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Design and Aesthetic in Debussy's Music: *The Premiere rapsodie* for Clarinet and Piano

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Samantha K. Johnson

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To my encouraging parents, Dr. James Briscoe, and Mr. Achille Rossi:

Thank you for pushing me and allowing me to stretch my wings.

A painter looks deeply into his blank canvas. His brow furrows as his hand rests under his chin. The palette of paint lies on the small wooden table next to him while reds, blues, and greens await their final destination. What does the painter see in his empty canvas? His mind works feverishly to pick out the depth, perspective, and lines that would soon become his newest masterpiece. What will the subject be? What hues of color and light shall he use? Will there be definite boundaries? How will he *design* this work? To achieve aesthetic pleasure, the artist will need to use specific techniques and develop a unique style that separates his work from other painters. Musical composition is approached in the same manner. A composer searches his blank manuscript for the melody, orchestral layers, and harmony while asking the same questions. There should be a subject, whether a thematic program, a certain instrument, or an emphasized technique. The orchestration, harmony, dynamics, and articulation will color and light the piece with contrasting sounds and timbres. Boundaries will either be set or obscured with a chosen form or lack of. The *design* of the work will achieve the composer's targeted aesthetics, whether they are disgust, attractiveness, or mourning. It will take much more than sheer creativity to conjure a painting or a musical composition, however. The designer will use organization, knowledge of his tools, and outside influences to fashion a special and sophisticated form of art.

In the realm of musical art, there are works for the sake of listening, but there are also pieces that are well thought out, well designed. Compositions with an innovative plan are as stimulating as the masterpieces that blossom from the artist's blank canvas. The mind marvels at the balance of the musical piece, the colors achieved amongst the rich harmonies or clever orchestration, and the flowing change of character as the music

progresses. In Claude Debussy's *Première rapsodie* for clarinet and piano, the composer is beyond the realm of "music just for listening", but has become a designer, an architect of musical structure. During the early 1900s, Debussy began to develop a different outlook for his compositions. *La mer* (1903–1905), a piece for orchestra, begins to exhibit Debussy's new focus on and compositional purpose of design and structure during his late career. The *Première rapsodie*, written from December 1909 to January 1910, is an example of this late compositional style. This thesis will explore the historical context of France from 1880–1910, attempt to discover the influences for a design aspect from the composer's personal life, and complete a detailed analysis of the *Première rapsodie.*

Paris, France, was a cosmopolitan city in the early 1880s and on into the twentieth-century. The city's financial, cultural, and creative wealth was a hot spot for education and exhibition in the arts.[1] Conflicting ideas kept the heat of debate alive in Paris, and Debussy was not absent from the music area of this pool of thought.[2] The visual arts were also in high fashion during this period, and such painters as Monet, Cézanne, Signac, and Seurat could have made an impression on Debussy's musical style. The four artists are associated with the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist periods, which directly relate to Debussy's form, tonality, and harmonies during the early 1900s. The historical context in which the *Rapsodie* was written is an important aspect in order to understand certain formal aspects of the piece and musical styles that appear within its structure.

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[1] Charle, Christophe, "Debussy in Fin-de-Siècle Paris," in *Debussy and His World*, edited by Jane F. Fulcher, trans. Victoria Johnson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 272.
[2] Charle, "Debussy in Fin-de-Siècle Paris," 271.

An in-depth study of the composer's personal experiences can also reveal influences on his or her music. Debussy encountered several obstacles during the climb to fame that arrived after the positive reception of *Pelléas et Mélisande* in the early 1900s.[3] These hardships made his outlook on life quite gloomy.[4] His relationships with women were not perfect and his health began to decline in 1909, the year Debussy began the *Rapsodie*.[5] Other personal experiences, such Gabriel Fauré's appointment as the Director of the *Conservatoire de Musique et de Déclamation de Paris* in 1905, also directly affected the *Rapsodie*. As the new Director, Fauré standardized pedagogical procedures and curriculum.[6] The *Première rapsodie* was directly affected by Fauré's command of virtuosic technique and lyricism because the work was written as a jury piece for the clarinet studio at the Conservatoire.

Once the historical and personal context of Debussy is discussed, an analysis of the *Première rapsodie* will allow the effects of these influences to surface. Debussy's late compositional style emerges as ingenious in terms of form, harmony, and tonality. The form of the piece is not based upon traditional Romantic period structures, but is something quite unique, and lends the piece its own balanced character. The pace of the piece is complex and is constantly interrupted by tempo changes and character contrasts, giving the piece distinct formal divisions.[7] Tonality and harmony are also unique characteristics in the *Rapsodie*. In his article "Debussy and the Crisis of Tonality,"

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[3] Charle, "Debussy in Fin-de-Siècle Paris," 290.
[4] Orledge, Robert, "Debussy the Man," in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, ed. Simon Trezise (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 10 –11.
[5] Orledge, "Debussy the Man," 18–19; Charle, "Debussy in Fin-de-Siècle Paris," 289.
[6] Woldu, Gail Hilson, "Debussy, Fauré, and d'Indy and Conceptions of the Artist: The Institutions, the Dialouges, and Conflicts," in *Debussy and His World*, ed. Jane F. Flucher (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 235.
[7] Parks, Richard S, "Music's Inner Dance: Form, pacing, and complexity in Debussy's music," in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, ed. Simon Trezise (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 197– 198.

Roland Nadeau states that in his late career, Debussy was to "achieve a synthesis that would bring Wagner-influenced chromaticism to play . . . Modal diatonicism was fused to late nineteenth-century chromatic connection and extension."[8] Debussy utilizes the whole tone, acoustic, modal, diatonic, and occasionally the octatonic scales within his melodies and harmonies, a present characteristic in the *Rapsodie*. Other aspects that will be analyzed include themes and motives within the form, phrasing, register, and texture. In the end, one can find that by this point in Debussy's life, he has become a leading modernist in the musical world.

Another interesting characteristic of the *Rapsodie*, however, is beyond the scope of a traditional analysis, although it confirms main points of articulation. Author Roy Howat addresses Debussy's design and structure in his book entitled *Debussy in Proportion: A Musical Analysis*. The focus of his book revolves around the Golden Section, a device which the author feels Debussy used very regularly in his late compositions: ". . . Debussy's music contains intricate proportional systems which can account for both the precise nature of the music's unorthodox forms and for the difficulty in defining them in more familiar terms."[9] *La mer* is Debussy's most famous example of design by the Golden Section as analyzed by Howat. He explains that by applying the Golden Section to most of Debussy's pieces in the early 1900s, one can discover how "The forms are used to project the music's dramatic and expressive qualities with the maximum precision."[10]

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[8] Nadeau, Roland, "Debussy and the Crisis of Tonality," *Music Educators Journal*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (Sep.,1979): 4, accessed January 22, 2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3395721.
[9] Howat, Roy, *Debussy in Proportion: A Musical Analysis* (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.
[10] Howat, *Debussy in Proportion*, 1.

Paris, France 1880-1910

Social and Cultural Context of Paris

The French capitol was the epitome of a thriving artistic culture during the turn of the century. The Eiffel tower's construction began in 1889, the centerpiece of the Exposition Universelle and a landmark of modernism. The metro system under the Parisian streets also began construction in 1898, allowing the city's public to travel in a fast and efficient way.[11] The city has become one of the world's top three of four central destinations for social, political, and cultural thought. Contradictory ideology and its well-known leaders also wove threads through the Parisian society.[12] From the 1880s to World War I, the city could not be described as anything less than the "cosmopolitan city par excellence."[13] The concentration of wealth, culture, educational centers, exhibition, distribution, and communication could not be matched by any other city in the world. London may have been the center of greater financial forces and a broader empire, but Paris had the artistic culture for visual arts, music, and publication that England did not possess at the time.[14]

As the capitol of France, Paris ruled the competition between other French cities. Foreigners arrived from such countries as America and Russia for the chance to exhibit their artistic and scientific work in the influential city. The city held host to several expositions during this time, as well, giving the public access to new art and thought. French innovation was climbing to a new height.[15]

The vast majority of foreigners fancied living in high-end districts of the city, encouraging the expansion of Paris to include twenty *arrondissements*, or districts, to

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[11] Kelly, Barbara, "Debussy's Parisian Affiliations," in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, ed. Simon Trezise (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 25.
[12] Charle, "Debussy in Fin-de-Siècle Paris," 271.
[13] Charle, "Debussy in Fin-de-Siècle Paris," 272.
[14] Charle, "Debussy in Fin-de-Siècle Paris," 272.
[15] Charle, "Debussy Fin-de-Siècle Paris," 273.

satisfy the growth of the population.[16] This process was called "Haussmanization" after the city architect who reconstructed the city after 1850. The process allowed the West End of the city to include eight regions for the highest style of living. The avenues were aligned with lush trees, and the buildings displayed stone columns and marble structures, marking the great attractiveness that interested these artistic minds.[17]

However, this attractive side to life also had its conflicts, with clashing opinions of ideology and criticism that dominated the daily newspapers.[18] Corruption was a regular critique of these publications, as well, with real writing talent being excluded if authors were not high-class or already well-known historians and critics.[19] Visual arts did not escape corruption, either. Painters were often commissioned for art that expressed presently accepted ideas and styles rather than new and innovative philosophies. Music resisted Wagnerian thought and emphasized academia and competition as the key for success in the field, encouraging composers to conform to standard techniques. Debussy was regrettably caught between these strict rules in music, most likely fueling his interest to expand his harmonic and formal aspects in his music. Unfortunately, the majority of the Parisian public was exposed to the corrupted influence of *retardataire* critics, leaving little opportunity for composers like Debussy to fully stretch their imaginative wings and receive acceptance.[20]

The political atmosphere of France was also a hot topic amongst its citizens. Variance of ideas and struggles against authoritative figures infiltrated the culture. Paris attempted to separate from the official government at the time of Debussy's youth, during

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[16] Charle, "Debussy Fin-de-Siècle Paris," 273.
[17] Charle, "Debussy Fin-de-Siècle Paris," 274.
[18] Charle, "Debussy Fin-de-Siècle Paris," 274.
[19] Charle, "Debussy Fin-de-Siècle Paris," 275.
[20] Charle, "Debussy Fin-de-Siècle Paris," 276.

the Commune of 1871, a conflict that Debussy's father tried to be a part of and eventually was imprisoned for.[21] Unfortunately for the arts, this political pull of monarchial and imperial tradition had a dominate hold on accepted ideas for music and the other arts. Composers, including Debussy, were also encouraged by this political pull to conform to certain techniques that were considered attractive to the public.[22]

Baudelaire had also been in important figure in Paris in the 1850s and 60s, describing parallels between the aims of music and the struggle that literature encountered against traditional form and structure.[23] "Harmony is at the root of the theory of colour. Melody is the unity of colour in general," stated Baudelaire.[24] Connections between color and music, especially in the case of Wagner, gave way to an ideology that most certainly influenced "Debussy's life-long fascination of musical colour."[25]

Influence of the Visual Arts

The visual arts also had a great influence on other genres of art, like music, in France. Claude Monet (1840–1926) was a French painter who was considered the leader of what is called the Impressionist movement. Throughout his career, particularly in the 1890s until his death, he explored the changing quality of light and color during different times of the day as well as in different atmospheric conditions. The 1860s had focused on Realism but was combined with this new style of light and color. A decade later, Monet's brush strokes became smaller, softer, and he used color contrasts between warm and dark. Muted grays might be paired with striking blues and reds such as in nature

[21] Charle, "Debussy Fin-de-Siècle Paris," 277–278.
[22] Charle, "Debussy Fin-de-Siècle Paris," 279–280.
[23] Kelly, "Debussy's Paris Affiliations," 29.
[24] Kelly, "Debussy's Paris Affiliations," 30.
[25] Kelly, "Debussy's Paris Affiliations," 31.

portrayals. During the 1890s, Monet narrowed his subjects by focusing on one particular landscape site and painting a series of works that reflected different times of day or climatic conditions. He began to paint while outside, allowing him to experience the scenery first hand as the light was changing throughout the day. His goal was to exhibit "unifying effects of the atmosphere." His strokes ranged from broad and contour defining to very small and textural just as Debussy's melodies and harmonies do in the *Première rapsodie*.[26]

The Japanese Footbridge and the Water Lily Pool—Giverny

An example of this focused site painting is Monet's series of water lilies modeled from the pond that he bought across the road from his home. He later built an arched bridge over the pond in 1893, a prominent figure in many of his paintings after 1910.[27] In *The Japanese Footbridge and the Water Lily Pool—Giverny* from 1899,[28] the range of brush stroke techniques allows the colors to blend beautifully and represent the different plant life that surround the pond. His contrasting colors emphasize the flowers on each lily pad and the reflections in the water, giving the painting a vast range of texture.

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[26] Isaacson, Joel, "Monet, Claude," in *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*, accessed February 7, 2011, http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T059077.
[27] Isaacson, "Money, Claude."
[28] Monet, Claude, "The Japanese Footbridge and the Water Lily Pool—Giverny," via Google Images, accessed March 5, 2011, www.terminartors.com.

Paul Cézanne (1839 –1906) was also a French painter associated with the Impressionists. However, he disagreed with certain features of outright Impressionism. The study of nature was definitely essential, but Cézanne believed that form and color were inseparable, an apparent feature of the *Première rapsodie*, as well. He also sought to emphasize solidity and structure, aspects that were neglected by the Impressionists. These ideas lead into the Post-Impressionist period of which Cézanne became a central figure. He became a great influence on young artists and created a bridge into twentieth-century art.[29]

Cézanne's style in the early 1870s exhibited dark and rich colors inspired by dramatic themes. His works were intense with thick and lively brushstrokes. In his first version of *Modern Olympia* from 1869–1870, he uses vibrant colors that overlap and swirl together, creating an unstable character. He presented a new version of this work at the First Impressionist Exhibition in 1872 where his brushstrokes became more fluid, showing off his new style. Between 1883 and 1895, Cézanne sought to emphasize mass and structure.[30] His paintings took on landscape themes and exhibited architectural structures. Asymmetrical frames emphasized the foreground of the picture, and the work contained broad and thick brushstrokes. In Cézanne's depictions of *Mont Sainte-Victoire*, there are clear geometric lines that show a distinct form while thick brushstrokes fill in these lines with swirls of color.[31] The *Première rapsodie* also exhibits this defined structure filled with colorful harmonies and a mixture of tonal and modal aspects.

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[29] Monnier, Geneviève, "Cézanne, Paul," in *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*, accessed February 7, 2011, http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T015638.
[30] Monnier, "Cézanne, Paul."
[31] Pioch, Nicols, "Paul Cézanne," in *WebMuseum, Paris*, accessed March 5, 2011, http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/cezanne/.

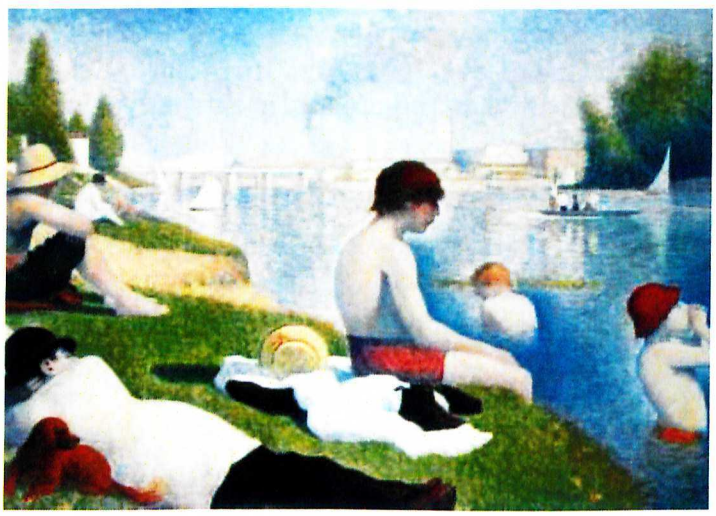
Cézanne's late period during the early twentieth-century continued this emphasis of distinct lines and form, but his colors become clearer and bolder, showing a more violent character in his works.[32] *Bibémus Quarry*[33] shows large red rocks exhibiting sharp diagonal lines giving an unstable feeling to the work. Color does not have exact boundaries within the distinct lines, though. Vibrant greens and blues are also a prominent aspect in this work, giving stark contrast between earth and sky. Aside from the intense colors and sharp lines, there is a light character about the work and a fluidity that gives aesthetic pleasure for the viewer.

