DEBUSSY
Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune

SYDNEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Learning & Engagement

STAGES 5 & 6

Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune by Claude Debussy

Stage 5 & 6 Teaching Resource

Sydney Symphony Orchestra

Acknowledgements

Resource Development

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For information concerning the Sydney Symphony Orchestra's Learning & Engagement program, contact:

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"Your life can be changed and enriched through all sorts of music; music from now, music from the past, music from the very distant past and music from as recently as yesterday.

Through intensive listening students become involved in one of the highest orders of thinking.

As a teacher, by bringing students to a concert and studying music in the classroom, you are providing your students with a special pathway to musical knowledge through direct experience of and contact with live music."

Richard Gill AO

(1941-2018)

Conductor, notable educator and advocate. Richard was the founding Artistic Director of Education at the Sydney Symphony. He has inspired generation of musicians through his work and continues to inspire new generations through his legacy.

Syllabus Links

NSW Curriculum

Prelude a l'aprés-midi d'un faune by Claude Debussy covers a range of topics from the NSW syllabuses:

Years 7-10 Additional Study Course:

19th Century Music

Music 1 Preliminary and HSC:

Topics: Music for Large Ensembles

Music of 19th Century

An Instrument and Its Repertoire

Music 2 Preliminary:

Mandatory Topic: Music 1600 to 1900

Music 2 HSC:

Additional Topic: 19th Century Music

Syllabus Outcomes

The activities included in this kit cover a range of outcomes across the NSW Music Syllabus stages, as mapped below:

Stage 4 and Stage 5 Elective Music

Activities	Syllabus Outcomes	Ideas for assessment
Activity 1: Listening and Score Reading	4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.11, 4.12 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.11, 5.12	Short written responses
Activity 2: Composition	4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.11, 4.12 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.11, 5.12	Notated composition
Activity 3: Musicology	4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.11, 4.12 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.11, 5.12	Short written responses Critical review Critical discussion
Activity 4: Listening and Composition	4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9 5.1, 5.3, 5.4, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9	Written responses Non notated composition
Activity 5: Musicology	4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.11, 4.12 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.11, 5.12	Critical review Critical discussion

Stage 6 Music 1

Activities	Syllabus Outcomes	Ideas for assessment
Activity 1: Listening and Score Reading	P4, P5 H4, H5	Short written responses
Activity 2: Composition	P2, P3, P7, P10, P11 H2, H3, H7, H10, H11	Notated composition
Activity 3: Musicology	P3, P4, P5, P7, P12 H3, H4, H5, H7, H12	Short written responses Critical review Critical discussion
Activity 4: Listening and Composition	P2, P3, P7 H2, H3, H7	Written responses Non notated composition
Activity 5: Musicology	P2, P5, P6, P7, P8 H2, P5, P6, H7, P8	Critical review Critical discussion

Stage 6 Music 2

Activities	Syllabus Outcomes	Ideas for assessment
Activity 1: Listening and Score Reading	P4, P5 H4, H5	Short written responses
Activity 2: Composition	P2, P3, P7, P10, P11 H2, H3, H7, H10, H11	Notated composition
Activity 3: Musicology	P3, P4, P5, P7, P12 H3, H4, H5, H7, H12	Short written responses Critical review Critical discussion
Activity 4: Listening and Composition	P2, P3, P7 H2, H3, H7	Written responses Non notated composition
Activity 5: Musicology	P2, P5, P6, P7, P8 H2, P5, P6, H7, P8	Critical review Critical discussion

Work: *Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune (Prelude to the afternoon of the faun)* by Claude Debussy

Composer Background

Claude Debussy was among the most influential composers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He is sometimes seen as the first Impressionist composer, although he vigorously rejected the term. He was greatly influenced by the Symbolist poetic movement of the later 19th century. The Symbolists were the literary equivalent of the Impressionistic movement in painting. Rather than direct references to human experiences and emotions in their texts, the Symbolists tried, instead, to use suggestive images to evoke a mood, an essence, an ideal. This method allowed the viewers and listeners to develop their own emotional response to the art they experienced. This endeavour to make words, sounds and colours express new shades of emotions encapsulated the music Debussy wished to write – the lyric, suggestive, non-formal music of the soul. Debussy drew on non-Western scales, such as whole-tone (six notes in an octave), pentatonic (five notes in an octave) and octatonic (eight notes in a symmetric pattern of alternating whole and half steps) and modes such as the Phrygian and Lydian scales. Debussy used modulation and chromatic harmony in ways that other musicians did not. Throughout his career he wrote melodies based on a wide variety of poetry, including his own.

Work Background

Although first performed in 1894, this piece provides a helpful starting point for the study of music from the twentieth century. It is one of Debussy's most famous works and is considered a turning point in the history of music; composer-conductor Pierre Boulez even dates the awakening of modern music from this score, observing that "the flute of the faun brought new breath to the art of music." It is a work that barely grasps onto tonality and harmonic function.

The composition was inspired by the Symbolist poem *L'après-midi d'un faune* by Stéphane Mallarmé – in which a faun playing his panpipes alone in the woods becomes stirred by-passing nymphs and naiads, pursues them unsuccessfully, then wearily abandons the chase. It later formed the basis for a ballet choreographed by Vaslav Nijinsky.

