sup>450</sup> The tied bass notes provide a permanent undertone of the cathedral’s

<sup>449</sup> Thompson, O., *Debussy Man and Artist*, p. 241.

<sup>450</sup> Howat discusses the import of this, in Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, pp. 159-162.

structure, sinking tonally every two bars, as the treble's chords hang in the air by means of 'open' tied crotchets.

### Melody and Harmony

Whilst we may suppose the lack of key signature to indicate C major, the tonic tonality only becomes clear at bar 28, after increasing hints from bar 22 onwards. The initial opening chords provide octaves on the supertonic D in the treble line, travelling upwards to the octave mediant E, which acts as a cliff-face or peak, both in sound and visually on the page, in that it is tied over the bar but the chord is not repeated. It is left hanging. In other words, this is a wave which grows upwards to a summit before the single bass line at bars 2 and 4 provides us with a rumbling trough or dip of sound, all travelling from dominant octave G opening chords. Throughout these bars, the octave chord chords contain 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> intervals for which Debussy was renowned, and are composed entirely of white notes, moving in a sense horizontally and comprising sets of whole tones. Bars 3-4 repeat this surge, but this time over a lower F tonality. The two upper parts of the right handed chords use consecutive fifths to point towards an eerie, atonal sound, with 'oriental' overtones – what Thompson refers to as 'escaped chords,' since they have 'escaped from the established harmony or tonality'. As he comments, these unrelated triads 'do not destroy the key but they do tend to produce a vagueness of tonality, a sense of wavering between keys, of hesitation as between major and minor' which in general was 'characteristic of Debussyan harmony,'<sup>451</sup> and which ran contrary to contemporary rules of music theory. The composer's experimentation with the piano's resonant qualities means that the piece is suffused with the pedal's ringing tones, extolling an inner realism to portray the most delicate sensations in Nature, devoid of imitative devices.

The E octave chords are subsumed within other harmonies in both treble and bass parts right up to bar 14, creating one of the harmonic poles mentioned previously, and delaying any early sense of arrival at the tonic. They have the effect of lifting the tonal mood ready for the next section.

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<sup>451</sup> Thompson, O., *Debussy Man and Artist*, p. 243.

### Register

The opening chord (repeated at bars 3 and 5, covers much of the bass and treble keyboard, thus suggesting both the depth and lightness of surface waves within its structure. The ascending chords that follow form layers within these two outer chord statements, traversing the middle range of the piano, their arrangement on the staff forming an obvious wave shape.

### Bars 7-13

#### Rhythm and Expression

Bars 7-13 form the second part of the ternary wave of the Introduction, and progress with soft undulations of sound at *pp* in anticipation of Section C at bars 47-72, producing the first dynamic swell at bar 11, which *crescendos* on the octave E before the *diminuendo* of bars 12-13. At bar 7, we have a minim = crochet direction, referred to in Howat's explanation<sup>452</sup> for the timing issue. This concords with the time signature of  $6/4 = 3/2$ , bars 7-14 to be played *Doux et fluide*. The following 7 bars may perhaps be seen therefore as the 'awakening' part of the music, suggested by Debussy's instruction. The fluidity of the passage is clearly indicative of water's mercurial nature, enhanced by the initial climax of the piece and suggestive of feelings and emotions mitigated by the imagination.

#### Melody and Harmony

The E pedal from bar 5 continues throughout bars 6-13, as well as being sustained in the treble, indicating the importance of the change to E major tonalities at bar 7 as a structural wave. However, C sharp tonalities are also hinted at, in preparation for bar 47. The D sharp seventh first hinted at in bar 8 recurs, along with other E major sounding tonalities, whilst the treble left hand indicates B major harmonies. The culmination of this section at bar 13 rests on B and E octave chords containing the disconcerting 4<sup>ths</sup> and 5<sup>ths</sup> again, containing typical Debussyan nuances within a restrained palette of *p* to *pp* dynamics.

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<sup>452</sup> See p. 2 and Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, pp. 159-62.

### Register

The chordal theme remains in the upper registers owing to the bass having moved to the treble stave at bar 5, alongside the E tonality. Thus the pitches are distinctively higher and generate a bright mood, perpetuated by the repetitive Es. This passage is almost transitional in transporting the theme towards the start of the main climax and much greater dynamic accumulations.

### Bars 14-27

#### Rhythm and Expression

These bars form the third part of the ternary introduction, and are anticipatory in their move towards the central C section, creating the aforementioned ‘wave within a wave,’ as Howat distinguishes.<sup>453</sup> Bars 14-15, *pp* and *sans nuances*, form a wide rolling arch or wave in crochets, which gives way to a 4-bar section ‘Peu a peu sortant de la brume,’ rolling quavers in the left hand indicating a move away from the enveloping mist, all within a finely graduated *pp/p* dynamic. The 6 sets of triplets per bar straightaway alter the disposition of the music, occurring in the bass line as ripples beneath the surface of the water, perceivable as the Cathedral ‘coming to life’ beneath the waves, assisted by two tonal shifts at bars 16 and 19.

Many cues as to the mood and feelings for the music are given by Debussy’s lexicography of the piece, as well as his dynamic markings. These are indicated as *sempre pp* and *p marqué*, for example, in bars 16-19, before the second tonal shift to E flat major. ‘Augmentez progressivement (Sans presser)’ – progressively ‘increasing’ but without speeding up, at bar 20, also alludes in an allegorical sense to a ‘raising up’ – the right hand following a clear undulating wave form whilst the left plunges down repeatedly, in a mirror image of bars 1 and 3, which sped in the reverse direction – except that the notes now have much shorter values and are therefore quicker and hastened by the occasional semiquaver group. These are also assisted by distinctive phrasing marks that become shorter after bar 17.

The *forte* reached at bar 22 refers us back to the minim chords in both hands, before the same pattern of gutted octave chords from earlier, (bars 14-15),

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<sup>453</sup> Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, p. 159.

follow. The treble forms a prescient run of falling tones before landing on the dominant, setting off the same pattern in the bass again. All are marked prominently for added effect, and reach their huge climax at the end of bar 27, with a *sff* marking the low G.

### Melody and Harmony

The B tonalities mark the beginnings of a tonally ascending wave now, moving to E flat major and then to G in bars 22 onwards. Prior to these, however, we see a brief excursion to a pivotal C tonic chord at bars 14-15, but it is overlain by B tonalities, cancelling out any premature arrival at the joyous C major theme. The BEB chord at the top of the visually distinctive wave of bar 15 is a reiteration of the chord it proceeded from, whilst clear layers of sound on both staves contain a preponderance of fifths in a statement of what has gone before. The inclusion of the B, a 2<sup>nd</sup>, is indicative of the many that are to appear in the piece, providing its dissonant flavour. Lockspeiser refers to the ‘rootlessness’ of these chords, indicated by Debussy’s direction *sans nuances*. For him, they form ‘a bland, almost expressionless region... the bleak hinterland of the imagination.’<sup>454</sup> These two bars in effect are almost a hiatus before the concluding part of the introductory ternary arrangement, which tonally is immediately noticeable for its copious use of accidentals.

Meanwhile, the emergent structure itself appears to plunge through the waves in a series of 4-note chords sharpened in a strongly B major indication (bars 16-18).<sup>455</sup> Three very similar bass patterns undulate downwards into a clear E flat major theme, with overtones of C minor chords (in parallel to the E major/C sharp minor middle section). This tonal shift, aided by the quicker plummeting left hand rhythms leads to a perceived heightening of tension towards the first climax at bar 22. A low E flat at bar 20 sustains the pedal point as the plunging bass drives onwards – its shorter semiquaver notes also ‘Augmentez progressivement (Sans presser).’

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<sup>454</sup> Lockspeiser, E., *Debussy: His Life And Mind*, Volume II, p. 241.

<sup>455</sup> This reference to the Cathedral little by little coming out of the mist/coming to life, may also hint at the magical spell under which the structure lies hidden beneath the waves, since the word *sortilège* (from *sortant*), also refers to this meaning, and therefore the Cathedral’s leaving of its ‘enchantment.’

The completion of the B-E flat-G sequence at bar 22 concludes the tonal wave that was set off with the first notes of the piece, on its way to the C major arrival at bar 28. Dissonant configurations of 2nds move the harmonies towards the tonic climax, whilst the dominant G pedal remains constant in some form. The low G at bar 27, clashing with octave F (the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>) in the bass, creates another discordant 2<sup>nd</sup> before moving in a dominant progression straight to the tonic, a perfect cadence heralding the beginning of the B section of the piece. Thompson refers to the foregoing intervals as belonging to a new concept of dissonance, in that their use is as an end in itself for Debussy, rather than a passageway towards ‘redemptive consonance.’<sup>456</sup>

### Register

After the rising chordal passage of bars 14-15 that covers much of the keyboard, the passage which follows (bars 16-19) continually inserts the bass clef onto the treble line, leading to an overall undulating pattern, assisted by the phrase marks. A low initial bass note at the beginning of each line acts as the depth of the structure before the left hand arpeggios upwards to the surface, covering much of the lower regions of the piano. The substitution of right hand chords at bars 17-19 cover the upper reaches of the piano, and stand out against everything else that is going on around them, because of their register and the intensity produced by Debussy’s *marqué* instruction, thus emphasizing the visual imagery. The final G chord at bar 22 leads us into a very high set of octave chords in the right hand that are played at *forte* and prompt the memory to recall earlier similar passages, Their register now suggesting a joyousness above the surface of the waves, supported by what lies beneath as we hear left hand chords repeat the sequence three octaves lower.

### Section B Bars 28-46

#### Rhythm and Expression

The beginning of B is marked *Sonore sans dureté*, ringing without hardness or harshness, and the minim chordal theme is firmly established at *ff*, a broad

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<sup>456</sup> Thompson, O., *Debussy Man and Artist*, p. 267.

wave of dynamic sound ensuing. To move the passage along and give a sense of the movement of the cathedral's bells, we find dotted minims accompanied by crochets and tied notes in the first longer phrase. Semibreves complete each of the first two phrases, before appearing twice in bars 37-8, in order to slow the rhythm at the same time as the climax over these bars. This continues to *diminuendo* over bars 40-41 which contain two dotted semibreves, that act as a long hiatus and almost static equilibrium of the surface of the water (see score). The impetus then picks up with the addition of another very high layer of pitch, above dotted semibreves and descending tied chords in the bass.

### Melody and Harmony

The suggested peal of bells are full of I and V close triadic chords in root and 2<sup>nd</sup> inversions, as we have now arrived at a solid bass and the tonic C major is established. In addition, IV, III, and II runs of crochet chords resound as both hands chime loudly together, overlaying a strong tonic bass line. The latter's tonicization continues for fourteen bars until 42, despite an excursion into F major from bar 33, with the appearance of B flat. Both hands make echoing wave shapes over bars 32-36. It is perhaps possible to see these 6 bars (36-41) as a microcosm of the whole piece, – their ascent as the crest of the wave before its corresponding descent. Schmitz refers to the 'sonorous colour of C major,' its 'warm parallel chords' in contrast to the opening theme. The dynamic swell and subsidence over bars 36-41 follows the undulating pattern of the chords, before another hiatus is reached on the 6-beat tonic and dominant of bars 40-41, summing up the passage. Softly resonating C/D tied 2<sup>nds</sup> are derived from the octave G (V) semibreve chord at the start of each bar, echoing at a much higher level as the bass descends a whole tone from B flat to A flat. These couplings peal in a muted fashion against dissonant B flats and A flats in the bass line – flattened 7<sup>ths</sup> and 6<sup>ths</sup>, whilst the bass then pivots to G sharp, (enharmonically A flat), heralding the introduction of the minor key of C sharp – enharmonically related to the previous excursion into E major and surrounding the first C major climax with other far more discordant tonalities.

## Register

The more solid feel to this section is assisted by clear treble and bass lines that employ the middle of the keyboard, apart from the static bass which remains an overwhelming presence throughout. This enables the music to ‘chime,’ resonating in a continuously surging chordal theme at *ff*, assisted by long phrase markings and dynamic expression, until bars 40-41 effectively introduce a pause in proceedings. Against lower bass tones and V-I chords, (with additional Ds), the C/D 2<sup>nds</sup> ring in a reverberation at the very top of the piano, graded between *p* and *piu pp*, acting as a plateau in pitch, dynamics and register before the piece moves to its second climax in section C.

## Section C Bars 47-71

### Rhythm and Expression

The sunken bells now take on a purer tone, *pp* and *expressif et concentré*, initially on single bass notes above the G sharp octave chord. The tempo is marked ‘Un peu moins lent (dans une expression allant grandissant),’ indicating the drive towards grandeur and vastness with a more open 3 minim per bar sound. The visual wave is smoothed out in a broader sense, but with the addition of *crescendo* markings at bar 52 onwards, the chordal texture is resumed, and closer intervals bring about a more undulating line. As the climax is reached at bars 58-9, the chords traverse a G # - C# - G# dip/hollow in the wave before building again, finally reaching a plateau on 5-note sustained triads at bar 62 onwards. Once more, the phrasing marks leap in wave-like motions to the following chords,<sup>457</sup> From this point, the 2<sup>nds</sup> and single bass notes of bars 68-69 evoke a larger wave until the two bars of micro bass undulations alternate between C and D at *pp diminuendo* to bring the middle section to a close. Again, the phrasing mark clearly gives the music a concluding wave to finish on.

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<sup>457</sup> Although the bass to treble leap over bar 64-5 would clearly be in the opposite direction, in a concave shape, in performance.

## Melody and Harmony

The C# minor key now ensues with a change of key signature, signalling the completion of second section B and the beginning of the middle section C, foretold by bars 7-13 in A. The bass on V (G sharp), dominates the passage for fourteen bars, right up to the next climax, and despite the appearance of other conflicting tonalities. These mainly concern the appearance of A sharp which begins to intrude from bar 50, indicating a possible G sharp minor key, given the bass note – its ambivalence hinting at shifting waters.

The use of the superimposed major 2nds is prevalent in this section, mainly as G sharp/A sharp, the latter being representative of an augmented 6<sup>th</sup> if the key of C sharp minor is taken as given. Debussy's use of 2nds in the 'depiction of resonant metallic sounds' such as the bells in *La Cathédrale*, is borne out by their usage in other pieces, such as the gongs in *Pagodes* and the crotals in *Danseuses de Delphes*.<sup>458</sup> They may also be used to reflect dissonance and the 'negation of harmony,' which Debussy felt in his evocation of the sea. Vladimir Jankélévitch refers to 'the interval of the second marking the point where music returns to the realm of noise...'<sup>459</sup> Lockspeiser himself names this interval as the 'quintessential dissonance' – its inversion of the seventh containing a sonorous value in itself, and approaching the hinterland between music and noise, whilst Arnold Whittall, postulates the theory that Debussy's frequent use of chains of 2nds 'indicate(s) the possibility of a new norm of relative consonance rather than a reinforcement of what, under other rules, is undoubtedly dissonant.'<sup>460</sup> Nevertheless, as with all Debussy's works, their application was predicated by their use in various very different pieces, and the effects he wished to convey.

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<sup>458</sup> Schmitz, E. Robert, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, p. 157.

<sup>459</sup> Jankelevitch quoted in Lockspeiser, E. *Debussy: His Life And Mind, Volume II 1902-191*, p. 242. He also points out the possibility that 'Strict objectivism, fleeing the life of the motions and in default of expression, approaches the nonmelodic and non-musical, the paramusical or premusical zone that is, like the ocean, the total universe of amorphous noise and chaotic rumor...perhaps it is in this sense that we can understand the crucial role played by the interval of the second, whether major or minor, first in Mussorgsky then in Debussy, Ravel, Szymanowski, and Bartok. The second – the inversion of the major seventh – lets the note "next to" resound; that is, it lets the wrong note sound with or very near the right one: is this second not the most undifferentiated and least harmonious of all the intervals? Closest to brute noise? The noise of things not yet understood is going to be louder than music's voice...' In Jankélévitch, V., *music and the ineffable*, p. 36.

<sup>460</sup> Whittall, A. *Musical Composition in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 341. See also Thompson, O., *Debussy Man and Artist*, p. 127.

The tonal theme is expanded by the A sharp of bars 50-54 inclusive, hinting at G sharp minor tonalities, particularly as The G sharp chord continues from bars 46 to 57 throughout in the pedal (and then exists in some form until the last V chord of bar 67, after which it becomes a 2<sup>nd</sup> against F# until the end of bar 70).<sup>461</sup> A feeling of some ambivalence comes at the beginning of bar 55, perhaps wrought by the treble F sharp octave, together with the dropping of the A sharp. Bars 55-56 are also an inversion of those at 48-49, forming a descending wave shape as opposed to the earlier rising one. This occurs prior to the G sharp peak of bar 57 and its attendant trough, which is repeated twice in a very expressive slow build and visually very much a wave on the stave, before we reach the next *f* climax at bar 59. Thence the bass line at bar 60 forms another sharply ascending wave, rising from V – G sharp and a B major chord (the relative of the potential G# minor hinted at by the previous A#), superimposed with the C sharp tonic. A clear C sharp minor tonic climax crescendos to *ff* at bar 61, with an F sharp minor IV chord that quickly dissolves into a brighter sound, accentuated by the sustained chords of F sharp major harmonies and the potential for C sharp major at bars 65-67. These form a set of wave-like ‘floating’ harmonies, purely geared to the atmosphere of the piece (and psychologically hovering above the original C major tonic which reappears at bar 72 – see tonal/modal graph for a visual trajectory of this). These major tones form a sustained 12-beat chord over a return to the G sharp bass, before a recurrence of the single notes that began this section. Now, the prevalence of the F sharp/G sharp chords proceed from bar 68, as a superimposed 2<sup>nd</sup> juxtaposed with C natural above. Their obvious wave-like pattern may indicate the reclaiming of the *Cathédrale* by the waves as it submerges once again in the low tonalities, passages of seconds reflecting a very Debussyan-type aura. When the bass picks up the G sharp tonality again, we enter a static phase in the lower reaches of the piano at bars 68-9, with F and G sharps resonating together, effecting a very slow and culminating deep sinking-down into the waves, with echoing shapes plunging downwards. The arrival of the C natural in the same bars prepares the way for ripples of 2nds in

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<sup>461</sup> Thompson remarks that Debussy was fond of using a ‘decorated pedal’ effect, – a ‘recurring figure’ that would be employed ‘with the effect of a pedal, against a succession of changing harmonies,’ in Thompson, O., *Debussy Man and Artist*, p. 244.

both hands, before the clear reintroduction of the original C major tonic at bar 72.

### Register

The passage of single tones at bars 47-50 suggest a broad wave-shape demonstrative of single bells ringing.<sup>462</sup> Their placement on a second bass stave gives them a fuller, rich tone, above the low G# structural bass. The reversion to a treble stave at bar 53 enables the harmonies to rise with the dynamic climax, until top F# and G# tones from bar 55 onwards act as pillars, allowing waves to sweep down over the following bars. With the move towards the next climax imminent, the register is raised still higher at bars 59-62, with a peak at C# then causing another subsiding trough to appear. The bass chord on the treble stave at bar 64 represents the depth of this plummet downwards in register, before a cessation is reached at bars 66-67. The ensuing 4 bars contain purely bass tonalities, their rumbling depths in a series of undulations marking out the cathedral's slow disappearance under the waves.

### Section B Bars 72-83

#### Rhythm and Expression

A broad chordal wave at 'au Mouvt,' sets the scene in the right hand, as the bass plays at *pp* in sets of 12 quavers – their never-ending rolling, undulating action made visually as well as aurally clear by Debussy's joining of each set, over the bar lines, so that they become 24's. This exaggerates their continuous, eternal nature. The indication of *Flottant et sourd* indicates his wish for a floating/drifted and muffled sound coming from the depths of the sea. Each set of 6 notes is an echo of a phrase heard previously in the introductory section at bars 17-18, where a similar rocking motion occurs. As the *Cathédrale* appears, so it disappears, engulfed and submerged – the quavers all rolling into one rippling wave of continuous sound.

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<sup>462</sup> Schmitz has likened the score to a 'graphic representation of one form of arch or another, commenting that the cathedral's visual appearance is contained therein as a reflection of Debussy's dual 'composer-painter nature', in Schmitz, E. Robert, *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, p. 156.

### Melody and Harmony

The return to C major heralds the reintroduction of the B section, and its I, II, V beginning in the right hand pitches. Eleven bars from 72-83 otherwise follow exactly the same format in the upper part as bar 28 onwards, (when the cathedral rose from the waves), except that they are placed an octave lower on double bass staves, leading to our visualization of the cathedral's reabsorption by the waves. The bass is employed in a distinctive prolongation of the C major tonic, producing a I-II-I-V-I-V continually resounding wave that is at the same time musically static. Various II, III, IV and V chords in the right hand interplay with C major chords throughout this section, with clear tonic chord statements at 76 - 78. Hints of F major/B flat major and G minor resurface from the first B section, particularly linked to the dynamics again (bars 80-81) tying them together tonally, before an abrupt cessation of these figures, and the Coda arrives.

### Register

The main feature of this section, after the final climax, is its low register. With the resumption of Section B's harmonies an octave lower, both staves are now bass, and give the music a sense of completion whilst paradoxically reminding us of the cathedral's earlier joyful appearance through the waves. This time, we experience the reverse though, with lower chordal tones appearing to suggest its 'demise' until the sun rises again. These are aided by a very low and prolonged bass line operating in a repetitive wave-like manner for 12 bars. In effect, the visual picture of the cathedral is now completed as it subsides once again.

### Coda Bars 84-89

### Rhythm and Expression

Section A is reinstated at bar 84, which forms a Coda in the ABCBA format, 'Dans la sonorité du début.' Crotchet chords over a sustained pedal answer those from the beginning in a further wave, but are now met with prolonged tied notes, bringing the *prélude* to a close at *pp*.

### Melody and Harmony

We return to the opening sonorities as the first five chords reprise the opening theme, but with the addition of Cs, so that the C major tonic is further emphasized, and linked to the earlier runs of 2nds, reiterating the dissonant tonalities of previous passages, as well as indicating the final completion of the piece. The ascending chords are repeated, moving to the G (V) chord on the dominant 3 times, (bars 85-87), as the bell tolls and we hear the ‘echo of plain chant.’<sup>463</sup> The bass pedal point reiterates the tonic C chord, ponderously ringing out through the final 6 bars, whilst the last sound we hear is overlain with a second inversion of I in the treble and a first inversion of it in the bass – to hint, perhaps, that the spectacle will rise again – its mystical essence intact.

### Register

A return to the treble clef allows the harmonies to produce higher sounds that are a parallel to those at the start of the piece, including the very high chords at the top reaches of the piano, re-emphasizing an echo of *La Cathédrale* beneath the waves. By bar 85, the I-V chords sustain an outer structure encompassing much of the keyboard, as the waves within continue to arouse images of the sea, before all subsides at the completion of the piece.

### Conclusion

The prelude contains significant melodic intervals of 2nds, 4ths and 5ths, used by Debussy in an evocation of medieval modes, perhaps in an echo of plainsong. He frequently superimposes tonic and dominant elements, and the gutted chords ‘in parallel fourths and octaves, seem to evoke in Debussy structures of the past, not presently visible.’<sup>464</sup> The composer’s very varied use of the bass pedal line is entirely typical of his ‘layering’ techniques, and clear passages of undulating swells and moving waves towards the end provide clear auditory and visual evidence of his intentions for performers.

The tonal progression with attendant excursions and ambivalences revolves around a C major core or equilibrium, whilst surrounding it shifting waves of

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<sup>463</sup> Schmitz, E.R., *The Piano Works of Claude Debussy*, p. 267.

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid*, p. 156.

related /unrelated ‘floating’ tonalities operate,<sup>465</sup> with the sonorous V chord often underpinning the tonic from an elongated bass line. Alternating passages in the first section are gradually augmented until the two poles/waves are resolved in the first climax at C major, at bar 28. After this, fluctuating harmonies recall earlier tonalities, again using V to introduce C sharp minor, and juxtaposing other potentialities. (The B flat major chord, for example, at bars 33 and 77, on top of a tonic bass, brings in a flattened 7<sup>th</sup>, another Debussyan favourite.)

The composer was alert to the formal framework of a piece, even if he declined to follow conventional orthodoxies, often articulating his ideas in architectural terms. For example, in a letter to Georges Hartmann in 1898, commenting about the architecture of the Opéra-Comique, he states:

‘These people seem to know nothing about light, and consequently about the whole theory of luminous undulations (la théorie des ondulations lumineuses), the mysterious harmony that links up the different parts of an edifice.’<sup>466</sup>

This is an unequivocal statement of Debussy’s ability to push beyond boundaries, overriding traditional orthodoxies and subsuming other ideas from the arts and sciences into his own form of expression. His incorporation of light (with its ties to Impressionism) is made clear in this letter, whilst the importance of emotional response was clarified in an article he wrote to a critic in 1901 when reviewing Paul Dukas’s Piano Sonata, mentioned previously.<sup>467</sup> Debussy’s letters and articles reflect an obvious preoccupation with esoteric knowledge and *correspondences*. He clearly felt it possible to express the parallel forces of structure amid nebulous liquidity in his harmonic statements. In the most direct reading of Debussy’s strategies, it is for the analyst to determine the composer’s interpretative techniques – those that are reflected most clearly in his words and music.

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<sup>465</sup> (See my tonal/modal chart at Appendix I for a visual exposition of these).

<sup>466</sup> (Roy, 1964, p. 118), in Howat, R., *Debussy in Proportion: A musical analysis*, pp. 172-173.

<sup>467</sup> See quotation on pages 151-152, n. 411.