Bibémus Quarry

Georges Seurat (1859–1891) was another important painter leading to the time of Debussy's dominance, but he is associated more with the Divisionist movement and the technique of Pointillism. He was very much interested in scientific principles as they were applied to art, specifically color complements, contrast, and symmetry, which are all similar concepts that Debussy applies to the *Rapsodie*. Seurat did include Impressionistic features such as wider brushstrokes to portray the sky and water but chose smaller and smoother strokes for grass. Harmonization of warm and cool colors was an absolute

[32] Monnier, "Cézanne, Paul."
[33] Cézanne, Paul, "Bibemus Quarry," via Google Images, accessed March 5, 2011, www.sugarhillart.com.

must for Seurat as he aimed to create a balanced work.[34] "He shifted away from strictly recording natural phenomena and became increasingly interested in calculating the emotional effects of his colour harmonies in line with the synaesthesia theories of Blanc, Sutter, Paillot de Montabert and Baudelaire." [35]



Bathers at Asnières

In his work *Bathers at Asnières*[36] from 1883, the viewer can see Seurat's use of the smooth strokes that represent grass as well as cool tones and colors, possibly emphasizing the less conservative moral quality in the theme.[37] The beauty of this work, though, is the optical allusion that is presented when two perspectives of the work are taken. Away from the work, the viewer experiences the vivid colors as they create the lines of figures, trees, and the water. Close up, though, the viewer finds the definition of Pointillism and discovers each color is composed of several different hues arranged in small dots. Not only is color now an important aspect, but texture. Debussy's *Rapsodie* for clarinet also exhibits creative textures that further support its design nature.

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[34] Smith, Paul, "Seurat, Georges," in *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*, accessed February 7, 2011, http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T077838.
[35] Smith, "Seurat, Georges."
[36] Seurat, Georges, "Bathers at Asnières," via Google Images, accessed March 5, 2011, www.accents-n-art.com.
[37] Smith, "Seurat, Georges."

The French painter Paul Signac (1863–1935), also a printmaker and a writer, exhibits influence from both the Impressionist Monet and the Pointillist Seurat. His early works from 1882–1883 give an Impressionist character with an emphasis on nature and asymmetry, but he later is intrigued by Seurat's color division and reverts to Pointillism by 1886. In 1891, Signac began to take Baudelaire's theory into consideration and started naming his paintings after such musical terms as "Presto (finale)." He was not an abstract painter but believed that "colour division is more a philosophy than a system."[38] Bright colors are juxtaposed, as in *Women at the Well*[39] from 1892, which creates interactions between large masses, giving a sense of freedom to his works. Rectangular brushstrokes produce a mosaic appearance, as well, which follows Seurat's Divisionism technique. The stark contrast of color in *Women at the Well* also is an example of Signac's color division on a larger scale, allowing a nice aesthetic balance to be achieved. In the *Première rapsodie*, Debussy also achieves color division by juxtaposing different musical characters, creating a contrasting and flowing piece of music.

Women at the Well

[38] Rapetti, Rodolphe, "Signac, Paul," in *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*, accessed February 7, 2011, http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T078644.

[39] Signac, Paul, "Women at the Well," via Google Images, accessed March 5, 2011, www.webexhibits.org.

Debussy the Man

A look into Debussy's personal life can furthermore reveal important influences that appear in the *Rapsodie.* Claude-Achille Debussy was born on August 22, 1862, in Saint-German-en-Laye, France.[40] His mother was very strict, which later fostered a need for close friends, and his father pushed him to be a concert pianist so that he could become wealthy. Debussy became quite insecure and selfish, which was not helped by a lack of regular education.[41] In 1871, his father was imprisoned for political acts associated with turmoil from the Commune, leaving Debussy with personal and painful memories for the rest of his life.[42] Debussy did not find happiness as a common emotion, unfortunately, due to these personal issues. He also felt guilty for leaving his parents in debt from his irresponsible spending to buy knick-knacks, even when he could not afford them.[43]

In 1872, Debussy entered the Paris Conservatoire as a student. Debussy struggled with authority during his years at the school and often found the teachers to be restrictive in their outlook on modern music. He resorted to experimenting with harmony on his own when his teachers were absent, a precursor to Debussy's unique and signature harmonic structure that can be seen in the *Rapsodie.*[44] As a pianist, Debussy was able to acquire only a single Second Prize at the Conservatoire but was quite gifted with *solfège.* In 1880, he began studying composition with Ernest Guirard, leading him to a Prix de Rome prize for his cantata *L'enfant prodigue* in 1884.[45] However, Debussy admitted he

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[40] Kelly, "Debussy's Parisian Affiliations," 25.
[41] Orledge, "Debussy the Man," 10.
[42] Kelly, "Debussy's Parisian Affiliations," 25.
[43] Orledge, "Debussy the Man," 11.
[44] Kelly, "Debussy's Parisan Affiliations," 25–27.
[45] Orledge, "Debussy the Man," 10.

was told by Guirard to conform to traditional composition techniques in order to secure the Prix de Rome, making him feel that his creativity was hindered.[46]

Debussy the man was generally pessimistic throughout his life. He was quite egotistical and a never missed a moment to express his true feelings. No composer was safe from his criticism, especially Wagner, and he loved French puns. Debussy would arrange lunches with friends where gourmet cooking was always a treat.[47] His search for the superb fueled his spending, unfortunately, but "provided an essential antidote to the mediocrity and shabbiness of the world about him, of which he frequently complained."[48] He kept a close circle of friends including such figures as Paul Dukas, Robert Godet, and Eric Satie. Debussy allowed meetings with his friends only in scheduled sessions, giving the appearance of an exclusive relationship. These lunches usually portrayed a grumpy and opinionated Debussy, often critiquing performers and conductors of his music.[49] A fellow composer, Alfred Casella, described Debussy as "extraordinarily nervous, impulsive, and impressionable, and he was easily irritated . . . incredible shyness which he disguised under a show of paradox and often sarcastic and unkind irony, all made for a certain awkwardness in one's first relations with him."[50]

Debussy had few women in his life, several of whom were married. Marie-Blanche Vasnier appeared in 1880 and inspired twenty-three songs to be written over four years.[51] Debussy began a nine year relationship with Gabrielle Dupont in 1889, eventually marrying here in 1893. She held an important role in his life during the time

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[46] Kelly, "Debussy's Parisian Affiliations," 28.
[47] Orledge, "Debussy the Man," 14.
[48] Orledge, "Debussy the Man," 12.
[49] Orledge, "Debussy the Man," 12.
[50] Orledge, "Debussy the Man," 18.
[51] Orledge, "Debussy the Man," 18–19.

of *Pelléas et Melisande* and the *Faun*. In 1899, Debussy married Lilly Texier, who he unfortunately found to be "unstimulating and overly possessive."[52] She was pretty and fashionable, but eventually appeared older than her age. Debussy did not dedicate any music to her during the early 1900s, during their marriage.[53]

At this time, Debussy also encountered a different arena for the arts. Music could easily fit into private settings, such as a salon, unlike theatre or the visual arts. This community was called *le monde* and emphasized the "art of passing time."[54] Debussy reluctantly plunged into this new circle where composers were unfortunately titled as guests and were admired entertainment for audiences that were assembled by birthright, kinship, and social position. They were rarely appreciated for their talent.[55] Other composers such as Fauré and Saint-Säens also participated in *le monde*. Debussy joined such a ring from 1893–1894 for financial support, since he lacked an official post, and royalties alone did not support his lifestyle.[56]

However, he eventually won his breakthrough as a respected composer when he met Emma Bardac in 1903, who was a member of this high-class society.[57] She was small, stylish, intelligent, cultivated, and a rather fine musician.[58] He divorced Lilly and eloped with Emma, causing great grief for Lilly, who shot herself in distress but survived.[59] About this time, Debussy began expressing his discontent with life to close friends such as Louÿs. He stated he was "sickened by age,"[60] which could be a precursor

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[52] Orledge, "Debussy the Man," 20.
[53] Dietschy, Marcel, *A Portrait of Claude Debussy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 125.
[54] Charle, "Debussy in Fin-de-Siècle ," 281.
[55] Charle, "Debussy in Fin-de-Siècle ," 282.
[56] Charle, "Debussy in Fin-de-Siècle ," 283.
[57] Charle, "Debussy in Fin-de-Siècle ," 285.
[58] Dietschy, *A Portrait of Claude Debussy*, 129.
[59] Orledge, "Debussy the Man," 21.
[60] Dietschy, *A Portrait of Claude Debussy*, 126.

to his rectal cancer that was diagnosed six years later in 1909. Debussy also realized his fame was growing and that his music was becoming more and more a "prisoner of opinion."[61] His opera *Pelléas et Melisande* had great success and attracted raving critics, but Debussy sought to step out of this light. He began to evoke a different style for his works by incorporating a structured design to each piece. The *Première rapsodie* is directly affected by this new compositional style. *La mer* became the monumental work containing the design aspect during this period in Debussy's life, which he began sketches for in September of 1903. The work became a reaction to *Pelleas's* success.[62]

After his marriage to Emma Bardac, his style of living was enhanced dramatically after 1904. The haute-bourgeoisie, or upper middle class, became his new realm. The community emphasized luxury and artistic design, a mentality that surely influenced Debussy. He moved to the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, where he was surrounded by high class neighbors who specialized in the arts and politics.[63] However, he began to feel out of place since he was not born into this high social class. He continued his old habit of spending more than he earned, especially on his beloved trinkets, causing severe financial problems. Moreover, Emma placed a great stress by her demands for a mode of living beyond Debussy's income. [64] "From this imprisonment there was now no escape but into the inner world of creativity. . . "[65] *La mer* was finished in March of 1905, which he dedicated to his publisher Jacques Durand who had offered him 12,000 francs for the rights to his future music.[66] Debussy accepted this offer immediately because of the

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[61] Dietschy, *A Portrait of Claude Debussy*, 126.
[62] Dietschy, *A Portrait of Claude Debussy*, 127–128.
[63] Charle, "Debussy in Fin-de-Siècle ," 286.
[64] Charle, "Debussy in Fin-de-Siècle ," 287.
[65] Orledge, "Debussy the Man," 23.
[66] Dietschy, *A Portrait of Claude Debussy*, 137–138.

financial issues of his own spending and Emma's demand for high living. This offer was still not enough to cover Debussy's financial mistakes, though. "I am overcome by regret and worries."[67]

La mer did not receive the same praise that *Pelléas* had received. Those who favored the opera seemed to be completely lost when trying to understand the orchestral work. Pierre Lalo wrote, "Debussy had wanted to feel, but instead has not truly, deeply and naturally felt."[68] The piece consists of three movements, each of which portrays a characteristic of the sea such as the wind or the waves. Debussy designs harmony, texture, and orchestration in such a way that these elements are an aural characteristic of the music. This technique was unusual for Debussy's time, most likely explaining the poor reception. The orchestration and craftsmanship of *La mer* was respected by critics, but the lack of comprehension for the "affect" of the work stung Debussy.[69]

He received a small glimmer of happiness, though, in October of 1905 when Emma gave birth to his daughter Claude-Emma, or "Chouchou" as she was nicknamed.[70] This small ounce of joy for Debussy was still masked by the depression in his life. By 1907, nothing had improved while ". . . weariness ran deep, prompted by financial concerns, the loss of former friends, a lack of promising projects, and the slow working out of the orchestral *Images*."[71] The year 1909 marked Debussy's discovery of his rectal cancer, and it was the same year he began work on the *Première rapsodie*.[72] His financial struggles continued into 1909, as well.[73]

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[67] Dietschy, *A Portrait of Claude Debussy*, 138.
[68] Dietschy, *A Portrait of Claude Debussy*, 139.
[69] Dietschy, *A Portrait of Claude Debussy*, 139.
[70] Dietschy, *A Portrait of Claude Debussy*, 140.
[71] Dietschy, *A Portrait of Clause Debussy*, 145.
[72] Charle, "Debussy in Fin-de-Siècle ," 289.
[73] Dietschy, *A Portrait of Claude Debussy*, 158.

In 1905, Gabriel Fauré was named Director of the *Conservatoire de Musique et de Déclamation de Paris*. Debussy was elected to the Superior Council of the Conservatoire under Fauré's reforming leadership in 1909, the academic background for which the *Rapsodie* was written.[74] Fauré held high standards in technique and musicality for the conservatory, and his influence is very apparent in the *Première rapsodie.* He enforced a strict approach to his new administration, shaking up years of tradition. He pushed academics forward into a new way of thinking insofar as musical artistry was concerned.[75] Musicians were now required to study history and theory along with their performance lessons. The voice department was particularly incomplete because of a lack of basic technique taught before attempting long and extensive arias during lessons. Students even lacked the skill of sight singing.[76] Fauré sought to expand the repertoire for students, requiring them to begin with preparatory exercises and vocalizations.[77]

Debussy recognized the previous faults of the Conservatoire, as well, commenting that the harmony teaching was faulty and that a conventional harmonic language hindered creativity and individuality.[78] D'Indy also aimed to improve music pedagogy during this time with his Schola Cantorum, where he wanted to create artists, unlike the Conservatoire that emphasized competitions and the importance of winning contests.[79] The debate between the two schools increased the race to create well-rounded students. Fauré commented, "I want to be the auxiliary to an art that is at once classical and modern, which sacrifices neither current taste to establish tradition, nor tradition to the

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[74] Kelly, "Debussy's Parisian Affiliations," 37.
[75] Woldu, Gail Hilson, "Debussy, Fauré, and d'Indy and Conceptions of the Artist: The Institutions, the Dialouges, and Conflicts," in *Debussy and His World*, ed. By Jane F. Fulcher (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 235.
[76] Woldu, "Debussy, Fauré, and d'Indy" 239.
[77] Woldu, "Debussy, Fauré, and d'Indy," 240.
[78] Woldu, "Debussy, Fauré, and d'Indy," 240.
[79] Woldu, "Debussy, Fauré, and d'Indy," 235, 245.

vagaries of current style."[80] Luckily, Fauré had gained enough respect as a composer enabling his leadership to clean up the unorganized curriculum of the Conservatoire.[81] The new regime was intended for the creation of "the musician's musician, one who was technically skilled, grounded in the history of his art, and open to a diversity of ideas about music."[82] This background underlies the birth of the *Rapsodie* and helps explain how virtuosic technique matched with melodic gesture comprises the piece.

The *Première rapsodie*

The *Première rapsodie* holds an attractive quality that allows the listener to become immersed deep in color, timbre, and a self-generating force of design. "What characterizes the music of Debussy is not its descriptive function, but its suggestion of hidden energy; and the power of this suggestion has a magical force which is irresistible."[83] Debussy continues to break traditional rules regarding form, harmony, and color. He seeks to explore a new realm of music, allowing the performer and the audience to be free from a strict system of formal and tonal tradition. [84]

After Debussy became a member of the Superior Council at the Conservatoire in 1909, he was asked to compose a competition piece for the advanced clarinet studio to play for the yearly boards. He began the piece for clarinet and piano in December of 1909 and finished the work in January of 1910, dedicating it to Prosper Mimart, a clarinet professor. Alongside the *Rapsodie*, Debussy also wrote a sight reading work titled

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[80] Woldu, "Debussy, Fauré, and d'Indy," 245.
[81] Woldu, "Debussy, Fauré, and d'Indy," 246.
[82] Woldu, "Debussy, Fauré, and d'Indy," 248.
[83] Jarocinski, Stefan, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism* (London: Ernst Eulenburg Ltd, 1976), ix.
[84] Jarocinski, *Debussy: Impressionism and Symbolism*, 158–159.

