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ANALYSIS OF DEBUSSY'S PRÉLUDE

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ANALYSIS OF DEBUSSY'S
"L'APRÈS-MIDI D'UN FAUNE"
IN TERMS OF CONDUCTING TECHNIQUE

A Master's Thesis

by
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Ankara
June 2025

To my parents and my wife

ANALYSIS OF DEBUSSY'S
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IN TERMS OF CONDUCTING TECHNIQUE

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
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by

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ANALYSIS OF DEBUSSY'S *L'APRÈS-MIDI D'UN FAUNE* IN TERMS OF
CONDUCTING TECHNIQUE

By Atay Bağcı

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Conducting.

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ABSTRACT

ANALYSIS OF DEBUSSY'S *L'APRÈS-MIDI D'UN FAUNE* IN TERMS OF CONDUCTING TECHNIQUE

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June 2025

This paper examines Claude Debussy's "*Prélude à l'après-midi d'un Faune*" from an orchestra conductor's perspective and gives pointers on how to conduct the music based on the analysis of the score. In the first chapter a short biography of Debussy is presented and background information on the *Prélude* is given. The second chapter examines the formal outline of the piece, breaking it down into sections and segments; and lays out its harmonic and textural structure. The third chapter builds a segment-based template based on the second chapter's analysis, and provides a measure-by-measure "conducting grammar" of the piece.

Keywords: Debussy, Faun, Mallarmé, Symbolism, Conducting

ÖZET

DEBUSSY'NİN *L'APRÈS-MIDI D'UN FAUNE* ADLI ESERİNİN ŞEFLİK TEKNİĞİ AÇISINDAN ANALİZİ

Bağcı, Atay

Yüksek Lisans, Müzik Bölümü

Tez Danışmanı: Doç. Dr. Işın Metin

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Bu tez Claude Debussy'nin "*Prélude à l'après-midi d'un Faune*" adlı eserini bir orkestra şefinin gözünden inceler ve eseri yönetmek için yönergeler sunar. Birinci bölümde Debussy'nin kısa bir biyografisi verilir ve *Prélude* hakkında arka plan bilgileri sunulur. İkinci bölümde eser detaylı olarak analiz edilir: form yapısı incelenir, kısımlara ve kesitlere bölünüp armonik ve dokusal yapısı açıklanır. Üçüncü bölüm, ikinci bölümdeki analizi temel alan bir şablon ile eserin "şeflik gramerini" kesitler bazında ölçü ölçü oluşturur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Debussy, Faun, Mallarmé, Sembolizm, Şeflik

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1. INTRODUCTION

a. Purpose of Thesis

In this thesis, I try to present a comprehensive “conducting grammar” for Claude Debussy’s *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune* based on my own analysis of the piece. As this work is a cornerstone of Western classical music, and sits at a crossroads between late romantic and modern styles, it is very important that a conductor gets to learn it thoroughly to better grasp the transition between those styles. This piece presents a challenge to conductors especially because of its inherent structural ambiguity, orchestral balancing issues, and harmonic colors. In laying bare all its ingredients and rebuilding from this dissection, I put forth an all-encompassing guide for the conductor who wishes to conduct this piece in a concert.

It should be noted that the conducting grammar extrapolated in Chapter III is NOT applicable to a first rehearsal of this piece, regardless of how many times the orchestra or the conductor has performed it before, even maybe together on the same stage. Every first rehearsal of any piece is a sight-reading, and a new experience; thus the conductor has to approach this first read-through matter-of-factly, focusing on essentials such as keeping the ensemble together and striving to beat time as clearly as possible.

b. Methodology

For the purposes of my analysis I draw upon a number of printed works as reference: Conducting gestures and their technical terms are drawn from Elizabeth A. H. Green's "The Modern Conductor" (Green, 1983) and Nikolai Malko's "The Conductor and His Baton" (Malko, 1950). Formal and structural terms are loosely based on Arnold Schönberg's "Fundamentals of Musical Composition" (Schoenberg, 1970). Terminology denoting the harmony in the score are my own and can be found in Chapter II along with Table 1:

Explanations of Signs. Two editions of the *Prélude* were used in creating the musical analysis: the Dover Study Edition (1983) and the Breitkopf & Härtel Urtext edition edited by Frank Reinisch (1987).

A number of sound and video recordings also served to both flesh out and compare my own analysis of the work: the most important of which is the hour-long documentary by EuroArts detailing French conductor Georges Prêtre's rehearsal process and the resulting concert with the Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra (EuroArtsChannel, 2017).

Forming the first part of my analysis, Chapter I gives a short biography on Debussy, highlighting the important details in his life; then provides information on the *Prélude*. I also include the poem of Mallarmé with its English translation at the end of this chapter. This is meant to prepare the conductor mentally for the work before the score is even opened.

Chapter II is divided into three main sections: The first, “Structure”, opens with a discussion about the structure of the work, considers differing arguments about it and presents my own conclusions. The large second section covers the overall formal outline of the work, first in larger, then in smaller units. The third section, “Harmony”, shows the harmonic language of the work.

Chapter III, based on the previous chapter’s analysis, builds the conducting grammar of the piece measure by measure, with detailed instructions on what to do, how to do it and why. It also touches on some practical problems present in the work and offers solutions on how to approach them. The final chapter then concludes the thesis by reflecting on the analytical procedure.

2. CHAPTER I

a. Short biography of Claude Debussy

Claude-Achille Debussy (1862-1918) was one of the most prominent French musicians of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He did not attend a regular elementary school due to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 displacing his family from their residence in Paris; during which Debussy underwent piano lessons with an Italian tutor at their temporary lodgings in Cannes. Debussy proved to be a talented student; he prepared for and won a place at the Paris Conservatoire at the age of ten and studied under eminent figures such as Albert Lavignac (solfège), Émile Durand (harmony) and Ernest Guiraud (composition).

After having failed to match the Conservatoire's required standards, he gave up on the dream of becoming a piano soloist, instead focusing on composition. He was engaged by Tchaikovsky's patron Nadezhda von Meck as a teacher to her children and travelled in Russia with the family. This engagement was to plant the seeds of Debussy's later career; in von Meck's household he was exposed to the Russian music of the time. The masterworks of Tchaikovsky, the orchestration and sound world of Rimsky-Korsakov, and the radical music of Mussorgsky had a great impact on the young musician. Though he was making ends meet by getting positions as an accompanist in Paris - where he was noticed by the likes of Charles

Gounod - composition turned out to be a better career path for Debussy. He was runner-up for the coveted *Prix de Rome* in 1883 and won the prize the next year; as a result of his winning this prize, he spent the years 1884-5 in Italy. Ultimately though he found that he could not bring himself to compose in a way that was expected from the *Prix de Rome* winners, that is, in line with the wishes of the Paris Conservatoire establishment. During a time of financial instability, he went to hear Wagner's operas performed in Bayreuth in 1888-89.

Although he did not see a future in the direction Wagner took music, nevertheless Debussy was deeply affected by the harmonic and orchestrational innovations of the German master. Debussy was looking for a way that defied Wagner and broke free of his immense impact on contemporary music and musical ideals, and his compositions in the late 1880's - early 1890's are attempts at doing so. Debussy made the acquaintance of the eminent French poet Stéphane Mallarmé in 1890, and the latter "asked Debussy to write a musical contribution to a theatre project ... centred on the poem '*L'après-midi d'un faune*'" (Lesure & Howat, 2001) which did not end up the way Mallarmé envisioned. At the Paris World Fair in 1889, Debussy was first exposed to the gamelan music of the East Indies and became fascinated by its alienness to Western musical tradition and canon. During the 1890's Debussy also met and became friends with other French musical figures such as Ernest Chausson and Erik Satie. Debussy was struck by the Belgian poet Maurice Maeterlinck's play *Pelléas and Mélisande* and

went through the trouble of going in person to the poet's home in Ghent to ask for the rights to make his play into an opera.

Debussy had his first public successes in the 1890's; first with his String Quartet premiered by the respected Ysaÿe Quartet, then with his symphonic poem *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune* based on the poem by Mallarmé. During the decade he worked mostly on *Pelléas* and supported himself by giving lessons and writing critical reviews of music under a pen name. This anonymity allowed him to express his more thorny views on contemporary music and musicians freely. His orchestral work *Nocturnes* was performed in its entirety in 1901 yet only had a lukewarm reception from the public while garnering praise from fellow musicians. In 1902 Debussy finally managed to get *Pelléas* staged and performed, and it became his greatest success, and propelled him to international fame. As a result he was awarded the Legion d'Honneur the next year which established him as one of France's great artists.

Despite this honor, the first decade of the twentieth century was a difficult one for Debussy; he was facing widespread condemnation and alienation from friends and colleagues on the grounds of his scandalous personal life involving affairs with a number of women. *La Mer*, another large-scale orchestral work, was premiered in 1905; its reception was muted, partly due to the public disapproval of Debussy's scandals, still fresh in people's minds. A second performance of the work in 1908 under the composer's own baton was received with more enthusiasm. In 1909 he joined the Paris

Conservatoire's advisory board and continued his professional travels until the beginning of the Great War in 1914.

His other more prominent orchestral works, *Ibéria* and *Images*, were given performances during this time to generally positive reviews. A ballet, *Jeux*, was premiered by the famous Ballets Russes just two weeks before the same company staged the premiere of Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*; *Jeux* was not well received and quickly forgotten after the latter work's bombshell impact. Debussy became ill with colon cancer during the Great War, and his creative output gradually diminished before he succumbed to his sickness and died on 25th of March, 1918.

b. The composition process of the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*

Stéphane Mallarmé, one of the progenitors of the Symbolist movement in poetry in France, composed three versions of the poem "*L'après-midi d'un faune*" (The Afternoon of a Faun). The first two were rejected for publication, but the third, now having the subtitle *Églogue* ("Eclogue", n.d.) was published 1876 in a book, with a title drawing by Édouard Manet. The poem's subject is the titular Faun, a creature based in Greek and Roman mythology, that is "part human and part goat" (Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica, 2020). Fauns were considered minions of their god Faunus, and were associated with pastoral elements like forests, fields and nature, as well as peace and tranquility. In the poem, the Faun wakes up from an afternoon nap and recounts his morning;

his pursuit of beautiful Nymphs and Naiads, the day and his surroundings, then he falls back to sleep. The symbolism in the poem is less of a tale of adventure and more of an affirmation of sexual desires, repressed as they were in the societal mores and taboos of the time.

The poem got praise for its evocation of sensual and dreamy images in a musical language (“wrapped up in complex metaphor and arcane syntax” [Walsh, 2018, p. 89]) and its abundant and masterful use of ambiguity. It firmly established Mallarmé as an eminent poet in the French literary scene.

Debussy’s acquaintance with the poem was at least around 1887 according to William W. Austin (1970), when Debussy purchased “at least one copy” of the “definitive edition” of the poem, which he then gifted to Paul Dukas. When Debussy and Mallarmé met and Mallarmé suggested his theatre project to the composer, Debussy was taken by the idea. He seems to have even originally planned a longer, three-part work titled *Prélude, interludes et paraphrase finale pour l'Après-midi d'un faune* (Austin, 1970).

In the manuscript of the work, the beginning date of composition is marked “92”; and it is revealed to be a kind of *annus mirabilis* for Debussy’s musical ideas: which in Austin’s observation, 1892

seems to have been the year in which Debussy began most of the major projects that he completed in the following years ... *Pelléas*, ... the Faun, ... the String Quartet, finished in February, 1893; the *Nocturnes* for Orchestra ... three Verlaine songs entitled *Fêtes galantes* ... four songs on texts by Debussy himself, *Proses lyriques* ... It appears that somehow Debussy had made a fundamental choice that released his energy to carry things through to completion (Austin, 1970, p.11).

