

fresco, less concerned with archaic fidelity than with loyalty to the Greece of my dreams, which in many ways resembled that imagined and depicted by French artists at the latter part of the eighteenth century. The work is constructed symphonically on a very strict tonal plan, by means of a few themes, the development of which assures the work's homogeneity."

The first two scenes, which comprise Suite No. 1, portray the courtship of Daphnis and Chloé, and the latter's abduction by, and miraculous escape from, a band of pirates. The third scene, comprising the three numbers of Suite No. 2, takes place in a grove sacred to the god Pan and begins with daybreak following the pirate's night of terror.

Eventually the muted sounds of dawn give way to a stronger, more dynamic melodic thread in the strings, rising to an impassioned lyrical theme. Throughout this extended passage, Daphnis awakes, anxiously looks for Chloé, and sees her among a group of shepherdesses. The two lovers embrace as the melody reaches an impassioned climax.

In gratitude to Pan, whose intervention saved Chloé from the pirates, Daphnis and Chloé mime the adventures of the god and his beloved nymph, Syrinx, to a sultry flute accompaniment. Marked "expressive and supple," the solo is actually shared by the four members of the flute section -- piccolo, two flutes, and alto flute -- but played as if written for a single instrument. Chloé dances to this flute music, which becomes increasingly energetic, and she in turn, more animated. The motion suddenly breaks at a woodwind descent, and with a last whirl, she falls languorously into the arms of Daphnis. In a brief but passionate epilogue, a group of young women enter, dressed as bacchantes and shaking tambourines, followed by a group of young men. Against a dizzying 5/4 meter, Ravel deploys the full resources of the orchestra to create an exhilarating Dionysian celebration of physical love.

*Debussy* LA MER  
*Ravel* DAPHNIS ET CHLOÉ  
*Suite No. 2*

Sir John Barbirolli conducting the Hallé Orchestra



Debussy's *La Mer* (The Sea; 1903–1905) is one of the most famous non-symphonic orchestral pieces ever written. During the 1890s, oceanic imagery had proven a recurrent source of inspiration for the composer. *Sirènes*, the third of the *Nocturnes* (1897–1999), and passages from the opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1893–1905) at once bear testament to a certain nautical bent. *La Mer*, however, goes a great deal farther than any previous work -- by Debussy or any other composer -- in capturing the raw essence of this most evocative of nature's faces. *La Mer* is no mere exercise in musical scene-painting, but rather a sonic representation of the myriad thoughts, moods, and basic instinctual reactions the sea draws from an individual human soul.

*La Mer* comprises three distinct movements: "De l'aube à midi sur la mer" (From Dawn to Noon on the Sea), "Jeux de vagues" (The Play of the Waves), and "Dialogue du vent et de la mer" (Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea). "De l'aube à midi sur la mer" unfolds in 6/8 following a *Très lent* (very slow) introduction. As in so much of the composer's mature music, it is not always possible to draw a clear distinction between thematic material and accompaniment and texture. Indeed, texture itself is often paramount in Debussy's music; what few glimpses of discreet melodies the movement affords (such as the glassy violin solo that arrives some sixty bars into the piece, or the brief horn gesture soon after the metric change to 6/8) are soon subsumed into the complex orchestral fabric. There are passages during which the rhythmic and metric scheme is obscured, perhaps intentionally so, by as many as six or seven different layers of simultaneous activity. The movement ends with one of the most striking of the composer's musical affirmations: In an enigmatic gesture, the final *forte-fortissimo* brass attack dies away to *piano* as the movement draws to a close.

The scoring of "Jeux de vagues" is, on the whole, more austere than that of the first movement. Frequent trills and bursts of rhythmic vitality vividly bring to life the movement's frolicsome, unpredictable subject matter, while the extremely

quiet ending purposely fails to resolve any of the musical expectations set out in the preceding, more active sections. The scoring of this passage (solo flute and harp harmonics) recalls the identical orchestration as used by the composer at the end of *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun; 1894). Indeed, these parallel passages are quite similar in dramatic purpose.

The final "Dialogue" is a tumultuous juxtaposition of an urgent, articulated rhythmic gesture -- first introduced *pianissimo* by the cellos and basses and ingeniously manipulated throughout the movement -- with a grandiose *legato* idea that many have likened to the melodies of César Franck (an important influence upon the young Debussy). A sustained *forte-fortissimo* brings this violent, elemental work to a powerful close.

*Daphnis and Chloé* was the largest work Ravel was ever to compose, occupying him from early 1909 until April 5, 1912. It is also widely regarded as his most impressive achievement, and among the greatest ballet scores of the twentieth century. The work calls for an enormous orchestra, with approximately fifteen distinct percussion instruments and a wordless chorus, heard both offstage and onstage. Given its sheer size, the ballet score is much better known by excerpts, and when heard in concert, is usually represented by one of two suites that Ravel extracted from it. The first suite, of 1911, draws material from the "Nocturne," "Interlude" and "Danse guerrière," while Ravel designated the final three numbers: "Lever du jour," "Pantomime," and "Danse générale" as Suite No. 2, following the score's completion in 1912.

Based on the pastoral drama by the Greek poet Longus, the ballet's scenario was devised by Mikhail Fokine, a classically trained dancer and choreographer for Sergie Diaghilev's *Ballets Russes*. In his autobiographical sketch, the composer described its conception: "In writing it I sought to compose a broad musical

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**Claude Debussy La Mer 23:25**

**1 De L'Aube À Midi Sur La Mer (From Dawn To Noon On The Sea)**

**2 Jeux De Vagues (Play Of The Waves)**

**3 Dialogue Du Vent Et De La Mer (Dialogue Of The Wind And The Sea)**

**4 Maurice Ravel Daphnis Et Chloe, Suite No. 2 15:25**

Recorded by Pye Golden Guinea Records 1964



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