"Petite pièce." Both works were published in the year 1910, and the *Rapsodie* was again published with a full orchestration by Debussy in 1911.[85]

The Conservatoire had been introduced into a new world of pedagogy as Fauré took the lead in 1905. Music history, rigorous writing assignments, full examinations, and a standardization of instrumental technique all accompanied the new regime. Competition was highly emphasized and was thought of as a measure of success. As a member of the Council, Debussy was asked to sit in on the year-end juries. He very much enjoyed the woodwinds and was present for the clarinet juries that presented the *Première rapsodie* in July of 1910. Eleven clarinets played the work, only one of which Debussy truly revered, mentioning that he "played it by heart and very musically."[86] Men and women were heard separately and did not play the same piece until later in 1910. The performance of the jury piece was open to the public, but sight reading was administered in a private setting.[87] Each student was given one of four awards, a first or second diploma or a first or second prize.[88]

Analysis of the *Première rapsodie*

Form

When designing the *Première rapsodie,* Debussy determines time spans and relationships to the duration of sections in the work. Breaks in the music, such as *ritardandos* and *accelerandos*, changes in character, reprises of themes, and textural variation help

[85] Briscoe, James, "Debussy for Clarinet Solo: The Music and Conservatoire Context," in *ClarinetFest Archives*, accessed September 4, 2011, http://www.clarinet.org/clarinetFestArchive.asp?archive=34.
[86] Briscoe, "Debussy for Clarinet solo."
[87] Bauer, Harold, "The Paris Conservatoire: Some Reminiscences," *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (October, 1947): 534.
[88] Bauer, "The Paris Conservatoire," 235.

designate phrasing and significant boundaries within the *Rapsodie*.[89] The duration for each section and themes within these larger sections varies throughout the piece, giving either a dramatic and virtuosic effect or a lyrical character to the work.[90] The piece is designed to show both the technical and expressive capabilities of the player, an influence that comes directly from Fauré's leadership at the Conservatoire. Debussy alternates technical and lyrical passages with "demanding velocity in a meandering, rondo-like scheme rotating among . . . distinct thematic entries."[91] Tempo changes, the duration of musical gestures, and changes in texture and instrumentation are all important aspects that help articulate Debussy's intricate form in the *Première rapsodie*.[92] For this analysis, I will be using the Elkan-Vogle, Inc. publication of this work. Please refer to Chart 1 for the proceeding sections to help illustrate important points about form, phrasing, register, texture, melody, and harmonic characteristics.

The introduction (mm. 1–10) presents asymmetrical phrase gestures. The character is peaceful and smooth for the first four measures, but gradually gains momentum in mm. 5 and 6 until the clarinet releases the tension in m. 7 with long note durations. The piano begins a rhythmical ostinato in mm. 9–10 that acts as a transition into measure 11. Measures 11–20 present Theme A in the clarinet and ends with a slight slowing into measure 21 (Rehearsal 2 in the excerpt below) where Theme B begins, and it is presented in a new key.

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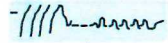
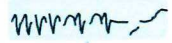
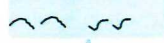
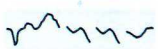
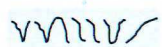
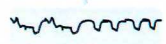
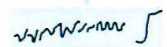
[89] Parks, Richard S., "Music's Inner Dance: Form, pacing, and complexity in Debussy's music," in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy,* ed. by Simon Trezise (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 198.
[90] Parks, "Music's Inner Dance," 199.
[91] Parks, "Music's Inner Dance," 219.
[92] Parks, "Music's Inner Dance," 221.

Chart 1. Analysis of the *Première rapsodie*

measure	m. 1-10	m. 11-20	m. 21-30	m. 31-39	m. 40-44	m. 45-57	m. 58-75	m. 76-83	m. 84-91
Theme	Introduction	Theme A	Theme B and motive 'a'	transition on Theme C and motive 'b'	Theme A	transition on motive 'a' and Theme C	Theme C	Theme B	transition on Theme C
Phrasing	5 two-bar phrases	5 two-bar phrases	5 two-bar phrases	1 three-bar phrase + 3 two-bar phrases	2 two-bar phrases + 1 one-bar phrases	6 two-bar phrases +½+½	9 two-bar phrases	4 two-bar phrases	4 two-bar phrases
Clarinet Register									
Texture	monophony (piano) to homophony to monophony (clarinet) to polyphony	homophonic, polyphonic piano line	homophony to monophony (clarinet)	monophony (clarinet) to homophony	homophony	polyphony between clarinet and piano moving to homophony with polyphony	homophony	homophony	conversation between clarinet and piano, monophonic like
Melody	lyrical with slight technical aspects	lyrical and continuous	lyrical moving to a technical motive	tecnical moving back to lyrical	lyrical and continous	technical and rhytmic	technically and lyrically challenging	lyrical and continous	technical and playful
Harmony and Tonality	Possible F tonal center	Ebm to DbM- clarinet Db mixolydian to A- piano	F#m to unstable- clarinet DM to unstale- piano	unstable to Db Mixolydian in clarinet and piano	Ebm- clarinet; untraditional pentatonic scales- piano	C#^{o7} and D#^{o7}(octatonic) to F# Dorian to F to F Lydian	A Lydian to B tonal center	G#m	whole tone, unstable
Golden Section (seconds)						Golden Section (reverse)			

measure	m. 92-95	m. 96-123	m. 124-131	m. 132-151	m. 152-157	m. 158-162	m. 163-168	m. 169-184	m. 185-206
Theme	Introduction to Theme D	Theme D	transition on Theme D	Theme B with Theme D variation	Theme A	Theme B	transition on motive 'a' and motive 'b'	Theme D and motive 'b'	Closing Chromatic Material and motive 'b'
Phrasing	2 two-bar phrases	14 two-bar phrases	4 two-bar phrases	10 two-bar phrases	3 two-bar phrases	1 two-bar phrase + 1 three-bar phrases	3 two-bar phrases	8 two-bar phrases	6 two-bar phrases + 5 two-bar phrases
Clarinet Register	N/A								
Texture	homophony with piano only	homophonic with polyphonic characteristics	homophony	homophonic with polyphinic charateristics	homphonic	homophonic with polyphonic characteristics	conversation between clarinet and piano, monophony to homphony	homophony	homphony with polyphonic characteristics
Melody	jocular in piano	jocular and articulate, technical	lyrical to jocular to lyrical	lyrical	lyrical	lyrical	technical	jocular and articulate	extremely technical
Harmony and Tonality	Db tonal center	chromatic (and Db) to Fm, octatonic, E Lydian	Cm-like, unstable and chromatic	Cm to Gbm to chromatic with Eb half dim and C^{7}	Ebm	Bbm	octatonic with F half dim to G^{7} to chromatics	chromatics with pedal Gb	chromatic scales and root mvt; F Lydian scale
Golden Section (seconds)	Golden Section								

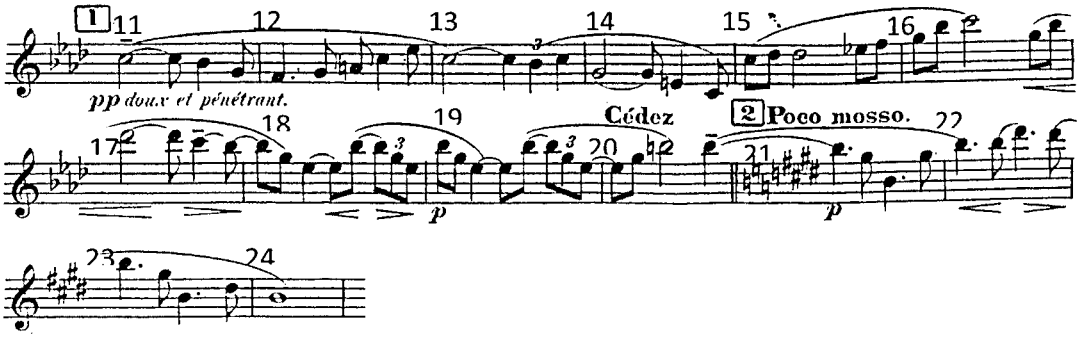


Figure 1. Theme A and Theme B

A new motive is also introduced in measure 26, motive 'a', which is an ascending run of thirty-second notes.

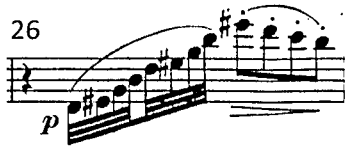


Figure 2. Motive 'a'

The section ends with a tempo acceleration into m. 31, where the key signature has changed and the tempo is marked "Le double plus vite." Measures 31–39 act as a transition based on a new theme, Theme C, a theme that has not yet been stated in the work. Debussy not only gives tempo and character contrast, but is foreshadowing an important future theme. A new trill motive, motive 'b', is introduced in mm. 36–37. Trills in this specific context add a new color that gives a distinct texture which occurs at specific moments throughout the piece.

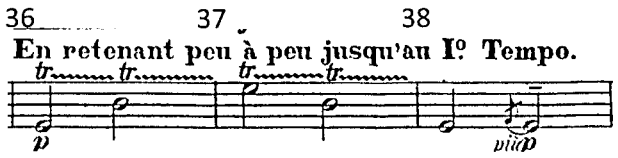


Figure 3. Motive 'b'

Measures 36–39 decrease in tempo, hinting a new section might be approaching. Motive

'a' leads the clarinet into measure 40 where Theme A is again presented in the original tempo, marking a new section. Theme A is written an octave higher than initially stated in order to create contrast. If this theme had been present in its original octave, there could be a sense of rounded binary, which is inappropriate for this early on in the piece. Debussy feels it is necessary to restate this theme once more, though, before moving on to Themes C and D. Only half of Theme A is presented in mm. 40–44, as well, which gives a sense of suspension and momentum forward.

Measure 45 is marked as "Le double plus vite," for the second time, but the tempo stays constant for this section and does not slow down into a new theme. Motive 'a' is the theme of mm. 45–50 with ascending arpeggiated runs in the clarinet. Debussy uses repetition to distinguish between sections during the middle portion of the *Rapsodie*, as well. The ascending thirty-second notes cease at m. 51, which mark a transition based on Theme C material, continuing to foreshadow the new theme that is stated in its entirety later in the piece. Measures 51–52 mimic the material from mm. 32–33, and m. 53 shows the first two notes of measure 34, which form a minor second. The tonality alternates between each note of the minor second, creating instability and a need for resolution. The minor second continues and develops in measures 54–55. Measure 57 again gives a *ritardando* into a new section at measure 58.

Theme C finally arrives in its entirety after two hints prior in transition material. The contour of the melody is new with scalar motion and a wave-like character. The grace note that is prevalent in the transitions is also prominent in the theme. This section displays two-measure repetition, which again helps define where the section ends in measure 76.

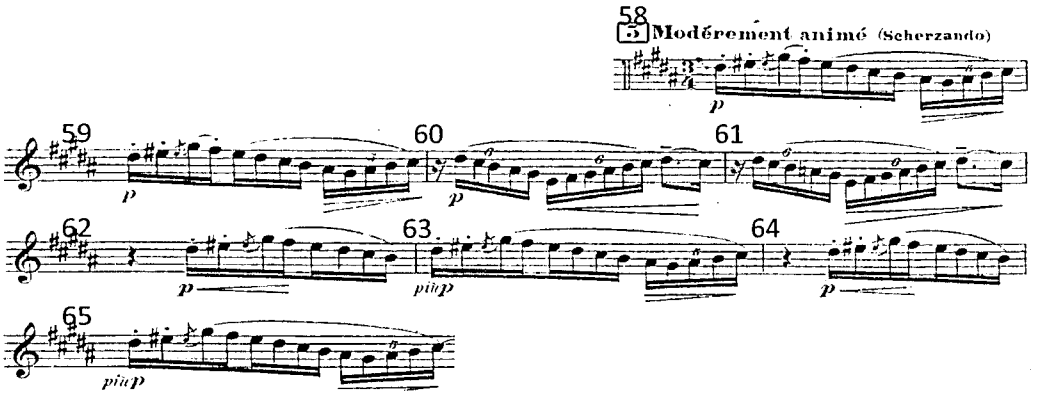


Figure 4. Theme C

Motive 'b', the trill, is used in measures 70–72, connecting the section to previous musical material. So far, the trills have only been presented with Theme C, whether in a transition or larger formal section. Theme B appears again at measure 76, but is a bit more dressed up with anacrusis eighth notes. A dramatic character change happens at measure 84, which will be labeled as a transition that is based on Theme C due to the contour, scalar motion, and rhythmic integrity.

Measure 92 marks the beginning of the last large section of the work. Measures 92–95 are an introduction given by the piano with a steady tempo and light, staccato character. The clarinet enters in measure 96 with Theme D, marked *scherzando*, and presents a stark contrast from the first two sections of the piece. Repetition is still a prevalent technique and creates two-measure phrases as it did in previous material.

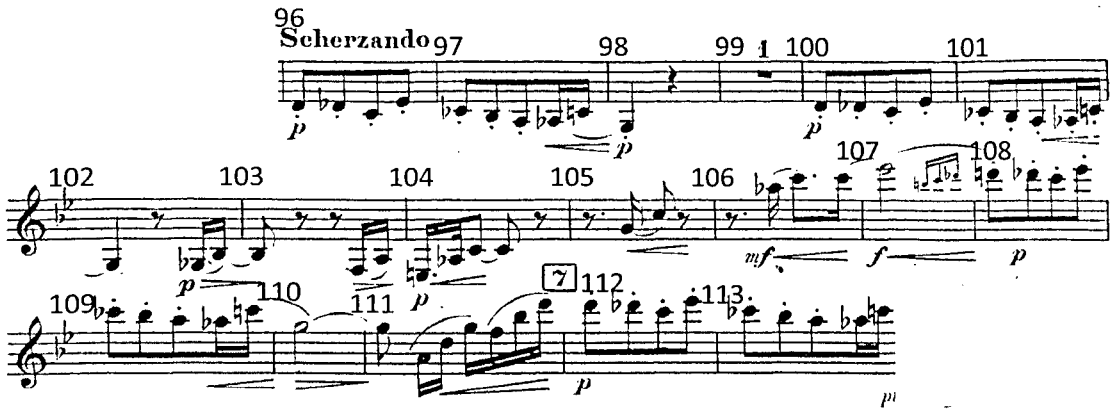


Figure 5. Theme D

Measure 123 slows, creating an end to the section. The tempo again continues in measure 124 and acts as a transition that incorporates Theme D, but does not keep the constant repetition of material. Measure 132 brings back a fragment of Theme B and mixes it with a triplet variation of the opening statement of Theme D in mm. 141 and 145. The music *ritards* once again into measure 152, which signals the end of the section.

Theme A occurs in its original tempo at m. 152 for the first time since the opening statement and is almost completed until measure 158 melts into Theme B. The music continues to accelerate slightly and grows in intensity. The phrasing in this section is slightly abstract, giving the music a suspenseful character until is it released at measure 163 with the presence of a motive 'b' and a new tempo. Measures 163–168 is a transition that combines both motives 'a' and 'b', which drives the music forward and brings an exciting new virtuosity to the piece. An ascending chromatic scale ends the transition as it leads into measure 169 where Theme D returns. Motive 'b' is blended into the mix in

measures 177, 179, 181, and 183. Measure 185 exhibits completely new musical material, which earns this section the title of Closing. The chromatic scale is very prevalent in this last section, giving tonal instability and a sense of excitement. Chromatics cease at measure 196 as the piano brings a new texture of block chords and a slower tempo. The clarinet takes one last gleaming moment and plays a virtuosic ascending thirty-second note run.