About his composition Debussy wrote:

> "The music of this *Prelude* is a very free illustration of Mallarmé's beautiful poem. By no means does it claim to be a synthesis of it. Rather there is a succession of scenes through which pass the desires and dreams of the faun in the heat of the afternoon. Then, tired of pursuing the timorous flight of nymphs and naiads, he succumbs to intoxicating sleep, in which he can finally realize his dreams of possession in universal Nature."

The work is called a Prelude because Debussy intended to write a suite of three movements – Prelude, Interlude, and Final Paraphrase – but the latter two were never written.

Instrumentation of Work

Woodwind	Brass	Percussion	Strings
3 Flutes	4 Horns	2 Crotales	1st Violins
2 Oboes			2nd Violins
2 Clarinets in A and B flat			Violas
2 Bassoons			Cellos
			Double Basses
			2 Harps

Listening Guide

Overview

Debussy's tone poem has been described as being in "free form, non-symphonic and hazy". Boulez wrote of the Prelude, "what was overthrown was not so much the art of development, as the very concept of form itself". Others have suggested an A B C A structure. However, the Prelude may also be thought of as a Ternary Form piece with a Coda.

Section A Bars 1 - 54

Section B Bars 55 - 78

Section A Bars 79 - 93

Coda Bars 94 - 110

Bars 1 - 54 Section A

Bar 1 Main theme: flute solo

This opening downward chromatic scale encompasses a tritone. It is completely unaccompanied and therefore its key is ambiguous.

Bar 4 The theme is harmonised at the very end by a Bb7 chord. This is a very unstable dominant seventh chord which doesn't resolve in a perfect cadence. The two horns complete the flute melody with the notes of a whole-tone scale.

Bar 6 Debussy places a bar of silence here to give his ideas space. After this the Bb7 chord repeats and the dialogue between the two horns is repeated.

Bar 11 The theme is played for the second time, now with a D major harmony and parallel chords from the strings. The oboe completes the theme.

Bar 15 The theme fragments to a three-note motif repeated by the oboe, joined by the violins. This creates the first mini climax of the piece. Note the melody is presented in octaves.

cre - scen - do **f**

Bar 20 Solo clarinet repeats the three-note motif.

Bar 21 The theme is played for the third time, finally harmonised in the 'home key' of E major but now with an extended first note. As a result, the opening bar is not repeated. The second bar of the theme becomes a varied and rhythmically diminished version of bar 3, which then leads into a transposed version of the opening theme (a major 3rd lower), which now spans a perfect 4th interval instead of a tritone.
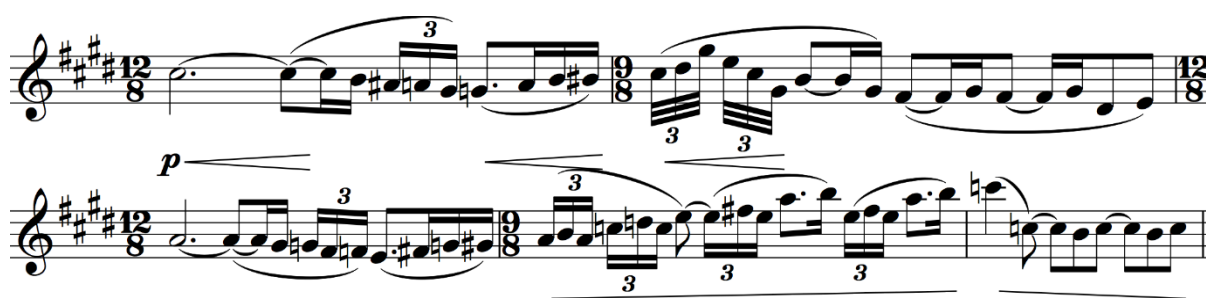
Bar 24 The fourth version of the theme, harmonised in E (with added 9th). This time, the theme fragments to create another mini climax.

Bars 31 - 33 The music becomes more agitated. The clarinet has a variation of the theme which includes a whole-tone scale. The chromaticism of the clarinet melody also links back to the opening flute theme.

Clarinet

Flute

This three-bar episode is repeated a step and a half higher. There is the use of *accelerando* and *ritardando* creating *rubato* or a sense of push and pull in the music.

Bars 34 – 36 is a transposed repeat of bars 31 - 33.

Bar 37 A new idea, based on the shape of the flute theme, played by oboe.

Bar 40 The oboe melody is developed and imitated by the violin.

Bars 44 - 54 The oboe melody fragments and develops, with ideas reminiscent of the opening theme, creating a climax which then fades, including a four-bar pedal note of Ab at bar 51. The first section ends with the clarinet melody and a key change.

Bars 55 - 78 Section B

The persistent C# from Section A anticipates the enharmonic Db at Bar 55, thereby conjuring up a feeling of tonal flux totally in sympathy with the Faun's dreamlike state. The B Section has a more stable metrical framework, remaining in Simple Triple throughout.

Bar 55 New theme in the woodwinds with syncopated accompaniment from the strings. The bassline alternates between Db and G – a tritone.

Bar 63 Strings take over the new theme. The accompaniment here features many different rhythms so that the sense of pulse is 'blurred'. The end of the new theme, bars 67 and 68, is borrowed from bar 40 and bar 1 combined.

Bar 72 Each of these ideas is broken down to solos for horn, clarinet, oboe and violin. The pitch of the violin ascends for the return to Section A.