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La mer De l'aube a midi sur la mer Movement I

Bars	<u>Introduction</u> Bars 1-30	<u>First Principal Section</u> Bars 31-83
Harmonies	Obscure tonality, though B m key signature and B bass. (C flat bar 35) Pentatonic theme (Symbolic of rising sun in the east). Presence of 'major' G# bars 3-30. M/m? A flat – bars 14-16 (V of D flat M). Bar 16 – D bass. Fig. 2 – woodwind pentatonic tones.	D flat M key sig. Pentatonic waves in woodwind. Acoustic and pentatonic waves in cellos (derivatives of A1) over stable tonic D flat) pedal. C flat (enharmonically B from beginning). b. 35 in horns and fig. 4. (b. 42-6 shift from D flat to E tonality) E M tonality – (F flat) becomes E in bass b. 52.
Architectural Structure	6/4 – 4/4 – 6/4 time signatures (ternary) No regular pulse. Dotted rhythms – Bar 6 1 <sup>st</sup> main theme, followed by Cyclic Motive X at fig. 1 – clear wave/arch. Undulating bass fig. 1 on plus chromatic runs – falling waves. Fig.2 – harp and timbales undulations. Condensed surges in ascending waves of woodwind.	6/8 compound time. Undulating chords in violins – 3rds /5ths. Pentatonic wave - Motive A1 (b. 33) plus horn acoustic Motive A2 (b. 35 - principal theme). Motive A3 at fig. 4 (b. 43 on). Motive A1 (b. 44) Motive B – 'erotic' flute arabesque (b. 47). 'Static' string section. Motive A2 (b. 53 on) completes small scale ternary seq. 'Static' string section. Anacrusis figure (bars 46 and 51) in woodwind.
Form	Arch or wave form ABCBA - Cyclic Motive X at apex of wave (C). A (b. 1-5) B (b. 6-11) C (b. 12-16) B (b. 17-22) A (23-30). 'Open form' – J. Barraqué – 'self-propelling'/'sonorous becoming'	3 Arch figures based on motives (R. Howat p. 74) – A (b. 31-46) B (b. 47-52) {A (b. 53-8)} C (b. 59-63) B (b. 64-7) A (b. 68-83). A (b. 31-46) B (b. 47-52) A (b. 53-8). A1 – A2 – A1 based over bars 33-42. (A3 enters at fig 4 as transition to next part of larger arch form).
Dynamics	Très lent (116 = crotchet) pp p <<> pp pp <i>expressif et soutenu</i> piu pp <> pp > Animez peu a peu jusqu'à l'entrée du 6/8p << p < p <	Modéré, sans lenteur (Dans un rythme très souple) (116 = quaver) f dim. p >> mf > p <i>expressif et soutenu</i> <> mf <> p > piu p p < mf> p <i>expressif</i> < p < p < p < p

Bars		<u>Second Principal Section</u> Bars 84-121
Harmonies	Bass F-C flat b.54 (aug. 4th). F flat bass b. 57. (E) – G b. 58. A flat b. 59 (fig. 6) – C flat b. 60. Diminished harmonies in Motive B arabesque. B flat – E flat – D flat progression to G flat M at b.68. E natural mode (F flat) in bass at b. 72 (fig. 8). Acoustic harmony in strings. Loss of ‘tonic’ E – D natural at b. 73. Unstable modality leads to tritone to B flat M at b. 84. F (V) in bass.	(Tritone E-A#/B flat) B flat M. F (V) bass. Given max. impact by removal of E at b. 73. C M at b. 95 (latent tonic). C# whole-tone arpeggios (strings). Unstable flat mode – G flat/F flat b. 111. – F flat bass b. 115 – Aug. 4 <sup>th</sup> of B flat. – E in bass b. 119 (fig. 13). Whole-tone arpeggios - return to opening tonality. Tritone E flat – A bass
Architectural Structure	A2 cont. at b. 55. Four rippling glissando harps – (vertical as well as horizontal waves).Motive C at b. 59 (fig. 6) plus yearning ‘erotic’ violin solo and 2 octave plus harp arpeggios. Motive B – b. 64 (fig.7) – minor 3 <sup>rd</sup> below b. 47 (previous Mot. B). 9/8 time sig. b. 67. 6/8 time sig. b. 68. Motives A1 b. 68. A2 b. 69. Whirlpool/vortex to climax – huge dynamic wave. Motive X (cyclic) b. 72 (fig. 8). Climax b. 76. Motive A1 b. 77.	4/4 time sig. Motive D strings (b. 84-fig. 9). Striking triplet theme/dotted rhythm (16 cellos).Woodwind at b. 98 (fig. 10). B flat M scale at b. 87 in lowest cellos. Motive D flutes b. 92 and harp type at b. 95.Woodwind b. 98 (fig. 10). Dynamic swell to fig. 11-climax. 6/8 b. 100. 12/8 b. 101. Ascending scales in strings – b. 100-102. Bars 106-133 – solemn chordal passage – awe and immensity - brass. 4/4 b.109. 6/8 dramatic punctuation at b.110. 12/8 b. 111. Motive X dominates from b. 112 (fig. 12). B.115 derivatives of Motive D too.
Form	ABCBA arch form (see previously).	Variations / Strophic. (An elaboration / additional element, as a sharp contrast to 1 <sup>st</sup> Principal Section).
Dynamics	Bar 47 on - <i>doux et expressif</i> <> p p Un peu animé < p < p < p < mf < pp > pp > pp > pp > p < p < pp < p < p < p < au Mouvt. p <i>expressif et soutenu</i> < mf< mf < p <> p <> p <> p <> mf < mf < mf < mf < Retenu sfz sfz sfz a Tempo f > dim. pp > pp > pp >	– Un peu plus mouvementé (69=crotchet) Très rythmé (104 = crotchet) p <sfz p > mf < f > p < mf < < mf < f ff < dim. pp pp p cresc. mf < molto cresc. Au Mouvt (Un peu plus mouvementé) f < f <> p << mf < f ff < f dim. peu a peu En retenant peu a peu p> p > piu p > Encore plus retenu pp > p < p pp <> pp <pp > Presque lent pp < pp > piu pp >

Bars	<u>Transition / Interlude</u> Bars 122-131	<u>Coda</u> Bars 132-141
Harmonies	D flat M key signature. A flat (V) dominant pedal, but used to 'transform' rather than 'progress' to the end - i.e. reprise + new material. Bars 122-3 C – G flat tritone in violas. Bars 128-131 – Whole-tone passage.	G flat M 'subdominant' (not really V-IV of D flat M so much as 'shifting tonalities.' IV-I in flute. G flat bass neutralizes tonal momentum towards tonic chord. D flat tonic arrival in bass at bar 135 but tenuous. VI – B flat continues throughout bass and in final chord is held aloft (b. 140-141). Final 'plagal' cadence – E flat – D flat – B flat parallels first climax at bar 76 – C# - B – G#. Strength lies in its motivic gesture, rather than harmonies, therefore movement is ongoing. Completion of overall tonal wave.
Architectural Structure	6/4 time signature - sustained and quietly expressive passage. Unison cello bass.	Motive E – new chorale-type motive (incl. trombones) driving forward at b. 132 (fig. 14), together with pentatonic A1 and derivatives b. 135-9. Recapitulation with compression of strings. Bar 139 – Motive A (b. 76). Motive X (broad tidal wave sequence- cyclic) at b 136-8 overlapping A1.
Form	Repeated melody over 'dominant' pedal but 'transforming' into following harmonies, not resolving – example of Eimert's 'vegetative propagation.'	Unity and Open endedness (Obscurity of tonic). Extended plagal cadence.
Dynamics	Très modéré (104 = crotchet) pp < pp > Retenu pp >	Très lent (80 = quaver) pp p <> mf < f < piu f f < piu f < ff < ff < ff < ffz > ffz > ffz > p



Bars	<u>Part II (cont) Bars 60-71 72-81 82-91</u>	<u>Part II (cont) Bars 92-103</u>	<u>Part II (cont) Bars 104-117</u>
Harmonies	E M (cont) Bar 67 – C# M (D flat M) harmonies. Bar 72 C M F (IV) in bass Bar 76 C# M harmonies – G# bass at bar 78 (V of C# M. Augmented V of C M. Bar 88 tritone dominates (strings).	A M Bass A – E – G natural	A M Bass C natural C natural/G natural chord Bar 112 – harmonic change – B/E A/D (V-IV) Tritone above, F# - B# (C# M).
Architectural Structure	‘Overlap’ segment from fig. 21. New beginning at bar 60 or 62. Bar 62 – Motive K – on cor anglais. Berman’s ‘smooth sailing motif.’ In horns from bar 66, followed by ‘Hollywoodesque’ chords from fig.22 above heightened string textures/timbral change. Bar 72 – Climax Wind/String dialogue Bar 76 (23) – Motive L1 – slower crotchet = 112 (missing from score). [slowest part = highest density dynamic peaks - Howat].	Au Mouvt. section. 112 = crotchet. Slower. Motive H in oboe part. Thematic recall of opening – reprise. Interruption of Animez section.	Motive K ‘smooth sailing’ reappears in cellos. Another sharp break – cuts in with no preparation. Themes reprised, but not in same order. (J postponed till fig. 33 which leads direct to climax).
Form	Part II – fragmentary – Wave	Reprise of Part I Motive returns.	Reprise Part II. Motive returns. Central point in larger scale ‘forward impulse’ trend figs. 25-28 – Berman.
Dynamics	<i>p très léger</i> pp > Cédez un peu <i>p expressif (en dehors)</i> < p < au Mouvt (peu à peu) f < f f < Cédez f > f > mf > mf > p gracieux et léger < pp < > pp. p < p > p < Animez p p p < mf <	Au Mouvt. 112 = crotchet. p < p < p p p très <i>expressif</i> < <i>molto</i> pp <i>subito</i> > pp >	mf < sfz arco p <i>expressif (en dehors)</i> < p p <i>crescendo</i> f dim. p >

Bars	Part II (cont) Bars 118-123 124-146 147-162	Part III Bars 163-218
Harmonies	A M Bass I/V Tritone motive. Bar 126 – dissonant harmonies – C#-E#-G#-B-A# + A# harp (B flat) ostinato leads into and over fig. 29. to extend line and resolves into bar 130 – 131 G minor triad. Chromatic clarinet motive. Bar 142 – Augmented 4ths/5ths. Fig 32 on – chromatic harmonies. Gm bass conts. Fig. 32 – elements of W.T. on C scale + B flat V9.	E M – tonal reprise fig. 19. (flutes + oboes) G# trilling violins. (end part II) G# pedal point at bar 171 antic. home key, cont. to bar 214. E M scale in cellos at fig. 35. Tritone derivatives at bar 189 on. Bar 199 flute B#/E# (C# M). Bar 215 B flat bass and trumpet motive (C - V9)
Architectural Structure	112 = crotchet. Motive H obstructs K's 'forward impulse' and recalls material from bars 95-6. Bar 124 – en animant beaucoup – spurt of speed before 126. Bar 126 – 'breaking' chord – 9 beats – suspension of previous action. Bars 126-135 harp 'overlapping device.' (Rit. – au Mouvt) Bar 134 – Motive L2 (clarinet) repeated + trumpet solo repeated. Bar 142 on – dialogue between woodwind/strings using variants of L2. Bar 147 on staccato bass from bars 142 and 144. Bar 149-50 horn tritone-type motives. Harp wave arpeggios over bar-lines repeated twice. Cellos/bass wave motion from bar 147. Violin trills from bar 155 'overlap' into fig.33.	Motive J returns at Animé 138 = crotchet – leads directly to climax of 38. faster tempo. Bars 163-9 'overlap' section in violins. Statement/counterstatement. Motive M (2 <sup>nd</sup> violins/cellos) broader sweep. Expanded harp sequence. Bar 179 Motive J across woodwind. Sustained 4-bar phrases across string melody + J alternates with Motive M in 1 <sup>st</sup> violins. Bar 189 H derivatives. Canonic augmentation of strings. Harp motive b. 203 on. Fig.38 Motive L applies 'brakes.' Climax at fig. 38.
Form	Part II cont. Motive returns. Au Mouvt. 112 = crotchet – denotes 'miniature rondo' between 1st clarinet and trumpet. Bar 147 – time begins to unravel in accel. – 138 = crotchet.	Part III long approach to Dynamic peak at Animé.
Dynamics	Au Mouvt (112 = crotchet) p <> p < p En animant beaucoup p < mf < f ff dim. p > pp au Mouvt. 112 = crotchet sfz sfz p <> pp p < p > pp < p < p < p < Peu a peu animé pour arriver a 138 = crochet au No. 32 p < pp p < p < p < p <i>cresc. molto</i> < f < ff < f < ff >	Animé 138 = crotchet. p un peu en dehors < p < p <<< < p << p < p < p < p < p < p < p < En animant beaucoup p < p < p < f <i>très expressif et très soutenu</i> mf < ff <i>glissando sur les 2 mesures en croisant</i> ff f ff <i>glissando (en croisant)</i> f < f < f < f ff f < ff/fff

Bars	Part IV Bars 219-261 Coda at bar 225.
Harmonies	Whole-tone ‘mysterious’ wave harp figure at 39. Repeated. Cadential movement. Bass F natural moves to E tonic at 39, ensuring continuity despite harp figure. Bass C# (VI) at bar 232. B flat at 235 (aug 4 <sup>th</sup> of E). E M tonic chord at fig. 41, with tritone H following – duality - plus added VI (C#) in 1 <sup>st</sup> violin. Bass E/B (I/V). At bar 258 E/B joined by C# (VI) on glockenspiel- final comment / hint of discord.
Architectural Structure	Stave splits at bar 223-4. Coda ensues. 2 harp <i>glissando</i> figures across staves. Legato bass line – ‘cadential motion’ helping unify piece. Harp wave form – across bars at fig. 42 onwards.
Form	Part IV Coda Debussy’s aim for the movement – ‘one that is neither open nor closed.’
Dynamics	En retenant f dim p > au Mouvt (138 = crotchet) p <i>glissando</i> < mf mf > <i>glissando</i> p <i>glissando</i> < mf mf > <i>glissando</i> p < > p < > pp pp pp >pp> pp < > ppp pp ppp

La mer Dialogue du vent et de la mer Mouvement III

Bars	<u>Introduction First group Bars 1-55 (X)</u>	<u>Second group Bars 56-79 (F)</u>
Harmonies	<p>C# m (E M enh.)            F# bass – C natural tritone fig. 43. E flat/G natural in bassoons bar 10. F# - C natural bars 14 - 15. D/C natural bar 22.            F# – D flat = enh. A perfect 5<sup>th</sup> – perfect cadence eventually reached at bar 157. (link to Mvt. 1 – D flat b. 31 + 132) via G# bass at b.24 on and fig. 45. Basic IV-V progression.            Fig. 45 W.T. strings – 10 bars. Bar 55 G# -V pedal –used to carry momentum forwards.</p>	<p>C # m / C# m bass. C# tonality – ‘soft’ arrival.            Fig. 47 – diatonic harmony in woodwind.            Complex chromatic passage in strings.            Fig. 47 A bass. (VI).</p>
Architectural structure	<p>2/2 time signature.            Programmatic intro. ‘Passing through the eye of a storm.’ Prevalence of triplet fig. (Mvt. 1). Dramatic prominence given to b. 30-42.            Bar 31 on Motive X restored (from Mvt. 1) and trombones (b. 35)            Ascending string passage.</p>	<p>Fig. 46 - Motive F – oboe, cor anglais and bassoon against string chromatic triplets ascending. Lasts through bars 56-72.            Fig. 47 - Motive G – flute and viola (also end of X in violin1 except triplet ascends)</p>
Form	<p>First/Second group alternation with principle theme and chorale – Trezise. ‘Rondo-type’- Recapitulates themes from Mvt. 1 and D flat key sig. Evolutionary.            ‘Two contrasting forces – Barraqué. ‘Unusual sonata form’ – Howat – Intro. serves as transition from <i>Jeux de vagues</i>?</p>	<p>Theme F appears/contrast to cyclic motive X. Theme G (similar to F appears). Both have more regular periodic structure.</p>
Dynamics	<p>Anime et tumultueux Minim = 96 pp &lt;&gt; pp &lt;&gt; &lt; sfz&gt; p &gt; &lt; sfz &gt; p &gt;            p &lt; p &lt; p &lt; mf &lt; sfz &gt; pp&lt; pp &lt; p &lt; mf &lt;&gt; pp &lt; pp &lt; pp &lt; f &lt; f &lt;            expressif avec Sourdine &gt; pp &lt;&gt; pp &gt; f sans Sourdine mf &lt;&gt; mf &lt;&gt;            mf &lt;&lt; f p&lt; p &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt; f &lt; ff ff</p>	<p>Cédez expressif et soutenu Légèrement et retrouvez            Peu a peu le mouvement initial mf &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt; mf molto cresc. f            &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt;&gt; Tempo 1 p p doux et expressif &lt; p &lt; &lt;</p>

Bars	<u>First group Bars 80-132 (X)</u>	<u>Interlude with chorale Bars 133-156 (E)</u>
Harmonies	<p>Bar 81 – A flat. Bar 90 – A. Bar 92 (49) CM scales in violas/ 2<sup>nd</sup> violins with flattened 7ths. Bar 94 – Whole-tone ostinatos – A-D sharp tritone.</p> <p>Bar 98 - W.T. Motive X in bassoons and cellos. At b. 104 joined by bass + aug. 4ths in woodwind grace notes to fig. 51.</p> <p>Bass F natural (b. 94 and 98) A (b. 104) B (110) = augmented 4<sup>th</sup>/tritone.</p> <p>Chord – bar 113 – A flat /C natural (V of D flat M) Leads via F# (G flat) at fig. 51 to D flat M key sig, at b. 133. IV – V – I. Completes tonal / dynamic arch</p>	<p>A flat / B flat A flat b. 137. E flat / F in D natural b. 143 in bass.</p> <p>A flat (V) b. 145.</p> <p>D flat (I) b. 157 – Perfect cadence.</p>
Architectural Structure	<p>Fig. 48 - Motive G chordal theme. Bar 90 – ostinatos. Bar 94 – rocking wave patterns in strings – (similar at Mvt. I b. 86).</p> <p>Bar 94 – Motive G derivative in horns. Bar 98 Motive X - W.T. in bassoons and cellos.</p> <p>Bar 104 on - Huge elongated X theme, continues like a wave propelled onwards in bassoons, cello/bass horns, then across all woodwind till b.122. At fig. 51 becomes chordal.</p>	<p>Motive E – chordal – in horns – b. 133. (Linking device between Coda to Mvt I at fig. 14 and Coda to Mvt. III – b. 258).</p>
Form	<p>Huge X theme / some chordal Motive G / G derivative</p>	<p>Interlude with chorale (Codetta to Exposition – Howat)</p>
Dynamics	<p><i>f &lt; f &lt; p &lt; f &lt; f f &lt; f &lt; &gt; pp &lt; &gt; p &lt; f p &lt; f f f &lt; &gt; mf f &lt; f &gt; mf &gt; mf f &lt; &lt; mf molto cresc. f &lt; ff f e dim. mf e dim. molto p &lt; &gt; pp &gt;</i></p>	<p><i>Très soutenu Sourdines aux 4 Cors p un peu en dehors &lt; pp &gt; p &lt; &gt; p &gt; pp &gt; au Mouvt p expressif &lt; mf dim. p &lt; p &gt; piu p &gt; sf pizz. dim. p &gt; pp &gt;</i></p>



Bars	<u>Second group with chorale Bars 244-269 (E) (F)</u>	<u>Synthesis of two groups Bars 270-292 (X) (F)</u>
Harmonies	C#m key sig. (EM) G# bass (V) – A flat at bar 254. D flat M key change at bar 254. (A flat bass). Bar 258 on – bass B flat – E flat – G flat – F shifts dynamic and tonal intensity towards finale.	Figure 61 – Perfect cadence. (A flat (V) bass at bar 265.) D flat bass – A flat trebles. Bars 274-5 Whole tone passage (all black keys). Bar 282 – Whole tone woodwind till end. D flat bass below A flat bar 276. G natural at bar 284 – Tritone to D flat. Undulating A flat – D flat wave to bar 290 D flat / A flat tonic chord – 3 bars.
Architectural Structure	Motive F fig. 60 in woodwind onwards. Driving triplet rhythm in strings. Chorale – Motive E – cuts in at bar 258 (Howat's Coda) over B flat (VI) bass. Prevents completion with perfect cadence at this point. String triplets become <i>staccato</i> . Thematic wave –see below.	Motive E chordal passage completes bar 271. Fig. 61 - Très animé passage – semiquaver rhythm – textural change. Elements of Motive F in woodwind. Fig. 62 – Remnants of Motive X in cornets. 6 bar subsiding wave motive in strings – bars 278-283 dynamically, and remnant of Motive X, before final build to triumphant <i>fff</i> . Bar 282 – dotted rhythm in treble (woodwind). Motives X and F/G synthesis.
Form	Chorale – F/E alternation Tonal centre rather than recapitulative (H)  Completion of Howat's thematic wave. F – G – X      F      X – G – F Bars 56 – 72 – 98      159      225 – 237 – 245	Synthesis of themes/motives. Dynamic accumulation to end.
Dynamics	Au Mouvt initial en laissant aller jusqu'au très Anime p < p < <i>molto cresc.</i> << f < f < f < f <i>très sonore mais sans dureté</i> < f <> f <	Très Animé ff mf < f sfz f < sfz f < f < f f < ff p <i>molto cresc. cresc. molto</i> mf <i>molto cresc.</i> f < ff < ff fff fff fff

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L'isle joyeuse

Bars	Introduction Bars 1-6	<u>Section A</u> Exposition Bars 7-67	First Additional Episode Bars 28-51
Harmonies	A M Trill C#/D# (Whole-Tone) (augmented 4 <sup>th</sup> from tonic) 3 augmented triads /3 W.T. chords	A M Trill C#/D# (W.T.) Bar 9 – W.T. above I – V – I – V – V – I. Repeated b. 15 onwards. Bar 11 – Use of Lydian/Mixolydian modes – augmented 4 <sup>th</sup> /flattened 7 <sup>th</sup> + substitution of Acoustic scale – augmented 5 <sup>th</sup> – W. T. scale Bars 12-14 chromatic lines. L.H. – V – I – V – I Leads into Modal transition. Pivotal F natural (bar 21) introduced (aug. 5 <sup>th</sup> ) W. T. section – volatile. G natural (flattened 7 <sup>th</sup> bar 22) Tonic pedal (bar 23)	Chromatic development over tonic A. Bar 35 modulations begin Diatonically related to B major (D# and A #). Bar 52 diatonically related to C# M (E#).
Architectural Structure	<i>Quasi una cadenza</i> : free improvisatory shape. Rhythm and tonality undefined. 4/4 time signature. Wedge-shape opening indicative of overall shape.	<i>Tempo: Modéré et très souple</i> – flexible line. Bar 9 – Regular pulse arrives – dotted rhythm + triplets. Bar 17 Intro. of sets of 6 semiquavers. (4 per bar). Bars 19-24 W. T. section Undulating wave pattern visually and acoustically cf. 148-157 and 166-174 Bar 27 – overlapping semiquaver group.	Time signature changes to 3/8. R. H. – unhinging thirds + chromatic line. L.H. chromatic development over tonic. All in 3 sets of triplets per bar.
Form	Motive A Amalgamation of Ternary and Rondo styles.	Motive B (b. 9) Reprise Motive B (b. 15) Motive C in L.H. (b. 21)	Bar 36 – 9:6 semiquavers per bar – cross-rhythmical + 2-bar phrases begin.
Dynamics	p < p < f p > piu p > sfz > sfz >	pp p léger at rythme < p p < p < p poco cresc. --- p piu p p piu p mf > p > mf > mf > p piu p pp < mf < < dim.-- - mf < < dim.---	p < > p < < < pp < mf < mf < > pp < mf < mf < cre--scen--do

Bars	Transition Bars 52-66	<u>Section B</u> Long central Section Bars 67-159	Developmental Section Bars 105-45 (within B)
Harmonies	<p>Diatonically related to C# M (E# bar 52-58 + B# bar 63).</p> <p>Bar 64 – V – I – V – I – V – V – I – V progression in bass.</p>	<p>Bars 67-94 Prolongation of A M in bass, in sets of 5 arpeggiating semiquavers per bar.</p> <p>I – V – I – V – VI in bass overlaying tonic. First 6 bars carried over bar line – 2 bar phrases.</p> <p>Bar 99 Modulation to E M V – I in bass</p>	<p>Bars 105-140 C# M tonalities. Initial G#/D#/ E#/B#.</p> <p>Bar 115 Cancellation of key signature. Tritone in bass from C# to G Move from diatonic to whole-tone harmony.</p> <p>Bars 117-20 W. T. layered bass line over G/D then A flat (flattened 7<sup>th</sup> of A M) then B flat. Bar 125 – B flat m tones. Bar 141-4 C M unexpected climax.</p>
Architectural Structure	<p>W.T. trills. Strongly rhythmical passage.</p> <p>Bars 62-3 Crotchet hemiola anticipating bar 64.</p> <p>Bar 64 – Time signature changes to 4/4.</p>	<p>Bar 67 Time signature changes to 3/8.</p> <p>Bars 67-99 R.H. chords doubled over bar lines. L.H. Strong arpeggio bass in wave-shaped patterns.</p> <p>Strongly ‘romantic’ chordal theme.</p> <p>Very rhythmic dotted quaver/semiquaver rhythm.</p> <p>Bar 99 E M demisemiquaver arpeggios across 2 octaves.</p> <p>Continued doubling of notes, especially I and VI of bars 99-104.</p>	<p>Bars 105-8 Doubling of G#.</p> <p>(B# - VI - at bar 105 indicates C# M).</p> <p>3 sets of demisemiquavers per bar – triplet appears as 3<sup>rd</sup> group in semiquavers from bar 115 and all 121-2.</p> <p>Triplet link to dynamic peak.</p> <p>Bars 115-124 – Doubling Bs then Cs. Bar 137 – strong line of 2nds.</p>
Form	<p>Bar 52 – Motive A</p> <p>Bar 64 – Motive B</p>	<p>Bars 67-95 Motive D (A M arpeggio + added 6th F#).</p>	<p>Motive B in bass</p>
Dynamics	<p>f &gt; f &lt; f &gt; f &lt; f &lt; p &lt; &gt; p &lt; &gt; &gt; p &lt; &gt;</p>	<p>Un peu cédé Molto rubato <i>ondoyant et expressif</i></p> <p>Bars 67-105 p &lt; &gt; &gt; piu p &lt;&lt;&lt; &lt;p&lt;&lt;&lt; p e cresc. mf &gt; p &gt; piu p &lt;&lt;&lt; p mf &lt; p</p>	<p>Pp p mf &lt; p &lt; p &lt; pp p <i>expressif et en dehors</i> &lt;&lt;&lt; p &lt; &gt; pp &lt; &gt; p &lt; &gt; pp p <i>expressif et en dehors</i> p &lt; &gt; p &lt; &gt; cre—scen—do--- f f &lt; &gt; &lt; &gt;</p>

Bars	Initial Recapitulation Bars 145-159	<u>Section C</u> Recapitulation Bars 160-219	Coda Bars 220-255
Harmonies	Theme recapitulated and compressed. C M tonic in bass. Prolongation over 9 bars. R.H. – B flat from bar 147, sustained from 148-153 - flattened 7 <sup>th</sup> of C (another 2 <sup>nd</sup> ) Lydian/Mixolydian modes – includes augmented 4 <sup>th</sup> C - F#.	A M key signature re-established. I – V – I in bass, followed by 16 bars prolongation of tonic. Bars 166-181 Tonal recapitulation of bars 19-24. Whole tone in treble – augmented 4 <sup>th</sup> (D#) and flattened 7 <sup>th</sup> (G natural) + bar 176 augmented 5 <sup>th</sup> (F natural). Bars 182-5 Whole-tone climax. Bar 200 – flats denote B flat M, but minor D flat tones, leading to whole-tone scale passage from bar 204 and again at 212. A M chord reappears in R.H. as 3rds and octaves build in preparation for Coda.	A M Powerful resolution with arrival of tonic. 2 <sup>nd</sup> inversion tonic chords held over bars, from 220-235 (16 bars). Bar 238 E flat major diatonic section. (V bass). L.H. Whole-tone series. R.H. Whole-tone trill and aug. chords from beginning (Motive A). Tonic in bass. 244-247+ 252 to end.
Architectural Structure	Dotted rhythm reappears, + triplets.  Incorporation of development and recapitulation takes weight of piece towards Coda.	Dotted rhythm then triplets. Dynamic peak of scale passages over both staves, in preparation for Coda and final climax. Bars 186-114 and 200-210- highly articulated notes in predominantly L.H. ‘guttled’ chords. R.H. repeats A chord 17 times at bars 208-211.	Builds on ‘Romantic’ chordal theme of 67-91. A M chords tied 16 bars. Climax and Resolution both contained within Coda. Tremolos and both hands traverse complete keyboard.
Form	Bar 145 Motive B. Theme recapitulated and compressed. (Variation of 3rds from Motive C bars 148 and 166 onwards and bar 170.)	Bar 160 Motive B. Reappears bar 188. Bar 201 Motive C in L.H. and again at bar 212.	Link to melodic strain of Section B chordal strain – bar 75. Bar 244 Motive A returns. Continual evolution till end.
Dynamics	Peu a peu Animé e <i>molto cresc.</i> p sempre cresc --- f f	mf < mf < p <> p < <i>poco a poco cresc.</i> f pp <i>subito</i> p < p < p < p < f < mf < f < mf < f < f < f piu f	Un peu cédé ff ff < ff ff < piu ff < ff < ff < < Très animé jusqu’a la fin ff ff ff <<<< fff<

Reflets dans l'eau

Bars	Introduction Bars 1-23 <u>Theme A</u>	Bars 24-34 <u>Theme B</u>	Bars 35-49 <u>Theme A</u>
Harmonies	D flat M I-V-III-II-I Motive A - sonorities mirrored in R.H. chords. Bars 9-10 Chromatic sequence. Bar 16-Pentatonicism. Bar 18 harmonies moderate away – C flat (G flat M/E flat m). Bars 20-21 augmented 4ths- bar 22 F flat and C flat (C flat M/F flat m).	D flat M –V Prolongation of dominant pedal 11 bars. Minor sounding tonalities at bars 30-31.	D flat M - Motive A – sonorities mirrored in R. H. triplets. L. H. - V-I Bars 43-5 Augmented 4ths and 5ths and flattened 7ths (C flat). Modulates away, towards B of bar 50. (C flat). Bar 48 Key signature cancelled – Change to whole-tone harmony.
Architectural Structure	4/8 Time signature. Wave-like thematic motive in R.H. of bars 4 and 8. Bar 11 3/8 (Extra quaver accounted for in Cadenza-type bar 23? (Howat). Bar 12 4/8 restored Bar 16 Contrapuntal textures (Consecutive 4 <sup>th</sup> /5ths/8ths). Bar 23-Cadenza-Extended bar-absence of bar lines.	Groupings of 13 demisemiquavers (6) 14 dsq. (2)15(1) 13(1) plus !0 hemidsq. Then 9, then 2 sets of 8, 2 sets of 4 create waves over both staves. Bar 31-3 Introduction of triplets. Bar 34- structural break 4 quaver hiatus before A.	Bars 36-44 Motive A sonorities in R.H. accompaniment. Bar 35 onwards, Triplet theme established Groups of 6-bars 35-7, 39, 41 Groups of 7-bars 38, 42. Groups of 8-bars 43-47. Two groups of hemidemisemiquavers bar 48-9.
Form	Irregular Rondo – type. Alternation of 2 main themes, A here and B, but tonal and dynamic shape independent of thematic sequence. (Howat) Improvisatory, organic continuous free variations	Theme B. (L.H. on treble staves, Bars 24-6).	Theme A (L.H., treble tones, bars 35-6 and 39-40 mirrored in tones of right hand)
Dynamics	Andantino molto (Tempo rubato) pp <> pp <> pp< pp< < piu p Rit. a Tempo pp pp<> p<> pp> p<> Quasi Cadenza pp poco a poco cresc. e stringendo	Mesuré ppp pp doux et expressif < mf < f pp mf < f pp p pp p > piu p Bars 29-33 Culmination of 1st overall wave.	Au Mouvt. pp <<<> pp <<<> En animant p e poco a poco cresc. f < f <> f <> Much larger dynamic wave builds and continues to peak.