This deluge of ideas could be the result of Debussy mingling in earnest with the French avant-garde and fringe intellectual crowds, and powerful emotions stemming from his stormy personal life at the time, abandoning one lover for another, to widespread public ire and broken friendships. Debussy was very busy during 1893-94 with a lot of different musical pursuits, yet towards the end of 1893 he “finally worked up his sketches for the Mallarmé project into a single orchestral movement, which he called, simply, *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*” (Walsh, 2018). In his mind the piece was complete enough that he could play it on the piano for friends (Austin, 1970) and for the poet himself, whose reaction was one of unexpected appreciation (Walsh 2018).

The next year (1894) Debussy managed to complete the orchestration by the end of October, which then left enough time to prepare the piece for its premiere. The completed piece is “just” 110 bars of music, in parallel with Mallarmé’s poem which is also composed of 110 lines. Although nominally a symphonic poem, and thus “program music”, it does not easily fit into any mold. Walsh argues that “any attempt to turn [the poem] into programme music in the old-fashioned sense would surely have got lost in the undergrowth” (Walsh, 2018, p. 89).

The program notes for the first few performances echo this sentiment, stating that

[t]he music of this *Prélude* is a very free illustration of the beautiful poem by Stéphane Mallarmé. It does not pretend to be a synthesis of it. Rather, it is the successive settings through which the desires and dreams of the Faun move in the heat of this afternoon. Then, tired of pursuing the fearful flight of the nymphs and naiads, he lets himself go to an intoxicating sleep, filled with dreams finally realized, of total possession in universal nature (Minahen, 1988, p. 176).

c. Performance history of the work

Published in 1895 by the now-defunct publishing house of Édouard Fromont, the *Prélude* requires an orchestra consisting of 3 flutes, 2 oboes, 1 english horn, 2 clarinets in A and Bb, 2 bassoons, 4 horns in F, 2 harps, antique cymbals (crotales) and full strings. A typical performance of the work lasts around 11 minutes. Debussy also prepared an arrangement for two pianos himself, which was published simultaneously. The autograph manuscript for the *Prélude* is currently in the possession of the Bibliothèque Nationale in France. The manuscript bears a dedication for Raymond Bonheur - not to be confused with the French painter of the same name - who was Debussy's fellow student in the Paris Conservatoire where both had studied under Ernest Guiraud.

Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune premiered on the 22nd of December 1894 at the Salle d'Harcourt in Paris, located at 40 Rue du Faubourg-Poissonnière, which was demolished at some time in the beginning of the 20th century. The concert was organized by the Société Nationale de Musique, an organization with the aim of advancing and promoting French music. The conductor of the concert was the Swiss national Gustave Doret, who studied under the great Hungarian violinist Joseph Joachim and the French composer Jules Massenet. During the rehearsal periods, Doret remarked that "[he] promised [Debussy], to take as much time as needed for the rehearsals of the work ... Debussy was constantly changing this or that tone color" (Nichols, 1993, p.

60). Georges Barrère, then a seventeen year old flute student of Paul Taffanel at the Paris Conservatoire, was entrusted with the solo flute part.

The date of the premiere coincided with probably the most notorious event of the French Third Republic: The conviction of Louis Dreyfus, an army officer of Alsatian Jewish origin who was much later revealed to be falsely accused of colluding with the German Empire, which after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71 had annexed the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine from France. It is not hard to imagine the politically active French audience coming to the concert of the Société, with feelings of Anti-Germanism and Anti-Semitism running high. Debussy's new music, in which he was trying to find a new language completely different from Wagner, was coming exactly at this time of high anticipation and slowly boiling public sentiment. The *Prélude* thus found fertile ground for its reception at the premiere: It was so well liked that it had to be encored "despite the fact that the performance, by some accounts, left a good deal to be desired" (Walsh, 2018, p.107). Debussy's good friend, the poet Pierre Louÿs, remarked in his letter to the composer after the concert: "To hear your piece again I shall wait for a slightly better performance. The horns stank, and the rest were hardly better" (Austin, 1970, p. 141).

3. CHAPTER II

a. Structure

The symbolist origin of the poem, and Debussy's impression of it, blur the lines of form to such an extent that the piece gives the illusion of being freely composed. Yet upon another look, we see that this is not really the case. Inside the numerical "limitation" of 110 measures of music, there is ample space for Debussy to craft a formal outline. There are numerous readings of the form in this work, and each is in its own way correct and plausible. Most analyses point to a loose A-B-A' form, but opinions differ as to where exactly these sections are located. The section that is most agreed upon is the beginning A section, with the biggest point of contention of it being extended until measure 55, or ending earlier. Both William Austin and Matthew Brown argue that the B section starts at measure 55 and goes on until measure 78. Yet Brown also admits that for him "it is not obvious how the mm. 30-54 relate to their surroundings" (Brown, 1993, p.131). Denijs Dille advocates for a different reading, in which the formal outline is shaped thus:

M. 1 - Section A; M. 37 - Section B1; M. 55 - Section B2; M. 79 - Section A' (Austin, 1970, p. 74).

Another analysis of Ernst Decsey instead singles out the B section as beginning at measure 31. The A' section again divides opinion as to how it's supposed to be analyzed. Jean Barraqué asserts that what he sees as "the genuine recapitulation" starts at measure 94 (Austin, 1970, p. 74); whereas

Brown and others argue for the section to begin at measure 79. Austin identifies 5 main “points of articulation” in the work: Measures 30-31, 37, 55, 79 and lastly 94 (Austin, 1970, p. 71); Brown adds measure 106 to these (Brown, 1993). These are the spots which one can safely define as anchors, even though they seem to grow organically out of the preceding music.

A different point of contention is to what extent did Debussy follow the poem’s verses in music; because even though as mentioned before, Debussy did not consider himself to be painting the poem “as is” on the musical score. David J. Code, in his article “Hearing Debussy Reading Mallarmé” argues - with some brilliant insights and analysis of both the poem and music - that Debussy did in fact follow the poem’s verses, quite literally in some cases (Code, 2001). This formal (and also explanatory) ambiguity is crucial, because it is in keeping with the overall aim of Mallarmé’s poem, which also strives to sow doubt, lull the listener to sleep with the rhyming, and paint only the blurriest of pictures in words. In my own analysis, I tend to agree with the work being in a very free A-B-A’ form, in which the larger B section is itself divided into two parts.

The following is my own deconstruction of the piece’s formal outline and individual sections. The more prominent themes and melodies have been given names and then abbreviated. Sections of the work are divided into smaller “segments” which include these themes but may be longer than the melody itself. After they have been presented here, all references to these

segments in this paper will be by their abbreviations, where applicable.

Meanings of signs used in the formal and harmonic analysis are as follows:

	Table 1: Explanations of Signs
#	Sharp sign
b	Flat sign
C	Major root chord on C (<i>do</i>)
c	Minor root chord on C
o	Diminished chord
ø	Half-diminished chord
+	Augmented chord
Fr+ ⁶	French Augmented Sixth Chord
Ger+ ⁶	German Augmented Sixth Chord

The “₇” after a named chord always implies an ascending minor seventh from the root tone, unless the ₇ is accompanied by an altering sign such as +. For example, the C₇ chord has the tones C-E-G-B_b (*do-mi-sol-si bemol*).

Likewise, the c₇ chord has the tones C-E_b-G-B_b (*do-mi bemol-sol-si bemol*).

A major seventh chord on C is written as C₇₊ (C-E-G-B, do-mi-sol-si). Ninth chords are built on the same principle: the chord C₇⁹ has the tones C-E-G-B_b-D (*do-mi-sol-si bemol-re*).

b. Form

1. Overall Formal Outline

Table 2: Formal outline of the <i>Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune</i>		
SECTION	measure STRUCTURE ^{bars}	EXTENT
Exposition (A)	1 - 30	30
Development (B)	31 - 78	48
Recapitulation (A')	79 - 110	31

2. Exposition (A)

Table 3: Outline of the Exposition Section (A)		
SEGMENT	measure STRUCTURE ^{bars}	EXTENT
"Faun" theme (FT) (Flute Solo)	₁ 10 ³⁺³⁺⁴	10
FT2 (D ₇₊)	₁₁ 10 ³⁺³⁺⁴	10
FT3 (c#)	₂₁ 5 ²⁺³	5
FT4 (E ₇ ⁹)	₂₆ 5 ²⁺³	5

The Exposition, which is based on a single theme and its variations, runs from measure 1 until measure 30, presenting the "Faun" Theme (first played by the solo flute) a total of four times; each time with a different harmony and

differing instrumentation. First time the Faun Theme is presented on the solo flute alone, with the accompaniment (and the first full chord) not coming in until the melody is complete at measure 4. Measures 4-5 present two important motifs on the horns. Measure 6 is an empty bar, which in my opinion is structurally very important as it mirrors the spacing at the beginning of Mallarmé's poem. At measure 11 the Faun Theme is given fully on the flute, which blends into the oboe's continuation of the melody. The oboe's motif in measure 17 is strengthened by the first violins in the next bar before its fragmentation in measures 19-20. In the third iteration of the Faun theme, Debussy presents new material in the theme right away, while hiding an important stepwise motif in the viola and cello parts (measure 22). The second part of the theme in measure 24-25 sounds the highest notes (until now) on the solo flute, an indication of something stirring. The last presentation of the Faun theme (measure 26-30) incorporates the second flute in the theme as well. The two flutes then play the previously hidden stepwise motif of measure 22 openly and in a rhythmically diminished form in forte dynamics, before slowly falling back into a calm mood. This A section ends - in my opinion - at measure 30, after the obvious cadential progression in measures 28-30 ($F\sharp_7^9 - g\sharp^o - F\sharp_7^9 - B$) brings the music to the key of B, the dominant of the tonic E, at bar 30. Also helpful with this reading is the *cedéz* (calming down) that starts in the last beat of measure 29, and goes on to measure 31, which affirms the feeling of "something ending".

3. Development (B)

Table 4: Outline of the Development Section (B)			
SEGMENT	SEGMENT (PROPERTY)	measure STRUCTURE ^{bars}	EXTENT
B1a	Whole-Tone Scale	₃₁ 6 ³⁺³	6
B1b	F# Dorian + “Syncopated” Theme (ST) + B Dorian	₃₇ 7 ²⁺³⁺²	7
B1c	D Dorian + ST + Whole-tone rit.	₄₄ 7 ⁴⁺³	7
B1d	ST Clarinet	₅₁ 4 ²⁺²	4
B2a	“Love” theme (LT) + “a” melodic minor theme (MMT)	₅₅ 8 ⁴⁺⁴	8
B2b	LT + ST & MMT	₆₃ 8 ⁴⁺⁴	8
B2c	MMT & ST + LT	₇₁ 8 ⁴⁺⁴	8

My analysis, like Denijs Dille and Ernst Decsey’s analyses, starts the “Development” section (B) at measure 31. The last beat of measure 30 is the upbeat to a whole-tone passage which is, in my opinion, a definite marker for something new that I name the Development. This section, instead of a regular Sonata-Allegro form Development - which would vary and deconstruct the previously presented themes and bring new harmonic material - has an abundance of new themes which function as the variation and digression. The Development section is then also divided into two subsections with 24 measures each: B1 (measures 31-54) and B2 (measures 55-78).

The B1 subsection begins at measure 31 which is marked *au Mouvt* (*au mouvement*, in tempo), and lasts a total of 47 bars. The Whole-Tone Scale segment, beginning at measure 31, is 6 measures long and is decidedly harmonically vague. Measure 37 brings a theme on the oboe, which is in the Dorian mode on F#, with the tempo indication *en animant* (moving the tempo forward). Then at measure 39 the oboe introduces a new “syncopated” theme - disguised as the ending of its Dorian theme - that is taken up by the violins in measure 40, and continued on measure 41 with the beginning motif of the Dorian theme. The following 4 measures (44-47) contain perhaps the most “action” in the piece in the way that a presented motif or theme is not followed through to the end, yet jumps from one idea to another. Helping along this fast interaction of thematic material is the tempo indication *toujours en animant* (always moving the tempo forward). My opinion is that these bars represent the first musical expression of “stream-of-consciousness” in literature.