Bars 79 - 105 Section A

It is noteworthy that the reprise of Section A is much shorter than its first appearance. The original Section A (Bars 1-54) can be further subdivided into subsections, and this gives a more balanced analysis in terms of bar lengths.

Bars 1 - 30 A (Flute theme)

Bars 31-36 Transition (based on opening Flute theme)

Bars 37-54 A1 (Oboe theme) Consequently, bars 79-93 could be considered a reprise of A1.

Bar 79 The main theme reappears, played again by the flute. The theme is now in $^4_4$, not $^9_8$. It is an augmented version, accompanied by E major chords from the harp and strings in first inversion. The descending phrase stretches just a 4th rather than a tritone.

Bar 83 Oboe theme based on the shape of the flute theme agitatedly interrupts the mood.

Bar 85 A cascade down throughout the orchestra, with string 'shiver'.

Bars 86 – 93 This is a loose repeat of Bars 79 – 85 with new orchestration. The oboe plays the theme, interrupted by the cor anglais.

Bar 94 The theme is played by the flute for the 6th time, again in E major in duet with solo violin. Percussionists add B and E (V – I) on antique cymbals. This is the most conventional harmony so far.

Bar 100 The theme appears for the seventh time.

Bar 103 Oboe finishes the theme, and the harmony moves to B7 which resolves to E major at the start of the Coda, with a perfect cadence.

Bars 106 - 110 Coda

Bar 106 Debussy adds chromatic movement in the harps, a clever harmonisation of the beginning of the theme and A# to colour the final chord over the tonic pedal, E.

Bar 107 A final reference to the theme in the horns.

Bar 108 Final flute entry ends with C# falling to G#, completing the reference to the theme.

Audio Excerpts

Access the Spotify playlist by visiting the following links:

https://open.spotify.com/track/4NXmcUMQauqEtDYDgP0MEi?si=d0fc52ab0bb3466f

Excerpt No.	Bar No.	Time	Activity
1	1 - 10	0:00-0:54	Activity 1, Task 1
2	11 to 20	0:55-1:52	Activity 1, Task 1
3	1 - 30	0:00-3:00	Activity 4, Task 1
4	255 - 269	3'30" - 3'42"	Activity 5, Task 1

Score Excerpts

Score excerpts are from Public Domain, IMSLP:

https://ks15.imslp.org/files/imglnks/usimg/4/40/IMSLP14736-Debussy_-_Pr%C3%A9lude_%C3%A0_l'apr%C3%A8s-midi_d'un_faune_(orch._score).pdf

Performance videos

Performance video from YouTube:

Debussy: Prélude à l'aprés-midi d'un Faune | François-Xavier Roth & London Symphony Orchestra

Learning Activities

Activity 1: Listening/Score Reading

In this activity the students will investigate the opening of *Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune* and identify the musical elements that make it such a revolutionary piece of music.

Task 1 Aural Skills

1. Listen to the opening of the *Prelude* **without** reference to the score and answer the following questions. Bars 1 to 10 (Audio cue 1 0:00-0:54).

Focus Question: Describe the opening melody.

Scaffolding Questions:

- Which instrument plays the melody at the start?
- Is the melody in short phrases, sections OR does it stretch unbroken?
- Is it smooth and continuous or are the notes detached?
- Is the range of the melody wide or narrow?
- How is the melody constructed?
- How does the rhythm relate to the pitch and structure of the melody?
- Where does the high point of the melody occur?
- Which instrument finishes off the melody?

2. Listen to the second section of the music: Bars 11 to 20 (Audio cue 2 0:55-1:52).

Focus Question: What differences are there in the second section?

Scaffolding Questions:

- In the second section, what instruments accompany the flute melody?
- Who finishes the melody this time?
- Is the melody exactly the same as its first appearance?
- How are unity and variety created in this second presentation?

Task 2 Listening/Score Reading

The opening flute melody is one the most famous passages in musical modernism.

1. Listen to the opening bars 1 to 10 again (Audio cue 1 0:00-0:54).

   - Describe the music of the opening (you may use descriptive or technical words).
   - Compare this opening to that of music from the Baroque, Classical or Romantic period:
     - Is the key clearly established?
     - Is there an obvious beat?
     - Which interval is the most important to the structure of the melody?
     - Is a mood created?
     - How is the orchestra used?
     - What is the texture?
     - What is the range of the flute melody?

2. Listen to more of the opening, bars 1 to 30 (Audio cue 3 0:00-3:00).

   - Rank the musical elements in order of their importance to the effect they give the music:

   (There is no absolutely correct answer here.)
     - Melody
     - Rhythm
     - Harmony
     - Tone Colour
     - Texture
     - Dynamics
     - Structure

3. Compare this ranking to the elements that you have found were important in music of the Classical and Romantic periods. Discuss your findings.

Task 3 Score Study and Harmonic Analysis

Bars 1 to 30 (Audio cue 3 0:00-3:00).

1. Study the score of Section one of the *Prelude* and identify the harmonies used in the following bars of the Debussy score:

Bar	Harmony
4	
5	
11	
14	
17	
20	
21	
26	
30	

2. Consider the key signature of the work and these sample harmonies. What might be inferred about Debussy's approach to harmony? How does this contrast with the harmonic writing in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century?

3. Study the second violin and viola chords in bars 27 and 28. What do you observe?

Task 4 Listening

Listen to the complete *Prelude*. Take note of the use of the opening theme.