The analysis of themes and character within the *Rapsodie* should allow the analyst to understand how Debussy designs the work as a technical and lyrical work for the advanced clarinet player. It is important to establish these divisions because they show the overall contour and shape of the work. Later in this analysis, the reader will discover that these themes and characters also play an important role when determining the Golden Section of the *Première rapsodie.*

Phrasing and Cadences

Debussy's phrase structure is also an interesting point to observe in the *Rapsodie.* Not only do his phrases enable the analyst to clearly mark section divisions, but allow a careful listening to Debussy's compositional style. Symmetry is a key aspect to the *Rapsodie's* phrase structure. There are also different types of phrases that can include parallel periods or sentence structures. "While the parallel period, symmetrically and cadentially closed, creates a sense of balance and solidity, the sentence represents on-going, fluid musical motion and often implies a sense of urgency."[93] These sentences can still be symmetrical, but can build a sense of continuation through the entire musical

[93] Somer, Avo, "Musical Syntax in the Sonatas of Debussy: Phrase Structure and Formal Function," *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol 27, No. 1 (Spring 2005): 72.

gesture as opposed to separate parts hooked together.[94] Each symmetrical phrase contains two parts, an antecedent and a consequent, each of which is usually very closely related in musical material to the other.[95] A very prominent technique in the *Rapsodie* is the use of two-measure units to represent a phrase. This allows symmetry, depicts musical motives, and provides continuity.[96] Asymmetrical phrase groups can also be found in the *Rapsodie*; however, they act more as transitional phrases that lead into major sections of the work.[97]

To help determine the majority of these sections in the *Rapsodie's* form, phrasing and musical gestures are definitely an important key. The durations of larger sections in the work will vary depending on the character of the material or tempo, which gives a dramatic effect to the work and an asymmetrical one as a whole.[98] Richard Parks maps out the musical gestures of the *Rapsodie* in his article, "Music's Inner Dance: Form, Pacing, and Complexity in Debussy's Music," showing surprisingly uniform divisions. The two-measure musical gesture is found virtually in every aspect of the work. Repetition plays an important role within these two-measure phrases quite often as the work progresses, particularly in the second half of the piece. The introduction does not contain repetition within two measures, but does exhibit another tendency in this piece, which is repetition of a two-measure gesture, creating a four- measure period.

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[94] Somer, "Musical Syntax," 72.
[95] Somer, "Musical Syntax," 78.
[96] Pomeroy, Boyd, "Debussy's tonality: a formal perspective," in *The Cambridge Companion to Debussy*, ed. by Simon Trezise (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 159.
[97] Somer, "Musical Syntax," 74.
[98] Parks, Richard S, "Music's Inner Dance," 199.

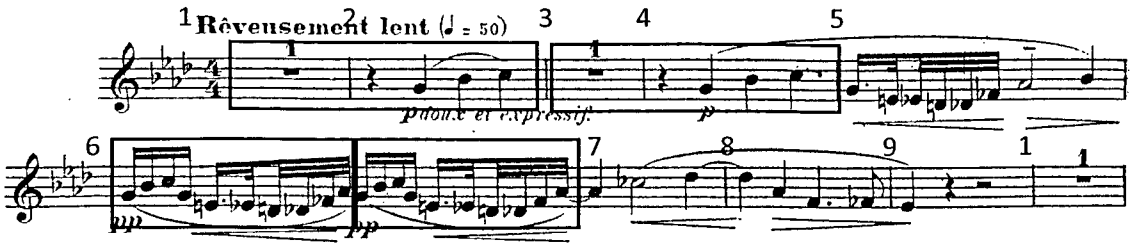

Figure 6. Introduction (Clarinet)

The second reiteration is usually slightly altered, whether it is by a small rhythmic change or one pitch changes between the two elements. The opening is a good example of this aspect of the work. The piano part contains the same material in measures 1 and 3, with the exception of a pitch change in the left hand where a C natural becomes a C-flat. The clarinet has the exact same material in measures 2 and 4, with no pitch change, creating a two-measure gesture in measure 1–2 and 3–4. Together they form a repetitive period. In traditional analysis, a parallel period could even be suggested. Measure 6 in the clarinet shows another aspect of the phrasing in this work where Debussy actually diminishes the time duration of the repetition to the half-measure. The clarinet plays, without pitch change, the same thirty-second note figure on beats 1–2 as on beats 3–4. The music seems to accelerate and bring a slight tension or suspension to the audience's ear.

Once Theme A first appears at measure 11, Debussy retires repetition for the time being and creates wave-like phrases as shown in Figure 1 above. The music does not cease to have direction, constantly creating new arrival points. Theme A is an excellent example of this directional two-measure phrasing, a type that also exists prominently throughout the piece where repetition is not being used. However, underneath the directional theme, the piano does have an ostinato, and this Debussy does not completely abandon repetition as formative. Theme B in the clarinet at measure 21 brings back

repetition, but not to the exactness as before, and outlines a parallel period in measures 21–24. Measures 25–28 also follow the parallel period form and recollect the opening four measures of the piece with alternating piano and clarinet two-measure phrasing. The clarinet then continues with two-measure phrases in measures 29–30 that contain repetition between the two measures as the music accelerates to a new character and tempo. These two measures are good examples of Debussy's desire to create excitement and energy in a small time period.

The new character and tempo at measure 31 shows the first hint of asymmetric phrasing between mm. 31–33. Measure 31 is an arrival, and Debussy lets the music breath for one measure before moving onto the next gesture. However, he cuts one measure down to a 2/4 time signature (measure 33) instead of 4/4 to make up for this slight resting. The music has directional gestures in measures 31–33 and 36–39 again along with repetition in measures 34–35, a nice transition between the previous sections into a reprise of Theme A at measure 40 where directional phrasing takes over.

The character of the music changes again along with a tempo change to double time at measure 45. Debussy incorporates two two-measure phrases, a four-measure period, in measures 45–48 and then reduces the phrasing to a single two-measure phrase containing repetition between the measures, allowing the music to hint at acceleration. Measure 51 hits with a sense of relief as the music from measure 31–33 reappears in a quieter dynamic and as a three-measure phrase. However, in Figure 7, Debussy sets this music into a two-measure phrase in measures 51–52 instead of the asymmetrical three-measure phrase as stated earlier. Measure 53 and 54 are phrased quite interestingly because each of these measures is like a half-measure phrase due to the repetition by half-

measure. Measures 55–56 are again a repetitive two-measure gesture, but m. 57 again uses the half-measure gesture. Debussy creates a sense of *rubato* by setting these five measures in this manner. The asymmetry between the measures is almost masked because of the symmetry within the measures themselves.

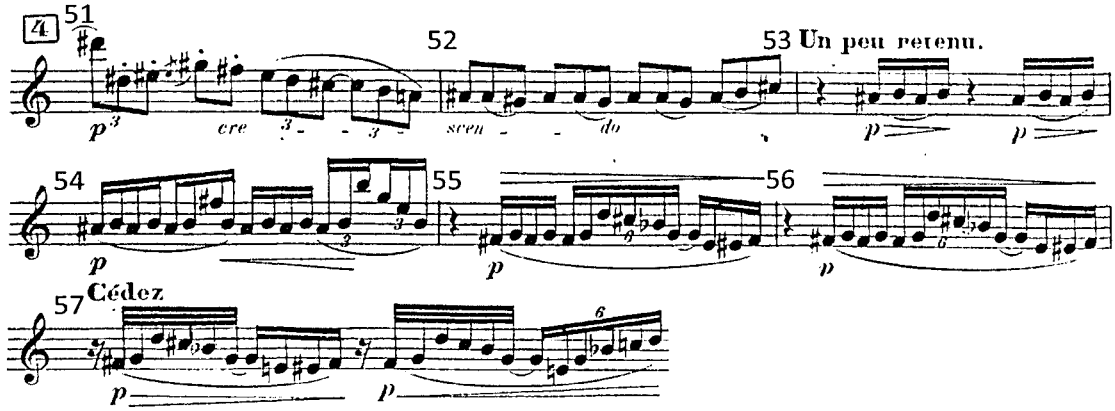

Figure 7. Example of Asymmetry and Half-measure phrasing

Theme C arrives in its full form at m. 58 and sets a fantastic example of the two-measure gesture with repetition between the two measures as shown in Figure 4 above. Measures 58–59 contain the same material, and mm. 60–61 also shows the same material with one pitch difference. The next four measures exhibit a new phrasing not seen yet in the piece, where Debussy incorporates into the second half of 62 and 64 the same musical material as the first half of 58 and 59. Measures 63 and 65 then contain exactly the same material as mm. 58–59. Each set of two measures (62–63 and 64–65) gives a certain suspension because the first measure of the two-measure gesture begins one beat later, and the ear expects the phrase to appear as it did in measures 58–59 on beat one. There is also a sense of syncopation, giving the piece a little flavor at this point in the music. Measures 66–75 continue with directional two-measure phrases, a nice contrast to the

prominent repetitive gestures just prior in the music.

Theme B returns at measure 76 with directional two-measure gestures and lands in measure 84 with a sharp and staccato two-measure gesture. Measure 86-87 is piano alone and hints at Theme D, but an incomplete statement, leaving the ear wanting more. Measures 88–89 are exactly that of 86–87, however, the piano and clarinet have switched musical material like a mirror effect. The piano begins the introduction of Theme D in measure 92, creating repetitive two-measure phrases until the clarinet enters in measure 96 with two-measure gestures that create four-measure periods as seen in Figure 5 above. The clarinet climbs higher in register to measure 108 where Theme D is presented two octaves higher than previously stated. Measures 108–111 show a four- measure period moving into measures 112–113 where Debussy writes one two-measure gesture. Debussy then introduces new material in a parallel four-measure period until measure 122 where only a two-measure gesture is present as the music slows down in tempo. Debussy has used two compositional techniques to give a sense of deceleration at this point in measures 122–123. Two-measure phrases return in measure 124 with the directional quality as they lead into the return of Theme B, which is also presented in a directional manner with two-measure gestures. 140–143 create a four-measure period between the clarinet and piano, as well as 144–147. Each instrument repeats the music exactly in these two periods, allowing the listener's ears to rest a bit with familiarity as the music continually slows down into measure 152 where Theme A returns for the first time since measure 40.

After two sections of significant repetition between two-measure gestures and four-measure periods, Theme A in measure 152 allows directional two-measure gestures

to return. Theme B is also brought back in measure 158 where it combines a bit of directional gesture with repetitive gesture. The combination allows the ear to prepare for the next section where repetition will be taken to the maximum. Measure 163 hits with motive 'b', the trills, in combination with motive 'a', thirty-second notes. The clarinet begins mm. 163 and 165 with the same material and moves through virtuosic thirty-second note runs through mm. 166–168. An ascending chromatic scale leads up to measure 169 where Theme D returns with two four-measure periods in measures 169–176 and moves directly into a succession of two-measure phrases that integrate Theme D and motive 'b' in repeating two-measure units.

The closing section begins at measure 185 and begins to take repetition to the extreme alongside the tonal instability of chromatic runs. Measures 185–188 contain two two-measure units that mirror each other and move directly into a chromatic passage that repeats from mm. 189–190 to mm. 191–192. The two-measure gestures continue, keeping the same chromatic material but only repeating the last beat of 192.

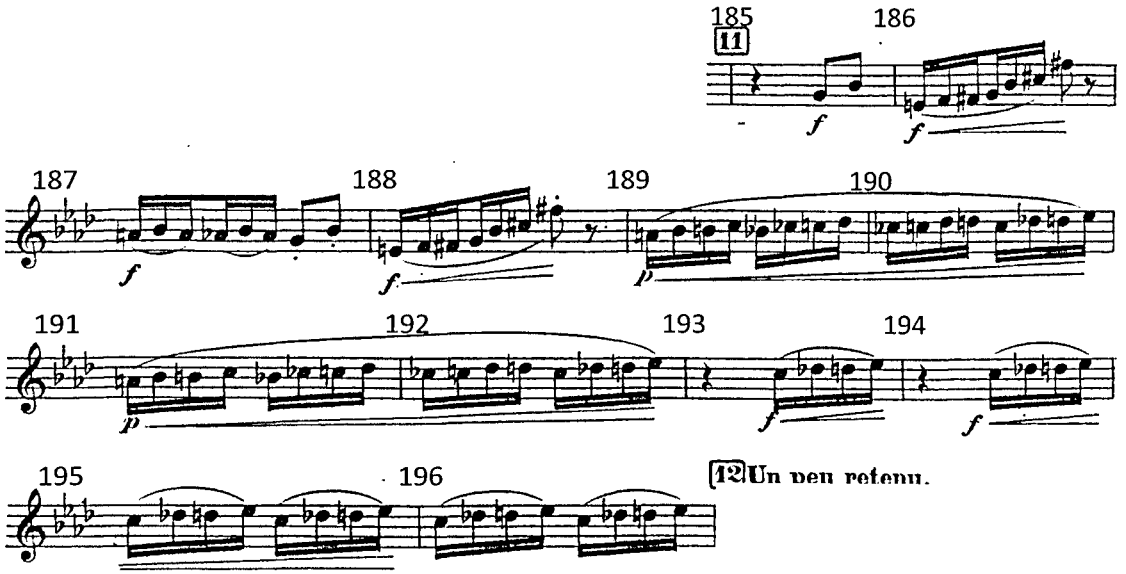

Figure 8. Closing Section (Clarinet)

The music crescendos till the excitement releases on the first beat of 197 with silence. Beat two presents the piano in broad chords with syncopation in the frame of a four-measure period. The clarinet enters in measure 201 continuing through the ascending thirty-second note run, which creates a two-measure gesture from 201–202. Measures 203–205 appear to be asymmetrical as a three-measure gesture, but Debussy adds an extra measure onto the end of the work containing a fermata. It is possible he did this to keep the consistency of two-measure gestures to the very end of the piece.

Register

Register in the *Rapsodie* is quite prevalent in the piece and is a challenge for each instrument during certain sections. From this point forward, the clarinet pitches will be stated in concert pitch. Debussy does not hesitate to explore the expanded register of the keyboard in the introduction and reaches two octaves from F4 to F6 while the clarinet opens with F4 in its warm middle range. The register does not expand past B-flat4 in the

clarinet until measure 7 where the peak of the melodic line occurs on a C-flat5. Warmth does not cease when the piano enters with its ostinato in measure 9 as it stays below A-flat4 with thick textured chords. Theme A in the clarinet (measure 11) is in a very comfortable range for the player. Beginning on a B-flat4, the melody glides over the wave-like contour by mostly step-wise movement until the line begins to expand up in measures 15–16. The piano follows the contour and ascends to D-flat5 in the right hand at measure 16. The left hand now incorporates arpeggiated triplets, lengthening the register downward to D-flat2, as well, in measure 17. This material continues, as the clarinet joins the arpeggiation in measure 21 with the occurrence of Theme B. The clarinet line specifically now touches upon each range in which musical material has been presented thus far in the piece. Motive 'a' further expands the clarinet register up to D-sharp6 via the ascending thirty-second note run in measures 26 and 28, an idiomatic gesture for the instrument. The piano does not move from its lower register position.

A solo moment for the clarinet arrives at measure 29, and quickly moves the articulated line to the instrument's woody and sultry register on F4. However, measure 36 incorporates arpeggios which eventually lead back to B-flat5 in measure 40. The piano also arpeggiates with the clarinet, but uses contrary motion and descends to C-flat 4 in measure 40. The piano discontinues mimicking the clarinet contour for a moment, a nice contrast in the music. At m. 40, the return of Theme A in the clarinet is now an octave higher than originally stated while the piano continues to use arpeggiation to expand the register for this section.

The "Le double plus vite" at measure 45 now stretches the range of the left hand downward to F-sharp1 while executing tremolos, giving a very deep and rumbling sound to the music. The clarinet plays flourishing runs up through two octaves to C-flat5 and D-flat6 in measures 46–50. This contrast is quite prominent compared to the previous musical material. This section does not really contain the inside or middle voices, but the extremes of each instrument.