Measures 48-50 are based again on a whole-tone scale: Yet this time, reversing the first instance in the piece (Section A, measures 28-30) where a *cedéz* in a tonal center prepared a whole-tone episode, a *retenu* in a whole-tone center prepares an episode in a tonal center (measure 51). The last four measures of the B1 subsection are marked *1^{er} mouvt* (*première mouvement*, a tempo) and act in their calmness as a counterbalance to the previous “action” measures of 44-47.

Subsection B2 begins at measure 55, exactly at the halfway point in the work. Here a new and very lyrically expressive theme - which I term the “Love Theme” - is presented. This theme has two parts - the first part (measures 55-58) has greater interval jumps whereas the second (measures 59-62)

moves stepwise downwards. The second iteration of the Love Theme juxtaposes the second part of the theme with the earlier Syncopated Theme (measures 67-70) which becomes the third part of the Love Theme. For this segment, Debussy uses the orchestration to its fullest: Loudest with every part save the harps playing a *forte* at measure 61 - the winds playing the main theme *tutti* and strings accompanying with their heartbeat syncopations; and immediately after with harps joining the full orchestra, softest with a *pianissimo* marking. All three parts of the Love Theme are then presented from measure 74 to 78, the orchestration having thinned down to a solo violin, solo oboe and flute, horns and a sustained D $\flat$ in the double bass.

4. Recapitulation (A')

Table 5: Outline of the Recapitulation Section (A')		
SEGMENT	measure STRUCTURE ^{bars}	EXTENT
FT'1 (Var. in E)	₇₉ 7 ⁴⁺³	7
FT'2 (Ob., Var. in E $\flat$)	₈₆ 8 ⁴⁺⁴	8
FT'3 + ST & MMT (3 Fl. unis., E)	₉₄ 6 ²⁺²⁺²	6
FT'4 Full (Solo Fl. + Vc., Ob. C#7)	₁₀₀ 6 ³⁺³	6
Coda (FT frag.)	₁₀₆ 5 ²⁺³	5

The very loose “Recapitulation” section begins at measure 79 with the return of the main Faun Theme on E on the solo flute, yet it is now in a simplified form. It is answered directly with the diminution of itself on the solo oboe, in a much more playful mood, with the marking *un peu plus animé* (a little more lively). The second Faun Theme is now in the oboe part (measure 86), in the original tempo and half a step lower than before on E $\flat$; it is answered this time by the english horn, again with a livelier tempo. The third iteration (measure 94) has the Faun Theme on all the flutes playing in unison, with the marking *dans le 1^{er} mouvement avec plus de langueur* (in the first tempo with more languor), and the violins briefly sounding the Syncopated Theme. The second half of the theme in this iteration (measures 96-99) is none other than the Melodic Minor Theme, i.e. the second part of the Love Theme, which finally binds sections A and B formally and thematically.

The fourth appearance of the Faun Theme is shortened on the solo flute, accentuating the feeling of “wanting to be done with it” by using a *retenu* at measure 102 before passing on the theme to the solo oboe. The oboe then finishes the theme with an ingenious melodic contour resembling the Faun’s futile attempts at staying awake. The Coda ends the piece with a final presentation of the Faun theme, this time harmonized and without a tritone interval, before the sounds are completely dissolved in the last three measures.

c. Harmony

Pierre Boulez praised the *Prélude* as “a new breath to the art of music” (Austin, 1970, p. 161). At a time when French music was threatened to be relegated to a second-class level by its more cavalier German and Italian counterparts, Debussy found a way out of the “Wagnerian trolley problem” (does one compose just a bit like Wagner or completely like Wagner?). This he did by upsetting the supremacy of harmony in Western music: Harmonies and chords were set on the path to becoming individual sound clusters instead of functions of a greater whole. Even though the *Prélude* is nowhere near an atonal or even polytonal work - it is clearly in the key of E major - its lax approach to harmonic functions inside that tonal center is remarkable. The *Prélude* is also significant in the way that it gives the wind instruments center stage all throughout the piece; the string section is employed decidedly in a complementary role, even though the violins and celli occasionally get to play a theme in the foreground.

Throughout the piece, the tone C# (and its enharmonic equivalent, D ♭) is perhaps the most significant and important sound. Not only the work (thus the Faun Theme itself) starts with this tone, the Love Theme is built on it as well; and in the very last three measures it is emphasized twice on a strong beat. This insistence on C# at important spots in the work give it a grounded quality that is not found on the formal and harmonic sides of the work. It can also be interpreted as the whole work being a hallucinated extension of the overtones of the C# at the beginning.

The following is the harmonic analysis of the piece, divided into the previously outlined sections and their segments.

1. Harmonic and textural analysis of the Exposition (A)

FT1 (1-10): The piece begins with the solo flute playing the main theme, starting on C#, and pausing on G; thus giving the audience an ambiguous tritone at the very beginning. The actual tonality of E major is in fact present in the solo, concealed in the last two beats of measure 3. On measure 4, the first full chord is heard, which is none other than the Tristan chord on A# (A# - C# - E - G#). David J. Code notes that “in French leitmotivic guides the leitmotif containing the original ‘Tristan chord’ was labeled ‘*le Désir*’ [desire]” (Code, 2001, p. 17-18). This is then “resolved” into a dominant chord (B ♭ - D - F - A ♭ , measure 5) like in the original Tristan overture. Measures 7-9 again state the same harmonic progression before measure 10 resolves a D - E dissonance to D - F consonance; itself part of the previous dominant chord but anticipating the new harmony immediately following it, by altering the F into F# in measure 11. A noteworthy observance about this first segment by David J. Code states that the prominent instruments in the beginning of the piece - flute, harp and horn - are direct allusions to Greek mythology, in the way they are associated with the Greek Gods’ own chosen instruments: the Flute of Pan, the Lyre of Apollo, and the Horn of Diana (Code, 2001, p. 531).

FT2 (11-20): FT starting again on C#, but on a D major chord; thus it acts as a major seventh. C#'s tritone G in the theme falls on a G⁷ dominant chord, further extending the tension. This D major - G⁷ progression very subtly implies a move to C in the tonic, but that never comes. Instead, measure 13 brings in d#ø⁷ and the first instance of the tonic, E major, which is disturbed by the motif in the first Horn with a C#. Continuation of the FT2 on the Oboe agitates the harmony, going through d#ø₇ - G#₇ - F#₂ - e# - Fr+⁶, to arrive on A#⁷ - C#⁷ in measures 17 until 20.

FT3 (21-25): Third time the FT starts on C#, with a more ambiguous harmonic underlining; is it a c#⁷ chord on first inversion, or an E with added sixth? The arpeggios in the harps argue for the former whereas the E pizzicato in the bass and the sustained E in the low horns argue for the latter. In my opinion it is an E⁶ chord, used in this way to “reinforce” the tonic in a subtle way. Also worth noticing that in the same measure (21) the G in the FT is briefly harmonised to a C major chord, creating a submediant relationship with the tonic E. This passing C major chord is incidentally the first fully consonant chord that falls on a beat, even though it is immediately broken on the flute's motif. Measure 22 again is the same E⁶ chord, but this time it leads through an eø⁷ to a B₇⁹ in measure 23 which is the dominant of E, disguised by the C# once more. In the same measure, the solo Flute's FT undergoes a slight transformation as it no longer holds a tritone - it goes from A to E instead. This E is harmonized to an A minor chord, which with the previous C major on measure 21, makes the two “real” consonant chords in the piece until now

closely related to each other. Measure 24-25 move from $D_7^9 - f\sharp\emptyset^7 - c$ to set the harmony of Section A's last FT.

FT4 (26-30): The harmony here is again ambiguous, with equal possibility of being a $g\sharp\emptyset^7$ and an E_7^9 , and even an inverted eleventh chord on $c\sharp$ if one takes the $C\sharp$ in the solo Flute as a chord note. For analytical ease, I tend to classify this chord as an E_7^9 because of the approaching cadential progression in later measures. Measures 28-29 bring the $F\sharp_7$ chord - the double dominant in the tonic E - again disguised in the orchestration and in the harmony with ninths and elevenths, before Section A comes to a close on the dominant B at measure 30. Thus this last segment has the functional outline of E (I) - $F\sharp$ (DD) - B (D/I).

2. Harmonic and textural analysis of the Development (B)

B1a - Whole-tone scale (31-36): As the naming implies, the overarching harmonic progress in this segment is that of the whole-tone, which is necessarily without harmonic function. The identifiable chords throughout this segment can be considered to have Dominant characteristics, yet since they do not resolve to their intended targets, they remain solely as coloristic objects. These chords are: the *pizzicato* G_7^9 chord in the string section (measure 32); a $Ger+^6$ under the "implied" FT on the clarinet and rapidly passing B_7 chords (disguised with the enharmonic $G\flat$) in measure 34; again a $Ger+^6$ and a *pizzicato* B_7^9 in measure 35, then finally two $Fr+^6$ chords in measure 36 to give way to the new segment.

B1b - F# Dorian + ST + B Dorian (37-43): This segment brings with it a concrete reference to ancient Greece and mythology - the Dorian mode. The oboe theme in measures 37-39 is composed of the tones of this mode on F#, lacking only the tone A, which, according to David J. Code, Debussy left out on purpose (Code, 2001). Code argues that the missing A comes at measure 44 in accordance with line 34 in Mallarmé's poem, which refers to the Faun as "the one who searches the La" (*qui cherche le La*) (Code, 2001, p. 526). Measures 39-41 are harmonically more or less static with only an E₇⁹ (a concealed Tristan chord on G#) and some passing notes in between; but the Syncopated Theme (ST) in the oboe (measure 39) then both violins (measure 40) is the more important point in this segment, as it will re-emerge later more prominently. The transition leading into the next segment is two measures of Dorian mode on B, with an alternating D major and E major harmonic background.

B1c - D Dorian + ST + Whole-tone rit. (44-50): These 7 measures present important elements of subsection B1 in a condensed and mirrored way: The Dorian mode, now on D with a d minor harmonic background, appears on measure 44. An ambiguous transitional passage on measure 45 moves into the Tristan chord with a rhythm that suggests the Faun theme, which is then coupled with the ST, measure 46-7; and finally a whole-tone passage over 3 measures (48-50) that prepares the next segment via a *retenu*.

B1d - ST Clarinet: This short segment puts the Syncopated Theme (ST) under the spotlight with the solo clarinet playing it for the whole 4-measure length, joined at measure 54 by the oboe and flute. The accompaniment layer is very transparent and light, and the segment ends with a *decrescendo* to *pp*. Harmonically this segment is a major transition point, starting with the tonal center in A $\flat$, then when the melody adds the G $\flat$ in measure 53, it becomes a dominant chord on A $\flat$ which will modulate into D $\flat$ major in the next segment; at exactly the middle of the piece and in exact correspondence to the very first starting tone of C#.

B2a - “Love” theme + “a” melodic minor theme (MMT): The middle of the piece introduces an exuberant and soulful theme I name as the “Love Theme”. It is first presented in measures 55-58 in the woodwinds playing unison. The harmony is now firmly in D $\flat$ major but the LT offsets this feeling by including suspension tones at strong beats (for example measures 56-58). In the immediate continuation (measure 59-62), the melody is basically a descending A minor melodic scale (reinforced by the full A minor chord on measure 61), yet with the alterations of the 6th and 7th degrees left intact; by which Debussy creates a reference to the previous Whole-Tone scale passage at segment B1a. Measures 61-62 rhythmically mimic the flute melody at measure 28.