- Does the music have a structure or is it a program piece, following a storyline?
- How many times is the opening theme repeated?
- Is it the same every time?
- Is the theme developed?
- How are tension and release created in this piece?

Optional Extension Task

The key signature of the *Prelude* is E major but the opening flute melody appears with different harmonies in each appearance. The first playing is unaccompanied, but the starting note of C# might suggest C# minor, the relative minor of E major. However, the melody is unaccompanied. The subsequent appearance of the flute melody is harmonised in the following way (please see score analysis on the following page).

- Play the melody with each of the harmonies.
- Identify the interval created between the C# melody note and the harmony.
- Discuss the effect upon on the melody and the overall sound of each variation in the harmony.

Activity 2: Composition

In this activity students will investigate the construction of whole-tone scales and create ostinatos and larger compositions using a form of the whole-tone scale.

Task 1

Use the following tasks to aid your investigation of whole-tone scales:

- Write out a C major and a D major scale. How many notes do they have in common?
- Write out whole-tone scales, beginning on the same notes, C and D. How many notes do they have in common?
- What difference will this make to your ability to write music using both scales simultaneously? (Hypothesise and test your ideas on your instruments).
- What effect will using whole-tone scales have on a decision to have a tonal centre in your music?
- Hypothesise and test your ideas on your instruments.
- Try playing thirds in a whole-tone scale. What sort of thirds are they? Try creating chords from the notes of a whole-tone scale. What sort of chords are they?

Task 2

Composition Activity

- Using either a C or D flat whole-tone scale create your own melodic motif. Don't limit yourself to scale patterns.
- Harmonise your motif with major thirds from the whole-tone scale.
- Try playing your motif simultaneously and then in a sequence with those of other students.
- Use the best material and textures to create a larger piece of music, adding a whole-tone melody.

Task 3

Use this video to guide an investigation of Debussy's harmonies. The three chords are written below for you:

How to improvise like Debussy using three chords.

Optional Extension Activity

Watch this video to investigate how R&B musician Stevie Wonder uses the whole-tone scale:

[Stevie Wonder](#)

Teaching Notes
The three chords task can be undertaken by pianists and non-pianists. The visual cues and demonstrations provide adequate modelling. A hands-on approach, with a keyboard, will provide students with a tactile sense of the spacing or voicing of the chords and allow them to experiment with the added notes in the extended harmonies.

Activity 3: Comparative Study

In this activity the students will compare Debussy's orchestral version of *Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune* with a synthesizer arrangement by Japanese composer Isao Tomita.

Task 1 Listening

Listen to bars 1 to 21 of the orchestral performance of *Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune* (Audio cue 3 0:00-3:00) and then the same passage from Tomita's version of the *Prelude* (0:00-3:13). Compare the two versions with reference to the elements of timbre/tone colour, texture, dynamics and expressive techniques. Create a table like the one below to record your observations:

Prelude a l'aprés-midi d'un faune Tomita Version

	Orchestral Version	**Synthesizer Version**
Timbre/Tone Colour		
Texture		
Dynamics		
Expressive Techniques		

Task 2

1. Listen to the music of the arrangement based on bars 21 to 51 (Audio cue 3:14 to 4:30).
    - Refer to the list of elements from Task 2 of Activity 1. Rank the musical elements below in order of their importance to this excerpt:
        o Melody
        o Rhythm
        o Harmony
        o Tone Colour
        o Texture
        o Dynamics
        o Structure
    - Compare this ranking with that from Task 3 of Activity 1.
    - Does the ranking change as the excerpt continues?

Task 3

Read the quote below from an interview with Tomita in 1977 and answer the following questions:

- How is this arrangement of *Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune* provide an example of Tomita's philosophy about the use of synthesizers?
- Which aspect of composition does the synthesizer contribute to?
- From your listening to both versions of the *Prelude*, how does this contribution relate to Debussy's intentions as a composer?

Aren't many of the sounds created by the synthesizer just imitations of the sounds of conventional instruments?

"Some people think that the fixed mission of the synthesizer is the quest for sounds that could be produced using conventional instruments. But I feel that the emergence of the synthesizer makes it possible for players and composers to do better than past achievements, because the limitation of having to deal with given sounds is no longer there. The musician, unlike the painter or the sculptor, has never been able to search for colours other than those that were given. But with the synthesizer, we have a palette comparable to that of the painter. There is no rule that dictates how this palette ought to be used; it can produce both imitative and nonimitative sounds. Also, you could reproduce your image of a soprano so high that the human voice couldn't produce it. You see, if you want the sound of a violin, you can always use an actual violin. But if your sound images are somewhat different from the sounds of any actual musical instrument, the synthesizer will allow you to create sounds similar to your image.

If a listener relates to the synthesized sounds as imitations, it doesn't matter to me, because in any case the origin of the sound is in our minds. It will take many years of use, though, before the best method of using the synthesizer is determined. Good methods will remain, while others will vanish. It seems to me that history will have to evaluate the various possible uses of the synthesizer. Right now, we're all seeking to find good methods, so each user should find his or her own way. In the past, we could already imagine beforehand, just by knowing the style of the composer and the instruments that were available during that period, the kind of sound that he or she would produce. The sounds of the synthesizer, however. cannot be imagined in advance. But there are a lot of possibilities. Who knows? Imitative synthesis might someday take the place of conventional instruments. I imagine, though, that in synthesizer orchestration, imitative and non-imitative sounds will continue to exist side by side. Take the paintings of Salvador Dali, for instance. In certain paintings, you will have an image as realistic as a photograph placed next to another that isn't so together. The same thing can also be said with music. It's the personal feelings of the musician that will determine the quality of the music."