Bars	Bars 50-70 <u>Theme B</u>	Bars 71-77 <u>Theme A</u>	Bars 78-80 <u>Theme B</u>	Bars 81-94 <u>Coda</u> <u>Theme A</u>
Harmonies	Whole-tone (augmented 4ths and 5 <sup>th</sup> of B bass) modulating to E flat major key signature at bar 56. Bass B – A – G sharp (enh, A flat) Bar 59 V9 bar 60 onwards W.T. harmonies. Bass E flat - A flat - D flat (I- IV- dim.VII of D flat M). Bar 65 A M key signature. (D# at 66/enh. E flat). Bar 67 transforming passage flats/naturals lead to G# (A flat) and C sharp (D flat) ready for return to home key – bar 69, D flat M. V7 chord. Return to tonality.	D flat M. Return of tonic delayed - Bass B flat – (VI) – D flat at 77 (I) (lead in bars 75-6). Effectively final tonal resolution. Wave-like thematic motive at bars 73-4. Versions at bars 71-2 and 77.	Wave-like Thematic motive in R.H.-bar 78, from bars 4 and 8. VI in bass. D flat tied notes.	D flat M, though clear I chord in root position not reached till bar 91. Bars 81-6 Motive A in bass (in treble tones) and treble-glissando chords at upper level of register. Tied chords including D flat for most of remaining bars. B present in first chord of bar 81 plus repetition of B flat /F open octave chords VI-III related to theme B at bars 50-53 and 57-8. ‘Plagal meanderings (Howat)
Architectural Structure	Bars 52-3 2 sets of dsq. per bar. Bar 57 – Chordal theme in R.H. Distinctive Wave phrases at bars 60, 62, and 63. Bar 67 group of 18 hdsq. Transforming tonalities.	Chordal. Much slower – expression marking plus tied notes. Wave phrase marks over staves at bars 77-8. Triplets’ rhythms resurface.	Triplet rhythms continue. Version of Motive B’s dotted rhythms in R.H. at bars 79-80.	Chordal theme. Introduction of minims and glissandos. Innovative use of vertical spacing/layering. Crotchet silence – complete structural break.
Form	Theme B (R.H. upper register bars 50-51)	Theme A (L.H. in treble staves, bars 71-2 and 75-6).	Theme B (R.H.) bars 79-80.	Theme A in bass and treble at Bars 81- 86. (Echoes of theme B in 1 <sup>st</sup> chord of bar 81 and B flat/F repetitions.)
Dynamics	p < > mf cresc. molto f < > ff < Rit. dim. p Molto rit. piu p au Mouvt. (plus lent) pp < ppp pp > sempre pp > > Angled crescendos/diminuendos for effect. Main climax –dynamic wave builds to bar 56, then subsides to bar 62.	1st Tempo en retenant jusqu’à la fin pp	Rit. p (un peu en dehors) > pp >	Lent ( <i>dans une sonorité harmonieuse et lointaine</i> ) ppp

La Cathédrale engloutie

Bars	<u>Section A</u> Introduction Bars 1-6	Bars 7-13	Bars 14-27
Harmonies	C M V Bass Tonicization. Series of white-note 'horizontal' chords –in L.H. and R.H. - whole tones. Intervals of 4ths/5 <sup>ths</sup> /octaves.  Two tonal polarities – G – F – E <i>descending</i> over bars 1-13.	E M (C# m) III -VI – VII – VIII chords. Anticipates bar 47. Bar 10 onwards A# - Augmented 4 <sup>th</sup> . Anticipates B M at bar 16.  Descending and rising 'floating' tonalities around equilibrium of C M tonic.	C M plus B-M in treble (2nds) – B M at 16-18 (run of 2nds – F#/G# and C#/D#) E flat M at 19-21 plus C m triads at bars 20-21. C M at bar 22 above G M – V. Bar 27 – G in R. H. leads straight to tonic C at 28.  B – E flat – G polarity <i>rising</i> over bars 13-27. Pivotal C M at bars 14-15. (See p. 121).
Architectural Structure	6/4=3/2 Open Chordal theme Octave/4 <sup>th</sup> /5 <sup>th</sup> 'guttet' chords. 9 beat (crotchet) octave Es	Minim = crotchet Octave Es.	Rising and falling octave chords over C M pivot point Bar 14-15. Arpeggiated L.H. (antic. Bar 72) mixed with scale passages. Prevalence of 2nds. 'Guttet' chords in treble/bass.
Form	Ternary/Arch form ABCBA Theme A	Wave within a wave – ternary / dynamics. Theme A	Theme A
Dynamics	Profondément calme (Dans une brume doucement sonore) pp	Minim = Crotchet Doux et fluide <> pp > (small dynamic wave).	pp ( <i>sans nuances</i> ) (Peu a peu sortant de la brume) <i>sempre</i> pp p <i>marqué</i> pp p <i>marqué</i> pp p Augmentez progressivement (Sans presser) f piu f sff (climax) bar 20 on – beginning of large-scale dynamic accumulation

Bars	<u>Section B</u> Bars 28-46	<u>Section C</u> Bars 47-71	<u>Section B</u> Bars 72-83	<u>Section A</u> Coda Bars 84-89
Harmonies	C M (I-IV-V-IV-III-II) Bass I – Tonicization for 14 bars. (Bar 33 – B flat M – flattened 7 <sup>th</sup> of C) Bar 40 – C M hiatus (Bar 42 B flat Bar 44 A flat tonalities Bar 46 A flat/G# enharmonically).	Change in key signature C# m Central section. Bass pedal prolonged on V - G# (bars 47-61 and 64-70) Series of modulations - Bar 50 – addition of A# (G#m?) – aug. 6 <sup>th</sup> of C#m. Bar 60 B M superimposed over tonic in bass. Bar 63 - E# = F#M Bar 64 – B# = C# M leading to bar 68 – C natural. 2nds from bar 52 on – G#/A# C#/D# on both staves from bar 59, F#/G#.	C M I-II-V-IV-III-II-II-VI-III treble chords against arpeggiating low bass I-II-I-V-I-V. Bar 77- B flat addition (flattened 7 <sup>th</sup> ) (FM/B flat M). 'Noise'	C M repetition of bar 1 sonorities, with addition of 2 <sup>nds</sup> throughout, until last 2 bars. 4 <sup>th</sup> /5 <sup>th</sup> chords. Vertically spaced whole tones. Bars 85-9 G - V – superimposed throughout.
Architectural Structure	Chordal passage – triadic minims. Prolonged tonic pedal. Bars 40-41 hiatus of 6 minim beats.	C# m key signature. Prolonged dominant pedal. Open chordal octaves. Prevalence of 2nds 12quavers rpt. twice on C/D naturals over F#/G# - IV/V of C#m.	Prolongation of C M in bass arpeggios	Chordal Vertical spacing of chords
Form	Theme B	Theme C	Theme B	Theme A
Dynamics	Sonore sans dureté ff <> > p piu p pp piu pp  Dynamic wave continues	Un peu moins lent (dans une expression allant grandissant) pp <i>expressif et concentré</i> < pp pp < p < f <ff > <i>molto dim.</i> p > p > pp > Bar 71 – completion of large-scale dynamic wave	Au Mouvt. pp (Comme un écho de la phrase entendue précédemment) <> piu pp	Dans la sonorité du début pp



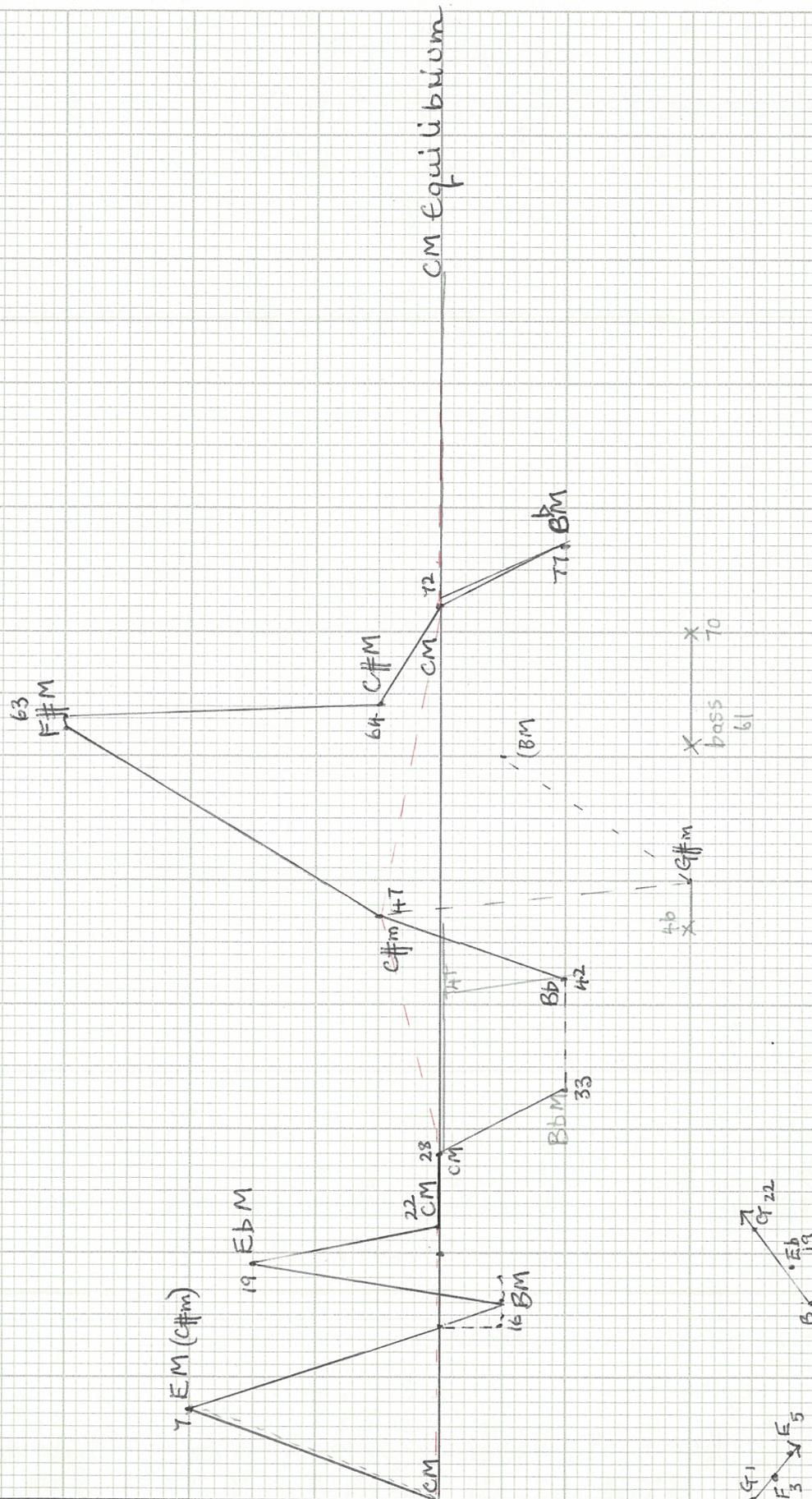
Waves

La Cathédrale engloutie

Tonal/Modal trajectory

(Key-Tonal)  
Modal

(G#) F#  
 (D#) F  
 (D#) E  
 (D#) Eb  
 (D#) D  
 (D#) C#  
 (Tonic) C  
 B  
 (A#) Bb  
 A  
 (Ab) G#  
 G



Time (Bars)

4 = 3  
4 = 2

2 harmonic poles

Waves  
(Dynamic)

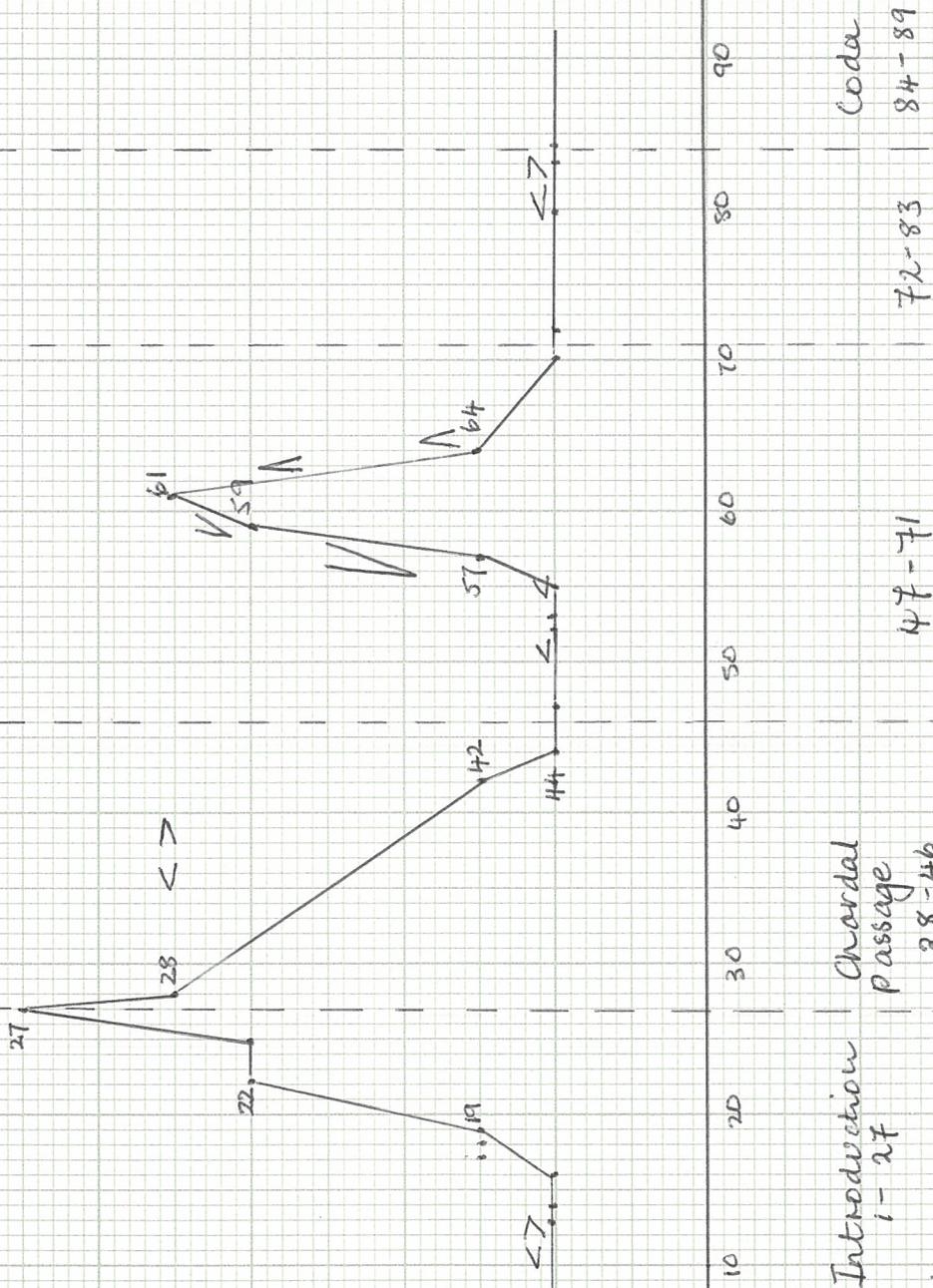
La Cathédrale engloutie

Dynamic Trajectory

sf  
ff  
f  
mf  
mp  
p  
pp  
ppp

6 = 3  
14 = 2

Time  
(Bars)



Introduction  
1-27 (A)

Chordal  
Passage  
28-46 (B)

47-71 (C)

72-83 (B)

Coda  
84-89 (A)

- (i) 1-6
- (ii) 7-13
- (iii) 14-27

La Cathédrale engloutie

Bars	Section A Introduction Bars 1-6	Bars 7-13	Bars 14-27
Harmonies	C M V Bass Tonicization. Series of white-note 'horizontal' chords -in L.H. and R.H. - whole tones. Intervals of 4ths/5ths /octaves.	E M (C# m) III - VI - VII - VIII chords. Anticipates bar 47. Bar 10 onwards A# - Augmented 4th. Anticipates B M at bar 16.	C M plus B-M in treble (2nds) - B M at 16-18 (run of 2nds - F#/G# and C#/D#) E flat M at 19-21 plus C m triads at bars 20-21. C M at bar 22 above G M - V. Bar 27 - G in R. H. leads straight to tonic C at 28.
Architectural Structure	6/4=3/2 Open Chordal theme Octave/4 <sup>th</sup> /5 <sup>th</sup> 'guttred' chords. 9 beat (crotchet) octave Es	Minim = crotchet Octave Es.	Rising and falling octave chords over C M pivot point Bar 14-15. Arpeggiated L.H. (antic. Bar 72) mixed with scale passages. Prevalence of 2nds. 'Guttred' chords in treble/bass.
Form	Ternary/Arch form ABCBA Theme A	Wave within a wave - ternary / dynamics. Theme A	Theme A
Dynamics	Profondément calme (Dans une brume doucement sonore) pp	Minim = Crotchet Doux et fluide <> pp > (small dynamic wave).	pp ( <i>sans nuances</i> ) (Peu a peu sortant de la brume) <i>sempre</i> pp p <i>marqué</i> pp p <i>marqué</i> pp p Augmentez progressivement (Sans presser) f piu f sff (climax) bar 20 on - beginning of large-scale dynamic accumulation

Bars	Section B Bars 28-46	Section C Bars 47-71	Section B Bars 72-83	Section A Coda Bars 84-89
Harmonies	C M (I-IV-V-IV-III-II) Bass I – Tonicization for 14 bars. (Bar 33 – B flat M – flattened 7 <sup>th</sup> of C) Bar 40 – C M hiatus (Bar 42 B flat Bar 44 A flat tonalities Bar 46 A flat/G# enharmonically).	Change in key signature C# in Central section. Bass pedal prolonged on V - G# (bars 47-61 and 64-70) Series of modulations - Bar 50 – addition of A# (G#m?) – aug. 6 <sup>th</sup> of C#m. Bar 60 B M superimposed over tonic in bass. Bar 63 - E# = F#M Bar 64 – B# = C# M leading to bar 68 – C natural. 2nds from bar 52 on – G#/A# C#/D# on both staves from bar 59, F#/G#.	C M I-II-V-IV-III-II-VI-III treble chords against arpeggiating low bass I-II-I-V-I-V. Bar 77 - B flat addition (flattened 7 <sup>th</sup> ) (FM/B flat M). 'Noise'	C M repetition of bar 1 sonorities, with addition of 2 <sup>nds</sup> throughout, until last 2 bars. 4 <sup>th</sup> /5 <sup>th</sup> chords. Vertically spaced whole tones. Bars 85-9 G - V – superimposed throughout.
Architectural Structure	Chordal passage – triadic minims. Prolonged tonic pedal. Bars 40-41 hiatus of 6 minim beats.	C# in key signature. Prolongated dominant pedal. Open chordal octaves. Prevalence of 2nds 12 quavers rpt. twice on C/D naturals over F#/G# - IV/V of C#m.	Prolongation of C M in bass arpeggios	Chordal Vertical spacing of chords
Form	Theme B	Theme C	Theme B	Theme A
Dynamics	Sonore sans dureté ff <> p piu p pp piu pp	Un peu moins lent (dans une expression allant grandissant) pp <i>expressif et concentré</i> < pp pp < p < f < ff > <i>molto dim.</i> p > p > pp > Bar 71 – completion of large-scale dynamic wave	Au Mouvt. pp (Comme un écho de la phrase entendue précédemment) <> piu pp	Dans la sonorité du début pp
	Dynamic wave continues			

# La Cathédrale engloutie. 1910.

- (A) 1
- (B) 28
- (C) 47
- (B) 72
- (A) 84

- X.

Introduction 1-27 (A)  
(1-6, 7-13, 14-27)

Ternary-Wave within a wave  
Arch form Parallel shapes -  
R.H. and L.H.

Bars 1-6 Profondément calme (Dans une brume doucement sonore)

\* Voir note sur Mouvement, p. 151  
See note on Tempo, p. 167

Bars 14-27

Build to climax

CM 22-7

22 26

2nds

C/D  
G/A  
F/G

pff

Chordal Passage (Parallel)

Sonore sans dureté

CM 28-46

26 28

V

8<sup>a</sup> C  
I Tonic established

TONICISATION

31 34

8<sup>a</sup> C I

8<sup>a</sup> bassa

Bb (F/BbM)  
↓ 7th of C

8<sup>a</sup> bassa

Long hiatus

8<sup>a</sup> bassa

8<sup>a</sup> bassa

8<sup>a</sup> bassa

8<sup>a</sup> bassa

C I

41 45

C/D

8

8

8

8

pp

pp

pp

pp

Ab - Aug. Str

Bb (2nds)

Un peu moins lent (dans une expression allant grandissant)

C 47-71

C#m (EM)

pp expressif et concentré

46 47

E

A# (A#m?)

Ab/G# enharm the same

G#

V

51 55

G#/A#

F

pp

pp

G# 2nd

CLIMAX

56

IV F#

V G#

I C#

V G#

pp

pp

pp

pp

R:

Dominant Pedal - Decorated effect.

R.H. } echoes  
L.H. } shapes

(2nds)

CLIMAX

Handwritten musical score for measures 60-64. It features a treble and bass staff with a piano accompaniment. The treble staff has a melodic line with notes highlighted in green. The bass staff has a rhythmic accompaniment. Annotations include *ff*, *molto*, *dim.*, and various chord symbols like  $C\#m/M$ ,  $A\#$ ,  $E\#$ ,  $F\#m$ , and  $A\#$ . A red arrow points to the word "CLIMAX".

Handwritten musical score for measures 64-72. The treble staff continues the melodic line with green highlights. The bass staff has a steady accompaniment. Annotations include  $C\#M \rightarrow$ ,  $B\#$ ,  $(Minor\ sound)$ ,  $C\#$ ,  $v/v\ F\#/G\#$ ,  $v\ G\#$ , and  $v/v\ (C\#M)$ .

Handwritten musical score for measures 70-72. The treble staff has a melodic line with green highlights. The bass staff has a rhythmic accompaniment. Annotations include  $C/D\ 2nds$ ,  $CM$ , *au Mouvt*,  $(B) 72-83$ , *ppp*,  $(Comme\ un\ \acute{e}cho\ de\ la\ phrase\ entendue\ pr\acute{e}c\acute{e}demment)$ ,  $(Flottant\ et\ sourd)$ ,  $CM\ I-II-I-V-I$  (echo of b. 18), and *Prolongation*.

Handwritten musical score for measures 73-79. The treble staff has a melodic line with green highlights. The bass staff has a rhythmic accompaniment. Annotations include  $v\ G$ ,  $IV\ III\ II\ II$ ,  $C$ ,  $8^a\ bassa$ , and  $I$ .

Tonic CM tonic harmonies

Handwritten musical score for measures 76-78. The treble staff has a melodic line with green highlights. The bass staff has a rhythmic accompaniment. Annotations include  $C$  ( $\downarrow 7th$ ),  $B\flat$ ,  $8^a\ bassa$ , and  $I$ .

Handwritten musical score for measures 79-81. The treble staff has a melodic line with green highlights. The bass staff has a rhythmic accompaniment. Annotations include  $(Gm)$ ,  $8^a\ bassa$ , and  $I$ .

Handwritten musical score for measures 82-83. The treble staff has a melodic line with green highlights. The bass staff has a rhythmic accompaniment. Annotations include  $8^a\ bassa$ ,  $I$ ,  $ppp$ ,  $pp$ , and  $(Beginning\ sonorities\ plus\ 2nds)$ .

Handwritten musical score for measures 84-89. The treble staff has a melodic line with green highlights. The bass staff has a rhythmic accompaniment. Annotations include  $8^a\ bassa$ ,  $I$ ,  $(2nds, 4ths, 5ths)$ ,  $8$ , and  $8^a\ bassa$ .