B2b - LT + ST & MMT: The second iteration of the “Love Theme” is played by the whole string section as the remaining orchestra (except English Horn and Antique Cymbals) is supplying the accompaniment of triplets in three different

lengths: big triplets on quarter notes, regular ones on eighth notes and small ones on sixteenth notes all at the same time (measures 63-66). It is followed by the ST which has been juxtaposed with the descending melody of the previous A minor scale; this union of melodies has now gained extreme importance. David J. Code claims that the theme's C-B $\flat$ appoggiaturas on measures 68 and 70 are deliberate digs at Wagner: The harmony in both these measures is E $\flat$ minor, into which the addition of C forms the Tristan chord (Code, 2001). These four measures from 67 to 70 feature the full orchestra (except Antique Cymbals) for the first and only time; coupled with the *crescendo* to *ff* in measure 70 with the MMT, this segment forms the climax of the piece. Code also maintains that the this climax mirrors the linguistic climax in the poem, citing lines 77-78:

“77 Pour fuir ma lèvre en feu buvant, comme un éclair

78 Tressaille! La frayeur secrète de la chair:

(To flee my fiery drinking lip, like a lightning bolt/

Thrills! The secret terror of the flesh)” (Code, 2001, p. 533)

In Code's analysis, the high point of measure 70 corresponds to the words “*comme un éclair / Tressaille!*”, thus illustrating in music the “lightning bolt” of desire and the “thrills” of the flesh (Code, 2001, p. 537).

B2c - MMT & ST + LT: This last segment of the Development dampens the power of the previous segment by deconstructing first the accompaniment into pieces, then stripping the orchestration bare in measures 75-78. The ST makes its last appearance in the Development on measure 74 on the solo

horn. The MMT, after losing its energy, is relegated to a secondary position on the clarinet and oboe, while the LT is presented - in a shortened form - for the last time on the solo violin. The last bar of this segment forms a very important Anticlimax with its rare *ppp* dynamic. David J. Code argues that these two segments B2b and B2c together form a kind of symmetrical “virtual bifolio” reflecting the poem: in the 16 bars of these segments, every four measures represents another page starting in order from outside right, inside left, inside right and ending with an outside left page (Code, 2001, p. 540-541).

3. Harmonic and textural analysis of the Recapitulation (A')

FT'1: The Recapitulation begins at measure 79 with an E Major chord in its first inversion, which fits the running theme of ambiguity in the piece. Normally one would expect a chord in root position, as is customary; indeed some analysts like Jean Barraqué claim (Austin, 1970, p. 74) that the “real” Recapitulation of the *Prélude* is at measure 94 where the root position E major chord appears. I claim that measure 79 is in fact the cutoff point for the new section, for just like in the Exposition, the Faun Theme will appear four times; moreover Debussy indicates the tempo marking *Mouv^t du Début* (Tempo of the beginning) here. In this first appearance the FT is played by the solo flute. It is rhythmically augmented, thus made to feel relaxed and drawn out. Moreover, it does not include the tritone this time, and is cut a bit short; before it is taken up by the oboe at measure 83 with a new tempo: *un peu plus animé* (a little more lively). The rhythm is diminished and more exciting, with accents on syncopations and appoggiaturas; on a C major chord. This

dialogue of flute-to-oboe is reflected in the next segment in the same way between oboe and English horn. The segment ends with a descending motif in the winds that resembles something glittering (measure 85).

FT'2: This segment is very similar to the previous one, with a few but notable changes: The FT is presented in the oboe, again rhythmically augmented, but in E $\flat$ major - a half-step lower than the preceding segment. The answer is given to it on the English horn, with the same rhythmic diminution as before, on B major (enharmonic C $\flat$ major). The descending motif from measure 85 is slowed down and slightly interrupted in measures 92-93, before a *retenu* leads into the next segment.

FT'3 + ST & MMT: Harmonically this variation firmly establishes the key of E Major, at least for the first two measures (94-95). The Antique Cymbals are heard for the first time in the piece. The FT comes back to the flutes, with all three of them playing unisono; the second half of the theme is a callback to the Love Theme, on alternating F# minor and C# minor chords. The ST makes its last appearance in the piece, played by two solo violins, on measure 95.

FT'4 Full: The last FT of the flute is reinforced by a solo cello. The underlying harmony here is C# major (enharmonic D $\flat$), a direct reference to the LT. The oboe takes over with the “original” second part of the FT (see measure 3-4) while the harmony prepares the Coda's E major, moving from C major to B⁷.

Coda: The short coda, after resting for one measure on E major, has the first violins and two muted horns play the harmonized and short FT (again without tritone). The piece then ends with a subtle reference to Wagner with two Tristan chords that resolve to E major on measures 108-109.

4. CHAPTER III

a. Conducting grammar of *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un Faune*

This chapter is a guideline to conduct the *Prélude*, based on the previous chapter's analysis. It is my own interpretation of the work, which I try to express in gestural suggestions and giving precedence to specific formal and textural elements while subduing others. It is in no way intended to be a definitive blueprint, as both the nature of conducting and the *Prélude* preclude such assertions. For convenience, I have organized this chapter using a template for conducting grammar, which uses the Segments from Chapter II as the basic element to work on. The expression "right hand" refers to the baton hand and "left hand" refers to the free hand.

1. Exposition

Segment: FT1 (measure 1-10)

Context: First presentation of the Faun Theme.

Form: 3 measures introductory solo, then 3+4 measures prolongation of harmony

Layers:

1. Foreground

Flute Solo; 1st and 2nd horns (from measure 4 onwards)

2. Middleground

1st Harp Glissandi

3. Background

Chords in winds; 2nd harp and strings

Conducting grammar:

Measures 1-3 - Beat pattern 9 in 9. It is advisable to meet with the solo flutist during rehearsal week to discuss the shaping of this very important solo, especially if the performer's and conductor's ideas about it are different. This will probably be obvious in the first playthrough, where the conductor usually "lets" the performer present the solo as opposed to conducting it. The desired result is nevertheless a solo that sounds as airy and free as possible to set the tone (as it were) of the entire work from the start.

Measure 4 - Beat pattern 9 in 9. After the "free" beginning, the first beat here can be beaten in full subdivision in an economic but clear way, with the upbeat to the 2nd beat more prominent to cue the winds and 1st harp in with security. The first subdivision of the 2nd and 3rd beats can be lightly accented to help the syncopated entrances of the 1st horn. The last subdivision of the 3rd beat is bigger to cue in the 2nd harp and strings to the next measure.

Measure 5 - Beat pattern 6 in 6. The second subdivision of the 1st beat lightly accented with a perceivable ictus to cue the 3rd horn in.

Measure 6 - Beat pattern 6 in 6. This empty bar is structurally important, so it should not be "left alone", but held until the lingering sound from the last bar is dead. Upbeat to the next measure should be given clearly in the last two subdivisions of the 2nd beat. This 2nd beat can be imagined as being part of measure 7, making it a parallel to measure 4.

Measure 7 - Beat pattern 6 in 2. Cues similar to the 2nd and 3rd beats of measure 4.

Measures 8-9 - Beat pattern 6 in 6. Second subdivision of the 1st beat and first subdivision of the 2nd beat lightly accented for the horns. The left hand stops the string chords in m. 9.

Measure 10 - Beat pattern can be either 6 in 6 as before or 6 in 2, depending on the desired effects (*ritenuto* etc.). Diminuendo throughout the measure shown in the left hand.

Personal remarks: This opening is famous for a reason and thus it needs proper attention. A conversation with the solo flutist is unavoidable. The tone color of measures 4-10 should be kept as *dolcissimo* as possible, as can be inferred from the orchestration; almost as if the performers are afraid of “touching” their tones.

Segment: FT2 (measure 11-20)

Context: Second instance of the Faun Theme.

Form: 10-bar sentence divided into 6+4: a 4-bar theme + 2-bar sequence (antecedent); then 4 bars of a motif & fragments (consequent).

Layers:

1. Foreground

Flute, then Oboe (from m. 14); Clarinet (from m. 17); 1st Violins (from m. 18).

2. Middleground

Horns (from m. 13-15).

3. Background

All other instruments.

Conducting grammar:

Measures 11-12 - Beat pattern 9 in 9. Subdivisions can be shown subtly from the 2nd beat, to lead the flute solo and help the string tremolos.

Measures 13-14 - Beat pattern 9 in 9. Subdivisions indicated more clearly, though in legato; especially upbeats to beat beginnings, in order to help the horns and cue the oboe. The crescendo in measure 13 is shown in the left hand, yet it should not be a big one. Take care that the 1st and 3rd horns do not join in the crescendo.

Measures 15-16 - Beat pattern 9 in 9. Subdivisions beaten with legato gestures. Cues for 2nd bassoon and 1st clarinet in 2nd beat of measure 16. An important point to remember: The written crescendo in measure 16 is only in the clarinet and bassoons. According to taste, the last beats of these both bars are places that can have a slight tempo change, which can be attested to by the remark *expressif* on the oboe in measure 15.

Measures 17-19 - Beat pattern 9 in 3. No subdivisions in these measures. The larger durati shown will help both the two-bar *crescendo* in measure 17-18 and the wave crescendos in measure 19. Care should be taken that unlike the transition from measure 16 to 17, between measure 17 and 18 there is no drop in dynamics; the crescendo is continuous. Cue in the 1st violins clearly by turning to them just before measure 18. The *forte* dynamic on the first beat of measure 19 should be taken seriously and thus be the loudest point of the motif there, as Debussy slowly takes away voices from the orchestration during measure 19. The three “wave crescendos” of that bar can be thus

performed as almost an immediate echo effect, starting at lower volumes after the first time, and preparing the more prominent diminuendo of the next measure.

Measure 20 - Beat pattern 9 in 9. The first two beats subdivided with a legato ictus, the last beat with more defined ictuses to prepare the next segment. Diminuendo and *retenu* throughout the bar, which can be expanded quite a lot.

Personal remarks: This segment evokes the images of a sleepy Faun reluctantly fighting sleep, stretching itself, relaxing. The music still does not have any stress in it and the conductor can reflect this by having a confident but relaxed posture throughout this segment.

Segment: FT3 (measure 21-25)

Context: Third instance of the Faun Theme.

Form: 5-measure sentence, divided into 2 (antecedent) + 3 (consequent).

Layers:

1. Foreground

Flute Solo

2. Middleground

Motifs in Strings (Viola, Cello); later Winds in measure 25

3. Background

Harp arpeggios, pizzicatos

Conducting grammar:

Measure 21 - Beat pattern 12 in 12. The low E in the 2nd and 4th horns must not be allowed to be out of tune, since it is in a tricky register and played unisono. The solo flute has the marking *légèrement et expressif* (lightly and expressive), which is an instruction for the conductor to keep the balance of the orchestration at such a level that the flute is still easily audible with its crescendo only going up to around *mf* in volume. First beat subdivisions must be given clearly, for the pizzicato in the basses and the 1st Harp arpeggios starting on the second eighth note. The second beat can have more relaxed subdivision ictuses. The third and fourth beats are more visibly subdivided with a light marcato ictus to ensure correct rhythm in the flute solo, the 2nd Harp's offbeat chord, and the tone change in the celli.

Measure 22 - Beat pattern 9 in 9. A legato gesture throughout to aid both the solo and the eighth notes in the Violas and Cellos. In the last beat the diminuendo is shown with the left hand and a short breath space is left at the very end, best done with a small ritenuto for the flutist before starting the next bar.

Measure 23 - Beat pattern 12 in 12. The same as bar 21 until the last beat, where the Violins and Cellos need a noticeable third subdivision ictus to reliably play their sixteenth notes.

Measure 24 - Beat pattern 9 in 9. Subdivision ictuses legato; the crescendo throughout the entire bar, shown via the posture rather than the left hand, can be augmented by making a very subtle accelerando; but then the lead-in to the next bar must be pulled back a bit to balance the phrase. The durata needs to be shown clearly in the last beat for this.

Measure 25 - Beat pattern 9 in 9. Legato gesture with left hand showing the whole-bar diminuendo; a clear upbeat to the last beat for the string pizzicato. Bigger durati in the last beat to show a ritenuto leading into the next segment.

Personal remarks: This segment has a very bare and light orchestration, which nevertheless foreshadows things to come (m. 22 viola-cello motif). The feelings this passage should evoke are of a relaxed silence, perhaps meditative, but still positive, with the flourishes in the flute denoting a slight stirring of stronger emotions, yet still remaining checked by the tranquility of the scene.