Source: Isao Tomita: Electronic symphonist by Mickey Yoshino

Translated By Steve Fox, Keyboard magazine, August 1977

Retrieved from http://tomita.org/interviews/KEYBaug1977/1977int.htm

Optional Extension Task

Select a piano piece by Debussy and create an electronic arrangement using a Digital Audio Workstation (DAW) with which you are familiar.

Activity 4: Listening and Composition

In this activity, the students will experiment with the scales and harmonies used by Debussy in *Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune* and learn about their influence on Modern Jazz genres such as Bebop, Modal and Free Jazz.

Task 1

1. Listen to the opening of the *Prelude* in this arrangement by the Jacques Louisser Trio (Audio cue 0:00-0:59).
   - Describe the differences between this arrangement and the original orchestral version: Jacques Loussier Trio
2. Now listen to a second excerpt from this arrangement. (Audio cue 2:35-4:24).
   - How have the performers created variety in this excerpt?

Task 2

Claude Debussy and other late 19th-century composers (especially Maurice Ravel) introduced several new harmonic innovations that have since become standard tools of the jazz composer/arranger/improviser. Among them, the rich harmonies of chromatically altered chords as well as the use of modes and the whole-tone, pentatonic and octatonic scales. A common application of the whole-tone scale in jazz is to create a dominant sharp five sound in cadences. John Coltrane used the floaty nature of the whole-tone scale as a "sheet of sound", played over dominant function chords to express an altered V chordal tension. In Coltrane's *One Down, One Up,* the melody is comprised almost exclusively of notes from the C# whole-tone scale. Coltrane is able to explore this sound for one of his longest ever recorded solos, around twenty-two minutes. Oscar Peterson employs whole-tone scale runs down the piano keyboard, while Thelonius Monk consistently used whole-tone scales in his improvisations (e.g. Ruby My Love). The 1960s music of Wayne Shorter is referred to as Jazz Impressionism, sharing characteristics such as tonal ambiguity and non-functional harmony with the music of Debussy.

1. Learn more about the use of whole-tone scales in jazz from this video:

   Whole tone scale in Jazz explanation (4 mins)

In the video, the ii7 V7 Imaj7 chord progression was demonstrated. Individually or in groups, improvise melodies over this chord progression using the following scale forms:

Chord prog	Dm7	G	C
Scales	D Dorian	G whole-tone	C major

D Dorian

G whole-tone scale

Task 3

1. Watch this video to explore more about how the whole-tone scale is used in jazz:
   Whole tone harmony, scales and improvisation

Optional Extension Task

Explore more detail about the use of whole-tone scales and other techniques based on Debussy's music in playing jazz standards with this video:

Debussy in Jazz video

Teaching Notes

Here are two resources for guitarists to explore whole-tone scales:
How to Play Whole Tone Scales on Guitar in One Minute

The second is a more detailed website with references to some of the examples discussed in the earlier whole-tone tasks:
Jazz Guitar Online: The Whole Tone Scale for Guitar

Activity 5: Musicology

In this activity, the students will research the influence of Debussy on the music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Task 1

1. Compile a list of the characteristics of Modernism found in the music of the twentieth century.
   - Identify the elements of Modernism that are announced in *Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune*.

Task 2

The first chord of the *Prelude*, heard in bar 4, is an A# minor 7th flat 5, or half-diminished chord. This is also known as the 'Tristan' chord. Research the meaning of this name and the influence of this chord or harmony on music of the Western tonal tradition.

Debussy voices the chord in this way: C# E G# A#. This places the C# in the bass and the A# in the melody. If it were voiced to follow Wagner's pattern, it would be A# E G# C#. Alternatively, if Debussy were to use Wagner's harmonisation and retain A# as the melodic note, the chord would be G C# F A#. Play these different variations of the harmony.

Task 3

Debussy is often included in the group of composers referred to as Impressionists. Find out about the origin of this term in visual arts and why it was later applied to the music of Debussy and Ravel.

Optional Extension Task

Debussy did not like the term Impressionist. He aligned himself with the Symbolist movement. Investigate this poetic, artistic and musical movement. Read the following article and list the similarities and differences between the Symbolist and Impressionist movements and their influence on the music of Debussy:

Debussy and the Poetic Image

Teaching Notes

The discussion of the Tristan chord can become quite technical and opinionated. The key for students to ascertain is the prominence of this harmony in Wagner's opera and the association with a move towards atonality. It is also important for them to understand the decision, by both Wagner and Debussy, to choose harmony for its sound rather than its function. Whether opera or tone poem, the affective use of harmony would influence music that followed, including the film scores of the twentieth century.

This is another useful website for investigating Impressionism and Symbolism:

https://www.theartstory.org/movement/symbolism/

Suggested Answers

Activity 1

Task 1

Focus Question: Describe the opening melody.

The melody is played by a solo or unaccompanied flute. It is a smooth, continuous melody which moves chromatically within a limited range. The melody moves from one long note to another with a run of shorter notes in between. The longer notes are at the high and low points of the melodic arc. The player uses expressive techniques such as dynamics and vibrato. The flute melody is completed by the French Horn, introducing variety in the tone colour.