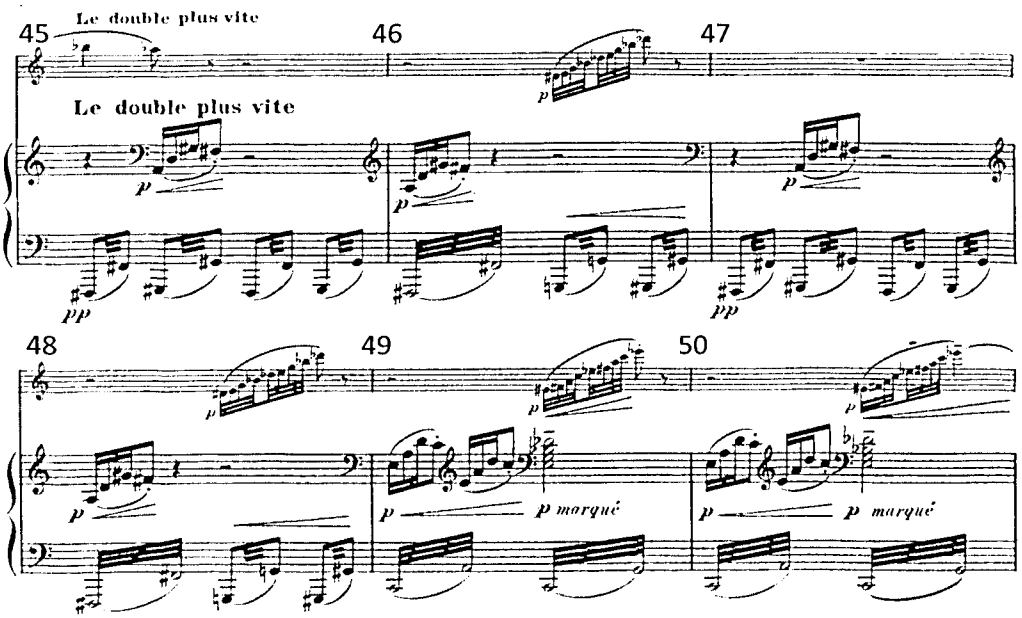

Figure 9. Example of Register Stretch

The feeling is unsettling and is very effective since this section is titled a transition. Measure 51 returns each instrument to the middle range, however, giving the relief that the ear was begging for. The piano now contains small splashes of color in the upper register such as in mm. 54–56.

Theme C is back in m. 58 within the clarinet player's comfortable range, and the piano frames this with registrally extreme chords. Measure 62 ropes the piano in and back to middle keyboard. It is not until measure 70 that the piano shows an expanding

register upward in the right hand with octave root movement of chords. When Theme B returns in the clarinet in a high register at 76, the piano actually moves to its middle range and keeps linear movement. At measure 84, the listener receives an entirely new disposition of instrumentation that combines both registers into unison. The conversation of the two instruments is at the same exact pitch level each time it is mimicked.

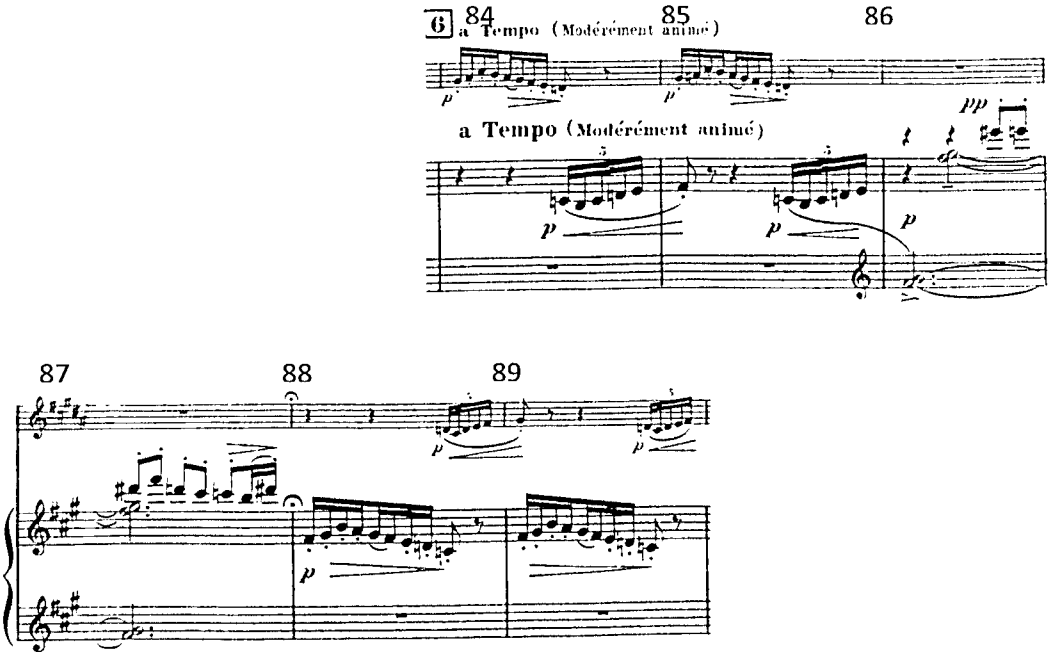

Figure 10. Example of conversation at same pitch level

The introduction of Theme D is notated in treble for both hands of the piano, presenting a simple octave but has rhythmic interest with continuous sixteenths between both hands. The *scherzando* Theme D enters at measure 96 in the clarinet's woody range of C4, an entirely appropriate move on Debussy's part because this range is round, playful, and full. The composer quickly moves the theme up an expansive two octaves in just three measures until it arrives at measure 107 on D-flat6. The piano keeps the rhythmic ostinato in the same range until m. 107 where the ostinato actually moves

contrary to the clarinet and travels down an octave. Debussy again incorporates polar extreme ranges between the two instruments. The clarinet quickly descends, though, into a technical passage played within the comfortable middle range in measure 114. The wave is again a prevalent contour for the melodic line. The piano at this point begins a staircase effect by hitting a low cord, middle chord, and then a high chord, and of course repeating. A *ritard* into measure 124 marks a new section and a new register. The piano returns to a middle range in the right hand, but the left hand covers a middle and low range, expanding down to an A-flat1. Similar motion appears again in measures 136–137 as the piano ascends with the clarinet, but Debussy does not keep this for long as he writes contrary motion in mm. 138–139 where the piano keeps ascending as the clarinet descends in register. Beginning in measure 140 the piano is now in a high register, notated in treble clef for both hands, while the clarinet is back to a middle range around C5.

The return of Theme A in measure 152, however, brings the piano back to a very warm and dark range where the right hand stays below C5 for three measures. Similar motion kicks in as it did in the first section of the *Rapsodie,* and the clarinet and piano ascend through measures 156–157 until both reach the highest range of the piece so far for both instruments. The intensity builds through to measure 161 where the clarinet drops to D-flat5. The clarinet then changes character in measure 163 and creates a one measure wave down to a C-flat3, then back up. The piano repeats the contour in measure 164. The clarinet then takes the wave contour and makes it a theme for a highly technical passage in measures 165–168 where the range dips to C-flat3 and rises to C-flat5.

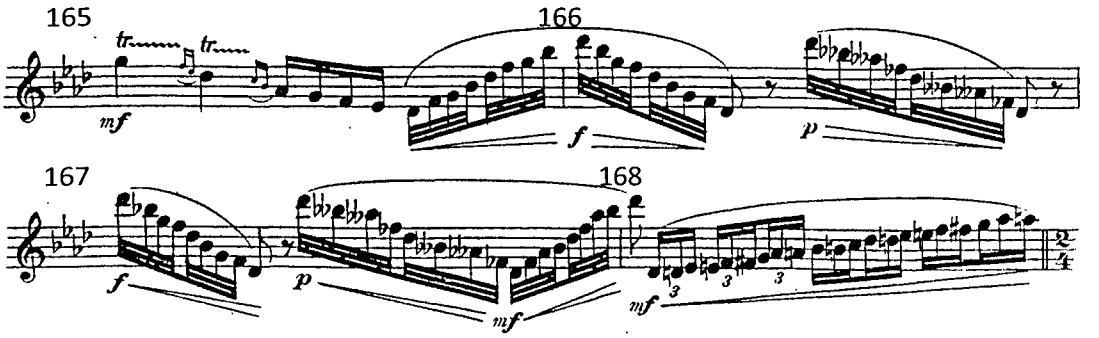

Figure 11. Wave-like extension of Clarinet register

While this is occurring in the primary voice, the piano is playing high register chords, both hands notated in the treble clef again. As Theme D arrives again at measure 169, the clarinet presents it two octaves above the original statement in measure 96. The piano resorts to the staircase contour underneath by beginning low and ascending over four measures then suddenly dropping in register. Measure 177 finds the clarinet in a higher range with bright trills to highlight the brilliance of the clarinet in this register. The piano is reduced to close proximity middle to low range and does not move from this register until the last chord of the piece. The clarinet, however, continues to vary register and rather quickly. The changes are small and, of course, wave-like through measures185–196, but the instrument gives one last push through in measure 202 from a D4 to a high F6, a final statement of the clarinet's glorious range.

Texture

Texture is an interesting point in the *Rapsodie* because Debussy stretches the traditional motions of monophonic, polyphonic, and homophonic texture, creating a unique convergence. The piece opens with solo and almost monophonic piano line that outlines an octave. Measure 2 introduces the monophonic clarinet pitches; however, the piano's octave Cs could be interpreted as a homophonic sound. Debussy repeats this succession

in measures 3–4 and arrives at more traditional homophonic texture in measures 5–6. The clarinet takes over with a monophonic line in measures 7–8. The piano immediately follows in mm. 9–10 with a solo polyphonic texture with triplets and against a syncopated quarter not bass line. Chords are outlined in this portion, too, so homophony could also be a texture description. After the introduction has ended at m. 11, the audience has heard each texture available to Debussy in the piece: piano solo, clarinet solo, clarinet and piano, monophony, homophony, and polyphony.

The piano continues the triplets against syncopated eighth notes through m. 16 as the clarinet introduces Theme A at m. 11. The piano is definitely playing the accompaniment role, but the left hand and right hand are playing two unrelated lines, creating a contrapuntal driving force underneath the simple and elegant clarinet. In measure 17, the piano moves strictly to triplets while the clarinet moves to eighth notes, continuing the contrapuntal but also homophonic texture. Measures 21–28 further exemplify polyphony between the clarinet and piano until m. 29. The piano suddenly drops out and the clarinet plays a rhythmic but tonally wavering line as it accelerates into m. 31. The piano plays a single gesture in measure 31 and again in measure 34 while the clarinet continues the tonally conflicting and technical passage. A remarkable contrast is set by allowing the clarinet to act as a monophonic line. The music becomes refreshing because traditional Romantic music does not usually allow the accompaniment to drop out unless a cadenza or *rubato* section is written. The clarinet is definitely not playing a cadenza in measures 31–35, and the *rubato*, if any, is very slight.

Homophony returns in measure 36 as the piano plays gliding chords with bass movement of a fifth while the clarinet trills, adding a slight disruption to the smooth tone

and color that has accompanied previous material from the clarinet. When Theme A returns in the clarinet in measure 40, the piano does not assume the original contrapuntal material as present in measure 11, but plays a more lucid role as the accompaniment. The music outlines the chordal function, yet in a free and florid manner with pentatonic runs. The clarinet line pops out as a monophonic line since the piano is not creating a rhythmic drive. This character foreshadows the runs that appear in the clarinet line at the "Le double plus vite" beginning at measure 45. The piano introduces tremolos in the left hand at measure 45 and small splashes of low octave notes in the right hand. The clarinet and right hand of the piano move in counterpoint against one another from measures 45–50 as they illustrate a conversation-like character as seen in Figure 10 above. Measure 51 breaks the conversation, however, and the piano returns to an accompaniment role with chords. Polyphony weaves its way into the texture, though, in m. 54 where a quarter note line emerges in the left hand of the piano.

The introduction of Theme C brings the piano back to a strictly accompaniment place in the texture, creating homophony between the two lines. The clarinet becomes the main focus as virtuoso runs are presented. The piano is appropriate during the section because it stays beneath the importance of the clarinet theme. Homophony does not cease until measure 84. Polyphony could arguably be present in mm. 74–83 with the quarter notes plaining in the right hand of the piano against Theme B in the clarinet. The conversation character returns in m. 84 as the articulation in the clarinet become rhythmic and staccato. The two instruments exchange entrances, creating a monophonic line that alternates in timbre, a new texture to the piece.

Theme D appears with an introduction in measure 92 with piano in a homophonic role. When the clarinet enters in m. 96, the piano is actually static with a held chord from the previous measure. This happens again in measure 100, alluding to monophony since the clarinet line is emphasized. The texture increases in complexity, however, beginning in measure 104 where the piano continues the sixteenth note rhythmic drive while the clarinet continues Theme D above. The line sounds polyphonic until measure 114 when the piano encounters chords as the clarinet line becomes technically intricate. Debussy allows the clarinet to shine during this moment by keeping the importance of the piano below that of the clarinet. Measure 124 introduces the sixteenth note drive in the piano again, and this continues as the clarinet cycles through two familiar themes, D and B. Debussy has now used texture to integrate two themes, allowing the ear to here familiar material with a new twist. Triplets take over the sixteenths in the piano at m. 140, calming the character of the scherzo as the music transitions into the return of Theme A at measure 152.

With the return of Theme A, the listener would expect the triplet-against-eighth polyphonic texture between the clarinet and piano, but Debussy uses different material instead of the original ostinato. The piano actually has a melodic line against the clarinet, which is still contrapuntal as before, but in a new way. The texture gets increasingly complex through mm. 158–162 as the piano returns to the ostinato but in triplet sixteenths. Measure 163 again shows the conversation character between the two instruments, but the material is not exactly mimicked. The two lines alternate, monophony in the clarinet to homophony in the piano. Through to measure 185, the piano stays within the realms of chords. The closing section incorporates chromatics in

both lines as they interact contrapuntally to measure 197 where the piano lands on a final progression of valiant chords. The clarinet finishes with the ascending run, and the piece concludes in a homophonic fashion.

In the general and broad aspect of texture, the clarinet is, of course, the main focus of the piece. The piano accompanies with several ostinatos that cycle through simple or elaborate rhythms and registers. Although Debussy writes the piano and a general homophonic texture, the contrast of three against two and the conversations with the clarinet let polyphony weave its magic through the music and shine for brief moments. The listener gains an appreciation for the complexity of the piano part as well as the clarinet part and how the two interact with one another to create a mixture of traditional textures.

Melody

The clarinet line of the work also has several unique aspects that shape the *Rapsodie.* One may argue that, in the end, melodic contrast is the most significant of all elements in shaping the work for the listener. Fauré's leadership at the Conservatoire during the time this piece was written influenced several aspects, especially melodic tendencies that appear throughout the piece. Debussy alternates between lyrical passages and technical passages in order to capture every aspect of the instrument for which a student should master.[99] Because this piece specifically emphasizes the clarinet, I will focus on this instrument and the idiomatic characteristics of the melody.

Debussy begins the introduction with a simple, but enticing lyrical line involving a conversation between the clarinet and piano. However, Debussy does not hesitate to include a bit of technique early on by adding thirty-second note clips in measures 5 and 6

[99] Parks, "Music's Inner Dance," 219.

as seen in Figure 6 above. The lines also demand a high level of musicianship, keeping the line from sounding boxy and metronomic. Theme A arrives at measure 11 and takes lyricism to the next level. The curve and contour of the line requires continuous breath and direction. The clarinet cannot create sudden breaks or take unplanned breaths in order for the melody to sound like it is going somewhere. Theme A beautifully leads into Theme B at measure 21 where the fluidity must continue so that the transition is flawless.