Segment: FT4 (measure 26-30)

Context: Fourth instance of the Faun Theme.

Form: 5-bar sentence divided into 2 (antecedent) + 2 (consequent) + 1 (concluding)

Layers:

1. Foreground

Flutes all throughout; Clarinet (m. 30)

2. Middleground

Harps; Viola, Cello (m. 27); 2nd Violin, Viola (m. 28); 2nd violin (m. 30);
Horn (m. 30)

3. Background

All strings (m. 26); Bassoons, Cello, Basses (m. 28-30); Viola (m. 29-30)

Conducting grammar:

Measure 26 - Beat pattern 12 in 12. Ensure that the horns are in tune. Show subdivisions clearly with a light ictus within a legato pattern, as in measure 23. Make sure cellos are not late with the tone change on the 3rd beat.

Measure 27 - Beat pattern 9 in 9. Durati between subdivisions slightly bigger to prevent both possible rushing from the flutes and dragging from the viola & celli. The left hand has to be actively guiding the crescendo-diminuendo forks in the flutes.

Measure 28 - Beat pattern 12 in 12. Legato gesture throughout, the left hand again guiding the crescendo-diminuendo in the strings. The violas are a curious case here, they do not have a written dynamic, and they do not have the same crescendo-diminuendo as the other strings do, yet they are in a higher register than all the strings. This will probably create balance issues which the conductor must solve in rehearsal. A possible solution is the obvious one in which the violas join in the crescendo-diminuendo. Another one is keeping the violas in a fixed but audible dynamic (according to the acoustics of the performance hall, a *mp* or *mf* should be enough) and having the bassoon trills on beats 2 and 4 provide the necessary support, which - I believe - is what Debussy intended. The very last subdivision of the 4th beat has to have a clearly flicked ictus for the bassoon to end its trill with the grace note.

Measure 29 - Beat pattern 9 in 9. This bar has to convey the feeling of relaxation and arrival, and a measured *ritenuto* in the last two beats might help to that effect. Take care during rehearsal that the 2nd violins do not rush into the C# in the last beat, but listen to the flute's triplets.

Measure 30 - Beat pattern 12 in 12. Actively conduct the 2nd violins until the last beat, showing the D#-C# undulations clearly in a legato ictus. The last four subdivisions (third of 3rd beat and all of the 4th beat) have to be more marcato and determined to cue in the clarinet and horn¹.

Personal remarks: These 5 measures have a very important motif presented for the first time, namely the flourishes of the flutes in measures 28-29. This motif has to be presented most expressively and with attention to every note in it, for the listener to recognise it easily when it comes up later; especially because it is built on a cleverly concealed Tristan chord.

2. Development

Segment: B1a (m. 31-36)

Context: First idea of the development: Resetting the harmonic context by breaking the previously established tonal center around E - B (I-V) using augmented sixth chords and whole-tone scales.

Form: 6-bar period divided into 3 (antecedent) + 3 (consequent).

Layers:

1. Foreground

Clarinet, Flute

¹Side note: There is a practical problem here in the 3rd horn. Debussy writes a muted B immediately at the beginning of measure 31, yet there is no time for the 3rd hornist to insert a mute from the regular playing position, as they are already playing an open B in this last beat. Most hornists will not even refer this to the conductor and will opt to hand-stop the B at measure 31 to achieve Debussy's demands. Most conductors will accept this also. This method, which while not exactly what Debussy wants, is still a very good and easy solution. There is another way, though much more unorthodox and unstable, that can be employed: The player can hold the mute a few centimeters from the bell while playing the first B and immediately insert it when required. This compromises the intonation of the instrument a little because the instrument will be naturally higher without the player's hand inside the bell. Yet the short duration of the open tone can be an excuse to use this second method.

2. Middleground

Cello (m. 31, 34); Bassoon (m. 33, 36)

3. Background

Harp; Horns; Strings

Conducting grammar:

Measure 31 - Beat pattern 12 in 12. All subdivisions throughout the measure have to be shown. The 1st beat starts with a strong ictus, then two lighter marcato ictuses; for the *f* in the clarinet and *sfz* in the horns, also to cue the harp in at the second subdivision. First subdivision of the 2nd beat light staccato for the cello entrance. First two subdivisions of the 3rd beat legato, last subdivision marcato to instigate movement in cellos and clarinet. 4th beat legato ictus throughout.

Measure 32 - Beat pattern 6 in 3. All beat beginnings in the bar should be given a short marcato ictus, getting stronger every beat. Imagine a crescendo in ictus intensity. This will help the crescendo in the clarinet and the *sfz* pizzicati in the strings, as well as guiding the harp's grace notes. In the 3rd beat, the decrescendo in the clarinet part should not influence the strong ictus gesture needed for the strings and harp.

Measure 33 - Beat pattern 6 in 3. Legato gestures throughout, getting bigger each time, with marcato ictuses. Some interpretations pull the 3rd beat of this measure slightly back. This might be useful in giving the trill in the flute some more time to be heard and preparing the next measure's *sfz* but care must be taken so the rubato does not affect the recently established flow of this segment right in the middle.

Measure 34 - Beat pattern 12 in 12. The same as measure 31, the only difference is that the basses have a pizzicato in the second subdivision of the 1st beat and thus need to be coordinated with the harp.

Measure 35 - Beat pattern 6 in 3. The same as measure 32.

Measure 36 - Beat pattern 6 in 3. Mostly the same as measure 33, but this time a *rubato* on the last beat is encouraged to lead into the next segment, while the 3rd beat of the bar should not have strong accents to prepare the *doux et expressif* (soft and expressive) oboe solo in the next segment. Take note that the flute crescendo goes to *f* this time and not *mf* like in measure 33, and the bassoon's dynamic carries over into the next measure. We can infer that Debussy wants a bigger volume from all the playing instruments here than at measure 33: this way, the next segment's starting piano dynamic will be made more effective.

Personal remarks: This segment has a transparent orchestration with a variety of colors, which enable the conductor to show differences even within a short segment. The length of the muted horn chords, the volume of the string *sfz* pizzicati, and even the theme repetition on the flute (tone color) can be manipulated to sound different in this segment.

Segment: B1b (m. 37-43)

Context: Three new motifs based on the F# Dorian mode and the Tristan chord on G#.

Form: Compound sentence of 7 measures, divided into 5 (2 for Dorian theme + 3 for Syncopated theme) + 2 (echo of Dorian theme)

Layers:

1. Foreground

Oboe (m. 37-39); 1st and 2nd Violins (m. 40-43); Flute & Clarinet (m. 42-43)

2. Middleground

Viola (m. 37-38, 42); Oboe, English horn, 1st Horn (m. 41); Cello (m. 42); Horns (m. 43).

3. Background

Long tones in winds; quarter-note movements in winds and strings; pizzicati in basses.

Conducting grammar:

Measure 37 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture, large durati to allow for freedom in the oboe solo. Violas can be brought out to indicate the interesting tone color of the orchestration.

Measure 38 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. The same as measure 37. Prepare the first beat of the next bar for the basses, horns and English horn with a small flick.

Measure 39 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. The left hand should indicate the beginning of the 2-bar crescendo by holding the palm upwardly open but not moving much. The 3rd beat should be flicked slightly to cue the clarinet in and turn to the 1st violins for their entrance in the next bar.

Measure 40 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Every beat beginning lightly flicked, durati reasonably long and with direction. The Syncopated Theme in the violins should start soft as their crescendo only goes to *mf* in the next bar. The left hand indicates this crescendo by leading the sound upwards.

Measure 41 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. The bar-long decrescendo is shown in the left hand. The 3rd beat of the bar must have a large durata to pull the tempo

back a bit. A little rubato here can be thus justified if this bar is treated as the real “end” of the segment; the next two measures are only “echoes” of the motif in measure 38.

Measure 42 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture throughout. The crescendo in this bar should not be too exaggerated, a measured lifting of the left hand should suffice.

Measure 43 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Again legato gesture throughout like the last bar. The crescendo can be more here as it leads to the new segment. Some interpretations hold back the tempo at the end of this bar, which apart from practical considerations for the clarinets², is not too important if left out.

Personal remarks: The motifs in this section are quite important for the piece so the conductor should have a clear image in their mind on how the motifs should be performed. Voice leading in the middleground layer should also be pointed out in rehearsals.

Segment: B1c (m. 44-50)

Context: Musical expression of a “stream of consciousness”, brief chaos and rising temper, culminating in the first climax of the Development, then calming down.

Form: 7-bar sentence divided into 4 (2+2 antecedent) + 3 (consequent)

² The clarinets have only two beats' time to change from A clarinets to B $\flat$ clarinets. The elongation of the last two beats thus give them a few more milliseconds' time for the change. Some clarinettists opt for a “cheat” here, in that they switch instruments at measure 38 and play measures 39-43 on B $\flat$ clarinets. The resulting change in timbre is hard to notice for most musicians.

Layers:

1. Foreground

Flutes (m. 44, 50); Violins (m. 45, 47); English horn, Clarinets (m. 44, 46); Bassoons (m. 44); Horns (m. 47-49); 2nd Harp (m. 50)

2. Middleground

Clarinets (m. 44); Viola, Cello, 3rd Horn (m. 45); Violins (m. 46-47)

3. Background

All long tones and quarter-note movements.

Conducting grammar:

Measure 44 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. Legato gesture for 3 beats, then the last beat should start with a short but curt flick for the 1st and 2nd violins for their triplet cue. Durati going from beats 1 to 2 and 3 to 4 have to feel more “sticky” and show a definite intent for the crescendi of the lower strings.

Measure 45 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture throughout. The durati of the 3 beats in this bar should be progressively larger to show the crescendo to the forte dynamic in the next bar.

Measure 46 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. The first climax point of the Development section is here, emphasized with the inverted Tristan chord on G (B ♭ - D ♭ - F - G). Marked though still legato ictuses for the first 2 beats, to guide the syncopating violins and the main motif in the English horn and clarinets. Take care that the orchestration does not completely drown out this motif, which Debussy draws extra attention to with the markings *forte* and *très en dehors* (very prominent). Then, a completely legato 3rd beat with an intense durata to prepare the *forte* Tristan chord in the next bar.

Measure 47 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture. Strong marcato accents for all the beats. The motif in the violins shares the spotlight with the Syncopated Theme in the horns, which should be prominently brought out.

Measure 48 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture throughout.

Measure 49 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture, slightly bigger duration than the previous bar, to show the beginning of the *retenu*.

Measure 50 - Beat pattern can be one of two options, depending on desired effect and the capability of the orchestra: either subdivided 6 in 3, or 3 in 3.

Without subdividing the beats, the *retenu* is harder to control but gives a more ethereal effect, especially if no subdivision follows in the next segment marked *1^{er} mouv^t* (1st tempo). The absence of subdivision here can provide a welcome contrast with the beginning of the piece.

Personal remarks: A feeling of “being cut short” pervades this segment, as both prominent motifs in measures 44-47 do not have any room to expand but are quickly quenched. Contrast to the B1a segment comes in the shape of the whole-tone scale being used for slowing down the music (m. 48-50) instead of accelerating it.

Segment: B1d (m. 51-54)

Context: First anticlimax in the Development.

Form: 4-bar period divided into 2 (antecedent) + 2 (consequent).

Layers:

1. Foreground

Clarinet (m. 51-54); Oboe (m. 53-54)

2. Middleground

1st and 2nd Violins (m. 51-52); 1st Violins, 2nd Flute, 1st Horn (m. 53-54)

3. Background

Harp, Low strings, Bassoons, Horns; Flutes (m. 52), 2nd Violins (m. 53-54)

Conducting grammar:

Measure 51 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture in the whole bar.

Measure 52 - Same as measure 51.

Measure 53 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture; lightly flicked ictuses at beginnings of beats to cue in the 2nd flute, guide movement of 8th notes, show pizzicati in the cellos and cue in the oboe in the last beat. Take care so that the horn does not do an unwanted crescendo.