84. Coda (A) 84-89

Dans la sonorité du début

[d=d]

*ppp*

*pp*

(... La Cathédrale engloutie)

(Key)  
Modality  
Tonality  
F

E

(Eb) D#

D

(Db) C#

C

B

(A#) Bb

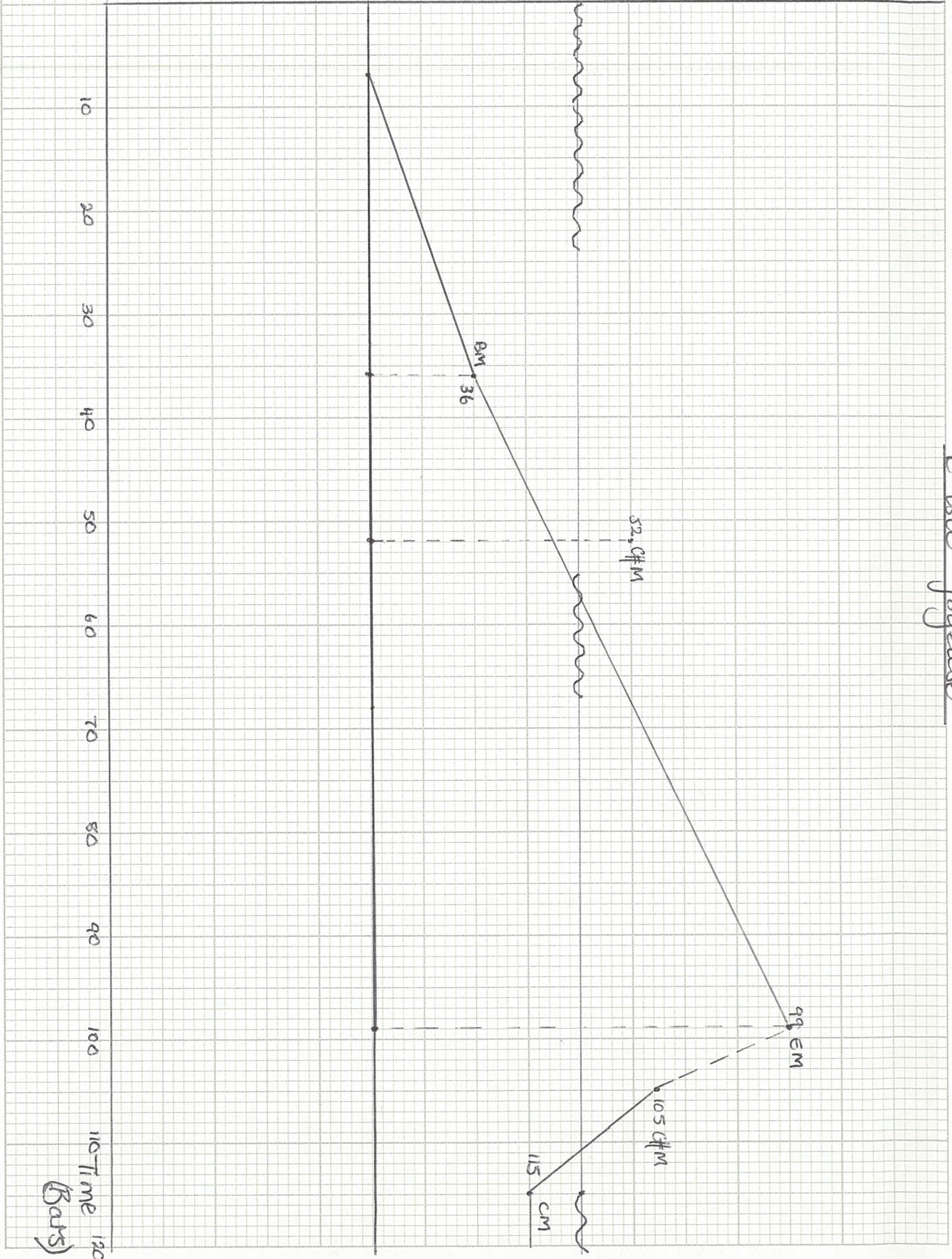
equilibrium A

(Ab) G#

G

(Gb) F#

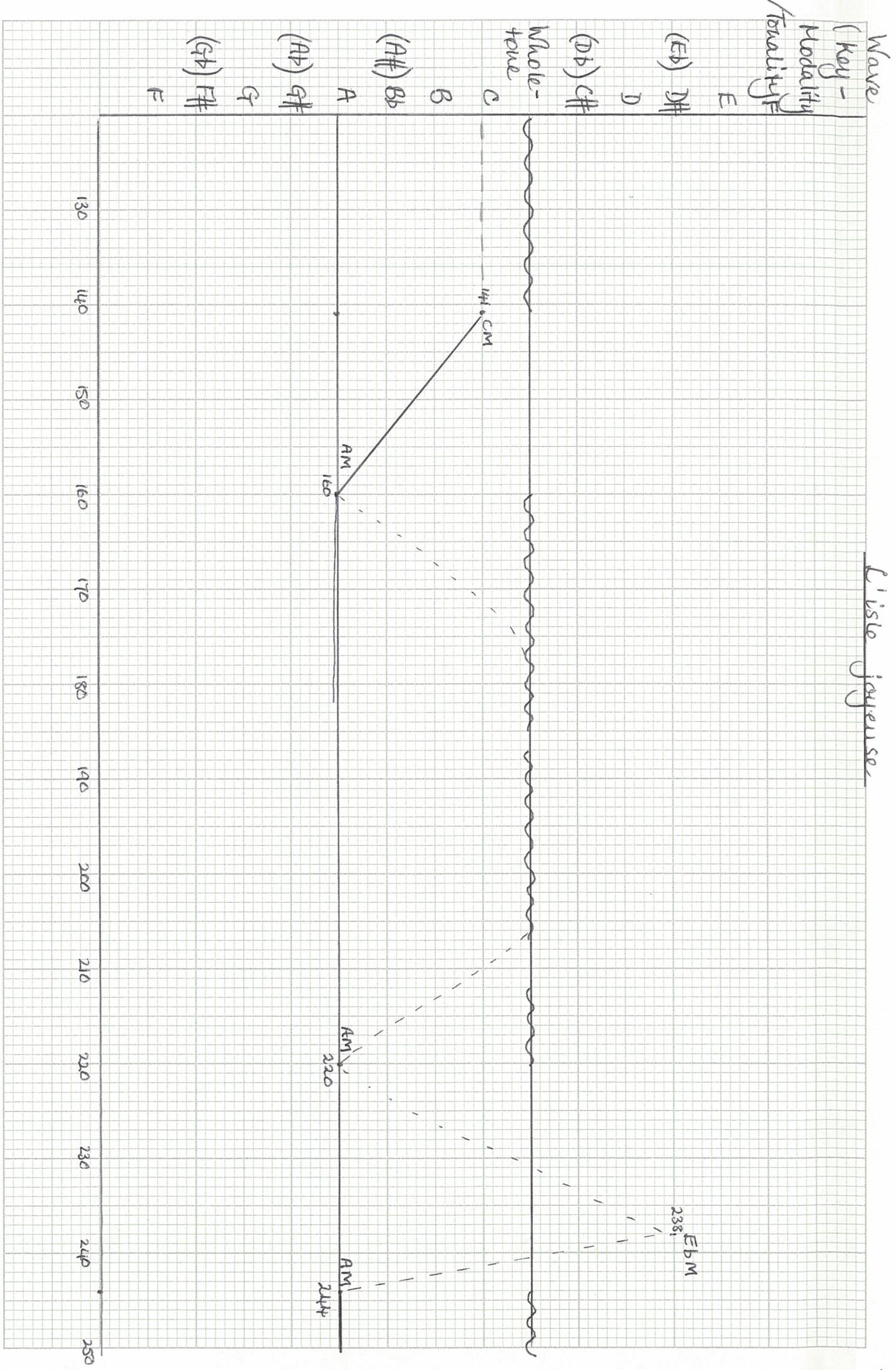
F



Time (Bars)

Chopin's Ave ?

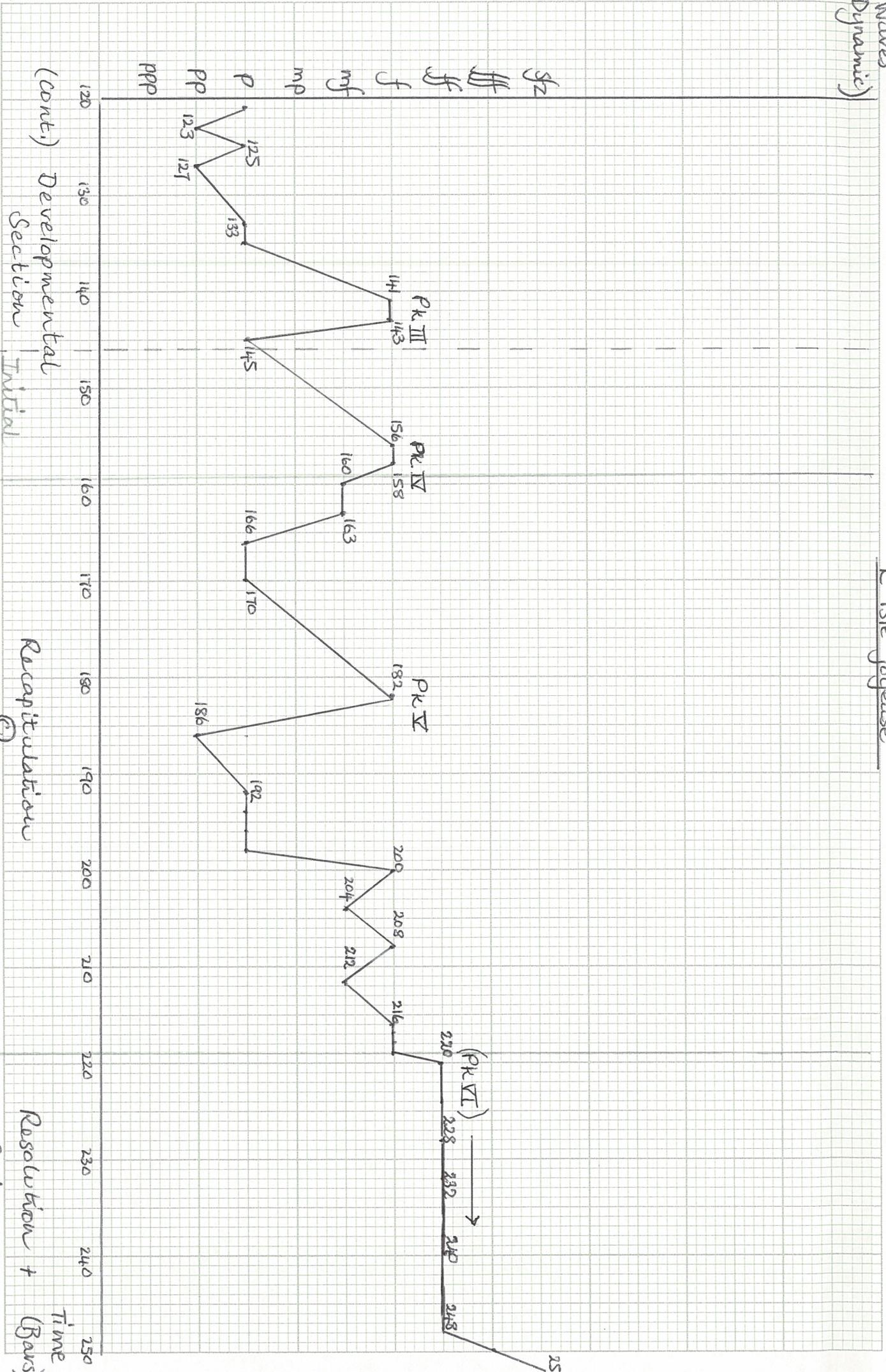
L'isle jayeuse





Waves  
(Dynamic)

L'isle joyeuse



End of Long central. →

160 - 219

220 - 255

Time (Bars)

## L'isle joyeuse

Bars	Introduction Bars 1-6	Section A Exposition Bars 7-67	First Additional Episode Bars 28-51
Harmonies	A M Trill C#/D# (Whole-Tone) (augmented 4 <sup>th</sup> from tonic) 3 augmented triads /3 W.T. chords	A M Trill C#/D# (W.T.) Bar 9 – W.T. above I – V – I – V – V – I. Repeated b. 15 onwards. Bar 11 – Use of Lydian/Mixolydian modes – augmented 4 <sup>th</sup> /flattened 7 <sup>th</sup> + substitution of Acoustic scale – augmented 5 <sup>th</sup> – W. T. scale Bars 12-14 chromatic lines. L.H. – V – I – V – I Leads into Modal transition. Pivotal F natural (bar 21) introduced (aug. 5 <sup>th</sup> ) W. T. section – volatile. G natural (flattened 7 <sup>th</sup> bar 22) Tonic pedal (bar 23)	Chromatic development over Ionic A. Bar 35 modulations begin Diatonically related to B major (D# and A #). Bar 52 diatonically related to C# M (E#).
Architectural Structure	<i>Quasi una cadenza</i> : free improvisatory shape. Rhythm and tonality undefined. 4/4 time signature. Wedge-shape opening indicative of overall shape.	<i>Tempo: Modéré et très souple</i> – flexible line. Bar 9 – Regular pulse arrives – dotted rhythm + triplets. Bar 17 Intro. of sets of 6 semiquavers. (4 per bar), Bars 19-24 W. T. section Undulating wave pattern visually and acoustically cf. 148-157 and 166-174 Bar 27 – overlapping semiquaver group.	Time signature changes to 3/8. R. H. – unhinging thirds + chromatic line. L.H. chromatic development over tonic. All in 3 sets of triplets per bar.
Form	Motive A Amalgamation of Ternary and Rondo styles.	Motive B (b. 9) Reprise Motive B (b. 15) Motive C in L.H. (b. 21)	Bar 36 – 9:6 semiquavers per bar – cross-rhythmical + 2-bar phrases begin.
Dynamics	p < p < f p > piu p > sfz > sfz >	pp p léger at rhythm < p p < p < p poco cresc. --- p piu p p piu p mf > p > mf > mf > p piu p pp < mf < < dim. --- mf < < dim. ---	p < > p < < < pp < mf < mf < > pp < mf < mf < cre--scen--do





L'isle joyeuse 1904

Introduction: 1-6

Quasi una cadenza

Wedge slapt

Motive (A)

AM (Aug. 4th of AM)

3 augmented triads

Aug. 4th.

(Free improvisatory shape: Cadenza) Rhythm + Tonality undefined.

Whole-tone chords

Exposition

Section (A): 7-27

W.T.

W.T.

W.T.

Tempo: Modéré et très souple

Aug. 4th.

3 Aug. triads

AM

pp

Regular pulse arrives

Motive (B)

p léger et rythmé

(whole tone)

A E A

10

12

14

(Whole tones)

Aug. iv.

Aug. v.

Retenu Aug. vi

Tempo

Repise Motive (B)

poco cresc.

p

più p

Stepping Chromatic line.

16

p

più p

mf

p

18

19

mf

mf

p

Aug. 4th

Lydian/Mixolydian Modes - Aug. 4ths, flattened 7ths, to Acoustic scale - Aug. 5ths -> Whole-tone scale.

b. 19-24 Whole-tone volatility

20 *pp* Motive © Precipice of Tonality

Modal transition → (un peu en dehors) Pivotal F# (Aug. 5th.)

*v* 1

22 *f* Tonic Pedal

*v* 2

24 D# Aug. 4th. 1st Dynamic Peak

*mf* *dim.*

9/4 | 7/4

26 'Joyous' chords 'overlapping' grouping

*mf* *dim.*

6

28 First Additional Episode 28-31

'Unhinging' 3rds in triplets.

Chromatic development

3

Modulations begin

32 *pp*

36 2-bar phrases begin.

*pp*

(Diatonically related to) BM Ratio 9:8 semiquaver cross-rhythms.

40 *mf* *mf*

44 *pp*

48 *mf* *mf* *mf*

ere - - - seen - - - do - - -

End of 1st episode.

Transition 52-66

Motive (A)

CLIMAX Peak II

52 56 60

Anticipates b. 64  
Crochet hemiola

Motive (B)

Section B (Long central Section)  
(♩ = ♩) Un peu cédé. Molto rubato 67-159

♩ ondoyant et expressif

'Romantic' chordal theme

Doubling

Mainly 2-bar phrases

più p

p e cresc.

mf

più p

Associated wave patterns.



62

128

*p* *expressif et en dehors*

Bb

132

Build to Peak III.

*p* Ab Gb A

136

Aug. 4th.

A

Strong 2nds sequence  
Am tonalities - 7th or IV/V of CM?

140

Dynamic Peak III.

CM climax (unexpected)

f C 8

144

Peu à peu Animé e molto cresc.

Motive (B)

*p* C

Theme Recapitulated + Compressed.

Lydian/Mixol. Modes.

148

Aug. 4th - F#, Flattened 7th - Bb

6th 7th C

Alternative Motive C

152

Aug 4th.

sempre cresc.

7th

Beginning of Peak IV

156

Dynamic Peak IV

Recapitulation 160-219

Section C:

Plus animé

Motive (B)

f 8ths. Bb 7ths of C. Ab Gb E

End of Contra Section

160

AM

(Anticipated by B)

Tonal Recapitulation

mf A v

166

Aug IV

(19-24)

A

Repetitive Build up → Coda → end

170 Aug. 4th Whole-tone →  
 Aug. 5th  
 9th & 7th of AM  
 A Aug. 5th. (Motive C)  
 F#

174 G# poco a poco cresc.  
 (Aug. 4th) F#

178 II III Aug. 4th. A

182 Dynamic Peak v Whole tone Climax  
 Scale passages (Cresc. preparation) Motive (B)

185 pp subito (C#M)  
 8ths 'gutted' chords

Motive (B) →

189

194

198 Total M B♭/B♭ (4)  
 Eb - aug. 4th of AM

203 Whole tone scale  
 mf

Motive (C)  
 Rpt. A chords  
 I

207

Whole-tone scale

Motive (C)

Built on this

DYNAMIC PEAK BUILDING

Coda: 220-255

Un peu cédé

(Powerful Resolution with arrival of Tonic)

Melodic strain linked to Section (B) - b. 75.

très en dehors

TONIC

CLIMAX

(Built on Romantic chordal theme b. 67-91)

f plateau - 34 bars

(diatonic) EbM 67

ff

F4 (V of Bb)

Bb-V

ff

Bb-V

Tempo: très animé jusqu'à la fin.

Motive (A)

Whole-tone series

CLIMAX + RESOLUTION IN CODA

C# / D# beginning (trill)

Huge Climax

traverses keyboard

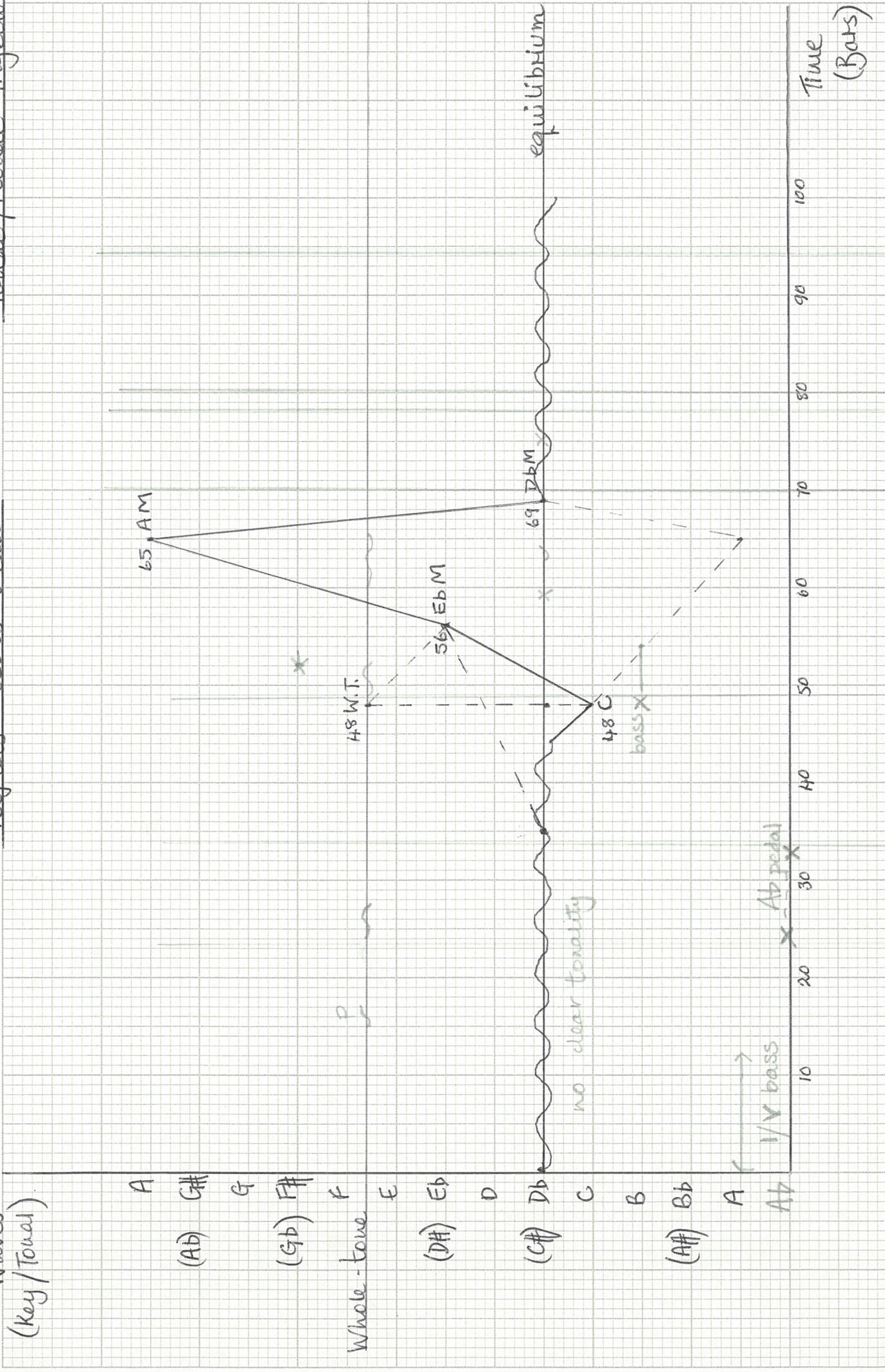
8va bassa!

fff

Waves  
(Key/Tonal)

Reflets dans l'eau

Tonal/Modal Trajectory



Intro. Bars 1-23

A B 23-34

A 35-49

B 50-70

A-B - possible alternate Coda trajectory 81-94

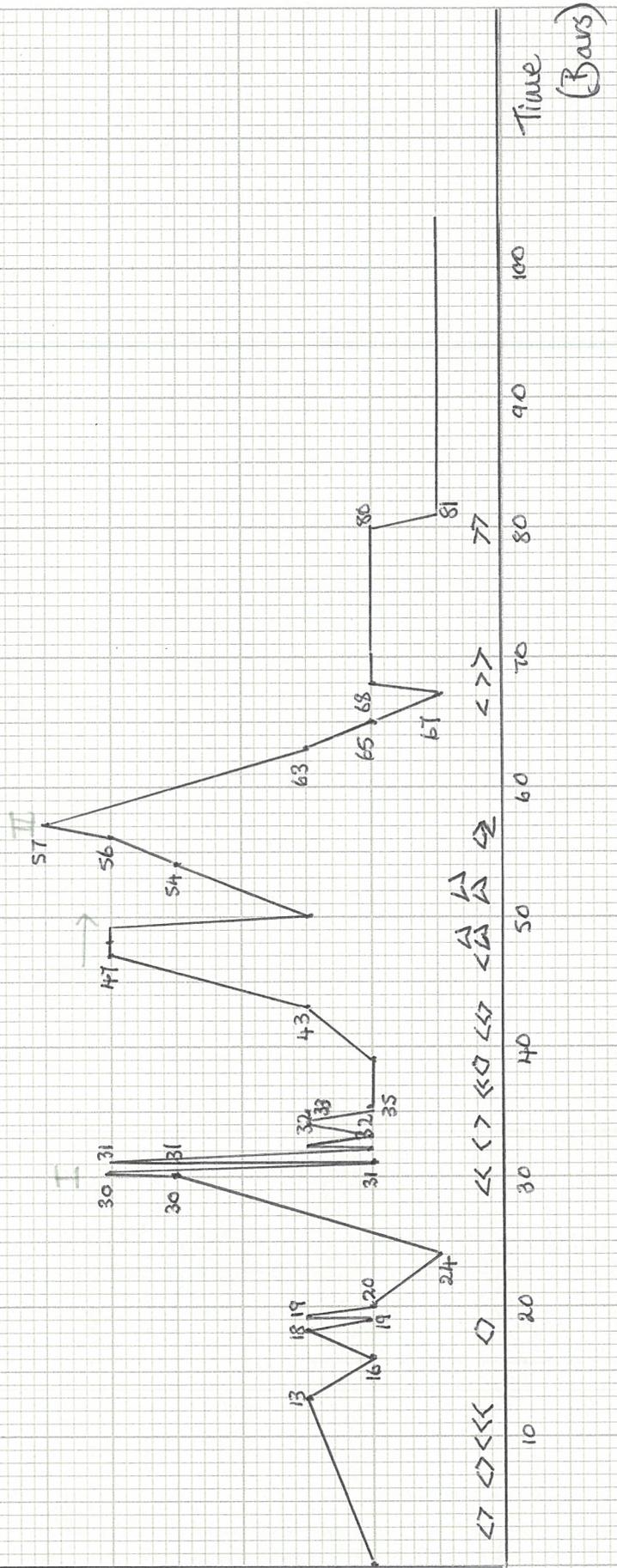
71-77 81-94

Waves  
(Dynamic)

Reflets dans l'eau

Dynamic Trajectory

sfz sfz sfz sfz mfz mp p pp ppp



Time  
(Bars)

Reflets dans l'eau

Bars	Introduction Bars 1-23 <u>Theme A</u>	Bars 24-34 <u>Theme B</u>	Bars 35-49 <u>Theme A</u>
Harmonies	D flat M I-V-III-II-I Motive A - sonorities mirrored in R.H. chords. Bars 9-10 Chromatic sequence. Bar 16-Pentatonicism. Bar 18 harmonies moderate away – C flat (G flat M/E flat m). Bars 20-21 augmented 4ths- bar 22 F flat and C flat (C flat M/F flat m).	D flat M –V Prolongation of dominant pedal 11 bars. Minor sounding tonalities at bars 30-31.	D flat M - Motive A – sonorities mirrored in R. H. triplets. L. H. - V-I Bars 43-5 Augmented 4ths and 5ths and flattened 7ths (C flat). Modulates away, towards B of bar 50. (C flat). Bar 48 Key signature cancelled – Change to whole-tone harmony.
Architectural Structure	4/8 Time signature. Wave-like thematic motive in R.H. of bars 4 and 8. Bar 11 3/8 (Extra quaver accounted for in Cadenza-type bar 23? (Howat). Bar 12 4/8 restored Bar 16 Contrapuntal textures (Consecutive 4 <sup>th</sup> /5ths/8ths). Bar 23-Cadenza-Extended bar-absence of bar lines.	Groupings of 13 demisemiquavers (6) 14 dsq. (2)15(1) 13(1) plus 10 hemidsq. Then 9, then 2 sets of 8, 2 sets of 4 create waves over both staves. Bar 31-3 Introduction of triplets. Bar 34- structural break 4 quaver hiatus before A.	Bars 36-44 Motive A sonorities in R.H. accompaniment. Bar 35 onwards, Triplet theme established Groups of 6-bars 35-7, 39, 41 Groups of 7-bars 38, 42. Groups of 8-bars 43-47. Two groups of hemidemisemiquavers bar 48-9.
Form	Irregular Rondo – type. Alternation of 2 main themes, A here and B, but tonal and dynamic shape independent of thematic sequence. (Howat) Improvisatory, organic continuous free variations	Theme B. (L.H. on treble staves, Bars 24-6).	Theme A (L.H., treble tones, bars 35-6 and 39-40 mirrored in tones of right hand)
Dynamics	Andantino molto (Tempo rubato) pp < pp < pp < pp < piu p Rit. a Tempo pp pp < p < pp > p < Quasi Cadenza pp poco a poco cresc. e stringendo	Mesuré ppp pp doux et expressif < mf < f pp mf < f pp p pp p > piu p Bars 29-33 Culmination of 1st overall wave.	Au Mouvt. pp <<<< pp <<<< En animant p e poco a poco cresc. f < f < f < f < f <> Much larger dynamic wave builds and continues to peak.

Bars	Bars 50-70 <u>Theme B</u>	Bars 71-77 <u>Theme A</u>	Bars 78-80 <u>Theme B</u>	Bars 81-94 <u>Coda</u> <u>Theme A</u>
Harmonies	Whole-tone (augmented 4ths and 5 <sup>th</sup> of B bass) modulating to E flat major key signature at bar 56. Bass B – A – G sharp (enh, A flat) Bar 59 V <sub>9</sub> bar 60 onwards W.T. harmonies. Bass E flat - A flat - D flat (I-IV - dim. VII of D flat M). Bar 65 A M key signature. (D# at 66/enh. E flat). Bar 67 transforming passage flats/naturals lead to G# (A flat) and C sharp (D flat) ready for return to home key – bar 69, D flat M. V7 chord. Return to tonality.	D flat M. Return of tonic delayed - Bass B flat – (VI) – D flat at 77 (I) (lead in bars 75-6). Effectively final tonal resolution. Wave-like thematic motive at bars 73-4. Versions at bars 71-2 and 77.	Wave-like Thematic motive in R.H.-bar 78, from bars 4 and 8. VI in bass. D flat tied notes.	D flat M, though clear I chord in root position not reached till bar 91. Bars 81-6 Motive A in bass (in treble tones) and treble-glissando chords at upper level of register. Tied chords including D flat for most of remaining bars. B present in first chord of bar 81 plus repetition of B flat /F open octave chords VI-III related to theme B at bars 50-53 and 57-8. 'Plagal meanderings (Howat)
Architectural Structure	Bars 52-3 2 sets of dsq. per bar. Bar 57 – Chordal theme in R.H. Distinctive Wave phrases at bars 60, 62, and 63. Bar 67 group of 18 hdsq. Transforming tonalities.	Chordal. Much slower – expression marking plus tied notes. Wave phrase marks over staves at bars 77-8. Triplets' rhythms resurface.	Triplet rhythms continue. Version of Motive B's dotted rhythms in R.H. at bars 79-80.	Chordal theme. Introduction of minims and glissandos. Innovative use of vertical spacing/layering. Crotchet silence – complete structural break.
Form	Theme B (R.H. upper register bars 50-51)	Theme A (L.H. in treble staves, bars 71-2 and 75-6).	Theme B (R.H.) bars 79-80.	Theme A in bass and treble at Bars 81-86. (Echoes of theme B in 1 <sup>st</sup> chord of bar 81 and B flat/F repetitions.)
Dynamics	p <> mf cresc. molto f <> ff < Rit. dim. p Molto rit. piu p au Mouvt. (plus lent) pp < ppp pp > sempre pp > > Angled crescendos/diminuendos for effect. Main climax –dynamic wave builds to bar 56, then subsides to bar 62.	Ist Tempo en retenant jusqu'à la fin pp	Rit. p (un peu en dehors) > pp >	Lent ( <i>dans une sonorité harmonieuse et lointaine</i> ) ppp



12 (cont.) *Theme B 24-34* (contrast to A)

ppp  
pp doux et expressif  
Strong Dominant pedal

5

ppp  
Ab V

7

Ab V  
V

8

Ab V  
Dynamic climax builds

8

pp  
mf  
f

8

pp  
Ab V

33 *Rit.*

pp  
p  
pizz p  
Culmination of 1st Wave Shape

35 *au Mouvt* *Theme A 35-49*

pp  
Ab  
F (Diatonic)  
Eb  
Hiatus - effect of

37

V  
F Tonic key  
A  
Bars 35-44 (A) sonorities in R.H.

