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**«PRÉLUDES» BY CLAUDE DEBUSSY –  
THE IDEA OF THE WORK AS A CYCLE**

The two separate «livres» of «Préludes», written between 1910 and 1913, represent the culmination of Claude Debussy's work in the field of piano music. These two «livres» are the purest representation of the composer's fantastic music world, as well as possibility of its pictorial (and/or dreamlike imagery, fantastic-imaginative) «readout» in listener consciousness.

Starting with Romantic era, from Frederick Chopin, over Felix Mendelssohn, César Franck and Max Reger (whose pieces of this kind are closer to baroque type), preludes were, as independent piano pieces of smaller scale, and not as «introductory» movements, on a turn of 20<sup>th</sup> century and during its first half, composed by Sergei Rachmaninoff, Alexander Scriabin and Dmitri Shostakovich. In fact, in Chopin, Scriabin and Shostakovich's opuses, there is a cycle of 24 preludes in all major and minor tonalities. Debussy's cycle is not conceived in that manner. Instead, it is mostly based on visual «facts» or «immediate data» of visual sense, which is indicated by their titles that appear at the end, in parentheses, witnessing of composer's

intention that free visual associations that may emerge during listening of these miniatures only get their concrete definition at the end.

With all mentioned composers, word is about «free cycles», i.e. collection of pieces with common title that can be performed separately (similarly as Schumann's «Kinderszenen», List's «Années de pèlerinage», Grieg's «Lyriske stykker», Bartók's «Mikrokosmosz», etc.). However, «there are cycles that represent organic unity with carefully measured and arranged contrasts, motivic and thematic bonds, which gives special allure to their integral performing. Chopin and Debussy's "Préludes" are precisely that type of cycles» [4, 73–74]. In that sense, it is very interesting to point out on Irina Susidko's interpretation of Debussy's «Préludes». Her approach reveals proportions and symmetries in the «Préludes» as well as role of the golden mean in all possible manifestations (as straight, inverted, mirrored, as well as increasing and decreasing progression). She comes to the conclusion that «Debussy uses almost mathematical norms of musical tectonic and creates an architecture that we experience as the organic entity of his works» [14, 19].

French composer used in full extent freedom that prelude as a form gives, treating it in a rich and versatile manner. In different writings on Debussy's opus, we found various perspectives and approaches in focusing on the «Préludes». Thus, for example, Paul Roberts writes about the relation of music and visual arts to examine any possible grounds for relating Debussy to Impressionism [13, 177–189, 191–199, 218–238, 239–284].<sup>1</sup> Siglind Bruhn discusses images and ideas, as well as the extra-musical subtext in Debussy's

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<sup>1</sup> In his book «Images. The Piano Music of Claude Debussy» Paul Roberts probes the sources of Debussy's artistic inspiration, relating the «impressionist» titles to the artistic and literary ferment of the time. In that sense, he creates dense network of relationships between titles and characteristic of Debussy's musical language emphasizing that «music portrays everything, even those objects that are purely visible. By means of almost inconceivable powers it seems to give the ear eyes» [13, 7].

piano works [5, 1–180, 377–384].<sup>2</sup> Roy Howat writes on Russian imprints in Debussy's piano music [6, 31–51], Simon Trezise focuses on Debussy's concept of «rhythmicised time» [15, 232–255]<sup>3</sup>, Boyd Pomeroy on tonal-structural diversity in the «Préludes» [9, 155–178]<sup>4</sup>, Marianne Wheeldon on interplay of continuity and discontinuity in the late piano works of Debussy [16, 97–115]<sup>5</sup>, while Ralph P. Locke searches for exotic places, peoples, and

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<sup>2</sup> In the study «Images and Ideas in Modern French Piano Music», Siglind Bruhn investigates how three French composers of the twentieth century, Claude Debussy, Maurice Ravel, and Olivier Messiaen, express extra-musical subtexts in their piano works. She shows how the relation between the subtexts and the musical works can be broadly categorized in terms of pictoriality and interiority. In case of Debussy's piano music, Bruhn decided to analyze «Préludes» – each musical piece and each source text in its entirety and in depth. Although, Debussy's music provides a complete aesthetic experience even when perceived without any extra musical stimuli, there is much more to the composer's explanatory after-titles than meets the eye, according to Bruhn.