Scaffolding Questions

- The melody is played at first by the flute.

- The melody stretches unbroken.

- The melody is smooth and continuous.

- The melody has a narrow range.

- The melody goes from one long note to another with a run of shorter notes in between. The runs move by semitone. The pause on these notes emphasizes the peaks and troughs.

- The rhythm makes the shape of the melody more obvious.

- The high point of the flute melody is the second last note.

- The flute melody is finished off by the French horns.

Focus Question: What differences are there in the later section?

The flute once again is the main melodic instrument. This time, however, the flute is accompanied by soft, tremolo strings playing slow-moving, but nevertheless changing harmonies. This time, the oboe completes the flute melody. However, the ending of the melody is altered and extended, creating variety. The horns play an accompanying motif based on their ending to the original presentation of the melody, creating unity.

Scaffolding Questions

- In the second section, the flute melody is accompanied by the strings.

- The oboe finishes the melody the second time.

- The melody begins the same, but the final pitches in bar 3 are altered and the oboe part is different from the French horn phrase. It is also extended, raising the pitch of the melody and adding two extra bars to the length of the melody.
- Unity is created by the flute playing the same opening phrase. Variety is created by having the oboe complete the melody with a different phrase, which moves upwards and introduces a new motif, which is repeated and varied, adding two extra bars to the original eight-bar melody.

Task 2

1. Dreamy, languid, chromatic, flowing, free, atmospheric, hazy.

2.

- Key clearly established?   *No*
- Is there an obvious beat? *No*
- Which interval is the most important to the structure of the melody? *Semitone*
- Is a mood created?   *Yes*
- How is the orchestra used?   *Sustained chords, colour*
- What is the texture?   *Open and transparent. Close chords accompanying single melodic instrument.*
- What is the range of the flute melody?   *Augmented 4th (Tritone)*

2. Rank the elements in order of importance important to the effect of the music. (There is no absolutely correct answer here.)

- Melody   *4*
- Rhythm   *5*
- Harmony   *2*
- Tone Colour   *1*
- Texture   *6*
- Dynamics   *3*
- Structure   *7*

3. In Baroque and Classical music, the structure is based on melody and harmony particularly. Motivic development is a key feature.

Task 3

1.

Bar	Harmony
4	A#m7-5 Also known as a half-diminished chord or Wagner's famous 'Tristan' chord.
5	B flat 7 to B flat 9
11	D maj 7
14	C#7 to A#7
17	A#7 Dm7-5 to E#m7-5
20	E#m7-5
21	E6 This is the tonic key indicated by the key signature.
26	E9
30	B The dominant of E

2. Debussy's chords are chosen for their individual sounds, and they move with unprecedented freedom. By writing without a key, Debussy didn't have to follow the rules dictated by that key, and rather than move from one expected chord to the next finishing with a perfect cadence, he could slip sideways blurring this ever-present feeling of an all-important 'home' note. Debussy said, "There is no theory. You have merely to listen. Pleasure is the law."

3. The chords are examples of parallel chords, which would becoming increasingly important in Debussy's music. Once again, this harmonic writing flouted convention and is employed purely for the sound that is created. (Note that the parallel intervals are visible. However, the A# to C# in bar 28 is also a tone, matching the whole-step movement of the parts above and below.)

Task 4

- The music is based on a poem, with dramatic scenes – but it is structured around the appearances of the opening melody. While the *Prelude* does have a narrative, Debussy is more concerned with creating the mood of the scenes than in portraying the storyline.
- The music is in ternary form, with the opening melody appearing four times in each A Section.
- The melody is varied on each presentation.
- Bar 1 Theme is completely unaccompanied and therefore its key is ambiguous.
- Bar 11 Theme now with D major harmony and parallel chords from the strings.
- Bar 21 Theme for the third time, finally harmonised in the 'home key' of E major but now with extended first note.
- Bar 24 Fourth version of the theme is harmonised in E (with added 9th). This time, the theme fragments to create a mini climax.
- Bar 79 Theme again on flute. It is now in $^4_4$. It is much slower (augmentation). The melodic range is just a 4th rather than a tritone and it is accompanied by E major chords.
- Bars 86 A loose repeat of 79 with new orchestration. The oboe has the theme.
- Bar 94 Theme is played by both flutes for the sixth time again in E major in duet with solo violin.
- Bar 100 Theme for the seventh time in the flute. The first note is extended once again, and the third bar is rhythmically varied. The oboe completes the melody with a varied version of its original phrase.
- Bar 107 Final reference to the theme. One bar version played by French horns.
- The theme may be said to be developed. The changes in rhythm and the extension of the theme in various appearances are a form of development. The changes of harmony are also a form of development.
- Tension is created in the harmony and dynamics. The harmonic tension is sustained for prolonged periods before the final harmonic resolution.