37

V  
Much larger dynamic war builds.

39

pp

41

V  
(7 sets triplets)

Harmonic densities || to refractions of water

**En animant** (8 sets triplets)  
*2nds*  
*p e poco a poco cresc.*  
 8ths  
 Aug 4th from Db  
 Aug 5th from Db

Dynamic build up. 8ths in bass evoke urgency - build to Climax.

Modulates away → B in b. 50

Dive → Dynamic Climax  
 Change to Whole-tone harmony.

**Theme B 50-70** (en dehors) (B)  
*au Mouvt*  
 Aug 4th  
 Aug 5th

Perfect 5th. V F#  
 Aug. 6th  
 Perfect 5ths

Ascending/Descending Waves

Dynamic Wave builds to b. 56. 75

53  
 8  
 mf *cresc. molto*

55  
 Modulation to EbM

57  
 CLIMAX / wave Peak (ii) EbM (Howat's G.S. peak)  
 Eb Whole-tone harmonies →

59  
 Wave  
 Rit

61  
 Wave  
 dim



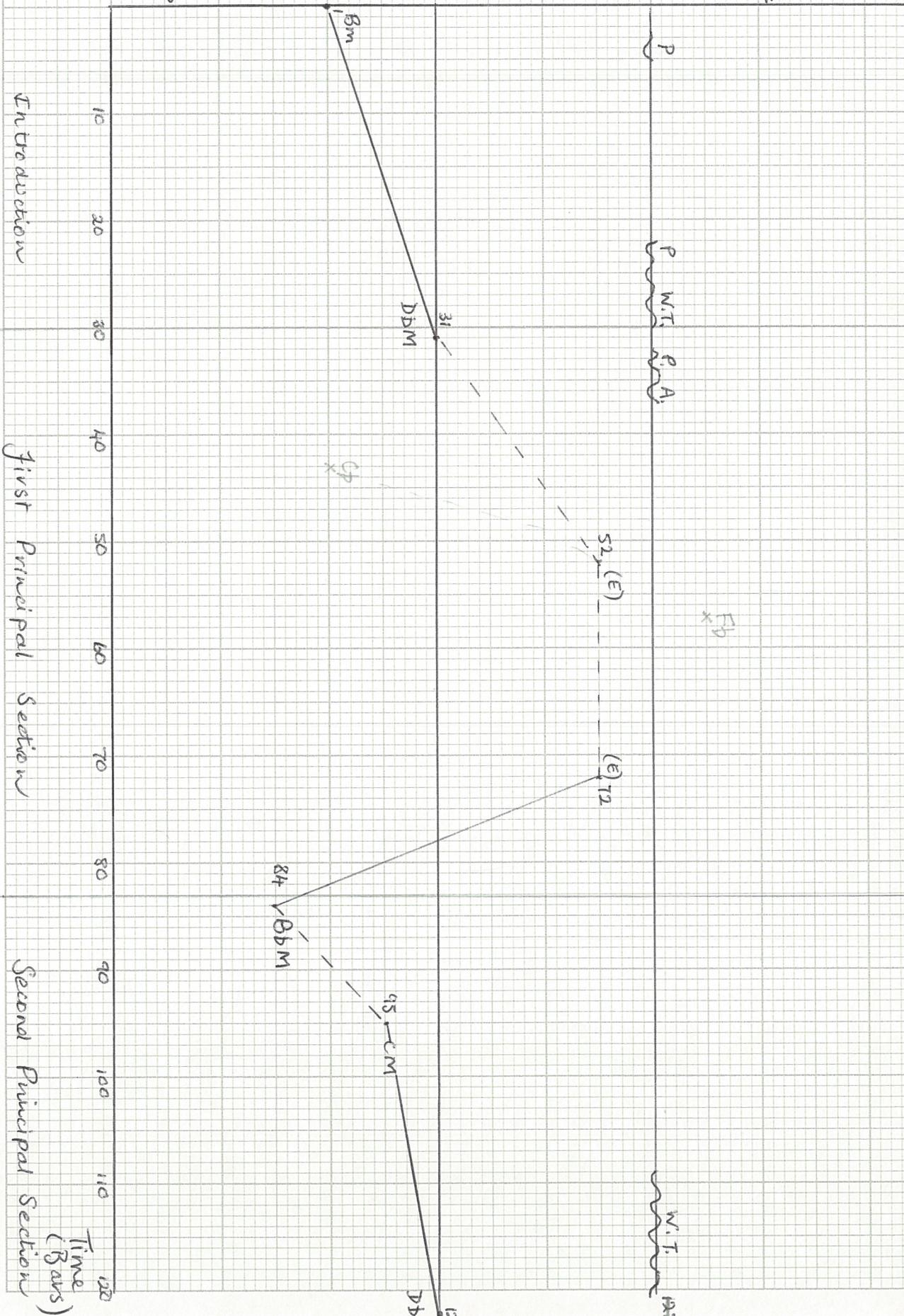
Wave

La mer: de l'aube à midi sur la mer I

(Tonal Model)

Whole-tone  
Pentatonic  
Acoustic

- G
- (G#) F#
- F
- (F#) Eb
- (D#) Eb
- D
- (C#) Db
- C
- B
- (A#) Bb
- A
- (G#) Ab



Introduction

First Principal Section

Second Principal Section

Time (Bars)

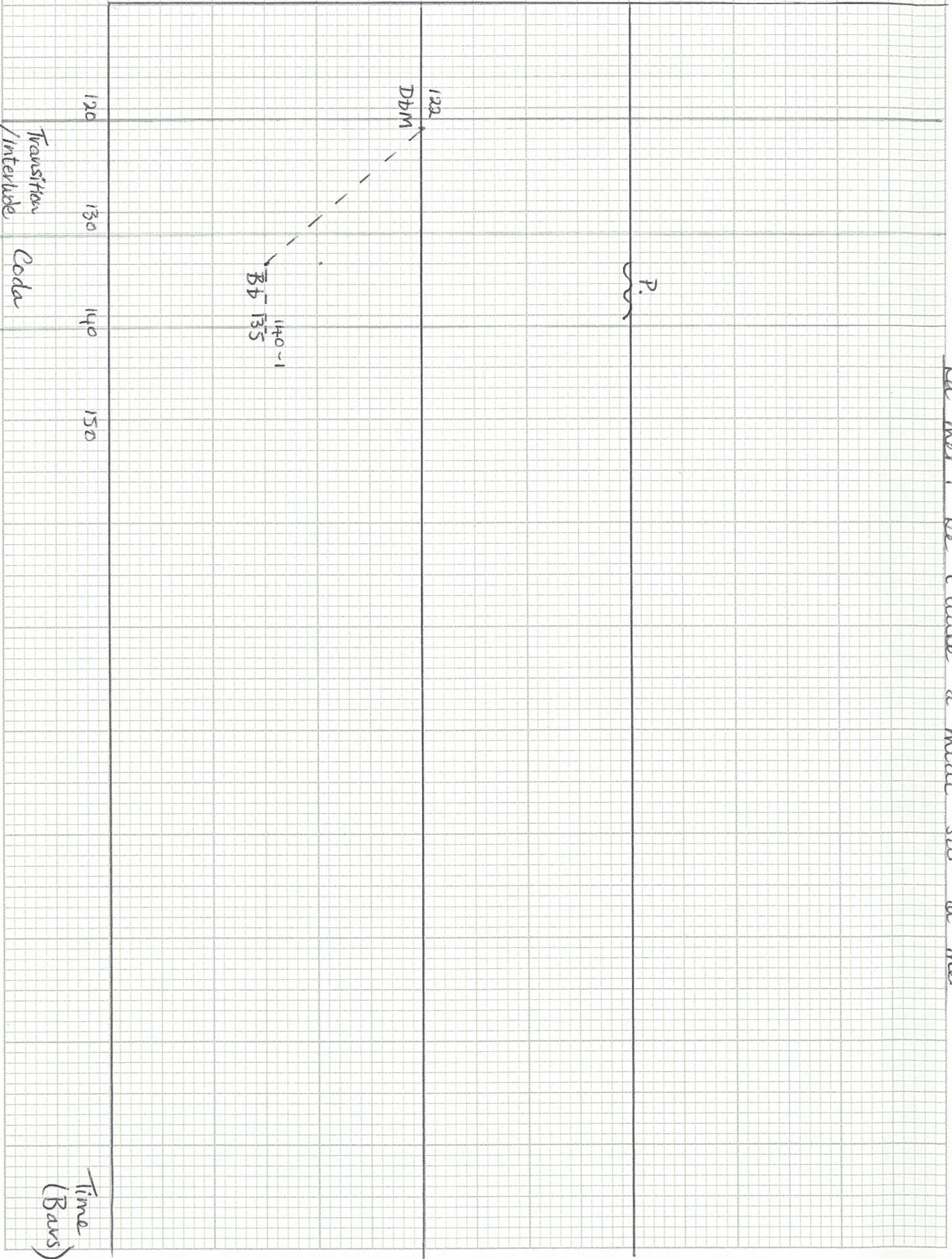
Wave

(Tonal / Modal)

La mer i de l'aube à midi sur la mer

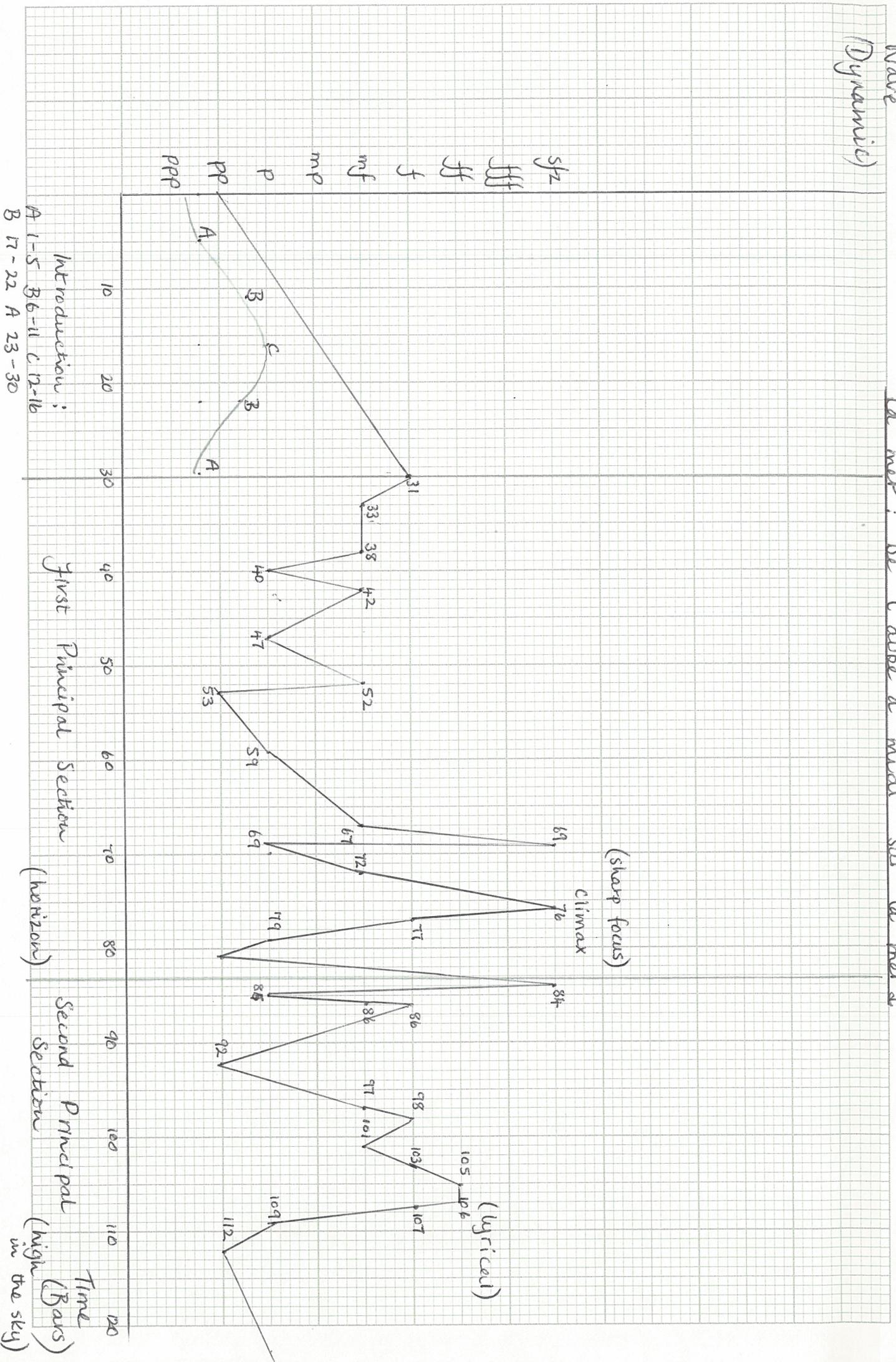
Windle-tone/  
Pentatonic/  
Acoustic

G  
F#b  
F  
E  
Eb  
D  
Db  
C  
B  
Bb  
A  
Ab



Navre  
(Dynamics)

La mer : De l'aube à midi sur la mer





La mer De l'aube à midi sur la mer Movement I

Bars	Introduction Bars 1-30	First Principal Section Bars 31-83
<p><b>Harmonies</b></p>	<p>Obscure tonality, though B in key signature and B bass. (C flat bar 35) Pentatonic theme (Symbolic of rising sun in the east). Presence of 'major' G# bars 3-30. M/m? A flat – bars 14-16 (V of D flat M). Bar 16 – D bass. Fig. 2 – woodwind pentatonic tones.</p>	<p>D flat M key sig. Pentatonic waves in woodwind. Acoustic and pentatonic waves in cellos (derivatives of A1) over stable tonic D flat) pedal. C flat (enharmonically B from beginning). b. 35 in horns and fig. 4. (b. 42-6 shift from D flat to E tonality) E M tonality – (F flat) becomes E in bass b. 52.</p>
<p><b>Architectural Structure</b></p>	<p>6/4 – 4/4 – 6/4 time signatures (ternary) No regular pulse. Dotted rhythms – Bar 6 1<sup>st</sup> main theme, followed by Cyclic Motive X at fig. 1 – clear wave/arch. Undulating bass fig. 1 on plus chromatic runs – falling waves. Fig. 2 – harp and timbales undulations. Condensed surges in ascending waves of woodwind.</p>	<p>6/8 compound time. Undulating chords in violins – 3rds /5ths. Pentatonic wave - Motive A1 (b. 33) plus horn acoustic Motive A2 (b. 35 - principal theme), Motive A3 at fig. 4 (b. 43 on), Motive A1 (b. 44) Motive B – 'erotic' flute arabesque (b. 47). 'Static' string section. Motive A2 (b. 53 on) completes small scale ternary seq. 'Static' string section. Anacrusis figure (bars 46 and 51) in woodwind.</p>
<p><b>Form</b></p>	<p>Arch or wave form ABCBA - Cyclic Motive X at apex of wave (C). A (b. 1-5) B (b. 6-11) C (b. 12-16) B (b. 17-22) A (23-30) 'Open form' – J. Barraqué – 'self-propelling'/'sonorous becoming'</p>	<p>3 Arch figures based on motives (R. Howat p. 74) – A (b. 31-46) B (b. 47-52) {A (b. 53-8)} C (b. 59-63) B (b. 64-7) A (b. 68-83). A (b. 31-46) B (b. 47-52) A (b. 53-8). A1 – A2 – A1 based over bars 33-42. (A3 enters at fig 4 as transition to next part of larger arch form).</p>
<p><b>Dynamics</b></p>	<p>Très lent (116 = crotchet) pp p &lt;&lt;&gt; pp pp <i>expressif et soutenu</i> piu pp &lt;&gt; pp &gt; Animez peu a peu jusqu'à l'entrée du 6/8p &lt;&lt;&lt; p &lt; p &lt;</p>	<p>Modéré, sans lenteur (Dans un rythme très souple) (116 = quaver) f dim. p &gt;&gt; mf &gt; p <i>expressif et soutenu</i> &lt;&gt; mf &lt;&gt; p &gt; piu p p &lt; mf &gt; p <i>expressif</i> &lt; p &lt; p &lt; p</p>

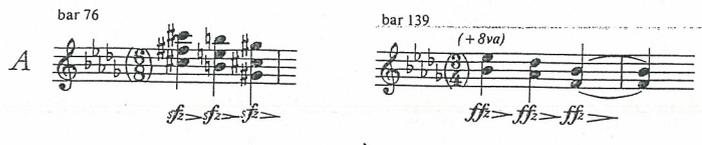
Bars		<p><u>Second Principal Section</u> Bars 84-121</p>
Harmonies	<p>Bass F-C flat b.54 (aug. 4th). F flat bass b. 57. (E) – G b. 58. A flat b. 59 (fig. 6) – C flat b. 60. Diminished harmonies in Motive B arabesque: B flat – E flat – D flat progression to G flat M at b.68. E natural mode (F flat) in bass at b. 72 (fig. 8). Acoustic harmony in strings. Loss of 'tonic' E – D natural at b. 73. Unstable modality leads to tritone to B flat M at b. 84. F (V) in bass.</p>	<p>(Tritone E-A#/B flat) B flat M. F (V) bass. Given max. impact by removal of E at b. 73. C M at b. 95 (latent tonic). C# whole-tone arpeggios (strings). Unstable flat mode – G flat/F flat b. 111. – F flat bass b. 115 – Aug. 4<sup>th</sup> of B flat. – E in bass b. 119 (fig. 13). Whole-tone arpeggios - return to opening tonality. Tritone E flat – A bass</p>
Architectural Structure	<p>A2 cont. at b. 55. Four rippling glissando harps – (vertical as well as horizontal waves). Motive C at b. 59 (fig. 6) plus yearning 'erotic' violin solo and 2 octave plus harp arpeggios. Motive B – b. 64 (fig.7) – minor 3<sup>rd</sup> below b. 47 (previous Mot. B). 9/8 time sig. b. 67. 6/8 time sig. b. 68. Motives A1 b. 68. A2 b. 69. Whirlpool/vortex to climax – huge dynamic wave. Motive X (cyclic) b. 72 (fig. 8). Climax b. 76. Motive A1 b. 77.</p>	<p>4/4 time sig. Motive D strings (b. 84-fig. 9). Striking triplet theme/dotted rhythm (16 cellos). Woodwind at b. 98 (fig. 10). B flat M scale at b. 87 in lowest cellos. Motive D flutes b. 92 and harp type at b. 95. Woodwind b. 98 (fig. 10). Dynamic swell to fig. 11-climax. 6/8 b. 100. 12/8 b. 101. Ascending scales in strings – b. 100-102. Bars 106-133 – solemn chordal passage – awe and immensity - brass. 4/4 b.109. 6/8 dramatic punctuation at b.110. 12/8 b. 111. Motive X dominates from b. 112 (fig. 12). B.115 derivatives of Motive D too.</p>
Form	<p>ABCBA arch form (see previously).</p>	<p>Variations / Strophic. (An elaboration / additional element, as a sharp contrast to 1<sup>st</sup> Principal Section).</p>
Dynamics	<p>Bar 47 on - <i>doux et expressif</i> ◇ p Un peu animé &lt; p &lt; p &lt; p &lt; mf &lt; pp &gt; pp &gt; pp &gt; p &lt; p &lt; pp &lt; p &lt; p &lt; au Mouvt. p <i>expressif et soutenu</i> &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt; p ◇ p ◇ p ◇ mf &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt; Retenu sfz sfz a Tempo f &gt; dim. pp &gt; pp &gt; pp &gt;</p>	<p>– Un peu plus mouvementé (69=crotchet) Très rythmé (104 = crotchet) p &lt; sfz p &gt; mf &lt; f &gt; p &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt; f ff &lt; dim. pp pp p cresc. mf &lt; molto cresc. Au Mouvt (Un peu plus mouvementé) f &lt; f &lt; &gt; p &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt; f ff &lt; f dim. peu a peu En retenu peu a peu p &gt; p &gt; p &gt; Encore plus retenu pp &gt; p &lt; p pp ◇ pp &lt; pp &gt; Presque lent pp &lt; pp &gt; p &gt; pp &gt;</p>

Bars	<u>Transition / Interlude</u> Bars 122-131	<u>Coda</u> Bars 132-141
Harmonies	D flat M key signature. A flat (V) dominant pedal, but used to 'transform' rather than 'progress' to the end - i.e. reprise + new material. Bars 122-3 C – G flat tritone in violas. Bars 128-131 – Whole-tone passage.	G flat M 'subdominant' (not really V-IV of D flat M so much as 'shifting tonalities.' IV-I in flute; G flat bass neutralizes tonal momentum towards tonic chord. D flat tonic arrival in bass at bar 135 but tenuous. VI – B flat continues throughout bass and in final chord is held aloft (b. 140-141). Final 'plagal' cadence – E flat – D flat – B flat parallels first climax at bar 76 – C# - B – G#. Strength lies in its motivic gesture, rather than harmonies, therefore movement is ongoing. Completion of overall tonal wave.
Architectural Structure	6/4 time signature - sustained and quietly expressive passage. Unison cello bass.	Motive E – new chorale-type motive (incl. trombones) driving forward at b. 132 (fig. 14), together with pentatonic A1 and derivatives b. 135-9. Recapitulation with compression of strings. Bar 139 – Motive A (b. 76). Motive X (broad tidal wave sequence- cyclic) at b 136-8 overlapping A1.
Form	Repeated melody over 'dominant' pedal but 'transforming' into following harmonies, not resolving – example of Eimert's 'vegetative propagation.'	Unity and Open endedness (Obscurity of tonic). Extended plagal cadence.
Dynamics	Très modéré (104 = crotchet) pp < pp > Retenu pp >	Très lent (80 = quaver) pp p <> mf < f < piu f f < piu f < ff < ff < ff < ffz > ffz > ffz > p

# Motivic action in la mer

## Movement I: De l'aube à midi sur la mer

bar 76 bar 139

A 

X 

A<sub>1</sub> 

A<sub>2</sub> 

A<sub>3</sub> 

bar 47

B 

C 

D 

E 

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Avec form: Wave form (Howat)

(A) (B) (C) (B) (A)

1 6 12 17 23

LA MER

Introduction 1-30

Trois esquisses symphoniques

(A) 1-5

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1903-1905)

I. - De l'aube à midi sur la mer

Pentatonic Rising Sun in the east (symbolism)

- 1 PETITE FLÛTE
- 2 GRANDS FLÛTES
- 2 CLARINETTES en LA
- 3 COR ANGLOIS
- 3 BASSONS
- 1<sup>er</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> CORs chromatiques en FA
- 3<sup>e</sup> et 4<sup>e</sup> CORs chromatiques en FA
- 3 TROMPETTES chromatiques en FA
- 1<sup>er</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> TROMBONES
- 3<sup>e</sup> TROMBONE
- TUBA
- 3 TIMBALS
- CYMBALES
- TAM-TAM
- 1<sup>re</sup> HARPE
- 2<sup>de</sup> HARPE
- VIOLONS
- ALTOS
- VIOLONCELLES
- CONTREBASSES

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③ 6-11

! rhythm

X - dramatic gesture

1st main theme → many derivatives

③ 17-22

Aug N of DM

undulating B/A A cross-AB V of DBM

(B-D progression)

A 23-30

Divas an → b. 31 Pentatonic forms.

23

2 Antenez peu à peu jusqu'à l'entrée du f

en détours

1<sup>o</sup> en détours

2<sup>o</sup>

3<sup>o</sup>

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Pentatonic Wave Patterns  
- 'oriental'

33

Clavier Fl.

Cl.

Bois

Cors

1<sup>re</sup> Harpe

2<sup>e</sup> Harpe

Cont. string parts

Native A1

Acoustic A2

CF

p expressif et soutenu

SB(B)

Smoulines aux 4 Cors

~~E♭~~  
~~B♭~~  
D♭

Acoustic + Pentatonic  
Mode over security of  
Tone pedal

37

Clavier Fl.

Cl.

Bois

Cors

1<sup>re</sup> Harpe

2<sup>e</sup> Harpe





SS  
Gdtes Fl.  
Hr  
Cl.  
Fgns  
Coss  
1to  
Harpie  
2de  
Harpie

*Handwritten notes:*  
 A2 (cont)  
 rippling gussards.  
 F(III)  
 Cb (aug. 4th of F)  
 (VI of Eb m)  
 F#  
 (Ab m)  
 q

59-63

Ⓢ (large scale arch/wave sequence - ABCBA - tt. p. 74)

59  
Gdtes Fl.  
Hr  
Cl.  
Cor A.  
Fgns  
1to  
Harpie  
2de  
Harpie  
3de  
Coss

*Handwritten notes:*  
 yielding/mysterious/giving way  
 C  
 Cédtez un peu  
 Hotive  
 C  
 Cédtez un peu  
 'Erotic' violin  
 Ab m  
 Cb/B  
 Ab  
 (Vot D#M)

B 64-7

Diminished harmony of b.47

Crest or vertex

Time change

opening out

A 68-83

Wider

A1

dimax f6

7

64

Giles Fl.

pic Fl.

Hrth

Cor A.

Cl.

Cors

1<sup>re</sup> et 2<sup>de</sup> Harpes

1<sup>rs</sup> Yous

Div.

2<sup>ds</sup> Yous

Div.

Altes Div.

Violles Div.

C.B.

Musical score for measures 64-7. The score includes parts for Giles Fl., pic Fl., Hrth, Cor A., Cl., Cors, 1<sup>re</sup> et 2<sup>de</sup> Harpes, 1<sup>rs</sup> Yous Div., 2<sup>ds</sup> Yous Div., Altes Div., Violles Div., and C.B. The music is marked "au MOUV" and "p expressif et soutenu". Handwritten notes in red and blue highlight specific passages, including a circled section labeled "arabesque". Dynamic markings include pp, p, mf, and mfz. Performance instructions like "Solo" and "Tous" are present.

Bb Eb Db (Tonic)

68

Giles Fl.

pic Fl.

Hrth

Cor A.

Cl.

Bois

Cors

Tuba

1<sup>re</sup> et 2<sup>de</sup> Harpes

1<sup>rs</sup> Yous

Div.

Altes Div.

Violles Div.

C.B.