Measure 54 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture, lightly flicked 1st beat, then fully legato for 2 beats. Durata gestures for these last 2 beats can be beaten in a quite drawn out way, to make a little unwritten structural ritenuto into the next big subsection of the piece.

Personal remarks: This anticlimax has a delicate, subtle timbral change from $A \flat_{7+}$ to an $A \flat_7$ via the alteration from G to $G \flat$. As this alteration most prominently happens in the Clarinet part, after an $E \flat$, it tends to sound like part of an $E \flat$ minor chord. By allowing the Celli to play their $A \flat$ pizzicato on measure 53 a hair louder, the Dominant function of this chord can be brought out more; enabling it to lead convincingly in a deliberate cadential progression to the following $D \flat$ major chord on measure 55.

Segment: B2a

Context: Exact center of the piece: Love Theme and first build-up to the second climax in the Development.

Form: 8-bar sentence divided into 4 (antecedent) + 4 (consequent).

Layers:

1. Foreground

All wind instruments playing the Love Theme and the “a” melodic minor theme unisono.

2. Middleground

Syncopations in the higher string instruments; 2nd Violins, Violas (m. 59-60); 1st Violins (m. 60).

3. Background

Lower strings throughout, Horns and Bassoons when they are not playing the unisono themes.

Conducting grammar:

Measure 55 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Gestures as legato as possible, with a barely noticeable flick impulse on every beat to help the syncopations of the strings. Durati are not necessarily long but have to be gestured very deliberately slow and drawn out. The left hand has to keep the orchestra at the low *p* dynamic in this bar.

Measure 56 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Gestures again are extremely legato, this time even without the subtle flicks. The crescendo in the theme is shown by the left hand, which can take over from the right hand in the last 2 beats of this bar and the 1st beat of the next bar. Take care that the crescendo is not too loud too early.

Measure 57 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. The same as measure 55, but the left hand is the main guide of the melody.

Measure 58 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Again with a very legato gesture and with the left hand guiding the melody, but preparing the subito piano of the next bar. Structurally a ritenuto is not a good idea in this bar and should be avoided.

Measure 59 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture but with more discernible flicks on every beat to help both the small note changes in the strings and the syncopated motion in the melody. The crescendo should not start until at least the first one and a half beats of this bar have sounded the *piano* dynamic. The left hand should control this volume over three measures with a diagonal, open palmed gesture going from inside (right) back to outside (left) front.

Measure 60 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. First two beats with a flicked legato gesture, with the left hand again carefully guiding the crescendo. The right hand should give a clear marcato upbeat for the next bar's powerful A minor chord.

Measure 61 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture with subtle flicks for the string syncopations. The left hand should continue the crescendo gesture for the winds, and the right hand should show both a clear upbeat going from the 2nd to the 3rd beat, and a large durata on this 3rd beat for an eventual rubato on the triplet of the winds.

Measure 62 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture with small flicks. Take care that the last beat of the bar does not have an undue decrescendo in preparation for the subito pp dynamic of the next bar, but continues in the attained *più forte* dynamic.

Personal remarks: The challenging aspect during this segment is going to be the breathing places for the winds playing the melody. The conductor can address this during rehearsal and ask for different breathing places for individual sections, which should solve the problem. The multitude of instruments playing the main themes in this segment leaves a lot of room for different tone colors, which the conductor can try out in rehearsal if at first the color of the orchestra does not fit his sound ideal.

Segment: B2b

Context: The second climax of the Development, and at the same time the main climax of the piece; full orchestration for the only time.

Form: 8-bar antecedent structure of a larger 16-bar sentence, divided into 4+4 (“Outer right” and “inner left” pages of the “virtual bifolio”).

Layers:

1. Foreground

All strings except Basses.

2. Middleground

All triplet rhythms.

3. Background

Arpeggios in Harps; long tones in Bassoons and Basses.

Conducting grammar:

Measure 63 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture, slow and intense duration.

Here in this whole segment, the rhythmic undulations beneath the main melody (Love Theme) do not have to be extremely precise, because the intended effect is a blur of sound; so any sharp ictus is to be avoided. The

conductor's focus should be on the tone color of the melody and the balancing of the orchestra. The main theme can be afforded even more room to be "sung out" and pulled back and forth, given Debussy's indication of *très expressif et très soutenu* (very expressive and very sustained); which in the previous segment where this theme was presented by the winds, only had *expressif* instead of *très expressif*. Take care that the whole orchestra maintains a *pp* sound while correctly balancing the layers, and that the little decrescendo gestures in the winds do not start too loud every time. No crescendo until m. 65.

Measure 64 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. The same as m. 63.

Measure 65 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. The same as m. 63. A crescendo of two bars' length starts here, and it is open to interpretation as to what to do with it. At the end of the crescendo, the given dynamic is *mp* (m. 67); but is it the objective of the crescendo, or the volume that the orchestra falls down to after expanding? I tend to think it is the latter; this way, the sound waves composed by Debussy can be fully expressed and performed. Otherwise it runs the risk of being too "Wagnerian" in performance.

Measure 66 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. The same as m. 65. As previously mentioned, the crescendo is to be played out and comes down to *mp* at the beginning of the next bar.

Measure 67 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. In beats number 2 and 3, the ictus can have a little "push" to lead the strings into their off-beat movements of this Syncopated Theme. In keeping with the previous *très expressif et très soutenu* direction, this theme can be afforded more space and time than its previous iterations.

Measure 68 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Only in the 3rd beat a small pushed ictus is required, otherwise the same as before. The *crescendo molto* instruction is to be taken seriously and the dynamic can go to *più forte-fortissimo* levels before dropping down to *mf* in the next bar.

Measure 69 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. The same as in m. 67. Biggest crescendo of the whole section to reach *ff* in the next bar.

Measure 70 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture. The climax and simultaneously the loudest point of the entire work. The decrescendo to *forte* is better shown with the posture instead of the left hand.

Personal remarks: In these last two segments, but especially this one, the Faun is at the zenith of his expressive powers and sensual desire. The tone colors of the middleground and background layers have to be balanced appropriately to not allow any one instrument to stand out, but be perceived as a multi-faceted single instrument. The same applies for the strings who have the melody; so in effect the segments B2a and B2b have to sound as if only two instruments were playing.

Segment: B2c

Context: An “exhaustion” after the climax leading to the Anticlimax.

Form: 8-bar consequent structure of a 16-bar sentence, divided into 4+4 (“Inner right” and “outer left” pages of the “virtual bifolio”).

Layers:

1. Foreground

Strings when they are playing the MMT, except Basses; Solo Violin (m. 75-78); 1st horn (m. 74).

2. Middleground

Triplet figures in Winds and Harp (m. 71-73); 1st Horn (m. 75-76); 1st Clarinet (m. 75-76); 1st Oboe (m. 77-78).

3. Background

Basses; Bassoons; Horns; 1st Clarinet (m. 77-78).

Conducting grammar:

Measure 71 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture. The 2nd beat should have a clear marcato ictus followed by a slow intensive durata to show both the staccato in the MMT and the “residual crescendo” towards the next bar.

Measure 72 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Similar to measure 71 but the left hand has to guide the decrescendo that will actually continue over the next bar into m. 74.

Measure 73 - Beat pattern 3 in 3³. The 2nd beat again has a clear marcato ictus for the main theme staccato, and its durata prepares the 3rd beat *sfz* in the Harp. The left hand can show this cue while also guiding the decrescendo.

Measure 74 - Beat pattern 3 in 3, but the last beat can be subdivided for a *ritenuto* (see footnote 34). Legato gesture. The 2nd Horn should be discouraged from “pushing” the sound when the tone changes and stay as legato as possible. Inversely, the 1st horn can be allowed to push the sound just a little bit for the sake of expressiveness.

Measure 75 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture. No flicks are required to help the clarinet and horn, but the durata can be “painted” with more intent.

³ NB: The MMT coming to an end in this bar leads some interpretations to make a *ritenuto* at the last beat or even start the *ritenuto* the 2nd beat. For structural reasons laid out in the previous chapter, I have omitted this “traditional” *ritenuto* but included one in the very next bar, for the same reasons. This way, the passage echoes m. 54-55 (the transition to segment B2a - Love Theme) and creates an internal reference point to provide more cohesion.

Measure 76 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. The same as m. 75, but a little rubato can be made at the end of the bar to prepare both the jump in the Solo Violin and the *pp* dynamic; no subdivision is needed. Take care that the 1st Horn does not make an automatic crescendo on its ascending 8th notes.

Measure 77 - Beat pattern 3 in 3. Legato gesture. The Solo Violin can be asked to play a tiny bit louder if the Oboe has trouble with the *pp* dynamic. The left hand can guide the unwritten but implicit diminuendo to *ppp* in the next bar.

Measure 78 - Beat pattern 3 in 3, but the 2nd beat should be subdivided very subtly and the 3rd beat very perceptibly; this last subdivision will serve to cue the tempo for the next segment. The *ppp* dynamic should be insisted upon, as it is the most important element in this bar which is the obvious Anticlimax.

Personal remarks: This segment provides ample opportunity for differing interpretations because of its fragmented but cohesive melodic material. Structurally it looks more boxy and limiting, but it is a testament to Debussy's genius that this whole passage can sound completely organic even if next to no liberty in the structure and melody is taken.

3. Recapitulation

Segment: FT'1

Context: Beginning of the Recapitulation; 1st Faun Theme of the Recapitulation.

Form: 7-bar antecedent structure of a larger 15-bar Sentence, divided into 4+3.

Layers:

1. Foreground

Solo Flute (m. 79-82); 1st Oboe (m. 83-84); descending sextuplets in Winds (m. 85).

2. Middleground

Sextuplet oscillations in Horns, Clarinets and Bassoons (m. 83-84); Strings except Basses (m. 85)

3. Background

Harp arpeggios (m. 79-82); muted strings and string pizzicati (m. 79-84); Clarinets and Bassoons (m. 82); Basses throughout.

Conducting grammar:

Measure 79 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. Legato gesture. Take care not to take a very slow tempo so the Solo Flute can play the complete theme in one breath.

Measure 80 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. Legato gesture. No hard flicks on the ictuses to give the flutist freedom in the theme.

Measure 81 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. Same as measure 80, with the left hand guiding the crescendo.

Measure 82 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. Same as the previous measure, but the left hand makes decrescendo. In the last beat, the right hand stops moving and gives a lively upbeat for the next measure's tempo change.

Measure 83⁴ - Beat pattern 4 in 4. Legato gesture but with decisively flicked ictuses. The 3rd beat's *durata* should be shown with intent to prepare the pizzicato of the strings in the 4th beat. The left hand shows the crescendo in the 4th beat with the following gesture: Palm facing body, hand position as if holding a basketball with fingers open, arm moving obliquely from inside right to outside left. At the end of the movement, the palm turns towards the orchestra to signal the immediate change to *p-pp* dynamics in the next bar.

Measure 84 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. The same as measure 83, but the left hand gesture change to *pp* can be even more pronounced.

Measure 85 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. Legato gesture with light flicks on every beat. The 4th beat's *durata* can be slightly slowed down to prepare the tempo change of the next segment.

Personal remarks: The recapitulation brings with it a sense of fun after the B2 subsection's intensive music full of longing and desire. This character change must be brought out especially in the instruments who have the main theme.

Segment: FT'2

Context: Second Faun Theme of the Recapitulation.

Form: 8-bar consequent structure of a 15-bar Sentence, divided into 4+4.

⁴ In the original Fromont edition, which is reprinted in the Dover Study edition, here all four horns have the direction "*sourdines*" (plural) to put their mutes in, even though the 4th horn does not play until m. 94 (rehearsal number 10). This indication causes confusion later on in m. 92 and 94.

Layers:

1. Foreground

1st Oboe (m. 86-89); English horn (m. 90-91); descending 16ths in Flutes, 1st & 2nd Violins, Violas (m. 92-93); F# on the English horn and stopped 1st Horn (m. 92-93).