Optional Extension Task

- Bar 1 C# minor (Tonic)
- Bar 11 The C# is the major seventh note
- Bar 21 C# (Tonic)
- Bar 26 6th

Activity 2

Task 1

1. The C major and D major scale have five notes in common: D E G A B (the notes of a G pentatonic scale).
2. The whole-tone scales beginning on the same notes, C and D, have all six notes of the scale in common.
3. Because there are only TWO forms of whole-tone scales, both the scales which start on C and D are from the same basic form of the whole-tone scale. This is the scale form that starts on C and uses the group of three black notes on the piano. The other form starts on C# or D flat and uses the group of two black notes on the piano. No matter what note your whole-tone scale begins on, it will only use the notes of one of these two scale forms (including the same "black" notes).
4. Because the whole-tone scale is not tied to a specific tonal centre, a composer can choose to have one, multiple, or no tonal centres in their composition. Tonal centres can still be used to create tension and release, but this is of less importance to the structure of the music.
5. In whole-tone scales there are only major thirds. The only types of triads available are augmented triads and there are no perfect fifths. This means that the traditional rules of harmonic relationships do not apply. It also means that the music can become monotonous. Composers overcome this by mixing whole-tone scales with other scale forms and by employing both forms of whole-tone scale.

Task 2

Bar	Melodic Scale	Harmony
31	G mixolydian-G major	C#7$^{(b5)}$ G7
32	F whole-tone scale	C#7$^{(b5)}$
33	F whole-tone scale	G7 A7
34	E whole-tone scale	E7$^{(b5)}$ B^{b7}
35	A flat whole-tone scale	E7$^{(b5)}$ B^{b9}
36	A flat whole-tone scale	B^{b7} C^7

Note the combination of the whole-tone scale with the dominant seventh, flattened fifth chords. This will be discussed in more detail in Activity 4 on Debussy and jazz.

Activity 3

Task 1

	Orchestral Version	**Synthesizer Version**
Timbre/Tone Colour	• Acoustic instruments. • The composer employs specific tone colours to create mood.	• Electronic sounds that are similar to the orchestral sounds e.g. sine wave=flute, string sounds. • Extra electronic sounds are added. • Substituted sounds e.g. aqueous sound for harp.
Texture	• Open texture. • Solo flute at start. • Static parts.	• Additional electronic layers add to the texture.
Dynamics	• Generally soft dynamics allowing subtle variations to introduce tension and release.	• Dynamics are used as an expressive technique in the opening melody.
Expressive Techniques	• Vibrato in the flute part.	

Task 2

- Melody   4
- Rhythm   6
- Harmony   5
- Tone Colour   1
- Texture   2
- Dynamics   3
- Structure   7

Compare this ranking with that from Task 3 of Activity 1.

Activity 1 Task 3		Activity 3 Task 2	
Melody	4	Melody	4
Rhythm	5	Rhythm	6
Harmony	2	Harmony	5
Tone Colour	1	Tone Colour	1
Texture	6	Texture	2
Dynamics	3	Dynamics	3
Structure	7	Structure	7

While the unusual tone colours attract the listener's attention at the beginning, Debussy's familiar melodic material emerges and eventually leads back to the second section of the *Prelude*. As the melodic material appears, tension is created between melody and harmony.

Task 3

In the arrangement of the Debussy *Prelude*, Tomita has used the synthesizer to create both imitative and nonimitative sounds. The violin sound is the most recognisable example of an imitative sound. The opening flute sound is less imitative and more of an allusion to the open sound of the flute. The French horn and clarinet parts are also recognisable in the tone palette. These sounds are set within a soundscape of non-imitative electronic sounds or tone colours. This variety of tone colours is congruent with Debussy's exploration of instrumental colour.

Activity 4

Task 1

1   The differences between this arrangement and the original orchestral version:
- The limited instrumentation of the jazz trio – piano, bass and drums.
- The accompaniment of the opening melody by harmonic arpeggios on the double bass and cymbal rolls.

2   The second excerpt includes the following features:
- Improvised melody on the piano.
- Walking bass line.
- Swing-feel drums featuring brushes on the snare drum.

Activity 5

Task 1

1. The characteristics of Modernism found in the music of the twentieth century include:

   - Importance of tone colour.
   - Use of chromaticism, rich harmony of extended chords.
   - Lack of fixed tonal centre.
   - Use of whole-tone scales, modes and octatonic scales.
   - Rhythmic complexity but sounding rhythmically free.

2. The elements of Modernism announced in this piece include:
   - **Tone colour**: Debussy's use of instruments in this *Prelude*.
     - The strings are required to use a variety of techniques including mutes, playing over the fingerboard (*Sur la touche*), pizzicato and tremolando.
     - Clarinets use tremolo technique as well as strings (Bar 95).
     - Focus on the individual timbres of woodwind (flute, oboe and clarinet).
     - French horns (In Bar 93 Horn 1 is instructed to play a note *bouché* (stopped) to create a particular tone colour. Horns are also muted (*sourdines*) in some passages.
     - The use of two harps with their shimmering *glissandi* and crotales.

   - **Use of chromaticism and extended chords**: Debussy uses chords in a non-functional way; his harmonies exist to create musical colour rather than expected relationships based on tonal relationships.

     - The chromaticism and use of tritones, inferred in the flute theme and heard, for example, in the bass in bars 55. (Db and G – a tritone).
     - Much use of 7th chords.
     - Use of chord extensions; 9th, 11th and 13th notes.
     - Non-resolving Dominant 7th chords (e.g. bar 5).
     - Pedals (e.g. Bars 94-99).
     - Half-diminished chords, e.g. bar 4

   - **Lack of fixed tonal centre**: Debussy moves fluidly, blurring the feeling of an all-important 'home' note.
     - The shift from B flat to D major in bars 5-11.
     - The unusual shift in bars 19-21 from a C#7 chord to an E6 chord.