Technique then takes over beginning in mm. 26–39 where Debussy includes motive 'a', the ascending thirty-second note runs, a tempo acceleration, and intricate articulation, requiring a high level of skill for the player. Altered chromatics also challenge the player in measure 34 and 35 by demanding a new set of muscle memory in the fingers that has not already been set by traditional tonal scale practice. Motive 'b', or the trills, is then introduced in measures 36–37. Trills are not a hard technique to understand, but the mastery of the movement and slight *rubato* with the beginning and end of trills is one that the player must develop by ear. Measure 39 then brings back the ascending thirty-second note line, leading back into Theme A two octaves higher at measures 40 with the original tempo.

The lyrical Theme A at this point has now added a slight technical aspect into the mix by requiring the player to produce the theme two octaves higher than originally presented. The fingers will not need extra training, but breath and embouchure control is a definite skill that must be developed for this passage. The line must continue to be as fluid as at measure 11, so the player must hear this line and adjust for the mechanical demand.

Theme A is not presented in full, and the music continues with a new tempo and the ascending thirty-second note runs previously seen in measures 26 and 28. Measures 45–75 denote a large section devoted to technicality and skill. The ascending thirty-second note lines continue through m. 50 where the music returns to previously stated material from measures 32 and 33. This material adds articulation into the required skills, but ceases in m. 53. During a short transition in mm. 53–57, the melody is now rhythmically challenging, alternating between binary and ternary rhythms. A fluidity of the fingers is also a must during this section. Debussy doesn't slack, either, as the music moves into Theme C where maximum flexibility of the fingers is needed to create a smooth and even line. Articulation also makes a small appearance with two staccato notes at the beginning of the sixteenth note runs as seen in Figure 4 above. A certain amount of musicianship and lyricism is also needed through this entire section. Phrases and slurs cannot be rushed through, and each gesture must have flexibility paired with accuracy. The mastery of the combination of these skills is one that takes the clarinet player a decent amount of time to understand fully.

Lyricism returns with Theme B in measure 76, but does not stay for long. Debussy uses this moment as a slight break in the piece to give the ear (and the player) and rest from fast and flashy. Measures 76–83 still require a certain amount of control as Theme B is varied upon, however, because of the octave in which the theme is played. The line is long with few breaks from breaths. Each pause must be carefully planned by the player to ensure that the melody is equally portrayed as it was earlier in the piece. The difficulty, though, will have increased from previous statements because of the position in the piece and fatigue the player will be feeling at this point. This is an

excellent example of why endurance is very important for the player to develop before performing the *Rapsodie*.

A transition into Theme D is played in measures 84–91, where a conversation between the piano and clarinet asks for active communication between the players. The small and quick lines are technically and musically demanding with the need for flexibility and articulation in the clarinet. Theme D is finally introduced in measure 96 and allows the clarinet player to elaborate on the skill of articulation. The line must be bouncy, and each note should not be cut dry by the tongue. The direction of the theme is also very important because the line has the capability to feel as if it is sitting rather than moving forward. Debussy uses this section to once again display the player's technique, but also incorporate lyricism into the melody. Measures 114–131 show this synthesis with smooth sixteenth lines that call for a bit of flexibility but also a high skill of fluidity in the fingers. Debussy does a marvelous job of incorporating the two elements of Fauré's technical and lyrical influence.

Theme B returns at m. 132, allowing the music to breathe a little with a sigh of relief for the lyricism. The melody gradually calms in character until one last statement of Theme A is given at measure 152. The lyricism of Theme A and Theme B at measure 158 is the last that the audience and player will encounter in the work. Debussy enters into a final section of furious technique at measure 163, requiring the player to stretch skill to the limit. Motive 'b', the trills, is now incorporated at a fast tempo and paired with motive 'a', thirty-second notes. The ability to cleanly play each trill and thirty-second note set should be a prized asset for any player. Thirty-second note runs are then played in measures 165–167, demanding nothing but technique and muscle control.

Theme D then appears at measure 169, adding articulation back into the mix. Debussy quickly moves from this theme, though, into a closing section that incorporates trills, articulation, and mastery of chromatic scales. The tempo has done nothing but increase slightly, putting even more strain on the player's skills. Debussy does not truly include lyricism in this last section, but instead allows the player's technique to be challenged to the highest level. This is appropriate since the need to leave the audience (or jury judges) with one last stellar impression is important, especially as a board piece at the Conservatoire. Debussy doesn't hesitate to stretch the clarinet's register, either, and ends on the highest notes of the piece so far in measure 203, a remarkable last thought.

Harmony and Tonality

Debussy's harmony and tonality is by the far the most defining aspect of his music. He explores non-diatonic materials and expands upon traditional harmony.[100] Debussy also incorporates pentatonic, acoustic, whole tone, and less frequently the octatonic scales.[101] When octatonic scales occur, however, triads and seventh chords create octatonic chords. The scale is also usually integrated with diatonic scales.[102] His scales often characterize melody as the *Rapsodie* exhibits. "One might well compare Debussy's procedures here to the Impressionist painter's subtle use of closely related hues. In both cases, we perceive a single blended whole."[103]

Third related tonalities move from one theme to another or progress between sections of his music, as well. The music can progress by ascending or descending fifths,

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[100] Tymoczko, Dimitri, "Scale Networks and Debussy," *Journal of Music Theory*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Fall, 2004): 224.
[101] Tymoczko, "Scale Networks and Debussy," 246.
[102] Forte, Allen, "Debussy and the Octatonic," *Musical Analysis*, Vol. 10, No. 1/2 (Mar.-Jul., 1991): 139, 147.
[103] Tymoczko, "Scale Networks and Debussy," 248.

in addition.[104] Tonality is "perennially new and exotic-sounding, yet retains powerful and familiar resonances…" giving Debussy's music a sense of tonal center.[105] There are few choral progressions to allow the curve and contour of the melodic line to be the primary voice.[106] The harmony is often slow moving underneath the melody and allows for the two-measure phrases to be emphasized.[107] Extended tertian chords and color chords that aren't necessarily for function are also prominent aspects of Debussy's music.[108]

Debussy mixes diatonic key signatures with modal and chromatic areas within the *Rapsodie*. The introduction introduces tonal ambiguity but does give a tonal center of F as the piano plays octaves on this note and always returns to F on the down beat of each measure. Theme A is a clear example of a familiar key when it presents concert E-flat minor in measures 11–16 in the clarinet while the piano plays a steady D-flat Mixolydian chordal accompaniment underneath. However, Debussy molds Theme A until it blends into D-flat major in measures 17–20, giving the line melodic and harmonic direction. Debussy's Theme B in measures 21 arrives suddenly in the key of F-sharp minor. The exchange from D-flat to F-sharp can actually be interpreted as outlining a V to I cadence if spelled as D-flat major to G-flat minor. The piano supports the cadence by creating its own V-I cadence in the key of D major going into measure 21. The piano and clarinet are also related tonally by a major third, F-sharp minor in the clarinet and D major in the piano.

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[104] Pomeroy, Boyd, "Tales of Two Tonics: Directional Tonality in Debussy's Orchestra Music," *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (Spring, 2004): 88.
[105] Pomeroy, Boyd. "Debussy's tonality: a formal perspective," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Debussy*, ed. by Simon Trezise (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 155.
[106] Pomeroy, "Debussy's tonality: a formal perspective," 158.
[107] Pomeroy, "Debussy's tonality: a formal perspective," 161.
[108] Nadeau, Roland, "Debussy and the Crisis of Tonality," *Music Educators Journal*, Vol. 66, No. 1 (Sep., 1979): 6.

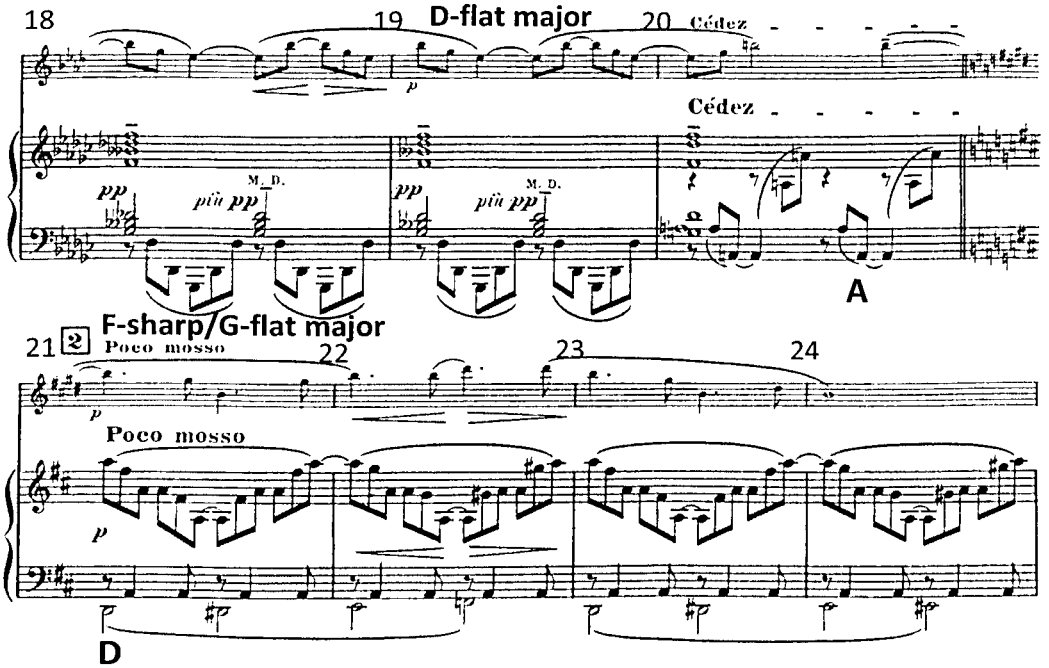

Figure 12. Traditional Cadence and Third Relation

Measures 25–30 contain material that increasingly becomes technical and articulated, signaling a transition. The tonality is also quite unstable during this section with several tri-tones in measures 29–30 and chromatics in mm. 34–35 after a new section has been hit at measure 31. Measures 36–39 outline D-flat to A-flat with simple tonic to dominant trills in the clarinet while the piano plays triads in D-flat Mixolydian, stabilizing tonality as the music moves back into a familiar theme. Theme A then returns at m. 40, again in E-flat minor as previously stated, but the piano alludes to instability with flourishing pentatonic scales beneath, possibly to foreshadow that Theme A is not around for long. As measure 45 arrives, the tempo doubles and the character has an unstable feeling as it did in measures 25–35. The clarinet begins with an ascending thirty second note run that outlines a C-sharp diminished-seventh chord, which can also fit into an octatonic scale. Debussy continues movement by second, though, and introduces D-sharp diminished-seventh with the same ascending thirty-second notes in measures 49

and 50. To recapitulate, Debussy moves through D-flat major, E-flat minor, C-sharp diminished-seventh, and D-sharp diminished-seventh in measures 36–50, which outlines movement by a second. The tonal aspect of D-flat major and E-flat minor sets a marked contrast between the two transition sections that express tri-tones, chromatics, and fully diminished seventh chords to represent instability.

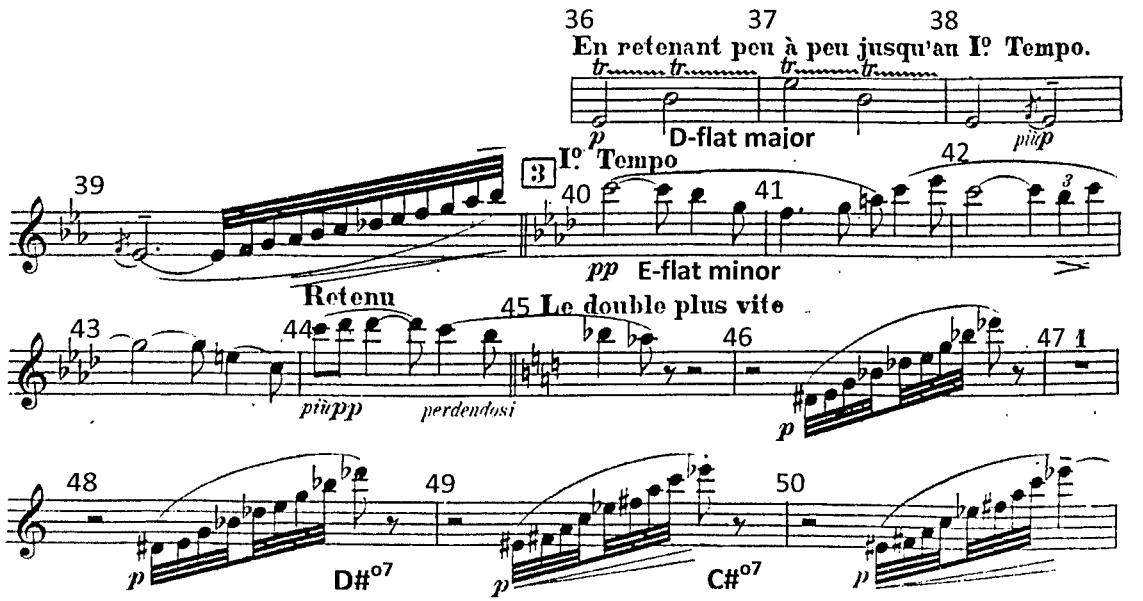

Figure 13. Harmonic movement by second

Measure 51 is written with an F-sharp Dorian scale in the clarinet line, related by a minor third to the previous D-sharp diminished-seventh scale. Root movement by a second then allows F to become the tonal center in measures 55–57 as Debussy emphasizes the leading tone E moving to the tonic F. Debussy also adds chromaticism into the scale in mm. 55 and 56, creating a Lydian mode with the raised fourth scale degree. However, the minor third is still present, so it cannot be true Lydian. This instability continues until tension is released in measure 58 with the arrival Theme C, presented as a Lydian scale on A as seen in Figure 4. Debussy incorporates gradual

chromatic changes to transition into the Lydian mode, and he provides root movement by third to transition into the new theme.

The Lydian mode on A continues, with slight hints at A Ionian in m. 60 and A Mixolydian in m. 61, until measure m. 66 where B is given the opportunity to be the tonal center. The clarinet covers very little distance away from this center until m. 69 where a B major scale is presented in sixteenth note triplets. It is not until measures 76 when Theme B returns does Debussy give a new tonal center of G-sharp minor. However, this is brief, and at measure 84 the music changes drastically, beginning a transition into Theme D. Aside from one note, the clarinet outlines a whole tone scale, creating instability in the transition. The piano follows suit until measure 92 begins the small introduction to Theme D with a tonal center of D-flat.

The clarinet begins the new theme in measure 96, which is based on a chromatic scale. At first sight of the score, a listener might think this theme would seem unstable and atonal due to the chromaticism, but the presentation of the whole tone scale before Theme D gives a pleasant stability and quirky character to the new theme. The piano also constantly reemphasizes D-flat underneath the theme. The piece does not introduce a different tonality until measure 114 where Debussy writes a technically challenging passage based on F minor and an octatonic scale in measure 115. With the exception of the B-flat concert at the beginning of m. 115, every note within measure 115 fits into an octatonic scale. Measures 116–117 then exhibits E Lydian, but the music falls back into F minor and the octatonic in mm. 118–123.

Measure 124 begins a transition that seems to begin in C minor, but is unstable with the emphasis of the leading tone. Theme D arrives in measure 128 again with chromatics in hand, supporting the transition feel to the music at this point. The key of C minor tries to make an appearance again as it is presented during Theme B at measure 132 and moves into G-flat minor in 138–139 with a descending scale. Chromatics once again takes over the tonality in 140–151 as the clarinet plays short jazzy triplet figures and the piano plays a steady triplet pulse rotating between an E-flat half diminished-seventh chord and a C-flat major minor-seventh chord, again emphasizing movement by a third. This alteration between chromatic lines and tonal hints is a marvelous contrast. The listener does not get tired but becomes intrigued. What will Debussy write next?