<sup>3</sup> Simon Trezise, in his article «Debussy's "rhythmicised time"» enters the maze-like domain of the temporal in music and problematizes a temporal dichotomy, pulse/beat, metre, metrical units/hypermeasure, rhythmic structures, etc. Through brief survey of the First Book of «Préludes», Trezise gives a rounded view of Debussy's treatment of metre. These works, according to the author, reflect many aspects of Debussy's music and so constitute an excellent starting point for Trezise's investigation in this field [15, 236–240].

<sup>4</sup> In Boyd Pomeroy's article «Debussy's tonality: a formal perspective», application of certain traditional concepts of formal syntax to a composer usually thought resistant to them results in a reappraisal of what are now received views on Debussy, not least his status as a proto-avant-gardist. According to Pomeroy's opinion «the two books of *Préludes* make excellent case studies on account of this hybrid genre's restricted dimensions and formal concision. They can serve to illustrate a diverse assortment of idiomatically Debussyan tonal and formal techniques, from those most reminiscent of traditional tonal practice to some of his furthest departures from that practice. This characteristic tonal-structural diversity could usefully be conceived in terms of hypothetical continuum along which the relative position of individual *Préludes* would be indicative of the extent of traditional tonal practice operative in a given piece». Thus, the author comes to a conclusion that «those least traditional preludes would occupy the left end of such a continuum, those most traditional the right» [9, 165–177].

<sup>5</sup> As a productive starting point for a discussion of Debussy's late style, Wheeldon largely refers to Stockhausen's *moment form*, which represents one of the few theoretical attempts to broach musical discontinuity, both theoretically and aesthetically. Following a summary of Stockhausen's ideas, she analyzes three late works – «Feuilles mortes», «Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest» and «Ondine» – in light of his arguments, taking into consideration the increasingly autonomous ideas of these compositions, their nondevelopmental modes of

ways of life in Debussy's miniatures and other solo piano pieces, etc. [7, 31–33, 65, 228]. What we realised is that none of aforementioned authors focus on the «Préludes» as a cycle with a very specific musical dramaturgy.

Since each prelude represents well balanced entirety, it could be performed separately, which is most common case. However, «since each prelude has its own place in the cycle, their integral performing presents fulfilment of composer's global intention» [4, 74]. The reason why we consider that the 24 miniatures together form the cycle lies in the fact that there are a number of integrative factors that relate to different musical components and their elements throughout the whole work and affect the integral perception of «Préludes». In other words, these integrative factors derive from Debussy's uttermost specific compositional principles and compositional procedures, as well as compositional-technical solutions based on which a complete musical-dramatic flow is being built, in terms of:

- shaping the entire musical flow on principles of building a structure out of fragments, that is, very specific thematic work with carefully measured and distributed contrasts;
- textural organization – mostly three-layered texture where one layer represent melody, often in short strokes, fragments; second is accompaniment given as 'flat'/'solid' chords or as broken/arpeggiated chords; third layer appears as a pedal tone. Not so seldom, three-layered texture is given as three staves (this is a case in the «2<sup>ième</sup> Livre»);
- specific type of melodic material based on various scales and their potential mutual combinations; thus, it is possible to notice melodies based on diatonic scale / major and minor scale, chromatic scale, anhemitonic

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presentation and, finally, the potential openness in their forms. According to Wheeldon's opinion this could be considered as unifying factor for Debussy's late opus.

pentatonic scale, diatonic (Gregorian) modes or a whole-tone scale, and on their most diverse «coloured» mixtures;

