

Even as critics and the public were beginning to complain that the elusive French style was waning, Pierre Dervaux was leading performances of grace, elegance, and meticulous detail. By his early 30s, the conductor/composer had demonstrated the ability to get the best from his musicians and singers while infusing works with compelling urgency. Dervaux presided over the premiere recording of one of the twentieth century's most enduring operas and was an accomplished composer in his own right. As a pedagogue at Montreal's Conservatory, the École Normale in Paris, and the summer academy at Nice, he exerted a positive



influence on a succeeding generation of conductors. Dervaux's training was thorough: at the Paris Conservatoire, he studied counterpoint and harmony with Marcel Samuel-Rousseau and Jean and Noël Gallon and piano with Isidor Philipp, Armand Ferté, and Yves Nat. He began his career as an assistant conductor at the Opéra-Comique in Paris in 1945. His podium debut, however, took place with the Orchestre Passeteloup in 1947, an occasion that won the young conductor considerable recognition. Subsequently, he was appointed vice president of the Concerts Passeteloup and remained in that position until 1955. Meanwhile, the same year he first appeared as a full conductor, Dervaux was engaged as principal conductor by the Opéra de Paris, where he continued until 1970. During this time, Dervaux was entrusted with the June 21, 1957, Paris premiere of Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*. The following January, Dervaux conducted the first recording, a standard-setting studio performance with Denise Duval, Régine Crespin, and Rita Gorr. In 1968, Dervaux was engaged as musical director of Québec's Orchestre Symphonique and remained there until 1971, when he was appointed music director of the Orchestre Philharmonique de Pays de Loire. In 1978, coinciding with his teaching at the Nice Academy, he began a four-year engagement as music director of the Nice Opéra. During his career, Dervaux appeared as guest conductor with many orchestras in other parts of Europe, in America, and the Far East, but always devoted himself primarily to those institutions with which he was engaged. His compositions include several concertos, two symphonies, and various chamber and solo piano works.

DEBUSSY / *La Mer*



Fetes - Iberia (No. 2 From Images Pour Orchestre)
L'Orchestre Des Concerts Colonne / Pierre Dervaux



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* (1897–1905), 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.

"The title *Nocturnes* is to be interpreted here in a general and, more particularly, in a decorative sense. Therefore, it is not meant to designate the usual form of the *Nocturne*, but rather all the various impressions and the special effects of light that the word suggests. 'Fêtes' (Festivals) gives us the vibrating, dancing rhythm of the atmosphere with sudden flashes of light.

Ibéria (1905–1908)

Ibéria is the most popular of the three orchestral Images and itself forms a triptych within a triptych. The three sections of *Ibéria* are:

1. *Par les rues et par les chemins* ("Through the streets and the paths") - inspired by rondo form
2. *Les parfums de la nuit* ("The fragrance of the night") - the atmosphere of a fascinating Spanish night
3. *Le matin d'un jour de fête* ("The morning of a festival day") - a procession of a 'banda de guitarras'.

The music is inspired by impressions of Spain.

DEBUSSY / *La Mer*

Fetes - Iberia (No. 2 From Images Pour Orchestre)
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La Mer

1. I. De L'Aube A Midi Sur Lar Mer 9:42
 2. II. Jeux De Vagues 6:09
 3. III. Dialogue Du Vent Et De La Mer 9:35
- 4 Fetes (From "Trois Nocturnes") 6:14**
- Iberia ("Images" Pour Orchestre #2)**
5. I. Par Les Rues Et Par Les Chemins 6:35
 6. II. Les Parfums De La Nuit 7:20
 7. III. Le Matin D'Un Jour De Fete 4:09

Total Time: 49:44

Transferred from a 4-track Command Classics Tape

Original master recorded on 35 mm magnetic film Recorded 1961

Engineer – Robert Fine Mastered By – John Johnson Producer – Enoch Light



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