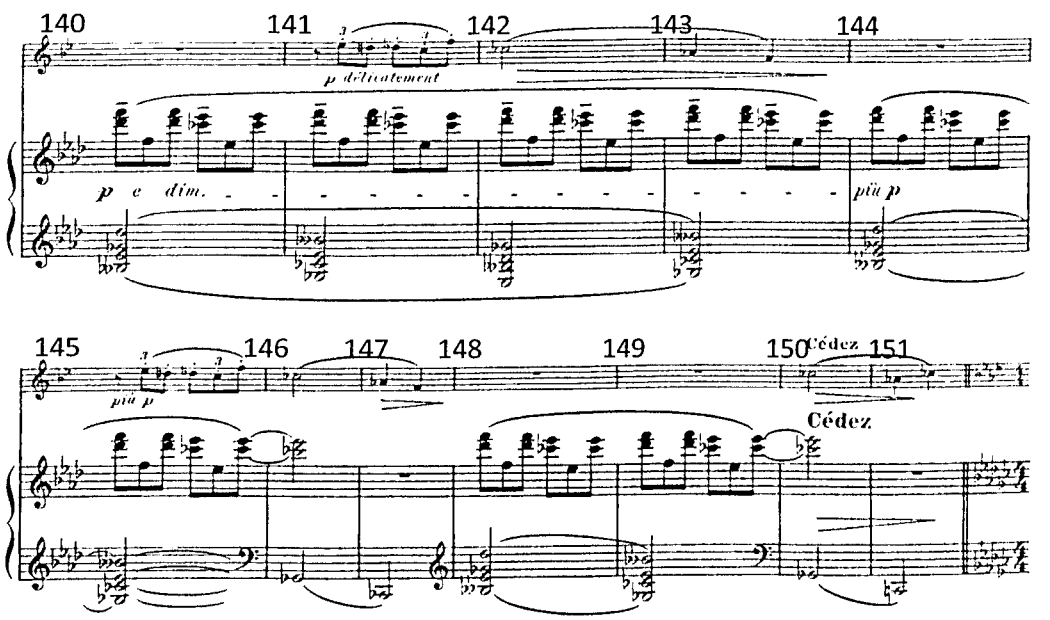

Figure 14. Transition back into Theme A

Theme A returns in m. 152 exactly as it is presented in measure 11 in the key of E-flat minor. Debussy puts a twist in the line, though, and immediately moves on to

Theme B in measure 158 while modulating to B-flat minor. This is a good example of root movement by fifth, from E-flat to B-flat. The audience has a moment to recognize traditional harmonic progression, a breath of fresh air after the previous section of chromatics and octatonic. However, Debussy does not linger for long in this comfortable realm.

The octatonic returns at measure 163 where the transition into the closing section of the work begins. The clarinet brings back the trills while the ascending thirty-second note run outlines an octatonic scale with the exception of one note, D-flat concert. Debussy continues with repetition of the same trill and thirty-second note set but alters the ascending run into an F half-diminished-seventh scale. The second half of measure 166 then changes suddenly to a G major minor-seventh scale, showing root movement by second from F to G, a popular transition technique in the *Rapsodie*. Debussy does not waste time, though, to return to the chromatic scale as he writes an ascending triplet run in the clarinet at m. 168, leading directly into the return of the chromatic Theme D at 169 with a pedal G-flat in the piano. During the closing section of the work beginning at measure 185, chromatic scales and chromatic root movement is the main theme in both the clarinet and piano. This adds a fabulous tension and angst to the music, preparing the listener for a flashy ending. Debussy does not leave chromaticism to end the work, luckily, and gives one last glimpse to modality with the ascending F Lydian scale in the clarinet in measure 202, adding a nice flavor to conclude.

Golden Section

A traditional analysis is definitely appropriate for Debussy, but applying twentieth-century ideas to his music also reveals interesting notions that are worth

investigating. The *Rapsodie*'s form is also guided by the Golden Section, a popular mathematical proportion that was assumed to give aesthetic pleasure to artwork as ". . . a principle that admits no exceptions."[109]

> "The key words of the [19th] century for poets and scientists were continuity and unity. No longer were events or objects looked at in isolation, but they were seen as part of a grand continuum governed by a finite number of discoverable laws from which nature, or art for that matter, derived its essential unity."[110]

The law is recognized in architecture and organic objects found in nature. The human body and biological plants show remarkable proportions that align with the principle.[111] Visual arts and dance also take this principle to heart as a way to give aesthetic pleasure to viewers.[112]

The Golden Section divides a whole into two proportional parts. As a mathematical equation, the principle can be written as so:

$$a/b = (a+b)/c$$

The equation can also be estimated to nearly two-thirds (.618034) of a whole, as well, where the shorter portion to the longer portion is the same ratio as the longer portion to the whole. [113] A whole will also have a reverse Golden Section, taken from the back of the object and moving forward. This will give a short-long division of the whole. The Fibonacci sequence can also be associated with this

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[109] McWhinnie, Harold J, "A Biological Basis for the Golden Section in Art and Design," *Leonardo*, Vol. 22, No. 1, Art and the New Biology: Biological Forms and Patterns (1989): 63, accessed January 22, 2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1575142.
[110] McWhinnie, "A Biological Basis for the Golden Section in Art and Design," 62.
[111] McWhinnie, "A Biological Basis for the Golden Section in Art and Design," 61.
[112] Howat, *Debussy in Proportion*, 1.
[113] Howat, *Debussy in Proportion*, 2.

principle due to its proportional nature. When each number in the sequence is divided by its successor, the ratio will be nearly two-thirds. As the sequence increases, this ratio becomes more accurate to .618034.[114]

The Fibonacci Sequence

0 1 1 2 3 5 8 13 21 34 55 89 144 233 ...

$Ex.\ 55 \div 89 = .6179 \qquad 144 \div 233 = .6180$

Symbolists were particularly fond of the Golden Section. In the 1880s and the 1890s, a mathematician by the name of Charles Henry sought to define the relationships between math and the arts, a motivating stimulus for painters such as Seurat and Signac. Cézanne also employs use of the Golden Section in his works. However, there is debate whether he did this consciously or for pure aesthetic pleasure as a viewer.[115] The proportional balance and the hidden connotation of the numbers gave shape and defining forms for artwork, including music.[116]

Debussy's music gives an excellent example of the Golden Section in several of his later works. *La mer* is considered a turning point in his compositional career in 1905 and consists of several proportions which Roy Howat analyzes in his book *Debussy in Proportion*. The Fibonacci sequence is a primary aspect of his analysis and shows proportions between sections. For example, the last movement of *La mer* contains a 55 measure introduction, a number that appears in the Fibonacci summation.[117] His central thesis for the work is that the Golden Section dictates how many measures may make up a

[114] Howat, *Debussy in Proportion*, 2.
[115] McWhinnie, Harold J, "A Review of the Use of Symmetry, the Golden Section and Dynamic Symmetry in Contemporary Art," *Leonardo*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (1986): 242.
[116] Howat, *Debussy in Proportion*, 164–165.
[117] Howat, *Debussy in Proportion*, 3.

smaller section, key changes, and dynamic peaks in the work.[118] However, there have been no calculations found in Debussy's manuscripts or other writings for this remarkable form. In a letter written in August of 1903 to his publisher Jacques Durand, though, Debussy addresses a missing measure from 'Jardins sous la pluie' in his *Estampes*, explaining that it is necessary for "the divine number." Howat analyzes this particular work, as well, and finds patterns for the Golden Section.[119] The debate of whether or not Debussy consciously calculated the structure of his works or intuitively wrote them is still a hot topic. It is possible Debussy destroyed his calculations, too, allowing his secrets to stay with him.

The Golden Section in Debussy's music tends to emphasize major turning points in the music such as melodic turning points, character and dynamic changes, and peaks that could be in register, dynamic, or melodic contour.[120] When defining the form of a piece, the music is usually static to a certain extent so that the perception of peaks and turning points is not distorted.[121] Howat focuses on proportions by measures or beats by taking the least common denominator of a measure, such as the half note or quarter note for 2/4 and 4/4 time signatures.[122] He specifically does not address the passing of time as a means for measurement. However, I will measure the Golden Mean in terms of beats, measures, and time for this particular analysis due to an important discovery that I believe should be addressed.

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[118] Howat, *Debussy in Proportion*, 64–110.
[119] Howat, *Debussy in Proportion*, 6–7.
[120] Howat, *Debussy in Proportion*, 12–13.
[121] Kramer, Jonathan, "The Fibonacci Series in Twentieth-Century Music," *Journal of Music Theory*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Spring ,1973): 118, accessed January 22, 2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/843120.
[122] Howat, *Debussy in Proportion*, 16.

Golden Section Measured by Beats

There are exactly 610 beats in the *Rapsodie*, which is an integer that appears in the Fibonacci sequence. At first glance, this is an exciting find. There will be two Golden Sections in the piece, one dividing the work with the longer section at the end, the other defined with the longer section at the beginning. To find the Golden Section, or first Golden Section (GS1), I will multiply 610 by .618 (the numerical value of GS) and find 377 as the result. Howat also explains that there is reverse Golden Section, a short to long division known as the second Golden Section, or GS2. By subtracting 377 from 610, I get the GS2 of 233. The two Golden Sections will take place on these particular beats in the music.

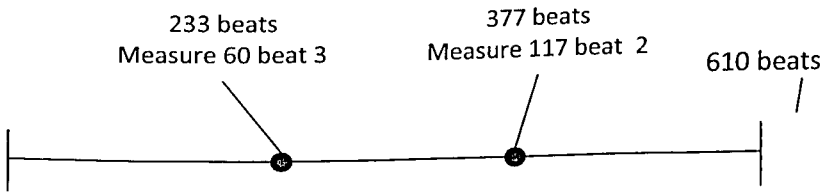

Figure 15. Golden Section by Beat

The GS2 of 233 beats with the short to long division occurs in measure 60 on beat 3 during Theme C as seen in Figure 15. At this point, the music has just passed a key change, tempo change, and time signature change at measure 58. However, the character of the music in the clarinet line is not much different from the music that occurs in mm. 53–57. There is also not much in the way of a peak for dynamics or musical growth that releases at the point of GS2, considering beat 233 as defining. If the GS2 is taken absolutely literally, the true GS2 lands in the middle of a phrase set, which is not a realistic point of articulation in the music.

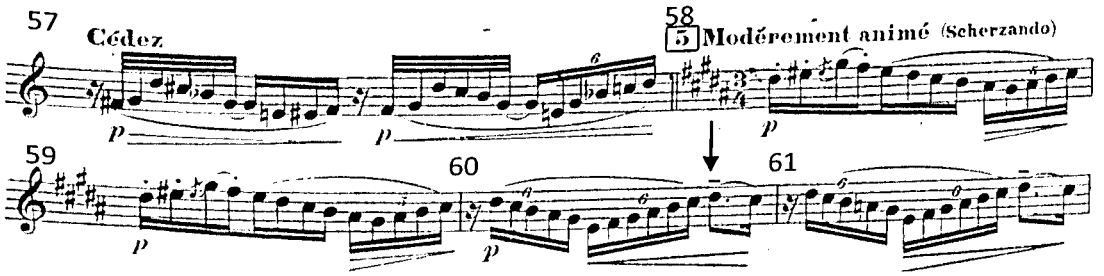

Figure 16. Golden Section at Measure 60 Beat 3 (Beat 233 of 610)

The first GS of 377 beats takes place in measure 117 on beat 2 during Theme D. The music again has just passed a rehearsal mark, five measures passed measure 112, but there is no significant key, time signature, or tempo change. The character change in the music began in measure 114, and the section began in measure 92. Either way, a major point of articulation is drastically removed from this GS. From this discovery, counting beats has been dismissed from the unit of measurements listed for the Golden Section of this piece.

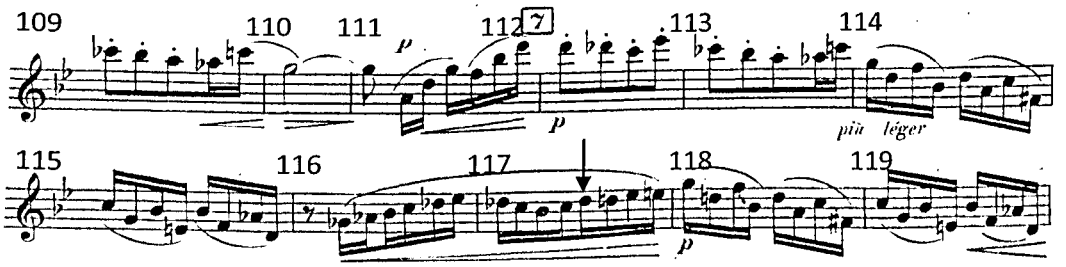

Figure 17. Golden Section at Measure 117 Beat 2 (Beat 377 of 610)

Golden Section Measured by Measures

Measures can be taken into consideration next. There are 206 measures in the piece and

Golden Section occurs at measure 127, or if reversed, m. 79. Measure 79 takes place in the middle of a phrase, but takes place just past the return of Theme B at m. 76. A high C-sharp has been held when Theme B returns at measure 76, too, creating a peak and launching point for resolution.

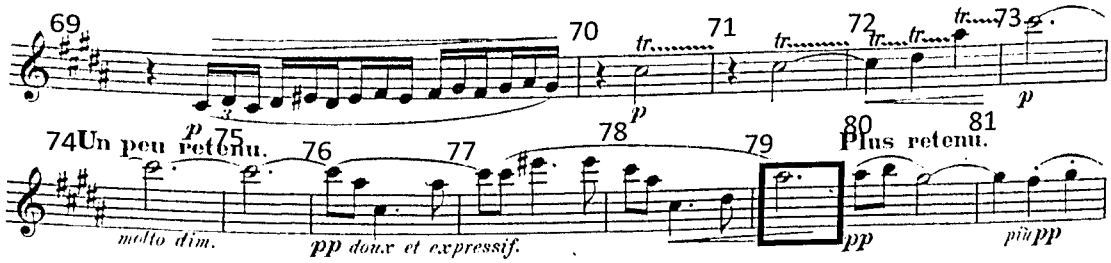

Figure 18. Golden Section at Measure 79

Measure 127 also lands in the middle of a phrase but has just passed a significant tempo change at 124. However, measures 124–131 act as a transition more so than a major peak or climax in the music.

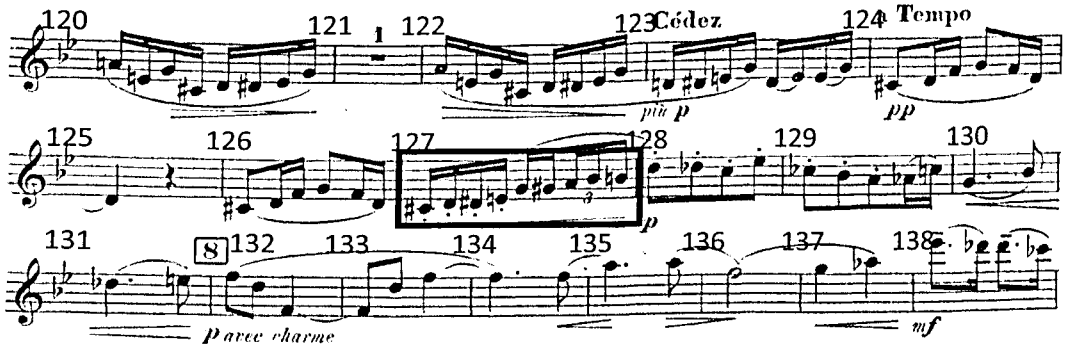

Figure 19. Golden Section at Measure 127

Theme D has just come to a close, and these measures lead the music back to Theme B, which is presented in measure 132. The music continues its transition into measure 152, where the clarinet presents Theme A exactly as it is stated in the beginning

of the piece at m. 11. Counting measures shows a bit more promise in discovering the Golden Section of the *Rapsodie* than counting the beat does, but one more unit should be analyzed.