- harmony solutions – parallel movement of consonant or dissonant chords, chromatic/mediant relationships (between chords a major/minor third apart), as well as, saturated harmonic language with use of more complex harmonies and chromatics, all in the function of colour; [4, 74]

- dynamics, agogics, articulation and/or «character» of colour;

- the specified components of temporal organization, that is, the «breathing» or «waves movement» of the musical flow, such as tempo, the rate of unfolding of musical time, decelerations and accelerations of «colour». [10, 342]

All aforementioned musical components, along with various modes of motivic and harmonic interconnectivity, are involved in process of «Préludes» linking, their integration or disintegration, aggregation or segregation, convergence or divergence in the metaphorical sense, that is, different ways of grouping individual preludes [10, 343].

On macro-level of this very specific cycle, there are entirety, i.e. phases in unfolding of musical flow intensity that represent smaller parts/waves with its own dramaturgy, which encompasses development, increase of musical flow intensity, its decrease, anti-climax or episode, and at the end reaching climax or appearance of epilogue. Interesting thing is that number of preludes, which group together into «waves»<sup>6</sup>, has regular growth.

Thus, the first «Book» is divided into three «waves»: first of which is comprised of first three preludes – **1**, «Danseuses de Delphes», **2**, «Voiles», **3**, «Le vent dans la plaine»; second «wave» of next four – **4**, «Les sons et les

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<sup>6</sup> Tijana Popović Mladjenović uses term «wave» in a relation to Debussy's music, that is, unfolding and shaping of a musical flow in time. [10, 310–311]

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parfums tournent dans l'air du soir», **5**, «Les collines d'Anacapri», **6**, «Des pas sur la neige» and **7**, «Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest»; and the third of last five preludes – **8**, «La fille aux cheveux de lin», **9**, «La sérénade interrompue», **10**, «La cathédrale engloutie», **11**, «La danse de Puck», and **12**, «Minstrels».

### **Macro-level of a cycle - «Waves» of the First «Book»**

#### THE FIRST «WAVE»

*Danseuses de Delphes* (1)

*Voiles* (2)

*Le vent dans la plaine* (3)

#### THE SECOND «WAVE»

*Les sons et les parfums*

*tournent dans l'air du soir* (4)

*Les collines d'Anacapri* (5)

*Des pas sur la neige* (6)

*Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest* (7)

#### THE THIRD «WAVE»

*La fille aux cheveux de lin* (8)

*La sérénade interrompue* (9)

*La cathédrale engloutie* (10)

*La danse de Puck* (11)

*Minstrels* (12)

Musical flow of the first «Book» is followed by second «Book» that is divided into two larger «waves». First «wave» is comprised of first six preludes grouped into two smaller «waves» – first «half-wave» **1/13**, «Brouillards» (the first prelude in the Second «Book» is the thirteenth in the entire cycle of 24 preludes), **2/14**, «Feuilles mortes», **3/15**, «La puerta del Vino», and second «half-wave» **4/16**, «Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses», **5/17**, «Bruyères», **6/18**, «Général Lavine – eccentric». Second larger «wave» consists of last six miniatures, also grouped into two smaller «waves» – first «half-wave» **7/19**, «La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune»<sup>7</sup>, **8/20**, «Ondine», **9/21**, «Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C.», and second «half-wave» **10/22**, «Canope», **11/23**, «Les tierces alternées», and **12/24**, «Feux d'artifice».

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<sup>7</sup> For more details on «La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune», see [3, 97–109].