   - **Use of whole-tone scales, modes and octatonic scales**:
     For example, the whole-tone scale in the Horn phrase in the theme, bars 4 and 5 and bar 32 in the clarinet.

   - **Rhythmic complexity**:
     - The opening metre is Compound Triple.
     - Frequent changes of metre are present.
     - Triplets (e.g. bar 1 – semiquaver triplets).

- o Other tuplets appear (e.g. bar 21 – quintuplets in harp, bar 105 – duplets, bar 106 – quadruplets).
- o Cross rhythms (e.g. bar 67).
- o Syncopation (e.g. bar 55 in accompanying strings).
- o Debussy often uses many different divisions of the beat at once.

Task 2

The original Tristan chord is heard in the opening phrase of Richard Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde* as part of the leitmotif relating to Tristan.
It is made up of the notes F, B, D♯, and G♯:

Note that, even though, enharmonically, these are the pitches of a (G#) half-diminished seventh chord, the voicing used by Wagner creates a series of augmented intervals – augmented fourth, augmented sixth, and augmented ninth – above the bass note.

The Tristan chord's significance is in its move away from traditional tonal harmony, and even toward atonality. With this chord, Wagner actually provoked the sound or structure of musical harmony to become more predominant than its function, a notion that was soon explored by Debussy and others. In the words of Robert Erickson, "The Tristan chord is, among other things, an identifiable sound, an entity beyond its functional qualities in a tonal organization" (Wikipedia).

There is certainly academic disagreement about the significance and effect of this chord, as used in this way by Wagner. Schoenberg and the members of the Second Viennese School may have contributed to the association of this chord with the beginning of atonality. Debussy, who was interested in harmony for its sound rather than function, uses it many times in the *Prelude*, each time without resolution.

Task 3

Impressionism, in music, is a style introduced by analogy with contemporaneous French painting. In Paris in the 1860s, artists such as Claude Monet and Edgar Degas moved away from painting in the studio to painting on location. Instead of capturing a 'realistic' image, like a photograph, they attempted to capture the atmosphere and give an 'impression' of the changing light and colour of a scene, rather than clear and exact detail.

Similarly in Impressionist music, there is an emphasis on atmosphere and emotive mood. The term was disliked by Debussy himself. However, *Prelude a l'apres-midi d'un faune* is often referred to as the first Impressionist music work. Certainly, Debussy was able to give his music the transparency and ephemeral quality of the best Impressionist art. Ravel is another French composer identified as an Impressionist.

Elements often termed impressionistic include static harmony, emphasis on instrumental timbres that creates a shimmering interplay of "colours", melodies that lack directed motion,

surface ornamentation that obscures or substitutes for melody, and an avoidance of traditional musical form. The music uses a narrower dynamic range than earlier Romantic music. The rhythm and tempo of impressionist music is not fixed. Pieces might be played rubato. The aim was for pieces to be played in a flowing and natural way.

Optional Extension Task

As mentioned above, Debussy was able to imbue his music with the transparency and ephemeral quality of the best Impressionist art. Similar to "symbolist" poetry and "impressionist" painting, Debussy deals deliberately in vagueness; his music suggests rather than depicts. With its unusual combinations of tone colour, the *Prelude* is something of a study in the play of light and shadow.

For the first movement of his *Nocturnes*, *'Nuages'* (Clouds), Debussy sounds like a visual artist when he wrote that he sought to capture "the unchanging appearance of the sky with the slow and melancholy progress of the clouds, ending in a grey dissolution gently tinged with white," and he commented to a friend that he was thinking of the play of clouds over the Seine in Paris.

The Symbolist movement strives to open up a space in which the words and images may be interpreted by the reader, rather than dictated by the author. Symbolist poets rejected previous artistic leanings towards naturalism and realism, instead favouring dreams, visions, and the power of the imagination. Mallarmé insisted that he wanted his poetry 'to depict not the thing but the effect it produces.' Symbolists were interested not in representing or describing reality, but in exploring the intangible and inexpressible truths hiding behind external appearances. One of the greatest Symbolist painters, Odilon Redon (1840-1916), wrote: "My drawings inspire, and are not to be defined. They place us, as does music, in the ambiguous realm of the undetermined".

Symbolism in music functions in a similar manner. Symbolist music is intended to suggest images or ideas to be interpreted by the listener, as opposed to imitative sounds that suggest specific, clearly defined and automatically identifiable ideas the way a symbol would in the usual sense. Symbolist poetry is typically introspective and suggestive, leaving meanings open-ended – much like the tonal and structural ambiguity of Debussy's music. In fact, for the Symbolist movement, music represented the ideal medium for expressing the realm of the intangible, capable of suggesting multiple possible meanings and psychological states rather than spelling out specific concepts or narratives.

Thus, Impressionism and Symbolism sought to break away from the "plain meanings, declamations, false sentimentality and matter-of-fact description" of Romanticism. For Impressionists, however, the emphasis was on the reality of the created paint surface itself. Symbolism was both an artistic and a literary movement concerned with the ideal, that suggested ideas through symbols and emphasized the meaning behind the forms, lines, shapes, and colours.

(The Art Story: Symbolism) https://www.theartstory.org/movement/symbolism/