Musical score for measures 68-83. The score includes parts for Giles Fl., pic Fl., Hrth, Cor A., Cl., Bois, Cors, Tuba, 1<sup>re</sup> et 2<sup>de</sup> Harpes, 1<sup>rs</sup> Yous Div., Altes Div., Violles Div., and C.B. The music is marked "Solo" and "mf tres soutenu". Handwritten notes in red and blue highlight specific passages, including a circled section labeled "A1" and another labeled "A2". Dynamic markings include pp, p, mf, and mfz. Performance instructions like "Solo" and "Tous" are present.

gbm

cb

E(F4) stable

removed

D4

Drive to climax

Motive X → 76 → 84  
Climax

Tonal deadlock till b. 84

Registeral / Dynamic Peaks every bar.

unstable acoustic harmony

unstable acoustic harmony





Dramatic punctuation

Dynamics build

Tension building on ascending scales

CLIMAX

Loses tonic associations

Dotted 'triplet-type' rhythm

B4/c

Solemn choral passage → b. 133 (horus + rassois)

Suggesting awe and immensity

fading away, but C# whole-tone arpeggios

Dramatic punctuation

109 En retentant peu à peu

121 Encore plus retent

NATIVE X

Ab m / C# M

Ab



Return to opening tonality  
 Ab → Db Tritone  
 Home key  
 Db M

Transition / Interlude  
 122-131

121  
 28  
 121  
 28  
 121  
 28

Whole-tone

Ab Tritone

Ab Dominant pedal

Gb-C Tritone C-#

unison cells

Whole tone Retains

Ab - Transforming rather than...  
 a transaxial

CODA 132-141

(Extended Pagan cadence)  
 Return to F# - (Subdominant)

New chorale-type motive

Motive E-3rd movement

Gb IV-1

Très lent (80 = ♩)

into Gb (IV)

(neutralizes tonal momentum to → tonic chord)

Emphatic Conclusion

Return to Tonic chord + neo material

Pentatonic A<sub>1</sub> (4:33-4)

MotivE  
Neo Material

Musical score for measures 1-33. Instruments include Guest Fl., Flute, Clarinet, Bassoon, Trumpet, Trombone, Cymbal, Snare Drum, and Harp. The score is heavily annotated with green and blue highlights, circled sections, and handwritten notes. A section labeled 'MotivE' is circled in green, and 'Neo Material' is circled in blue. The score concludes with a 'Tonic' section marked with 'Db' and 'Bb V1'.

Plagal cadence Motive A

Derivative of A<sub>1</sub>

Return Eb - a Tempo 144

Musical score for measures 34-144. Instruments include Guest Fl., Flute, Clarinet, Bassoon, Trumpet, Trombone, Cymbal, Snare Drum, and Harp. The score continues with 'Derivative of A<sub>1</sub>' and 'Return Eb - a Tempo 144'. It features a 'Recapitulation' section with 'A<sub>1</sub>/X' and 'Bb a Tempo' markings. The score is annotated with green and blue highlights and circled sections.

Db Bb V1

Motive A<sub>1</sub>

Recapitulation with some compression-strips

Musical score for measures 145-210. Instruments include Guest Fl., Flute, Clarinet, Bassoon, Trumpet, Trombone, Cymbal, Snare Drum, and Harp. The score concludes with a 'Recapitulation' section marked with 'A<sub>1</sub>/X' and 'Bb a Tempo'. The score is annotated with green and blue highlights and circled sections.

Notes

La mer: deux de vagues II

(Tonal/Modal)

Motive H Tritone

(F#) Gb

F

(Tonus/vois t)

E

E<sub>b</sub>

(C#) D<sub>b</sub>

C

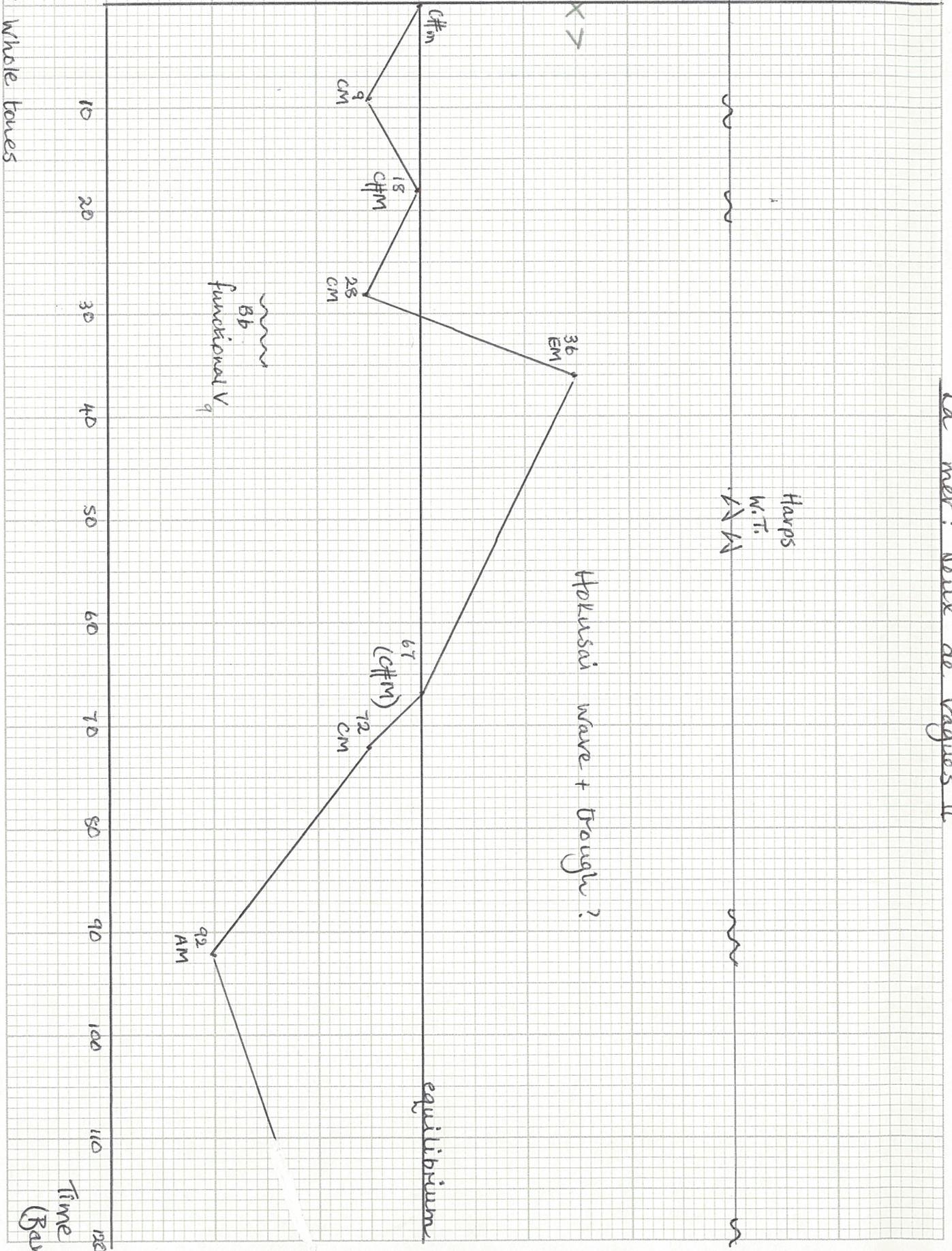
B

(A#) B<sub>b</sub>

A

(G#) A<sub>b</sub>

W.T. = Whole tones



Time (Bars)

Waves

La mer: vagues de roques

(Tonal/Medal)

Motive H Tritone



Harpis  
W.T.  
W.W.

(F#) Gb

F

E

Eb

D

(G#) Db

C

B

(A#) Bb

A

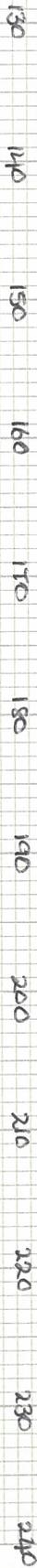
(G#) Ab

horizon of wave

163  
EM

equilibrium

Dissonant  
A#  
harmonies



Time  
(Bars)

Notes

La mer : jeux de ragues

(Tonal/Medal)

Motiv H / T/Hove

(F#)

Gb

F

E

Eb

D

(C#)

D#

C

B

(A#)

B#

A

(G#)

A#

250

260

270

Time  
(Bars)

x

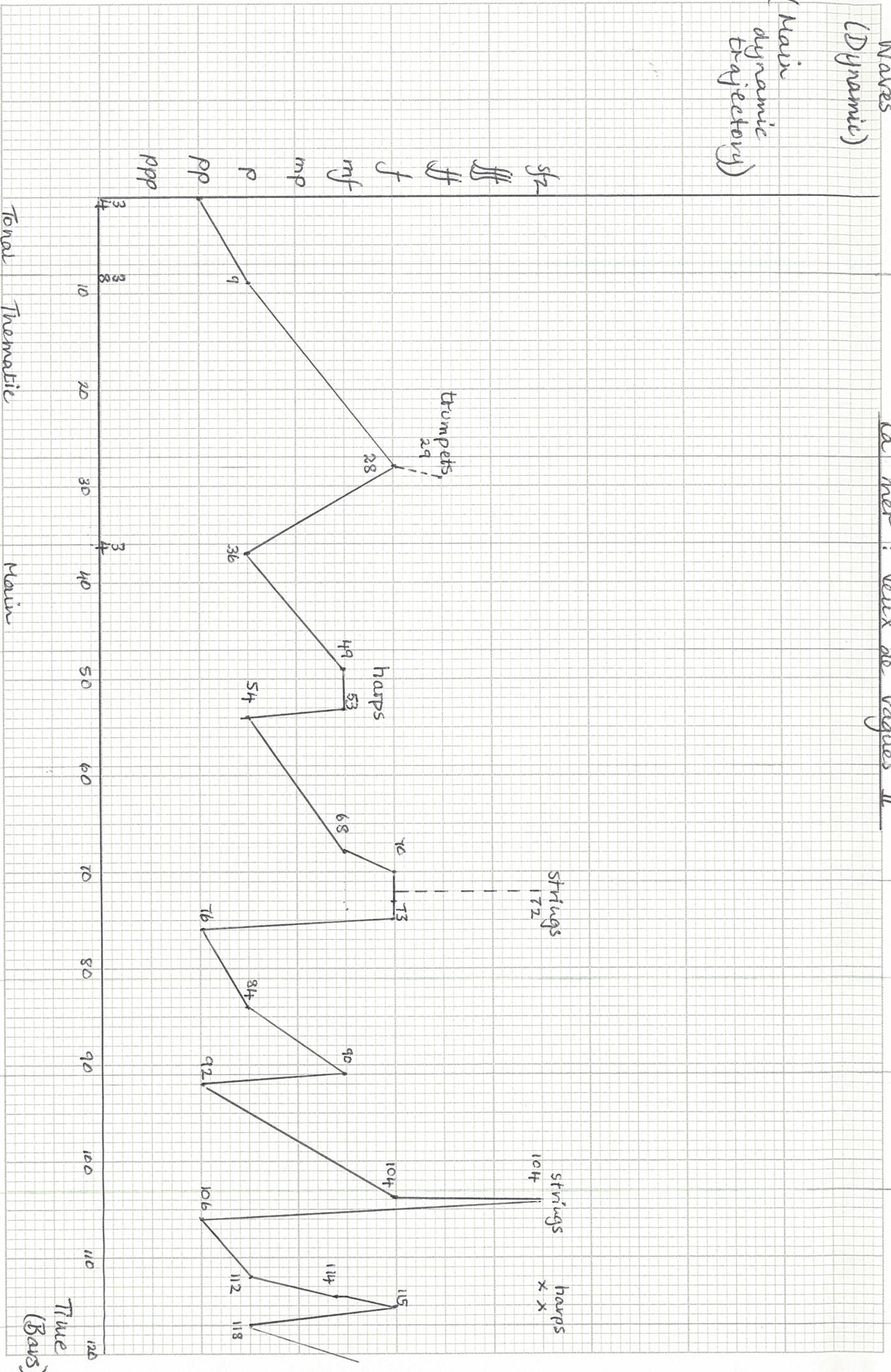
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\_\_\_\_\_

Waves  
(Dynamic)

(Main dynamic trajectory)

La mer: Jeux de vagues II



Intro. 1-8

Thematic Intro. 9-27

Beginning 36-47

Main 48-59

60-71

72-81

82-91

92-103

104-117

118-123

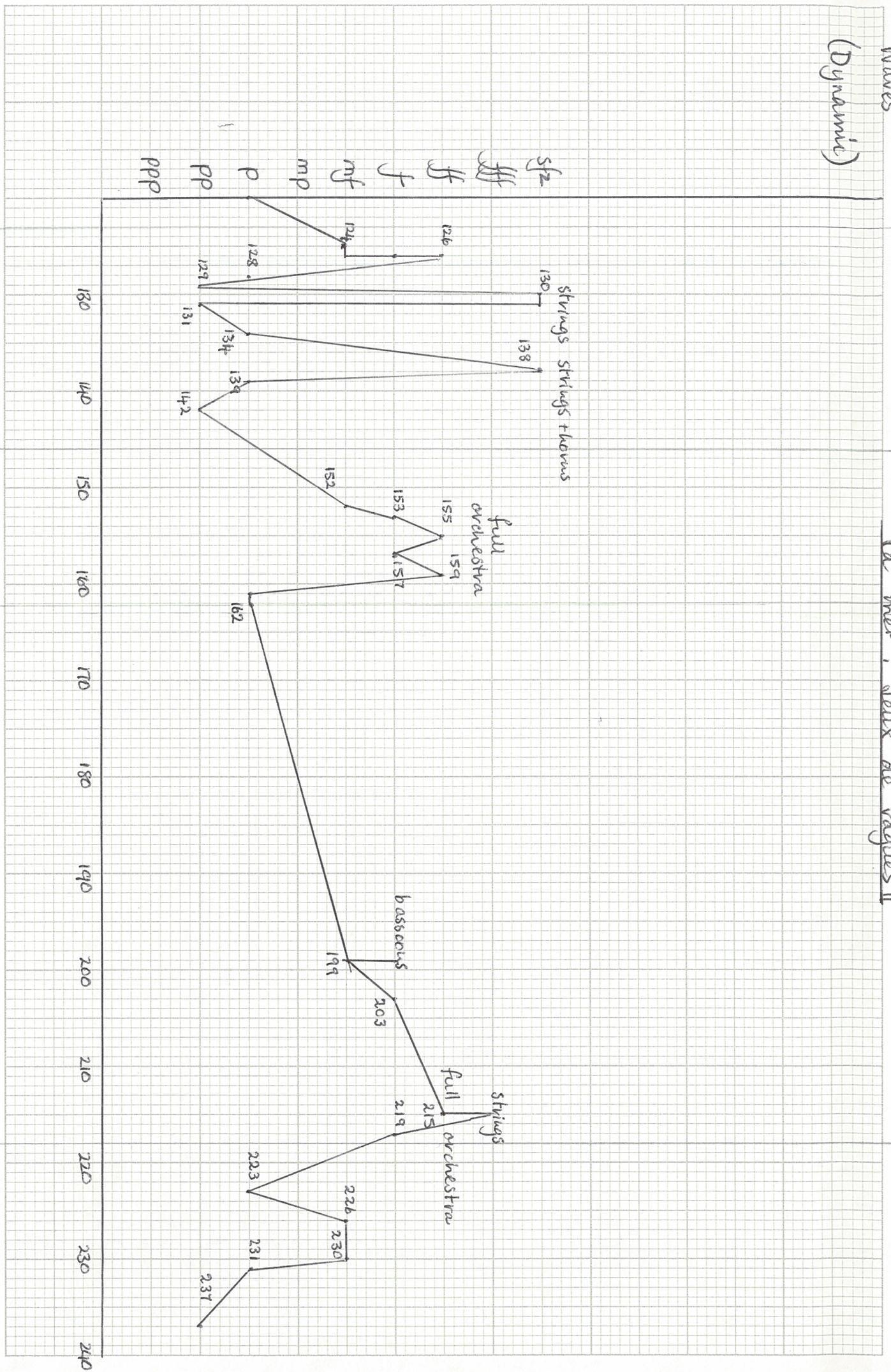
Intro

Main

Time (Bars)

(Dynamic)

La mer: Deux de vagues II



124 - 146  
 Part II  
 (cont.)

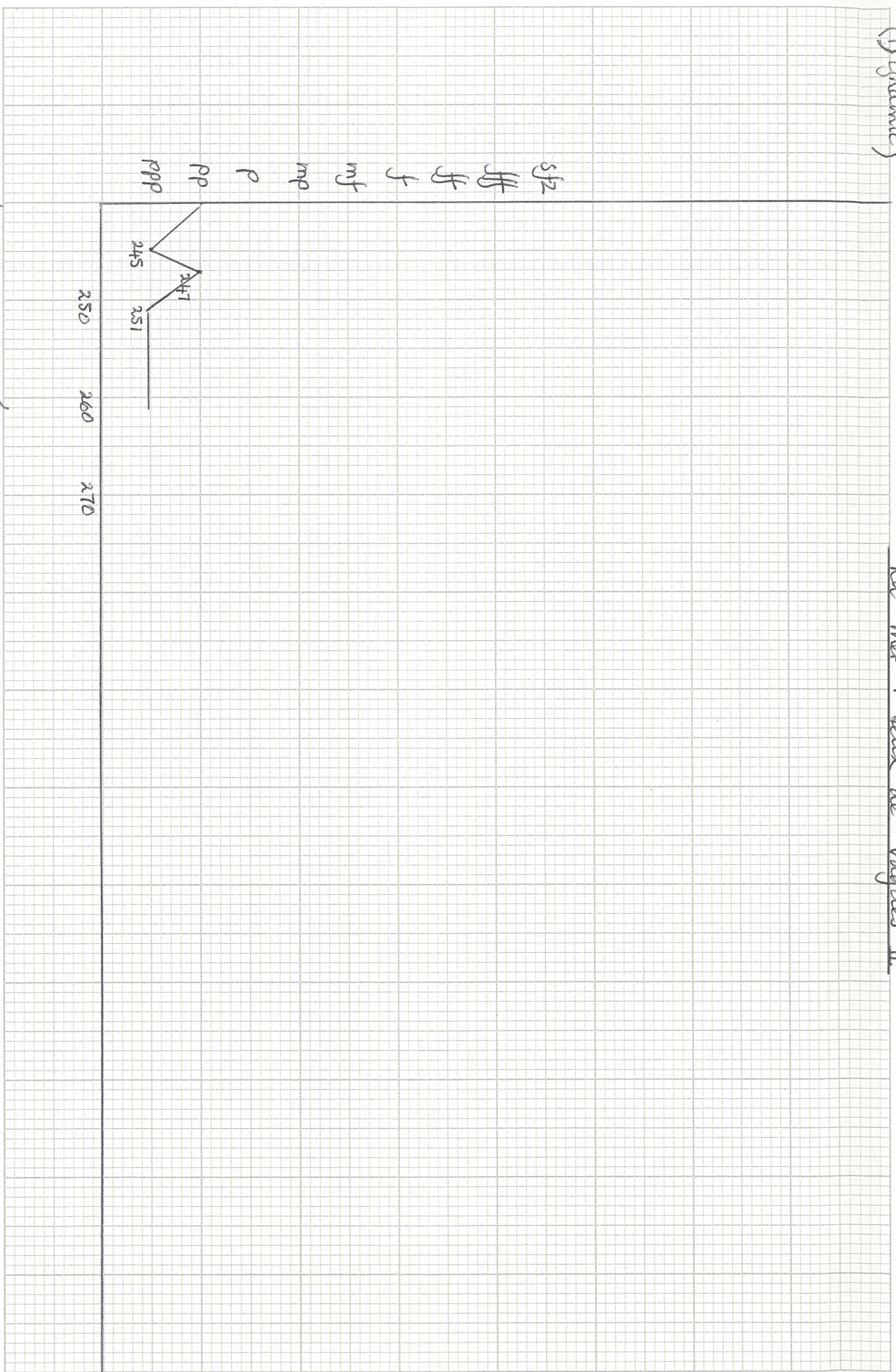
147 - 162

163 - 218  
 Part III

219 - 261  
 Coda

(Dynamic)

La mer : vagues de ragues II



Coda (cont.)

La mer *Jeux de vagues* Movement II

Bars	Part I Bars 1-35			Introduction			Part II			
	Bars 1-8	9-17	18-27	28-35	Bars 36-47	Bars 48-59				
Harmonies	C # m (E M) (enh. D flat M)	C M (end of beginning tonally).	C# M	C M			E M tonic estab. Main beg. tonally linked to 3/4. (End of beginning thematically). Bar 48 Whole tone harp <i>glissandos</i> repeated twice. Tonal/dynamic/wave form. Sweeps the board clean tonally. Bass B (not traditional V because of W. T. harps. Repeated bar 52 – ‘cadential’ in absence of traditional forms.			
Architectural Structure	Bass F# m No tonal stability established till fig. 19.	Bass C tonally).	Bass G#	V9 Bass B flat			3/4 time sig. Motive J and arabesque at faster time. Legato string line leads to surging harp ‘wave’- linked to Motive H tones Bar 50 on strong chordal passage in horns – triplet dotted figure.’ ‘Overlapping’ chordal woodwind at fig. 21. Intentional ambiguity.			
Form							3/4 time sig. String trem. Overall wave on stave - bars 1-4. ‘Overlapping’ device in trumpets – bar 8. Motive H – tritone with arabesque – bars 9-13 18-27. Harp waves bars 9-12 19-22. Cello trills at 31-3 anticipate violins at 36.			
Dynamics							‘Scherzo’ D. Cox. ‘Ternary’ M. Pommer. ‘Overlapping binary systems’ R. Howat. ‘Multiple segment’ Part I. S. Trezise. ‘Impediments and forward impulses’ L. Berman ‘Vegetative circulation’ H. Eimert. ‘Wave’ form			
							Allegro (dans un rythme très souple) (116 = Crotchet) pp < p pp < p > p < > pp > Animé 72 = crotchet p < > p < p < > p < > p < p < > p < > p < > p p < p < > f < f < ff < En retenant			Assez Animé 138 = crotchet. p < p < p p < p < p p < > p < < < mf mf > p <i>doux et express</i> < < mf mf > p < mf < < > p

Bars	Part II (cont) Bars 60-71 72-81 82-91	Part II (cont) Bars 92-103	Part II (cont) Bars 104-117
Harmonies	E M (cont) Bar 67 – C# M (D flat M) harmonies. Bar 72 C M F (IV) in bass Bar 76 C# M harmonies – G# bass at bar 78 (V of C# M. Augmented V of C M. Bar 88 tritone dominates (strings).	A M Bass A – E – G natural	A M Bass C natural C natural/G natural chord Bar 112 – harmonic change – B/E A/D (V-IV) Tritone above, F# - B# (C# M).
Architectural Structure	'Overlap' segment from fig. 21. New beginning at bar 60 or 62. Bar 62 – Motive K – on cor anglais. Berman's 'smooth sailing motif'. In horns from bar 66, followed by 'Hollywoodesque' chords from fig.22 above heightened string textures/timbral change. Bar 72 – Climax Wind/String dialogue Bar 76 (23) – Motive L1 – slower crotchet = 112 (missing from score). [slowest part = highest density dynamic peaks - Howat].	Au Mouvt. section. 112 = crotchet. Slower. Motive H in oboe part. Thematic recall of opening – reprise. Interruption of Animez section.	Motive K 'smooth sailing' reappears in cellos. Another sharp break – cuts in with no preparation. Themes reprised, but not in same order. (J) postponed till fig. 33 which leads direct to climax).
Form	Part II – fragmentary – Wave	Reprise of Part I Motive returns.	Reprise Part II. Motive returns. Central point in larger scale 'forward impulse' trend figs. 25-28 – Berman.
Dynamics	p très léger pp > Cédez un peu p <i>expressif</i> (en dehors) < p < au Mouvt (peu à peu) f < f < Cédez f > f > mf > mf > p gracieux et léger < pp < > pp. p < p > p < Animez p p p < mf <	Au Mouvt. 112 = crotchet. p < p < p p p très <i>expressif</i> < molto pp <i>subito</i> > pp >	mf < sfz arco p <i>expressif</i> (en dehors) < p p <i>crescendo</i> f dim. p >



Bars	Part IV Bars 219-261 Coda at bar 225.
Harmonies	Whole-tone 'mysterious' wave harp figure at 39. Repeated. Cadential movement. Bass F natural moves to E tonic at 39, ensuring continuity despite harp figure. Bass C# (VI) at bar 232. B flat at 235 (aug 4 <sup>th</sup> of E). E M tonic chord at fig. 41, with tritone H following – duality - plus added VI (C#) in 1 <sup>st</sup> violin. Bass E/B (I/V). At bar 258 E/B joined by C# (VI) on glockenspiel- final comment / hint of discord.
Architectural Structure	Stave splits at bar 223-4. Coda ensues. 2 harp <i>glissando</i> figures across staves. Legato bass line – 'cadential motion' helping unify piece. Harp wave form – across bars at fig. 42 onwards.
Form	Part IV Coda Debussy's aim for the movement – 'one that is neither open nor closed.'
Dynamics	En retenant f dim p > au Mouvt (138 = crotchet) p <i>glissando</i> < mf mf > <i>glissando</i> p <i>glissando</i> < mf mf > <i>glissando</i> p < > p < > pp pp pp > pp > pp > ppp pp ppp

Motivic action in La mer

Movement II Jeux de vagues

16  
H

19 (+8va)

Part I  
Introduction 1-8

'evolving tonic harmonies' - T. p. 93.  
Debussy's aim: a movement that is 'neither open nor closed';  
beginning tonally, end of

II. Jeux de vagues

$\sharp_m$  (EM)  
Allegro (dans un rythme très souple) (116 =  $\text{♩}$ )

2 GRANDES FLÛTES  
1 PETITE FLÛTE  
2 HAUTOIS  
1 COR ANGLAIS  
2 CLARINETTES EN LA  
3 BASSONS  
1<sup>er</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> CORNS chromatiques en FA  
3<sup>e</sup> et 4<sup>e</sup> CORNS chromatiques en FA  
3 TROMPETTES chromatiques en FA  
CYMBALES  
TRIANGLE  
1 GLOCKENSPIEL (\*)  
2 HARDES  
VIOLONS  
ALTOUS  
VIOLONCELLES  
CONTREBASSES

Handwritten notes on the score:  
-  $\text{pp}$  (pianissimo) markings in blue  
-  $\text{ppp}$  (pianississimo) markings in blue  
-  $\text{pizz.}$  (pizzicato) markings in blue  
-  $\text{Div.}$  (divisi) markings in blue  
- A green wavy line tracing a path through the strings, labeled 'thoge string wave' in red.  
- A red note: 'cette, "mysterieuse" woodwind' pointing to the woodwind section.

5  
Grands Fl.  
Pet. Fl.  
Haut.  
Cor A.  
Cl.  
Bass.  
Ces.  
Tromp.  
Gymb.  
Tps.  
Glock.  
Harpes  
Viol. 1 et 2  
Viol. 3 et 4  
Vcllo  
Cb.

Handwritten notes on the score:  
-  $\text{pp}$  markings in blue  
-  $\text{ppp}$  markings in blue  
-  $\text{pizz.}$  markings in blue  
-  $\text{Div.}$  markings in blue  
- A red note: 'overlaps' with a bracket over a passage.  
- A red note: 'derive - anticipates new rhythm.' with an arrow pointing to a rhythmic change.  
- A red note: 'No tonal stability established till (19)' at the bottom left.



CM 18

V9 - Bb CLINAX

(functional V) Bb harmony → EM

Musical score for measures 18-34. Instruments include Clarinet (Cl.), Horns (Horn), Trumpets (Trump.), Cymbals (Cymb.), Glockenspiel (Glock.), Percussion (Perc.), and Basses (Bass). The score features various musical notations and handwritten annotations in blue and green. Key annotations include "En retournant" at the beginning and end of the section, "pizz." (pizzicato) and "arco" (arco) markings, and "Sourlines" in the trumpet part. The music is in common time (CM) and features a Bb harmony.

Trius anticipate viduus at 19 - 'overlap' device

End of Intro. thematically.