2. Middleground

Sextuplets in Flutes, Clarinets, Bassoons, Horns, 2nd Violins and Violas (m. 90-93); 2nd Harp glissandi (m. 90-91)

3. Background

1st Harp arpeggios; all long tones and pizzicati in the Strings.

Conducting grammar:

Measures 86-89 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. These four measures exactly mirror the previous segment's beginning with the only differences being the tonality (E ♭ major) and the instrument playing the solo theme (Oboe instead of Flute), and thus are to be conducted much the same way⁵.

Measure 90 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. Legato gesture with light staccato flicks. The 4th beat ictus can be a bit stronger than the rest for the cueing in of the pizzicati, the harp arpeggio and the flutes, which should be as simultaneous as possible.

Measure 91 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. The same as measure 90.

Measure 92 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. Legato gesture. Light staccato ictus on the 1st beat for the Flutes, but a light marcato ictus on the 3rd beat for the English

⁵ NB: At the end of measure 89, the clarinets change back to A Clarinets, but this time Debussy affords them 3 beats' worth of time to accommodate for the change.

horn and Horn⁶. The parallel crescendo-diminuendo gesture of clarinets and violas should be balanced so that it is still audible even in their soft dynamics.

Measure 93 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. Legato gesture. The last two beats should be subdivided in 3 - in line with the sextuplets in the clarinets - to lead the *retenu* and prepare the next segment's new slower tempo.

Personal remarks: This segment and the preceding one form a 15-bar continuous structure that in all its orchestrational and structural similarity, nevertheless feels like two very different musics. I feel like these two segments are representing perspective changes in the "narrative" of the music, as in the poem where Mallarmé shifts from using the first person to the second person singular pronouns.

Segment: FT'3 + ST & MMT

Context: The "real" Recapitulation with the FT in original tonality; Third FT of the Recapitulation.

Form: 6-bar Sentence structure divided into three groups of 2+2+2.

Layers:

1. Foreground

Flutes throughout; first stand 1st Violins (m. 95).

2. Middleground

First stand 1st Violins (m. 96-99); Clarinets, Solo Cello (m. 96-97); 1st Horn (m. 98-99), Antique Cymbals.

⁶ In the Eulenburg Urtext edition, Frank Reinisch adds a "*senza sord.*" indication for the 1st horn at the beginning of this bar, which is absent from the original Fromont/Dover edition. This addition can be justified because the 1st horn has "*bouché*" (hand-stopped) and "*naturel*" (open) indications in m. 93, which obviously cannot be performed with the mute in. But m. 92's "cuivré" F# tone will sound very different when played muted as opposed to open, and the soft orchestration here leads me to think that Debussy's intention was a muted cuivré which will then blend better with the next bar's *bouché* and open sounds.

3. Background

Tremolos and long tones in strings, long tones in Horns, Bassoons and Clarinets.

Conducting grammar:

Measure 94⁷ - Beat pattern 12 in 12. This subdivision is a practical solution to the otherwise too slow durati required of the tempo indication in this bar: *Dans le 1^{er} mouv^t avec plus de langueur* - “in the first tempo with more languor (fatigue)”. The triple subdivision is already there from measure 93, with the retenu in the last two beats. The conductor should then carry this subdivision into this bar; wherein the FT in the flutes will fall perfectly in line with the divisions. There are no instruments in this bar that this subdivision would disturb; but the very last subdivision of the 4th beat should take a little time to prepare the next bar’s different beat pattern. Legato gesture throughout the bar and very lightly flicked ictuses for the subdivisions.

Measure 95 - Beat pattern 4 in 8. The double subdivision as opposed to the triple in the last bar stems from the ST played by the first stand of the 1st Violins. The tempo is still too slow for a healthy legato gesture, and the continuation of the FT in the Flutes allows for a double subdivision; even allowing for an optional pullback in the last beat of the bar.

Measure 96 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. Legato gesture. The *mf* dynamic and following crescendo in the Flutes should be clearly audible for the following drop to *p* to be sufficiently effective. The left hand should play an active role in shaping the theme in the Flutes.

⁷ The Eulenburg Urtext edition indicates *senza sord.* for the 3rd and 4th horns here, whereas in the Fromont/Dover edition they are absent. Precedent for this low E tone exists in m. 21 where the 2nd and 4th horns are not muted. Another clue is m. 100 where the Fromont/Dover edition writes *sourdine* for the 3rd and 4th horns. Thus we can infer that here the horns should not be muted.

Measure 97 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. Again a legato gesture. The dynamic drop to *p* at the beginning of the bar is shown with the left hand; and it should keep the orchestra insistently at a low dynamic.

Measure 98 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. Legato gesture. If desired, a rubato can be made at the end of this bar, with the help of “hidden” subdivisions. The crescendo-decrescendo wave should be loud enough to be discernible but not too subtle to pass unnoticed.

Measure 99 - Beat pattern 8 in 4. Legato gesture, subdivisions only in the last two beats, where an obvious structural pullback is necessary to prepare the last segment⁸ before the Coda. The diminuendo can be almost exaggerated to *a niente*.

Personal remarks: This segment reconciles the FT and the MMT that was so prominent in the Development. The narrative reaches its “happy resignation” phase, with no more grand gestures and emotions, and the current environment gains prominence instead of events past.

Segment: FT'4 Full

Context: FT in its “full” form as in the beginning, Fourth FT of the Recapitulation

Form: 6-bar period divided into 3+3.

Layers:

1. Foreground

Solo Flute (m. 100-102, 105); Solo Cello (m. 100-101); 1st Oboe (m. 103-105)

⁸ The 2nd horn is still *con sord.* here. The absent *senza sord.* indications in the other parts should not confuse the 2nd horn player as it stays muted from m. 83 to the end.

2. Middleground

1st Harp (m. 100-101); English horn (m. 102); 1st Oboe (m. 102); 1st Violins (including first stand), 2nd Violins, Cellos (m. 105)

3. Background

Horns, Clarinets, Bassoons, Violas, Basses, Cellos except Solo Cello all throughout; first stand 1st Violins (m. 102)

Conducting grammar:

Measure 100 - Beat pattern 12 in 12. Legato gesture, but subdivisions have to be shown clear enough to ensure the 8th notes in the harp fall in place, and the FT in the Solo Flute and Solo Cello are coordinated.

Measure 101 - The same as measure 100.

Measure 102 - Beat pattern 9 in 9. Legato gesture with legato ictuses. subdivision *durati* should be drawn larger to slow the tempo down. This bar acts as a “false ending” before the coda so a good amount of liberty can be taken in the *retenu* for the following part of the segment.

Measure 103 - Beat pattern 9 in 9. Legato gesture. Even though the slow tempo is better led by subdivisions, this bar should be conducted as if there were none. Especially true if in the beginning (measure 3) the solo Flute took the corresponding motif faster than the original tempo.

Measure 104 - Beat pattern 9 in 9. Legato gesture. In the first two beats the subdivisions should still be “hidden” as in the last bar, but in the last beats they should be shown to prepare the *très retenu* of the next bar.

Measure 105 - Beat pattern 9 in 9. Legato gesture. A triple subdivision is necessary in this bar for the main theme. The 8th duplets in the strings can be

reliably shown if the second subdivisions of beats 1 and 3 are flicked a bit stronger.

Personal remarks: The doubling of the Flute with Solo Cello - with the assumption that the cello's tone color is the closest to the human voice - gives the FT a more human element. This element can be made even more effective and fleeting: By asking the strings (that have reverted to their normal positions after playing on the fingerboard in the previous segment) to play from a position close to the fingerboard at m. 103 and move closer to the bridge over 3 bars; in effect ending up "on the bridge" at the start of the Coda.

Segment: Coda

Context: Fragment of the FT, ending Tristan chords.

Form: 5-bar structure divided into 2 (theme) + 3 (closing statement)

Layers:

1. Foreground

Harps (m. 106); 1st and 3rd Horns (m. 107); 1st Violins (m. 107) Solo Flute (m. 108-110)

2. Middleground

Horns (m. 106, 108-109); Antique Cymbals (m. 108-110); Harps (m. 108-109) 1st Violins (m. 108-109)

3. Background

All strings (m. 106); Cellos, Basses throughout; 2nd and 3rd Flutes (m. 108-110)

Conducting grammar:

Measure 106 - Beat pattern 4 in 8, in effect treating this bar as a normal 4/4 with subdivisions. Legato gestures with each subdivision flicked in order to coordinate the Harps playing unisono.

Measure 107 - Beat pattern 12 in 12. Legato gesture. Subdivisions before 16th-note movements (2nd beat second subdivision and 4th beat second subdivision) must be very clearly given so that the horns and violins are coordinated. Balance the tone colors of the instrument groups, taking care that the sounds blend instead of one group dominating. Do not forget to glance at the percussionist playing the Antique Cymbals to grab their attention.

Measure 108 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. In this bar, there is no need for subdividing as all entrances fall on beats. The conductor can use this opportunity to almost take this bar “out of the tempo” to create a feeling of timelessness. This also allows the Solo Flute to take a big breath before the next measure.

Measure 109 - Beat pattern 4 in 4. Legato gesture. Here one can subdivide only the second beat for the Solo Flute, and give a small but decisive upbeat to the 4th beat for the pizzicati. The left hand can guide the 1st violins’ decrescendo. Similar upbeat to the final bar.

Measure 110 - Beat pattern is not needed. Take care that the residual sound of the pizzicati blends with the flutes’ last sound.

Personal remarks: This short coda has some of the most sublime endings to a work of music, with a thin but brilliant orchestration. The sound colors of the Antique Cymbals and Harps must be brought out, if possible by placing them close to one another.

CONCLUSION

I have endeavoured to analyse this piece by delving not just into the score but also gaining knowledge about Debussy, his inspirations and surroundings. By placing this work in a more or less exact location in time and contextualising the world around it, my analysis made it possible to understand the work better when dissecting and rebuilding it. My musical ideas changed and matured even more during the analytical process as I was uncovering details with the help of all the background information I was learning. This led me to sometimes alter my initial musical ideas, which I had held just by looking at the score.

After I had read about Debussy's life more in depth for my analysis, I proceeded to try to read the original poem with my rather elementary French knowledge, both to myself and out loud. Of course some English translations were readily available but it was important to me to try to imagine what it sounded like. I found a recording by a French voice actor performing the poem online and tried to understand the sounds and cadences of the language. This exercise did indeed help me shape a sound image for the work.

Proceeding to the score, I first looked for the main themes and recurring motifs, and accentuated the barlines where I felt a structural change was happening. I wrote out the harmonies in every single measure under the score. This helped me to find out if there are any cadential progressions, if

tonal relations existed between sections and segments, and to what extent tonality was being pushed. In light of this harmonic analysis, at some points I had to alter my initial structural opinions. The overall formal outline of the work was thus formed from the melodic (“thematic”) and harmonic analysis. Individual smaller structures were decided upon the same general ideas. Scrutinizing the themes’ and motifs’ accompanying orchestration and trying to recreate the desired sounds in my inner hearing, I put the individual voices of the orchestra into a hierarchy which then translated to the “Layers” found in Chapter III.

Having done this preparation, I proceeded to actually try to beat time. I went measure by measure, deciding how to beat each bar according to the contents of that bar, including any cues for instruments. I wrote down the beat pattern and subdivisions in my own shorthand system, and expanded on it where necessary, especially for *ritenuto* measures.

What I have not done - on purpose - is to listen to the work while I was analysing it; I wanted to keep my mind free of any imitations or subconscious copying of another conductor’s interpretation. The only exception was the documentary with Georges Prêtre that I watched, to gain an insight to the rehearsal process. Thus, the resulting analysis and conducting grammar of Debussy’s work is as “my own” as it can be, as a professional musician who has already performed the work in an orchestra and is in no way a first-time listener.

A seminal work by any standard, Debussy's sublime *Prélude* still offers a great number of challenges for musicians. The various instrumental solos with a myriad of interpretive liberties available to the performers keeps the music fresh and new every time. The same can be said for the color palette of the orchestration, which in just 110 bars of music paints as vivid a picture as an artist of the calibre of a van Gogh or Monet.