Golden Section Measured by Seconds

The time unit of a second reveals a Golden Section that is both sensible on paper and audible to the ear. To measure this unit, I listened to several recordings, including my own, and noted the times of certain points in the music that I believe to be important climaxes or character changes. I used the Elkan-Vogel, Inc. publication for Table 1.

Table 1. Important Moments in the *Première rapsodie*

Measure #	Importance	Theme or Motive	Rehearsal Number	Figure # (for reference)
Measure 11	Introduction of theme	Theme A	1	Figure 1
Measure 21	Introduction of theme	Theme B	2	Figure 1
Measure 31	New tempo and character	transition		
Measure 40	Recurrence of theme	Theme A	3	Figure 13
Measure 45	New tempo and character	Motive 'a'		Figure 9
Measure 58	Introduction of theme	Theme C	5	Figure 4
Measure 76	Recurrence of theme	Theme B		Figure 18
Measure 84	New tempo and character	transition	6	Figure 10
Measure 92	Introduction of theme	Theme D intro		Figure 5 (m. 96)
Measure 124	Character change	transition		Figure 19
Measure 132	Recurrence of theme	Theme B	8	Figure 19
Measure 152	Recurrence of theme	Theme A	9	
Measure 163	New tempo and character	transition	10	Figure 11 (m. 165)
Measure 169	Recurrence of theme	Theme D		
Measure 197	New tempo and character	Closing	12	

Ralph Manno's performance of the *Rapsodie* on the album *French Clarinet Rhapsody* is a wonderful performance worth analyzing for the Golden Section.[123] His performance is 9 minutes and 4 seconds long, which is 544 seconds. The GS1 will occur at 336 seconds and GS2 at 208 seconds, which is 5:36 and 3:38. These times do not exactly line up with any of the markers set above in Table 1, but this is expected because of the spontaneity of live performance. Tempos will always be different. Thus only a close approximation is appropriate to show any promise for considering the passage of time as a unit for Golden Section determination. The closest section to 3:38 is measure 45, the "Le double plus vite". In Manno's recording this takes place at 3:47. This is the second double time section that continues to stay in the new tempo. The character of the music also changed dramatically and becomes more unsettled. The 9 second difference is something to keep in mind, however, because a closer approximation is desired. The 5:36 marking appears closest to measure 84. Manno lands on this measure at 5:38, which is an excellent margin of difference. Measures 45 and 84 will be set aside as possible turning points for the other recordings.

Table 2. Golden Section Approximations

Clarinetist	Theoretical Time GS2	Theoretical Time GS1	Actual Time Measure 45	Actual Time Measure 84
Ralph Manno	3:38	5:36	3:47	5:38

Isobe Shuhei's recording of the *Rapsodie* shows similar results, if with a few exceptions.[124] The recording is 7:49 (469 seconds), almost an entire minute shorter than Manno's recording. This is important because, if the second is to stand as the unit of GS, the length of the entire piece should still be proportional with m. 45 and m. 84. The first

[123] Claude Debussy, *French Clarinet Rhapsody*, Ralph Manno (clarinet), Oehms Classics OC114.
[124] Claude Debussy, *Clarinet Recital*, Isobe Shuhei (clarinet), Meister Music MM1101.

GS takes place at 290 seconds (4:50) and GS2 179 seconds (2:59). In Shuhei's recording, m. 45 hits at 2:56, a promising approximation for the reading of the GS2. Measure 84 occurs at 4:37, which is a somewhat larger distance from the GS1 of 4:50. The next point in the music that acts as a major turning point is measure 92, where the tempo is set and kept constant in the piano with sixteenth notes. This measure hits at 4:53 in Shuhei's recording, a much closer time to the GS1 of 4:50. From this analysis, measure 92 should now also be considered as a candidate for the GS.

Table 3. Golden Section Approximations

Clarinetist	Theoretical Time GS2	Theoretical Time GS1	Actual Time Measure 45	Actual Time Measure 84	Actual Time Measure 92
Ralph Manno	**3:38**	5:36	**3:47**	5:38	
Isobe Shuhei	**2:59**	4:50	**2:56**	4:37	4:53

The next recording on my list to analyze is performed by Richard Stoltzman, a leading clarinet performer.[125] The length of his recording resembles Manno's at 9:10, or 550 seconds. The GS1 should hit at 334 seconds (5:34) and GS2 216 seconds (3:36). The "Le double plus vite" at measure 45 occurs at 3:34, a beautiful approximation for the 3:36 time, or GS2. Measure 45 is certainly gaining momentum as a possible Golden Section computation on Debussy's part. However, the same issue occurs with Stoltzman that did with Shuhei. Measure 45 occurs at 5:25, about ten seconds away from GS1, and measure 92 hits at 5:42, also about ten seconds in the other direction from the GS1. The difference in tempos amongst the players will account for this variation. At this point, measure 45 is emerging as an excellent choice for the GS2 while measures 84 and 92 still have to be resolved.

[125] Claude Debussy, *Phoenix in Flight*, Richard Stoltzman (clarinet), Navona NV5801.

Table 4. Golden Section Approximations

Clarinetist	Theoretical Time GS2	Theoretical Time GS1	Actual Time Measure 45	Actual Time Measure 84	Actual Time Measure 92
Ralph Manno	**3:38**	5:36	**3:47**	5:38	
Isobe Shuhei	**2:59**	4:50	**2:56**	4:37	4:53
Richard Stoltzman	**3:36**	5:34	**3:34**	5:25	5:42

Martin Frost's performance helps resolve this issue.[126] His recording is 7:37 (457 seconds), about a minute and a half shorter that Stoltzman and Manno's. The GS1 is at 282 seconds (4:42) and GS2 at 175 seconds (2:55). In Frost's recording, measure 45 hits exactly at 2:55, solidifying this point for the reversed Golden Section in this recording. Measure 84 occurs at 4:35, only seven seconds too soon for this GS1. Measure 92 occurs at 4:51, which is nine seconds past the point of GS1. Because measure 84 has a closer approximation than measure 92, I will take measure 84 into further consideration.

Table 5. Golden Section Approximations

Clarinetist	Theoretical Time GS2	Theoretical Time GS1	Actual Time Measure 45	Actual Time Measure 84	Actual Time Measure 92
Ralph Manno	**3:38**	5:36	**3:47**	5:38	
Isobe Shuhei	**2:59**	4:50	**2:56**	4:37	4:53
Richard Stoltzman	**3:36**	5:34	**3:34**	5:25	5:42
Martin Frost	**2:55**	4:42	**2:55**	4:35	4:51

Another important name among clarinet players is Sabine Meyer.[127] Her performance of the *Rapsodie* is the closest approximation of all those analyzed. The length of the recording is 8:19 or 499 seconds. The GS1 will be at 308 seconds (5:08) and GS2 at 191 seconds (3:11). Measure 45 hits at 3:14, only three seconds "too late" for GS2. Measure 84 follows suit and occurs at 5:05 for GS1, another three second difference, but this time a hair too soon. No other recording shows this exactness in

[126] Claude Debussy, *French Beauties and Swedish Beasts*, Martin Frost (clarinet), BIS BIS-CD-693.
[127] Claude Debussy, "Rhapsodie pour clarinet," Sabine Meyer (clarinet), via YouTube, accessed February 2, 2011, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgNR6rDK8lQ.

timing, and perhaps Meyer's performance must surely confirm Debussy's computation or in the least his intuition of the Golden Section.

Table 6. Golden Section Approximations

Clarinetist	Theoretical Time GS2	Theoretical Time GS1	Actual Time Measure 45	Actual Time Measure 84	Actual Time Measure 92
Ralph Manno	**3:38**	5:36	**3:47**	5:38	
Isobe Shuhei	**2:59**	4:50	**2:56**	4:37	4:53
Richard Stoltzman	**3:36**	5:34	**3:34**	5:25	5:42
Martin Frost	**2:55**	4:42	**2:55**	4:35	4:51
Sabine Meyer	**3:11**	5:08	**3:14**	5:05	

I was also able to analyze a recording of my own playing of the *Première rapsodie*, which was performed with the Butler Symphony Orchestra on February 18, 2011 under the direction of Richard Auldon Clark at Clowes Memorial Hall in Indianapolis, Indiana. The piece lasted 7:57, which is 477 seconds, so the GS1 appears at 295 seconds (4:55) and GS2 at 182 seconds (3:02). As with the previous recordings, measure 45 hits almost exactly with the latter timing above at 187 seconds, or 3:07. With only a five second difference between the theoretical and the actual time, it is safe to assume that measure 45 is GS2 in this recording. Measure 84 in my recording hits at 280 seconds or 4:40, which is a significant fifteen seconds away from GS1 of 295 seconds (4:55). However, measure 92, as previously suggested a GS1 in Shuhei and Stoltzman's recordings, occurs at 296 seconds (4:56), an exciting one second past the theoretical GS1 of 4:55.

Table 7. Golden Section Approximations

Clarinetist	Theoretical Time GS2	Theoretical Time GS1	Actual Time Measure 45	Actual Time Measure 84	Actual Time Measure 92
Ralph Manno	3:38	5:36	3:47	5:38*	
Isobe Shuhei	2:59	4:50	2:56	4:37	4:53*
Richard Stoltzman	3:36	5:34	3:34	5:25	5:42*
Martin Frost	2:55	4:42	2:55	4:35*	4:51
Sabine Meyer	3:11	5:08	3:14	5:05*	
Samantha Johnson	3:02	4:55	3:07	4:40	4:56*

*closest approximation for GS1

Considering performance time, each recording has its discrepancies with the theoretical Golden Section computation, but there are definite trends that appear throughout the group. There is significant evidence in every recording that suggests measure 45 as a reverse Golden Section (short-long or GS2) in the *Rapsodie*. The recordings show little difference between theoretical and actual times for this point in the music, allowing my analysis to name measure 45 as a reverse Golden Section with the passing of time by the second as the unit of measurement.

The evidence for the first Golden Section is trickier to interpret because of the difference amongst the recordings. Two points, measure 84 and measure 92, were named as possible candidates. When referring back to the traditional formal analysis of this work in Chart 1, measure 84 is titled a transition because of the mixture of themes between two musical characters. This section from measure 84–91 also contains slight *rubato* throughout as the clarinet and piano mimic each other. The piano creates a phrase ending during its solo passages in measures 86–87 and 90–91, which can exhibit a slight slowing of the tempo to end the gesture solidly but is at the discretion of the performer. Measure 92, the true beginning of a new tempo and character, is more probably an

intended Golden Section because of its stability as a new theme, Theme D, in the piece. Theme D is varied throughout the rest of the movement, making it an important aspect of the work. Half of the recordings (Stoltzman, Shuhei, and my own) all expressed a possibility for measure 92 as the GS1. The other three (Meyer, Frost, and Manno) showed more promise for measure 84, so unfortunately there is no majority in this race. From personal experience, I believe measure 92 to be a more likely the first Golden Section for reasons I have already stated. Each player may have his or her own interpretation and may feel each tempo and *rubato* moment differently. The *Rapsodie* is a piece that will always have several interpretations, letting each player make the work his or her own unique performance.

Aesthetics

Especially for a French artist, the purpose of including the Golden Section in the arts is to give pleasure to the viewer or listener. Visual arts are normally used as a prime example for this principle, but as the *Rapsodie* has just shown, music can most certainly include points of Golden Section that give aesthetic pleasure. Pleasure, that is, results from the satisfaction of expectations generated in the formal procedure. However, one can argue that the Golden Section is not truly audible until the entire piece has been played so that a sense of beginning and end can define where the two points are supposed to take place.

Several psychological studies have taken place to test whether or not the Golden Section is preferred aesthetically compared to square or symmetric designs. "The golden section hypothesis states that visual form is most aesthetically pleasing when the ratio of the dimensions equals the ratio of the larger dimension to the sum of the two."[128] The

[128] Plug, C., "The Golden Section Hypothesis," *The American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (Sep., 1980): 467, accessed March 8, 2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1422725.

principle is supposedly more pleasing than other divisions, possibly explaining its presence in the architecture of such classical civilizations as Greece. Designs show a preference for rectangles, a shape that displays the Golden Section, over geometric squares, showing symmetry.[129]

Despite this sensible conclusion, psychological studies reveal that when a population is asked to chose the most aesthetically pleasing geometric shapes, a symmetric square was more often chosen over a rectangle that displayed the Golden Section principle.[130] A set of three studies by Susan T. Davis and John C. Jahnke also describe this phenomenon of preference for symmetry over the Golden Section.[131] A possible explanation, the psychologists write, is that the participants were more familiar with symmetry.

These particular experiments were limited to simple shapes and line lengths, unfortunately, which do not give a close relationship to contemporary art or music composition. The Golden Section can also refer to the position of an object in a painting, a characteristic that is noticeable in the four examples presented in the visual arts section of this thesis. The bridge in Monet's *The Japanese Footbridge and Water Lily Pool—Giverny* is roughly two-thirds above the bottom frame of the painting. Land accounts for less than a third of the picture in Seurat's *Bathers at Asnières,* while land covers about two-thirds of Signac's *Women at the Well.* The *Rapsodie* may not show the Golden Section on the surface as much as these visual works do, but Debussy appears most certainly to incorporate the Golden Section planning to define significant character

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[129] Plug, "The Golden Section Hypothesis," 468.
[130] Plug, "The Golden Section Hypothesis," 486.
[131] Davis, Susan T. and John C. Jahnke, "Unity and the Golden Section: Rules for Aesthetic Choice?" *The American Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 104, No. 2 (Summer 1991): 257–277, accessed March 8, 2011, http://www.jstor.org/stable/1423158.

changes in the work. There is no dispute among analysts against the boundaries between the different characters of lyrical and technical within the *Première rapsodie*. As a listener, these contrasts give a beautiful balance and an overall aesthetically pleasing aspect to the piece.

A Critique of Debussy

The French composer is revered today as one of the most influential geniuses in the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century, but his contemporaries did not always see eye to eye with his innovations. In fact, there was a period of time between the Prix de Rome and *Pelléas* when his works did not attract enough attention to receive an extended critique, for *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (1894) hardly received notice outside of his close circle of friends. Countries outside of France were mostly dominated by Austro-German influence and took very little interest in Debussy. Italy was not a fan of Impressionism and preferred the flashy melodies they so endeared in Italian opera. Russia did not care for his works either, claiming "his works to be monotonous and lacking in form." Prokofiev even described Debussy's music as bloodless. However, Stravinsky did seem to admire Debussy. Germany was neutral in the matter and labeled Debussy as a non-typical French composer. England seemed to be very much an advocate for the "atmospheric" Debussy, as they called him. The United States was also an admirer, allowing him to premiere several piano works, and after 1902 the *Faun* especially, many times in Boston and Chicago particularly. Composers such as Aaron Copland also accepted his influence. The Hungarians, such as Bartók (who found Debussy to be "the greatest composer of our time") also found an attractive quality in his music. Bartók even dedicated the seventh movement of his *Improvisations*, Op. 20 to the

French composer. Debussy's music could relate to Hungarian folk tunes with the use of pentatonicism, allowing a sense of familiarity between the two countries.[132]

Conclusion

What did the painter see in his canvas? A masterpiece designed by color, structure, and harmony. The artist sought to create a pleasurable aesthetic for viewers, resolving design aspects he or she proposed, and thus enabling not only his or her satisfaction but the audience's. Debussy achieves the same goal with the *Première rapsodie* for clarinet and piano. By combining colorful harmonies, enticing textures, virtuosic melodies and registers, and alternating music character, Debussy creates a unique form of genius for the work. The traditional analysis of the structure had links to his predecessors of the Romantic period, but Debussy did not completely conform to strict formal elements. The Golden Section also appears to have been called on and promotes structural cohesion in the work. Influences from visual arts and their philosophy of color and combination along with the influence of the Conservatoire setting also wove their ways into Debussy's composition, molding an absolute masterpiece for the clarinet.

[132] Lesure, François, and Roy Howat, "Debussy, Claude," in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, accessed February 19, 2011, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/07353.

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