EM

Tonic established Main linked to 3 & 4

Musical score for measures 34-37. Instruments include Clarinet (Cl.), Horns (Horn), Cymbals (Cymb.), Percussion (Perc.), and Basses (Bass). The score continues with various musical notations and handwritten annotations. Key annotations include "Motive T" and "arabesque" in red, and "p de la pointe" in blue. The music is in common time (CM) and features a Bb harmony.

T = 138 = 1 Associated with faster tim. max

Tonal instability

legato line in strings present in intervals

20

Whole tones' sweep the board' tonality

clean (33)

chordal

harps disrupt tonality -

51

Part II (160-71)

57

(b.8)  
 Example of 'overlapping'  
 of previous section -  
 'new segment' - here  
 or at b. 62?  
 21  
 Interlud ambiguity  
 'chordal'

62

*Cédez un peu*

*Motive K*

*Smooth sailing motive' - Berman*

*pizz*, *arco*, *pp*, *p*

'Smooth sailing motive' - Berman

(85)

22 au Motif (pour à peu)

*Motive K*

*holly woodesque*

*p*, *pizz*, *arco*, *pp*, *p*

(CFM) registered string harm.; texture - timbral change.

Flute  
Clarinet  
Bassoon  
Trumpet  
Trombone  
Horns  
Percussion

CM Part II (72-81)  
72 CLIMAX huge excitement: wind/string dialogue

CM IV

(missing from Durand edition; d = 112)

Flute  
Clarinet  
Bassoon  
Trumpet  
Trombone  
Horns  
Percussion

83-86 (slower) relative to p gracieux et léger

Tritone

Aug V

slowest part of measures 83-86 corresponds with high notes in clarinet and horn parts

Flute  
Clarinet  
Bassoon  
Trumpet  
Trombone  
Horns  
Percussion

Aug V

Part II  
Bars 82-91

(Motive of b. 76 - clarinet)

84

Flute I  
Flute II  
Clarinet  
Horns  
Cor A.  
Tromp.  
Trump.  
Glock.  
Harp  
Viv Solo

84

Flute I  
Flute II  
Clarinet  
Horns  
Cor A.  
Tromp.  
Trump.  
Glock.  
Harp  
Viv Solo

fig. 20) CRTs in re previous or vice versa

Titone dominant.

88 Antitez

89 overlap section

90 AM

91

92

Interruption of harmonic + melodic flow + ↓ of speed and dynamics.

New material + a reprise. Troms start

92 Motive H

93 Titone

94

95

96

97

98

99

100

101

102

103

Part II

Bars 92-103

Version: 20-20 - central point on larger - state used. Part II Bars 104-117

Part II Bars 104-117

Tranes return, but not in same order

2nd staff 104-117 - cuts in without any preparation

Notice J postponed till after 33 -> direct

Kidive K



114

Musical score for page 54, measures 114-123. The score includes parts for Gdes Fl., HOB, Cl., Bois, Cors, 1re et 2de Harpes, and Trompe. It features dynamic markings such as 'mf', 'f', 'dim.', and 'pp', and performance instructions like '(Sans sourdine)'. A large handwritten 'K' is placed over the woodwind and string parts, with an arrow pointing to the beginning of the score.

Part II Bars 118-123

K → H obstructs forward impetus

28

118

Au Mouvt (118 = d)

Musical score for page 55, measures 118-123. The score includes parts for Gdes Fl., HOB, Cl., Cors, 1re et 2de Harpes, and Trompe. It features dynamic markings such as 'pp', 'p', and 'f', and performance instructions like '1er Solo', '2e Solo', and '3e Solo'. Handwritten annotations include 'H' and 'K' with arrows pointing to specific notes in the woodwind parts. At the bottom left, there are handwritten notes: '1/4', '1/8', and '1/4'.

Part II Bars 124 - 146

En ralentissant beaucoup

Right Chord CHMAX

C# - E# - G# - B - A#

D# Aug. 4th.

Dissonant Harmonies

127

Full in action

instead of resolving → C# → Gm

A# leads into e over 29

'overlapping' domin 7th...

Gm



1 - bar dialogue between strings + woodwind.

142

31

Handwritten annotations on page 60:

- AB B D Aug. (trn) (L2) (ritard)
- Boundary of Slow Part
- L2

Part II

Bars 147-162

Acceleration towards p. 163.

146

Peu à peu animé pour arriver à 138 =  $\sigma$  au No 32

Handwritten annotations on page 61:

- Derived from h. 111, 7
- Wave-like motion
- Peu à peu animé pour arriver à 138 =  $\sigma$  au No 32

*Chromatic harmonies*

Flutes Fl.  
Piccolo Pic.  
Clarinets Cl.  
Cor Anglais Cor. A.  
Trumpets Trp.  
Trombones Trbn.  
Horns Horns  
Cymbals Cymb.  
Triangle Trg.  
Glockenspiel Glock.  
Harp Harp

*Titone-type*  
*auct res*  
*cresc. molto*

(Gm with + b7b)  
(b. 142-4)

(Inversion from b. 9)  
Titone Dynamic Part

SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI  
# 6 D COURTEX  
KANSAS CITY, MO

Flutes Fl.  
Piccolo Pic.  
Clarinets Cl.  
Cor Anglais Cor. A.  
Trumpets Trp.  
Trombones Trbn.  
Horns Horns  
Cymbals Cymb.  
Triangle Trg.  
Glockenspiel Glock.  
Harp Harp

*Titones*  
*cresc. molto*  
*Tritone*

Bb Whole-tones on V9  
C scale + chromatic

Bb Whole-tones on V9  
C scale + chromatic

*trills - undulating*

*trills*

11 bar climax continues

157

Flute I, Flute II, Clarinet, Bassoon, Oboe, Horns, Trumpets, Trombones, Cymbals, Timpani, Flute III, Harp

Part 3  
B163-218  
EM

Nearest approach to total reprise (same figure + total centre as 19) to 20 - of. bars 38-9 + 42-3). ? 36-47

Motive J → direct to climax at 35

Flute I, Flute II, Clarinet, Bassoon, Oboe, Horns, Trumpets, Trombones, Cymbals, Timpani, Flute III, Harp

long approach to 38 climax gives additional force - J = faster tempo.

over-lap, nears (time value?) till contin.

169

Oboes I-II  
Flutes I-II  
Clarinet A  
Bassoon  
Horns  
Trumpets  
Trombones  
Harps

*Harp expanded sequencia*  
*Native M*  
*p expressif et soutenu*

'Intensive counterpoint'

174

Oboes I-II  
Flutes I-II  
Clarinet A  
Bassoon  
Horns  
Trumpets  
Trombones  
Harps

*2x4 bars M - broader sweep encouraging a cad.*  
*M*  
*p expressif*

G# pedal m anticipates finale's home key

2x4 bars M - broader sweep encouraging a cad.

119

disruptive harmonies

Aug 4th

134

35 En attendant beaucoup

Sustained string melody - constant 4-bar phrases from b. 175 →

cf. to fragmentary nature of 1st half of movement

EM scale

Handwritten annotations in red: "Half ve H" and "Wacke-tone".  
 Handwritten annotations in green: "EM scale".  
 Red circled measure 189 with arrow and text: "v 7th".

Caricature augmentation of string parts, in 180-190 months.

Handwritten annotations in red: "H".  
 Handwritten annotations in green: "E major".  
 Red circled measure 191 with arrow and text: "v 7th".

(C#M)  
B#

Climax, building

109

Orchestra score for measures 109-110. The score includes parts for Oboes (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsns.), Horns (Corns), Trumpets (Tromp.), and Harp (Harpes). The music is marked with dynamic levels such as *mf*, *f*, and *ff*. Performance instructions include *f très expressif et très soutenu* and *à Solo*. Handwritten annotations in red and blue highlight specific musical elements and dynamics.

204

37 Très animé

Orchestra score for measures 204-205. The score includes parts for Oboes (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsns.), Horns (Corns), Trumpets (Tromp.), and Harp (Harpes). The music is marked with dynamic levels such as *f*, *ff*, and *ff*. Performance instructions include *ff*, *ff (en crescendo)*, and *Très animé*. A handwritten red arrow points to a measure with the note *b220* and the text *loop motive*. Handwritten annotations in red and blue highlight specific musical elements and dynamics.

209

Clas. Pt.  
Hrb  
Cor. A.  
Cl.  
Bons  
Cora  
1<sup>re</sup> et 2<sup>de</sup>  
Harpes

Main Dynamic Peak

38 CLINTX

Applies  
brakes

210

Clas. Pt.  
Hrb  
Cor. A.  
Cl.  
Bons  
Cora  
1<sup>re</sup> et 2<sup>de</sup>  
Harpes

38 CLINTX

NOTE L

Disruptive trumpets.

38

arco

Bb V<sub>9</sub>





249

Motifre H Tritone

1<sup>re</sup> et 2<sup>de</sup> Harpes

Tromp.

Cymb.

3<sup>e</sup> et 4<sup>e</sup> Harpes

1<sup>er</sup> et 2<sup>es</sup> Cors

3<sup>e</sup> Trompettes

2<sup>e</sup> Cornets à pistons en Ut

1<sup>er</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> Trombones

3<sup>e</sup> Trombone

Tuba

3<sup>e</sup> Timbales

Grosse-Caisse

Cymbales

Tam-Tam

1<sup>er</sup> Glockenspiel

2<sup>e</sup> Harpes

Violons

Altos

Violoncelles

Contrebasses

255

H Tritone

261

1<sup>er</sup> et 2<sup>es</sup> Harpes

Glock.

Cymb.

1<sup>er</sup> Solo

6. vers Vous Sall

ff Glockenspiel hold aloft - (V)

at no. 1' aube.

→ C-F#, tritone of Mt III → b44

Focus = a 'deliberately long-drawn-out'

perfect cadence → Tonic Db - b. 157. (H.P. 93)

Introduction: First group (X) Bars 1-55

III. Dialogue du vent et de la mer

(EM) Cfm

Animé et tumultueux (♩ = 96)

2<sup>e</sup> GRANDS FLÛTES

1<sup>re</sup> PETITE FLÛTE

2<sup>e</sup> HAUTBOIS

1<sup>er</sup> COR ANGLAIS

2<sup>e</sup> CLARINETTES en sib

3<sup>e</sup> BASSONS

1<sup>er</sup> CONTRE-BASSON

1<sup>er</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> CORNS chromatiques en Fa

3<sup>e</sup> et 4<sup>e</sup> CORNS chromatiques en Fa

3<sup>e</sup> TROMPETTES chromatiques en Fa

2<sup>e</sup> CORNETS à PISTONS en Ut

1<sup>er</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> TROMBONES

3<sup>e</sup> TROMBONE

TUBA

3<sup>e</sup> TIMBALES

GROSSE-CAISSE

CYMBALES

TAM-TAM

1<sup>er</sup> GLOCKENSPIEL

2<sup>e</sup> HARPES

VIOLONS

ALTOS

VIOLONCELLES

CONTREBASSES

Animé et tumultueux (♩ = 96)

tritone

Restored from Mt. I.

Waves  
(Tonal/Modal)

Dialogue du vent et de la mer III

Tritones/whole  
tones  
chromaticisms

(Gb) F#

F

E

(Eb) D#

D

(Db) C#

C

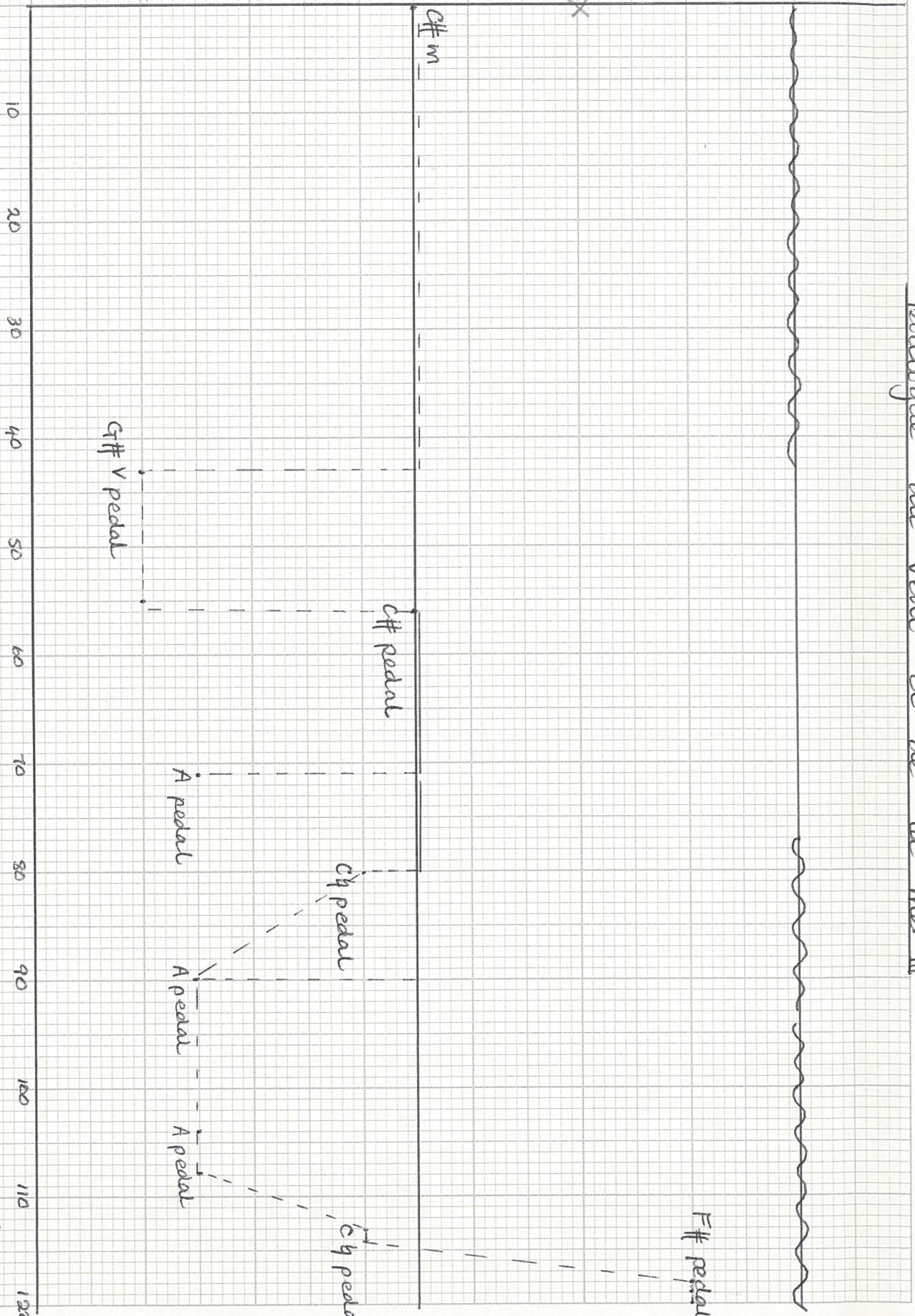
B

(Bb) A#

A

(Ab) G#

G



10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100 110 120

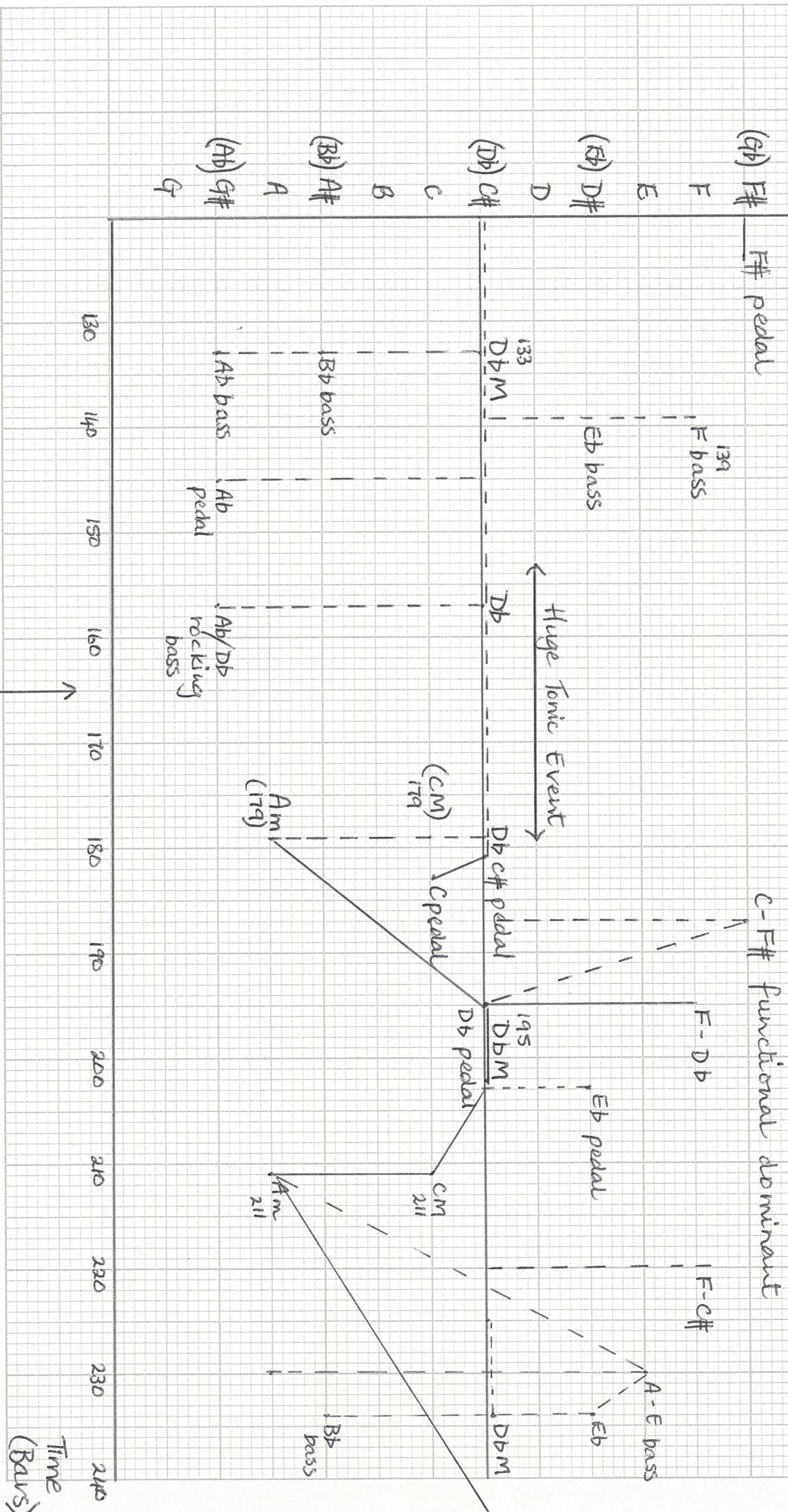
Time (Bars)  
Db (C#) equilibrium

Waves

La mer : Dialogue du vent et de la mer

(Tonal/Modal)

Tritones /  
10th le / tones /  
Chromaticisms



Tonal recapitulation  
of entire piece

C#m/F#m

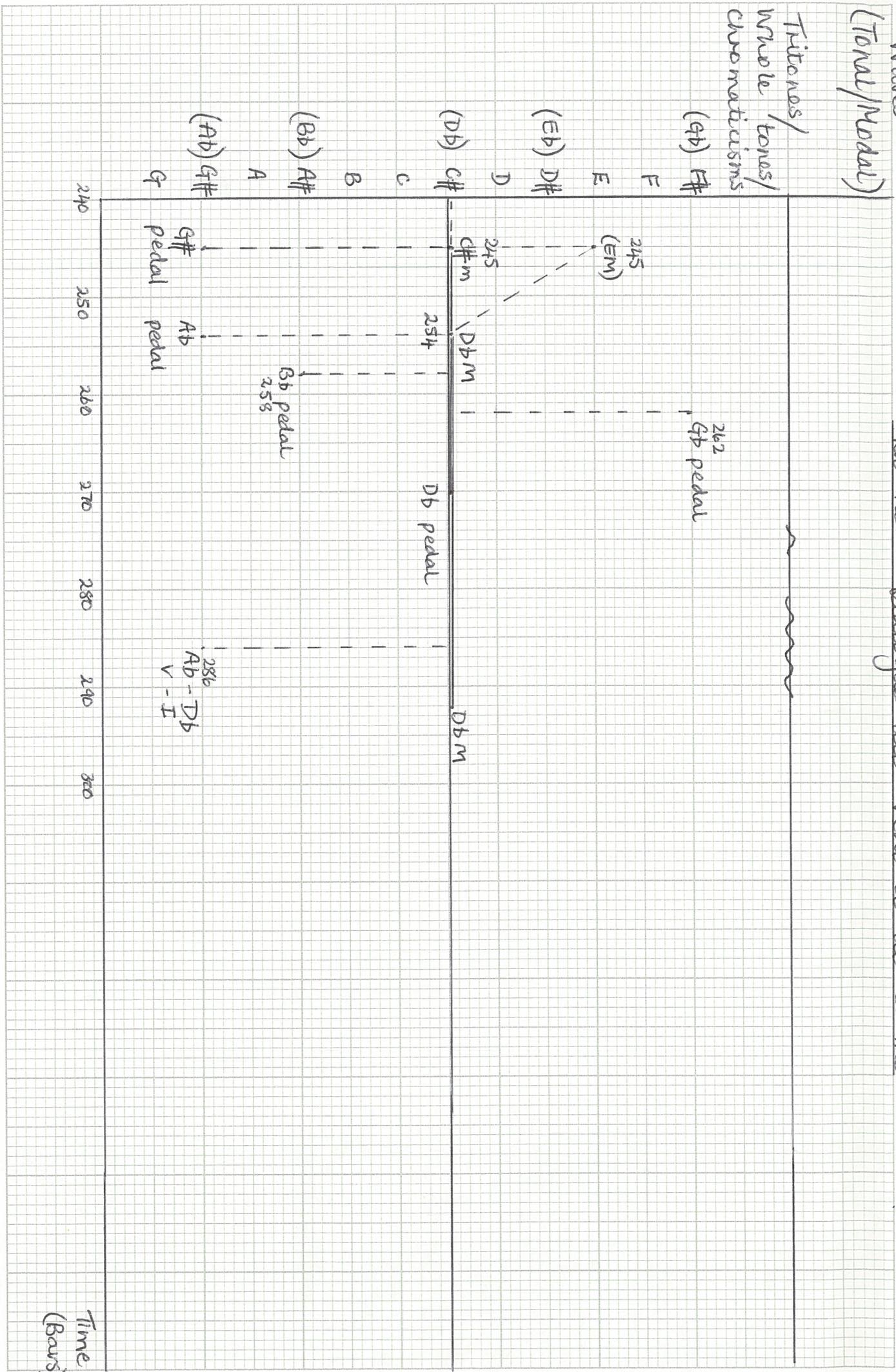
Time  
(Bars)

La mer : Dialogue du vent et de la mer

Waves

(Tonal/Pedal)

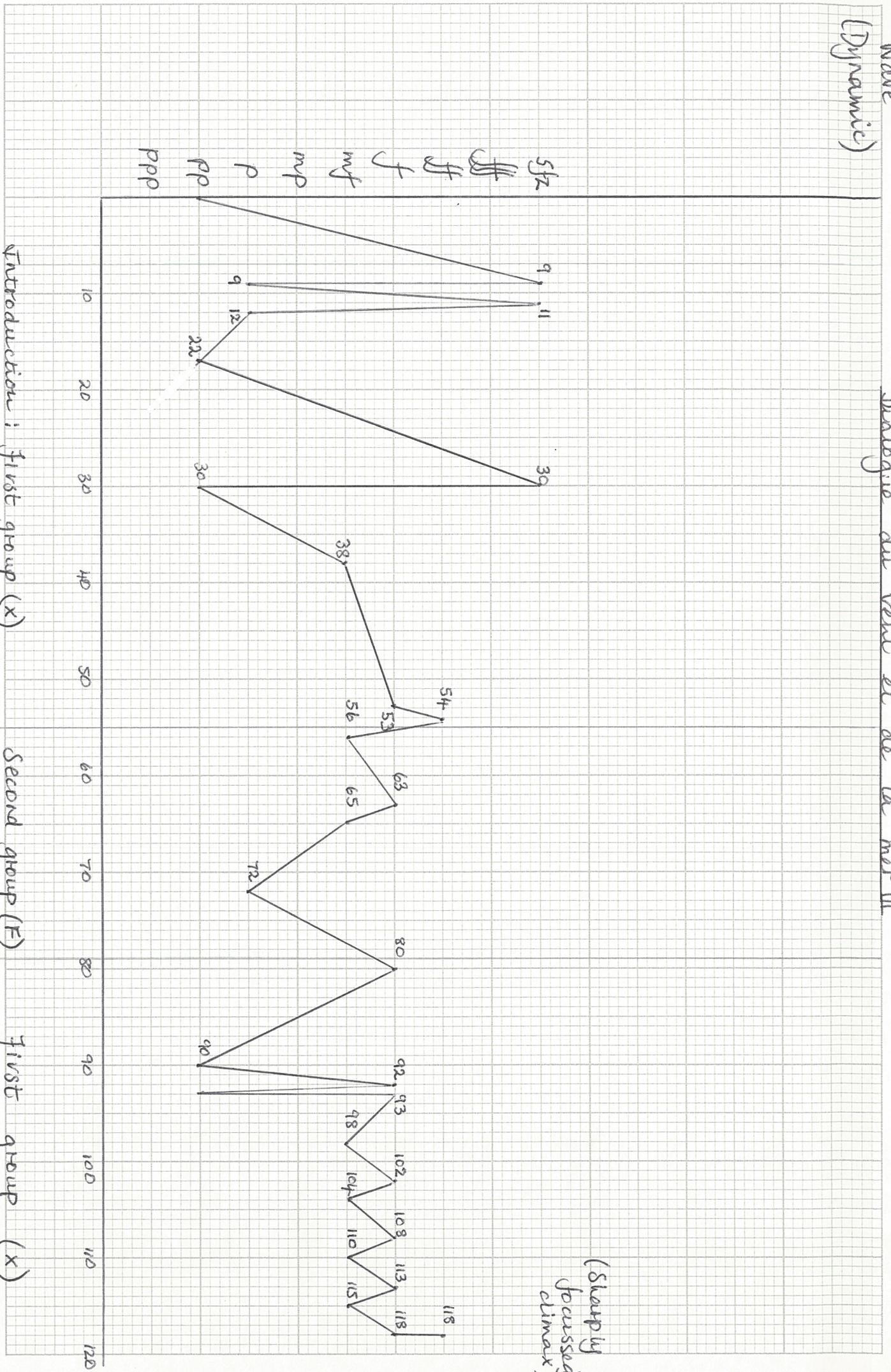
Tritones/  
Whole tones/  
Chromaticisms



Time  
(Bars)

Wave  
(Dynamic)

Dialogue du vent et de la mer III



(Sharply faussé (climax))

Introduction: first group (X)

Bars 1-55

Second group (F)