For the conductor who is there to keep these all together, my analysis of the piece and the resulting conducting grammar provides an in-depth guide that I hope does this amazing piece of music some justice; and makes shaping their version of the story of the Faun a little easier.

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APPENDIX

The following is the full French original of Stéphane Mallarmé's poem, "L'après-midi d'un faune". I have decided against putting the first edition of 1876; instead I have decided on the second edition published in 1887 for the reason - already previously mentioned in this paper (see footnote 6) - that Debussy owned a copy of this second edition. All italics, spellings, fonts and spacings have been preserved where possible. Immediately following, the English translation by A. S. Kline may be found.

L'après-midi

D'UN

FAUNE

ÉGLOGUE

PAR

STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

Édition définitive

LE FAUNE

Ces nymphes, je les veux perpétuer.

Si clair,

Leur incarnat léger, qu'il voltige dans l'air

Assoupi de sommeils touffus.

Aimai-je un rêve ?

Mon doute, amas de nuit ancienne, s'achève

En maint rameau subtil, qui, demeuré les vrais

Bois mêmes, prouve, hélas ! que bien seul je m'offrais

Pour triomphe la faute idéale de roses —

Réfléchissons...

ou si les femmes dont tu gloses
Figurent un souhait de tes sens fabuleux !
Faune, l'illusion s'échappe des yeux bleus
Et froids, comme une source en pleurs, de la plus chaste :
Mais, l'autre tout soupirs, dis-tu qu'elle contraste
Comme brise du jour chaude dans ta toison ?
Que non ! par l'immobile et lasse pamoison
Suffoquant de chaleurs le matin frais s'il lutte,
Ne murmure point d'eau que ne verse ma flûte
Au bosquet arrosé d'accords ; et le seul vent
Hors des deux tuyaux prompt à s'exhaler avant
Qu'il disperse le son dans une pluie aride,
C'est, à l'horizon pas remué d'une ride,
Le visible et serein souffle artificiel
De l'inspiration, qui regagne le ciel.

Ô bords siciliens d'un calme marécage
Qu'à l'envi des soleils ma vanité saccage,
Tacites sous les fleurs d'étincelles, CONTEZ

» *Que je coupais ici les creux roseaux domptés*
» *Par le talent ; quand, sur l'or glauque de lointaines*
» *Verdures dédiant leur vigne à des fontaines,*
» *Ondoie une blancheur animale au repos :*
» *Et qu'au prélude lent où naissent les pipeaux,*
» *Ce vol de cygnes, non ! de naïades se sauve*
» *Ou plonge...*

Inerte, tout brûle dans l'heure fauve
Sans marquer par quel art ensemble détala
Trop d'hymen souhaité de qui cherche le *la* :

Alors m'éveillerais-je à la ferveur première,
Droit et seul, sous un flot antique de lumière,
Lys ! et l'un de vous tous pour l'ingénuité.

Autre que ce doux rien par leur lèvre ébruité,
Le baiser, qui tout bas des perfides assure,
Mon sein, vierge de preuve, atteste une morsure
Mystérieuse, due à quelque auguste dent ;
Mais, bast ! arcane tel élu pour confident
Le jonc vaste et jumeau dont sous l'azur on joue :
Qui, détournant à soi le trouble de la joue,
Rêve, dans un solo long, que nous amusions
La beauté d'alentour par des confusions
Fausses entre elle-même et notre chant crédule ;
Et de faire aussi haut que l'amour se module
Évanouir du songe ordinaire de dos
Ou de flanc pur suivis avec mes regards clos,
Une sonore, vaine et monotone ligne.

Tâche donc, instrument des fuites, ô maligne
Syrinx, de reflleurir aux lacs où tu m'attends !
Moi, de ma rumeur fier, je vais parler longtemps
Des déesses ; et, par d'idolâtres peintures,
À leur ombre enlever encore des ceintures :
Ainsi, quand des raisins j'ai sucé la clarté,
Pour bannir un regret par ma feinte écarté,
Rieur, j'élève au ciel d'été la grappe vide
Et, soufflant dans ses peaux lumineuses, avide
D'ivresse, jusqu'au soir je regarde au travers.

Ô nymphes, regonflons des SOUVENIRS divers.

- » *Mon œil, trouant les joncs, dardait chaque encolure*
 - » *Immortelle, qui noie en l'onde sa brûlure*
 - » *Avec un cri de rage au ciel de la forêt ;*
 - » *Et le splendide bain de cheveux disparaît*
 - » *Dans les clartés et les frissons, ô pierreries !*
 - » *J'accours ; quand, à mes pieds, s'entrejoignent (meurtries*
 - » *De la langueur goûtée à ce mal d'être deux)*
 - » *Des dormeuses parmi leurs seuls bras hasardeux ;*
 - » *Je les ravis, sans les désenlacer, et vole*
 - » *À ce massif, haï par l'ombrage frivole,*
 - » *De roses tarissant tout parfum au soleil,*
 - » *Où notre ébat au jour consumé soit pareil.*
- Je t'adore, courroux des vierges, ô délice
Farouche du sacré fardeau nu qui se glisse
Pour fuir ma lèvre en feu buvant, comme un éclair
Tressaille ! la frayeur secrète de la chair :
Des pieds de l'inhumaine au cœur de la timide
Que délaisse à la fois une innocence, humide
De larmes folles ou de moins tristes vapeurs.
- » *Mon crime, c'est d'avoir, gai de vaincre ces peurs*
 - » *Traîtresses, divisé la touffe échevelée*
 - » *De baisers que les dieux gardaient si bien mêlée ;*
 - » *Car, à peine j'allais cacher un rire ardent*
 - » *Sous les replis heureux d'une seule (gardant*
 - » *Par un doigt simple, afin que sa candeur de plume*
 - » *Se teignît à l'émoi de sa sœur qui s'allume,*
 - » *La petite, naïve et ne rougissant pas :)*
 - » *Que de mes bras, défaits par de vagues trépas,*
 - » *Cette proie, à jamais ingrate, se délivre*
 - » *Sans pitié du sanglot dont j'étais encore ivre.*

Tant pis ! vers le bonheur d'autres m'entraîneront
Par leur tresse nouée aux cornes de mon front :
Tu sais, ma passion, que, pourpre et déjà mûre,
Chaque grenade éclate et d'abeilles murmure ;
Et notre sang, épris de qui le va saisir,
Coule pour tout l'essaim éternel du désir.
À l'heure où ce bois d'or et de cendres se teinte
Une fête s'exalte en la feuillée éteinte :
Etna ! c'est parmi toi visité de Vénus
Sur ta lave posant ses talons ingénus,
Quand tonne un somme triste ou s'épuise la flamme.

Je tiens la reine !

Ô sûr châtiment...

Non, mais l'âme

De paroles vacante et ce corps allourdi
Tard succombent au fier silence de midi :
Sans plus il faut dormir en l'oubli du blasphème,
Sur le sable altéré gisant et comme j'aime
Ouvrir ma bouche à l'astre efficace des vins !
Couple, adieu ; je vais voir l'ombre que tu devins. (Mallarmé, 1876)

L'Après-midi d'un Faune

Eclogue

The Faun

These nymphs, I would perpetuate them.

So bright

Their crimson flesh that hovers there, light

In the air drowsy with dense slumbers.

Did I love a dream?

My doubt, mass of ancient night, ends extreme

In many a subtle branch, that remaining the true

Woods themselves, proves, alas, that I too

Offered myself, alone, as triumph, the false ideal of roses.

Let's see....

or if those women you note

Reflect your fabulous senses' desire!

Faun, illusion escapes from the blue eye,

Cold, like a fount of tears, of the most chaste:

But the other, she, all sighs, contrasts you say

Like a breeze of day warm on your fleece?

No! Through the swoon, heavy and motionless

Stifling with heat the cool morning's struggles

No water, but that which my flute pours, murmurs

To the grove sprinkled with melodies: and the sole breeze

Out of the twin pipes, quick to breathe

Before it scatters the sound in an arid rain,

Is unstirred by any wrinkle of the horizon,

The visible breath, artificial and serene,

Of inspiration returning to heights unseen.

O Sicilian shores of a marshy calm

My vanity plunders vying with the sun,

Silent beneath scintillating flowers, RELATE
*'That I was cutting hollow reeds here tamed
By talent: when, on the green gold of distant
Verdure offering its vine to the fountains,
An animal whiteness undulates to rest:
And as a slow prelude in which the pipes exist
This flight of swans, no, of Naiads cower
Or plunge...'*

Inert, all things burn in the tawny hour
Not seeing by what art there fled away together
Too much of hymen desired by one who seeks there
The natural A: then I'll wake to the primal fever
Erect, alone, beneath the ancient flood, light's power,
Lily! And the one among you all for artlessness.

Other than this sweet nothing shown by their lip, the kiss
That softly gives assurance of treachery,
My breast, virgin of proof, reveals the mystery
Of the bite from some illustrious tooth planted;
Let that go! Such the arcane chose for confidant,
The great twin reed we play under the azure ceiling,
That turning towards itself the cheek's quivering,
Dreams, in a long solo, so we might amuse
The beauties round about by false notes that confuse
Between itself and our credulous singing;
And create as far as love can, modulating,
The vanishing, from the common dream of pure flank
Or back followed by my shuttered glances,
Of a sonorous, empty and monotonous line.
Try then, instrument of flights, O malign
Syrinx by the lake where you await me, to flower again!
I, proud of my murmur, intend to speak at length
Of goddesses: and with idolatrous paintings
Remove again from shadow their waists' bindings:

So that when I've sucked the grapes' brightness
To banish a regret done away with by my pretence,
Laughing, I raise the emptied stem to the summer's sky
And breathing into those luminous skins, then I,
Desiring drunkenness, gaze through them till evening.

O nymphs, let's rise again with many memories.
*'My eye, piercing the reeds, speared each immortal
Neck that drowns its burning in the water
With a cry of rage towards the forest sky;
And the splendid bath of hair slipped by
In brightness and shuddering, O jewels!
I rush there: when, at my feet, entwine (bruised
By the languor tasted in their being-two's evil)
Girls sleeping in each other's arms' sole peril:
I seize them without untangling them and run
To this bank of roses wasting in the sun
All perfume, hated by the frivolous shade
Where our frolic should be like a vanished day.'*

I adore you, wrath of virgins, O shy
Delight of the nude sacred burden that glides
Away to flee my fiery lip, drinking
The secret terrors of the flesh like quivering
Lightning: from the feet of the heartless one
To the heart of the timid, in a moment abandoned
By innocence wet with wild tears or less sad vapours.
*'Happy at conquering these treacherous fears
My crime's to have parted the dishevelled tangle
Of kisses that the gods kept so well mingled:
For I'd scarcely begun to hide an ardent laugh
In one girl's happy depths (holding back
With only a finger, so that her feathery candour
Might be tinted by the passion of her burning sister,*

*The little one, naïve and not even blushing)
Than from my arms, undone by vague dying,
This prey, forever ungrateful, frees itself and is gone,
Not pitying the sob with which I was still drunk.'*

No matter! Others will lead me towards happiness
By the horns on my brow knotted with many a tress:
You know, my passion, how ripe and purple already
Every pomegranate bursts, murmuring with the bees:
And our blood, enamoured of what will seize it,
Flows for all the eternal swarm of desire yet.
At the hour when this wood with gold and ashes heaves
A feast's excited among the extinguished leaves:
Etna! It's on your slopes, visited by Venus
Setting in your lava her heels so artless,
When a sad slumber thunders where the flame burns low.

I hold the queen!

O certain punishment...

No, but the soul

Void of words, and this heavy body,
Succumb to noon's proud silence slowly:
With no more ado, forgetting blasphemy, I
Must sleep, lying on the thirsty sand, and as I
Love, open my mouth to wine's true constellation!

Farewell to you, both: I go to see the shadow you have become. (Mallarmé,
1876/2009)