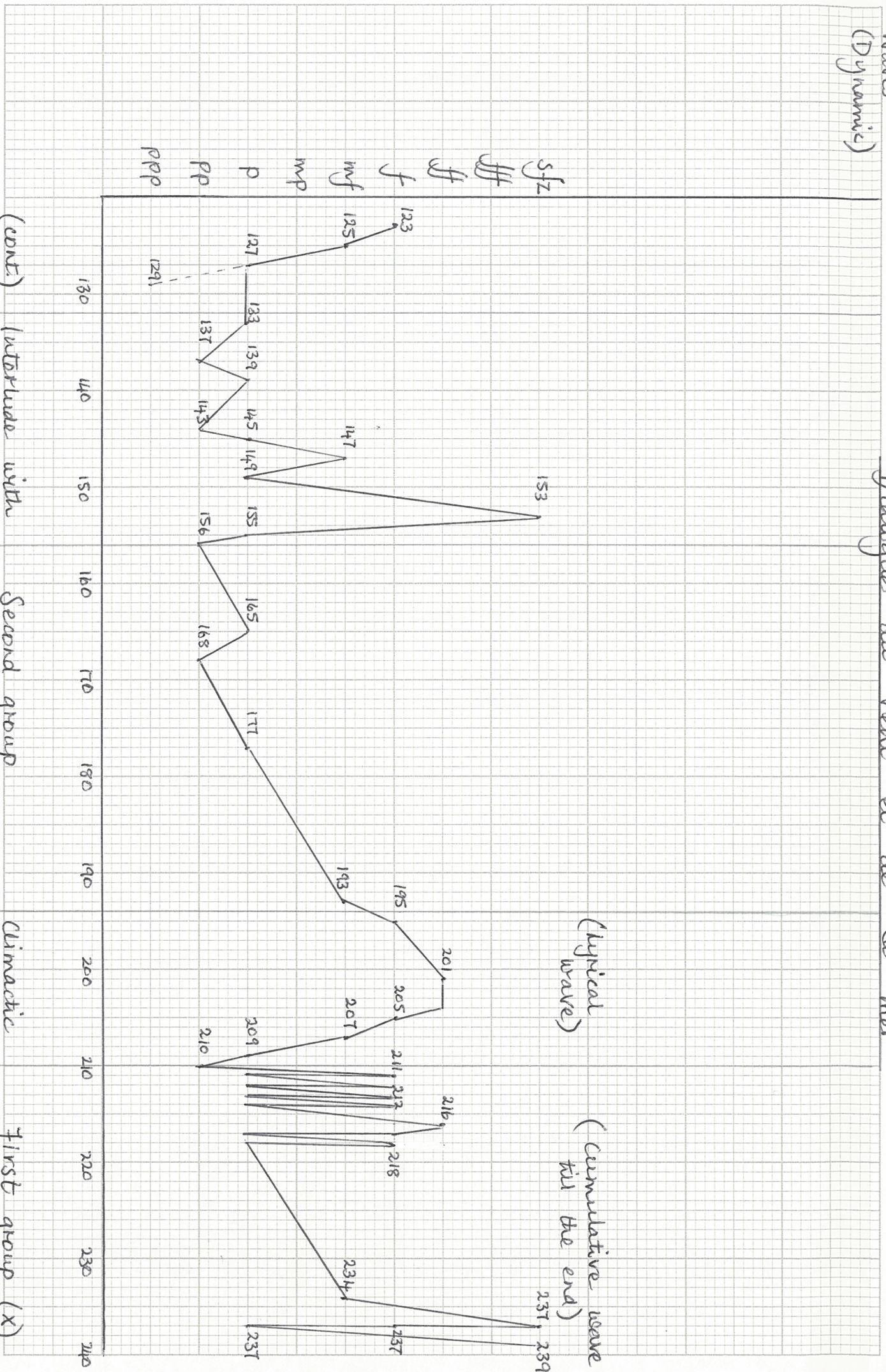
Bars 56-79

First group (X)

Bars 80-132

Waves  
(Dynamic)

Dialogue du vent et de la mer



(lyrical waves)

(Cumulative wave till the end)

(cont)

Interlude with  
Chorus  
Bars 133 - 156

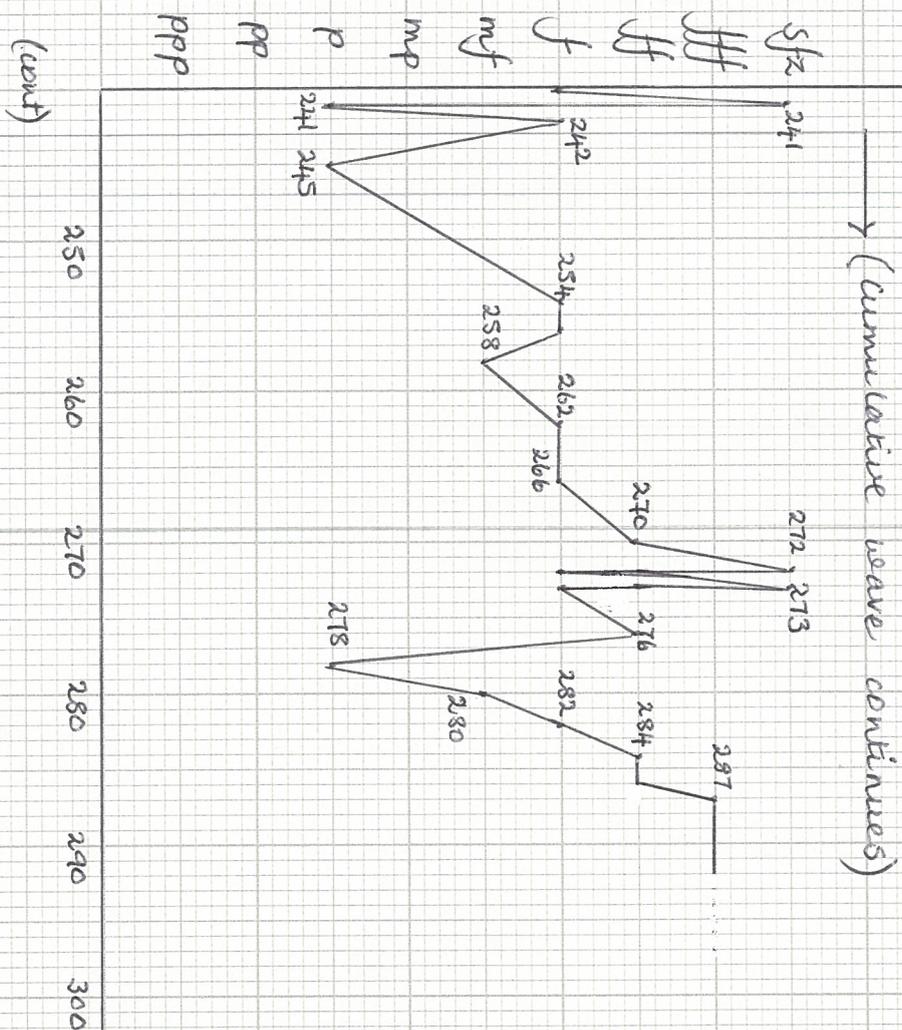
Second group  
Bars 157 - 194

Climatic  
Principal  
theme  
Bars 195 - 210

First group (X)  
Bars 211 - 244

Waves  
(Dynamic)

Diagramme des vents et de la mer



Second group with chérole  
Bars 245-269

Synthesis of two groups - X and F  
Bars 270-292

La mer Dialogue du vent et de la mer Movement III

Bars	Introduction First group Bars 1-55 (X)	Second group Bars 56-79 (F)
Harmonies	<p>C# m (E M enh.)            F# bass – C natural tritone fig. 43. E flat/G natural in bassoons bar 10. F# - C natural bars 14 - 15. D/C natural bar 22.            F# – D flat = enh. A perfect 5<sup>th</sup> – perfect cadence eventually reached at bar 157. (link to Mvt. 1 – D flat b. 31 + 132) via G# bass at b.24 on and fig. 45. Basic IV-V progression.            Fig. 45 W.T. strings – 10 bars. Bar 55 G# -V pedal –used to carry momentum forwards.</p>	<p>C # m / C# m bass. C# tonality – ‘soft’ arrival.            Fig. 47 – diatonic harmony in woodwind.            Complex chromatic passage in strings.            Fig. 47 A bass. (VI).</p>
Architectural structure	<p>2/2 time signature.            Programmatic intro. ‘Passing through the eye of a storm.’ Prevalence of triplet fig. (Mvt. 1). Dramatic prominence given to b. 30-42.            Bar 31 on Motive X restored (from Mvt. 1) and trombones (b. 35)            Ascending string passage.</p>	<p>Fig. 46 - Motive F – oboe, cor anglais and bassoon against string chromatic triplets ascending. Lasts through bars 56-72.            Fig. 47 - Motive G – flute and viola (also end of X in violin I except triplet ascends)</p>
Form	<p>First/Second group alternation with principle theme and chorale – Trezise. ‘Rondo-type’ - Recapitulates themes from Mvt. 1 and D flat key sig. Evolutionary.            ‘Two contrasting forces – Barragé. ‘Unusual sonata form’ – Howat – Intro. serves as transition from <i>Jeux de vagues</i>?</p>	<p>Theme F appears/contrast to cyclic motive X. Theme G (similar to F appears). Both have more regular periodic structure.</p>
Dynamics	<p>Anime et tumultueux Minim = 96 pp <math>\diamond</math> pp <math>\diamond</math> &lt; sfz &gt; p &gt; &lt; sfz &gt; p &gt; p &lt; p &lt; p &lt; mf &lt; sfz &gt; pp &lt; pp &lt; p &lt; mf <math>\diamond</math> pp &lt; pp &lt; pp &lt; f &lt; f &lt; expressif avec Sourdine &gt; pp <math>\diamond</math> pp &gt; f sans Sourdine mf <math>\diamond</math> mf <math>\diamond</math> mf &lt; &lt; f p &lt; p &lt; p &lt; p &lt; p &lt; p &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt; f &lt; ff ff</p>	<p>Cédez expressif et soutenu Légèrement et retrouvez            Peu a peu le mouvement initial mf &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt; mf molto cresc. f &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt; mf &lt; &gt; Tempo 1 p p doux et expressif &lt; p &lt; &lt;</p>

Bars	First group <u>      </u> Bars 80-132 (X)	<u>Interlude with chorale</u> Bars 133-156 (E)
Harmonies	<p>Bar 81 – A flat. Bar 90 – A. Bar 92 (49) CM scales in violas/ 2<sup>nd</sup> violins with flattened 7ths. Bar 94 – Whole-tone ostinatos – A-D sharp tritone.</p> <p>Bar 98 - W.T. Motive X in bassoons and cellos. At b. 104 joined by bass + aug. 4ths in woodwind grace notes to fig. 51.</p> <p>Bass F natural (b. 94 and 98) A (b. 104) B (110) = augmented 4<sup>th</sup>/tritone.</p> <p>Chord – bar 113 – A flat / C natural (V of D flat M) Leads via F# (G flat) at fig. 51 to D flat M key sig, at b. 133. IV – V – I. Completes tonal / dynamic arch</p>	<p>A flat / B flat A flat b. 137. E flat / F in D natural b. 143 in bass.</p> <p>A flat (V) b. 145.</p> <p>D flat (I) b. 157 – Perfect cadence.</p>
Architectural Structure	<p>Fig. 48 - Motive G chordal theme. Bar 90 – ostinatos. Bar 94 – rocking wave patterns in strings – (similar at Mvt. 1 b. 86).</p> <p>Bar 94 – Motive G derivative in horns. Bar 98 Motive X - W.T. in bassoons and cellos.</p> <p>Bar 104 on - Huge elongated X theme, continues like a wave propelled onwards in bassoons, cello/bass horns, then across all woodwind till b.122. At fig. 51 becomes chordal.</p>	<p>Motive E – chordal – in horns – b. 133. (Linking device between Coda to Mvt I at fig. 14 and Coda to Mvt. III – b. 258).</p>
Form	Huge X theme / some chordal Motive G / G derivative	Interlude with chorale (Codetta to Exposition – Howat)
Dynamics	<p>f &lt; f &lt; p &lt; f &lt; f &lt; f &lt; f &lt; p &lt; p &lt; p &lt; f p &lt; f f f &lt; mf f &lt; f &gt; mf f &lt; &lt; mf</p> <p><i>molto cresc.</i> f &lt; ff f e dim. mf e dim. <i>molto</i> p &lt; p &lt; p &gt;</p>	<p>Très soutenu Sourdines aux 4 Cors p <i>un peu en dehors</i></p> <p>&lt; pp &gt; p &lt; p &gt; p &gt; pp &gt; au Mouvt p <i>expressif</i> &lt; mf dim. p &lt; p &gt; piu p &gt; sf pizz. dim. p &gt; pp &gt;</p>



Bars	Second group with chorale Bars 244-269 (E) (F)	Synthesis of two groups Bars 270-292 (X) (F)
Harmonies	C#m key sig. (EM) G# bass (V) – A flat at bar 254. D flat M key change at bar 254. (A flat bass). Bar 258 on – bass B flat – E flat – G flat – F shifts dynamic and tonal intensity towards finale.	Figure 61 – Perfect cadence. (A flat (V) bass at bar 265.) D flat bass – A flat trebles. Bars 274-5 Whole tone passage (all black keys). Bar 282 – Whole tone woodwind till end. D flat bass below A flat bar 276. G natural at bar 284 – Tritone to D flat. Undulating A flat – D flat wave to bar 290 D flat / A flat tonic chord – 3 bars.
Architectural Structure	Motive F fig. 60 in woodwind onwards. Driving triplet rhythm in strings. Chorale – Motive E – cuts in at bar 258 (Howat's Coda) over B flat (VI) bass. Prevents completion with perfect cadence at this point. String triplets become <i>staccato</i> . Thematic wave – see below.	Motive E chordal passage completes bar 271. Fig. 61 - Très animé passage – semiquaver rhythm – textural change. Elements of Motive F in woodwind. Fig. 62 – Remnants of Motive X in cornets. 6 bar subsiding wave motive in strings – bars 278-283 dynamically, and remnant of Motive X, before final build to triumphant <i>fff</i> . Bar 282 – dotted rhythm in treble (woodwind). Motives X and F/G synthesis.
Form	Chorale – F/E alternation Tonal centre rather than recapitulative (H)  Completion of Howat's thematic wave. F – G – X F X – G – F Bars 56 – 72 – 98 159 225 – 237 – 245	Synthesis of themes/motives. Dynamic accumulation to end.
Dynamics	Au Mouvt initial en laissant aller jusqu' au très Anime p < p < <i>molto cresc.</i> < < f < f < f très sonore mais sans dureté < f < > f <	Très Animé ff mf < f sfz f < sfz f < f < f f < ff p <i>molto cresc.</i> <i>cresc.</i> <i>molto mf molto cresc.</i> f < ff < ff fff fff fff

Motivic action in La mer

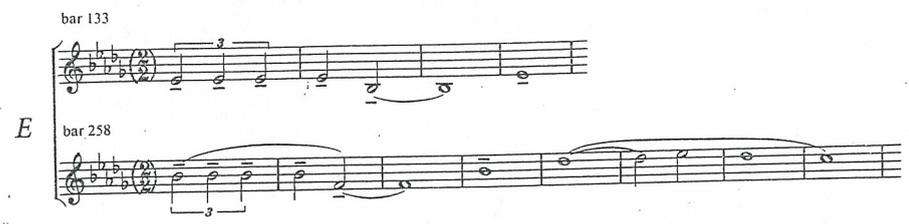
Movement III: Dialogue du vent et de la mer

X <sup>44</sup>

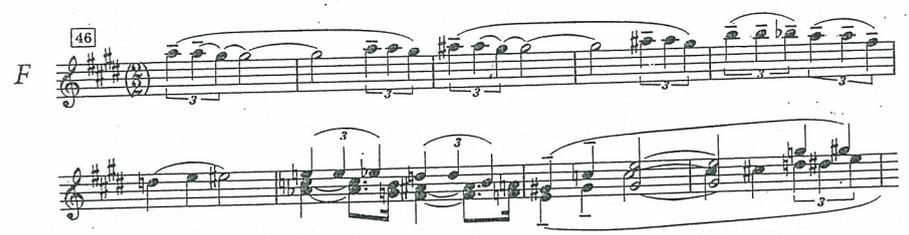


bar 133

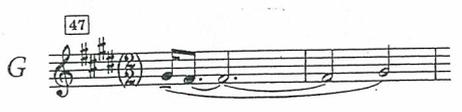
E bar 258



F <sup>46</sup>



G <sup>47</sup>



**C#** glockenspiel

held altf

→ C-F# Tritone of Awt. III → b.44

Foetus = a 'deliberately long-drawn-out' perfect cadence → Tonic Db - b.157 (H.p. 93)

Introduction: First group(x) Bars 1-55

III. Dialogue du vent et de la mer

(EM) C#m

Animé et tumultueux (d = 96)

tritone

Restored from Mt. 1.

Animé et tumultueux (d = 96)

Long-scale movement → 64 Intros. - 'Passing through the eye of a storm' - Programmatic (ff. p. 96)

4

43

44  
E♭

Aug. 4ths. F#-C

C4

Flute

Cl.

C. Bass

Trump.

Saxophones

Trmb.

Gr. C.

Gr. B.

T. T.

13

Cor. A.

1<sup>re</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> Cors

C. Bass

Trmb.

Gr. C.

Gr. B.

T. T.

13

Cor. A.

1<sup>re</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> Cors

C. Bass

Trmb.

Gr. C.

Gr. B.

T. T.

13

F#-C4 tritone

C4

Position ordinaire

Unies

13

Cor. A.

1<sup>re</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> Cors

C. Bass

Trmb.

Gr. C.

Gr. B.

T. T.

C#m - F# - IV - V - I sequence → 46 (F# → Eb)

15

A#

Aug. 4ths

C4

Flute

Cl.

Cor. A.

1<sup>re</sup> Cl.

2<sup>e</sup> Cl.

1<sup>re</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> Cors

3<sup>e</sup> Cors

C. Bass

Trmb.

Gr. C.

Gr. B.

T. T.

15

Cor. A.

1<sup>re</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> Cors

C. Bass

Trmb.

Gr. C.

Gr. B.

T. T.

(Link to Mr. I) → Db enharm. a Perfect 5th - Perfect cadence hist)

F#

C4

Div. en 3

arco

Div. arco

15

Cor. A.

1<sup>re</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> Cors

C. Bass

Trmb.

Gr. C.

Gr. B.

T. T.

24

Fl. et Cl. Bass

2<sup>de</sup> Cl.

1<sup>re</sup> Cl.

Cor A.

Cor B.

3<sup>es</sup> Horn

2<sup>es</sup> Horn

Tr. B.

Tr. A.

Dr. C.

Cymb.

ARTO

D4

F# F#4

Basic IV - V progression

30

44

3<sup>e</sup> Bass

C. Horn

Cor A.

Cor B.

3<sup>es</sup> Horn

2<sup>es</sup> Horn

Tr. B.

Tr. A.

Dr. C.

Cymb.

Tr. T.

Restored

Motive X (MUT-1)

Dive en 3 (Sur la touche)

Dive en 3 (Sur la touche)

Unis. pizz.

pizz. A

f expressive

to Solo avec Sordine

Basic IV - V progression

30-42 - Dramatic proviurence - tense stillness - framed by turbulent motion either

38

Flb  
Cor A  
Cl.  
3 Bsns  
Cors  
Tromp  
Gr. C.  
Cymb.  
T-T

En LA

Motive X

45

#  
Dominant pedal

45

Gtr. Pt.  
Flb  
Cor A  
Cl.  
3 Bsns  
Cors  
Tromp  
Gr. C.  
Cymb.  
T-T

Major 2nd - 6th/Ab of DbM

Diatonic harmony

F# / G#

45

Mute - tone passages  
(markar)

Momentum carried forward by dynamics and strings

cresc. and short divives onwards.

Flutes I. *mf*

Horn *mf*

Cor. A. *mf*

Cl. *mf*

3 Bsns *mf*

Cor. B. *mf*

Tromp. *mf*

Trmb. *mf*

Gr. C. *mf*

Cymb. *mf*

T-T. *mf*

Div. *mf*

Uits. *mf*

Strs. *mf*

Second group (F) Bars 56-79

Motive F

C# tonality arrives

Fl. *mf*

Cor. A. *mf*

Cl. *mf*

1er Bon *mf*

2e et 3e Bsns *mf*

C. Ron *mf*

Cor. B. *mf*

Tromp. *mf*

Gr. C. *mf*

Oktav *mf*

Strs. *mf*

C# (soft) arrival, so doesn't detract from b. 157 - The centre tonally





Ritardive

Chromatic passage

First group (x) Bars 80-132

→ 93

48 Chordal sequences 95

(Fin)

(chrom.)

Theme of - choral

85

Flutes Fl.  
Clarinets Cl.  
Cor. A.  
1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Trp.  
1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Trbn.  
Horn  
C. Tr.  
3 Trbn.  
Cymb.  
Perc.

49 Chromaticism (arcs)

90

Flutes Fl.  
Clarinets Cl.  
Cor. A.  
1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Trp.  
1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Trbn.  
Horn  
C. Tr.  
3 Trbn.  
Cymb.  
Perc.

CM

A

914

Handwritten annotations on page 914 include:  
 - **Rocking Wave pattern** (circled in red)  
 - **Aug. 4th.** (circled in red)  
 - **W.T.** (circled in red)  
 - **ostinatos** (circled in red)  
 - **F4** (circled in red)  
 - **A** (circled in red)  
 - **t-F Aug. 5th.** (circled in red)  
 - **F4** (circled in red)

Instrument staves include: Clarinet (Cl.), Cor Anglais (Cor. A.), Horn (Hrb.), Percussion (Perc. Pl.), Cymbal (Cymb.), Conductor (Cond.), Trombone (Tbn.), Trumpet (Trp.), and Snare Drum (S.D.).

98

Handwritten annotations on page 98 include:  
 - **Motive X** (circled in red)  
 - **Whole-tone** (circled in red)  
 - **aug. 4th.** (circled in red)  
 - **F4 B** (circled in red)  
 - **Whale-tone** (circled in red)

Instrument staves include: Clarinet (Cl.), Cor Anglais (Cor. A.), Horn (Hrb.), Percussion (Perc. Pl.), Cymbal (Cymb.), Conductor (Cond.), Trombone (Tbn.), Trumpet (Trp.), and Snare Drum (S.D.).

Glass Fl.

Pic Fl.

Flute

Cor A.

Cl.

1st Bsn

2nd & 3rd Bsns

Corn

Cymb.

Handwritten annotations on page 102:  
 - *g down.* (circled in red) above the 1st Bsn staff.  
 - *Aug. 4th.* (circled in red) above the 2nd & 3rd Bsns staff.  
 - *A* (circled in red) above the 1st Bsn staff, with an arrow pointing to a note.  
 - Red arrows pointing right across the bottom of the score.

Glass Fl.

Pic Fl.

Flute

Cor A.

Cl.

1st Bsn

2nd & 3rd Bsns

Corn

Cymb.

Handwritten annotations on page 106:  
 - *Motive X* (circled in red) above the 1st Bsn staff.  
 - *g down.* (circled in red) above the 1st Bsn staff.  
 - *Wave pattern driving on, (roll at the Mann)* written vertically on the left side with red arrows pointing right.  
 - Red arrows pointing right across the bottom of the score.

(V)

Wave pattern driving on, (roll at the Mann)

(H) (X)  
Aug. 4th.

Huge elongated X theme - wave propelled upwards →

(Vot Dbn)  
Ab (H)

di talon  
B Aug. 4th.

(Cava. str. firm. F#) b. 9L. 98.

c4 B righter  
Sound  
(vii of C# m/Dbm)

c4

B



Interlude with choral - Bars 133 - 156

133 DBM Motive E linking device (with 14) - HVF 1 plus introduces Coda - b. 258)

Eb/F (II/III)

Tonality gradually reasserts itself in coda.

Ab V → Perfect cadence at bar 157.

Ab

Ab/Bb







F#3

F

Reprenez peu a peu le Mouvt

1<sup>re</sup> Harpe  
2<sup>de</sup> Harpe  
C1  
Cors

pp

Reprenez peu a peu le Mouvt

Key cancelled

C#m/A m

Tonal departure

F#4

C#

Glissando wave

Onz la Sourdiue aux 4 Cors

1<sup>re</sup> Harpe  
2<sup>de</sup> Harpe  
Glock  
Cors  
3 Buns  
C1  
Cor A

pp

Onz la Sourdiue aux 4 Cors

Glissando wave

C#

E

A

E

Tous Dix

Aidez les Sourdiues

Dix

C#

A/E

D#

D#

D#

D# (C#)

181

1<sup>re</sup> Fl.  
2<sup>e</sup> Fl.  
Cl.  
3. Bass  
Cels.  
Cels.  
3. Bass  
Viol. I  
Viol. II  
Vcllo  
Harpes  
2<sup>de</sup> Harpe

*Glossida episode*  
*Chromaticism*

Tutti  
4 C. Basses Soli

187

1<sup>re</sup> Fl.  
2<sup>e</sup> Fl.  
Cl.  
3. Bass  
Cels.  
Cels.  
3. Bass  
Viol. I  
Viol. II  
Vcllo  
Harpes  
2<sup>de</sup> Harpe

*Chromatic*  
*Karp wave*  
*En animant*

*p poco a poco cresc.*  
*p cresc.*  
*ritz  $\text{F}\#$  chromatic undulating wave*  
*ritz  $\text{F}\#$   $\text{C}$  -  $\text{F}\#$   $\text{C}$  -  $\text{F}\#$*   
*ritz  $\text{C}$  -  $\text{F}\#$  Tritone*  
*functional dominant*

Central climax

Climactic principal theme - Bars 195-210 (F)

DBM

2-note ostinato waves

← Motive F

Arpeggio figures

E-F# functional dominant

Db Tonic return (tonal)

8:8 bars ÷ by climax at 57



120 Dynamic wave - cumulative to the end

215

avec sourdine

Active X

Bb

à 2 bouches

An harmonic interruption  
totally unstable

219 Grandes Piles

38

falling chromatic scales

Active G

CF

baguettes de Timbales

(other side of thematic wave)  
1E - a# - Dna (tm)

223

Handwritten notes: **Native X**, **q# D# F#**, **E D# C# B**

Handwritten notes: **F C** →

224

Handwritten notes: **A C#**

Handwritten notes: **A E A**

131

59

Musical score for page 124, measures 131-135. The score includes staves for Piccolo (Pic. Fl.), Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Trumpet (Tr.), Trombone (Tbn.), Horns (Hr.), and Percussion (Perc.). Handwritten annotations include 'Motive G' in red, 'Dive towards' with a red arrow, and 'E A E A' in red. Dynamics include *mf cresc.* and *mf*. A red 'X' is marked over the Piccolo staff in measure 134.

135

Motive G

Musical score for page 125, measures 135-140. The score includes staves for Piccolo (Pic. Fl.), Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Bsn.), Trumpet (Tr.), Trombone (Tbn.), Horns (Hr.), and Percussion (Perc.). Handwritten annotations include 'Motive G' in red, 'A B B B' in red, and 'E B Bb Eb Bb' in red. Dynamics include *mf* and *rit.*. A red arrow points to the Piccolo staff in measure 136.

241 Native G

60 Au Mouvt initial en laissant aller jusqu'en tres Animé

245 #m (EM)

Native F

Second group with shavale - Bars 245-269

- Shifts dynamic + tonal intensity to finale

247 Native F

Diatonic harmonies

(Ab) (V of Cm/BbM enharmonically)

→ Major at p. 254: Not

251

F (cont.)

DBM a2

CLIMAX

255

Motive F

258

cadence 129

1. Howard's 'Coda'  
 - Intervenes to prevent perfect cadence

CLIMAX

159

(F- cont.)

Chorded passages

163

(F cont.)



CLIMAX

134 275

gdes Fl.  
Fl. Pt.  
Hrb  
Cor. A.  
Cl.  
4<sup>th</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> Bsns  
3<sup>e</sup> Trp  
C. Bsn  
Tuba  
3 Trp  
Cornets  
1<sup>re</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> Trp  
Cors  
T. T.

avec la mallette

Whole-tone 8

près du chevallet  
p molto cresc  
près du chevallet  
p molto cresc  
du falon  
p molto cresc  
du falon  
p molto cresc

Db-Ab  
Db-Mb

62

V-1

CLIMAX

279

gdes Fl.  
Fl. Pt.  
Hrb  
Cor. A.  
Cl.  
4<sup>th</sup> et 2<sup>e</sup> Bsns  
3<sup>e</sup> Trp  
C. Bsn  
Tuba  
3 Trp  
Cornets  
T. T.

Bagues de Triangles

Remnant of Motive X

Remnant of Motive X

Whole tone

position ordinaire  
position ordinaire

135

low strings - subsiding wave motive

Diminution...

Dotted rhythm

CLIMAX ACCUMULATES TO END.

183

W.T.

63

183  
W.T.  
63  
X (count)  
position ordinaire  
Bb  
G4  
Trioire / aug. with G Db  
V-1  
Remnant of X  
Triplets corners

184

Ab-V

184  
X type  
Remnant of X  
Triplets corners  
G  
Ab  
Db  
V-1  
Last undulating wave of cellos.  
Db Tonic I  
290