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### **Macro-level of a cycle – «Waves» of the Second «Book»**

#### THE FIRST «WAVE»

##### First «half-wave»

*Brouillards* (1/13)  
*Feuilles mortes* (2/14)  
*La Puerta del Vino* (3/15)

##### Second «half-wave»

*Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses* (4/16)  
*Bruyères* (5/17)  
*General Lavine – eccentric* (6/18)

#### THE SECOND «WAVE»

##### First «half-wave»

*La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune* (7/19)  
*Ondine* (8/20)  
*Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C.* (9/21)

##### Second «half-wave»

*Canope* (10/22)  
*Les tierces alternées* (11/23)  
*Feux d'Artifice* (12/24)

In that way, one could sense, musical flow «decomposition» is performed in ever-wider strokes, from initial grouping of three miniatures until final joining of six comprised of two «half-waves» made of three preludes each. Both «books», viewed as a whole, could be interpreted as a constant musical-dramaturgic development with vacillations in its intensity – sort of «ups» and «downs» characterized by anti-climax, episode, and epilogue.

The First «Book» consists of:

1. «Danseuses de Delphes», «group portrait» of a sort, prelude that evokes antique age and serious, solemn dance of religious nature, a part of Apollo's temple in Delphi ritual, based on figures depicted on Greek antique vases. This prelude represents Debussy's characteristic procedures in building musical flow – in terms of its formal and textural shaping, use of certain types of scales and melodic material. Those procedures make significant binding factor if all 12 preludes of the First «Book» are observed as integral whole.

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They can be noted in «hidden» three-layered texture that is present in all parts of three-part form of prelude (a a<sub>1</sub> b transition a<sub>2</sub>), within which a a<sub>1</sub> a<sub>2</sub> parts move inside of chromatic scale, leaving impression of harmonic density and saturation (chromatic melody is wrapped with heavy chord accompaniment). Needed contrast is brought by b part – characterized by softer sound, use of anhemitonic pentatonic scale in melodic layer and accompaniment in form of chord parallelisms over pedal tone. Transition towards a<sub>2</sub> part brings specific sound based on relationship between chords a third apart. This prelude gravitating towards *in* B-flat misses only whole-tone scale so that «synopsis» of all Debussy's procedures would be complete (see Example 1).

Example 1. C. Debussy. «Danseuses de Delphes», First «Book» of «Préludes». *Lent et grave*, mm. 1–9.

The image shows the first nine measures of the prelude 'Danseuses de Delphes' by Claude Debussy. The score is written for piano in 3/4 time, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat major/D minor). The tempo and mood are indicated as 'Lent et grave (♩ = 44) doux et soutenu'. The music features a complex three-layered texture. The right hand plays a chromatic melody in the upper register, often with slurs and dynamic markings like *p* and *pp*. The left hand provides a dense harmonic accompaniment with heavy chords and a steady bass line, sometimes using parallel motion. The piece is characterized by its use of an anhemitonic pentatonic scale and a chromatic scale, creating a rich, saturated harmonic environment. The first system (measures 1-3) shows the initial chromatic descent in the right hand and the establishment of the harmonic texture in the left hand. The second system (measures 4-6) continues this texture with some melodic variation in the right hand. The third system (measures 7-9) concludes the excerpt with a final chordal texture.



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2. «Voiles», element of water, sea, is prelude based on consistent whole-tone material of musical flow, which decomposes all relevant factors of tonality and is used coloristic in terms of its distinctively fluid, «watery» sonority. In center of this prelude, in a few measures, pentatonic nucleus – earliest «childhood» of music life, its archetype basis – and overall «penetrating» pentatonic sounding shortly supersedes whole-tone scale. Musical nucleus of the prelude is made by figure based on parallel thirds whose appearance forms some sort of ostinato, as well as pedal tone, which is not rhythmsized in regular rhythmic patterns; instead, it has free, irregular pulse making association that way of swaying anchored ships, their approaching and retreating from one (more or less) fixed point. «Voiles» give an impression of external static breached only by light internal movements. In terms of tempo, sound acoustic quality, tonal center, formal and textural shaping this prelude does not represent great contrast to previous. However, contrary to character stability and definitiveness of «Danseuses de Delphes», this prelude gives an impression of uncertainty and sort of remoteness in expression (see Example 2).

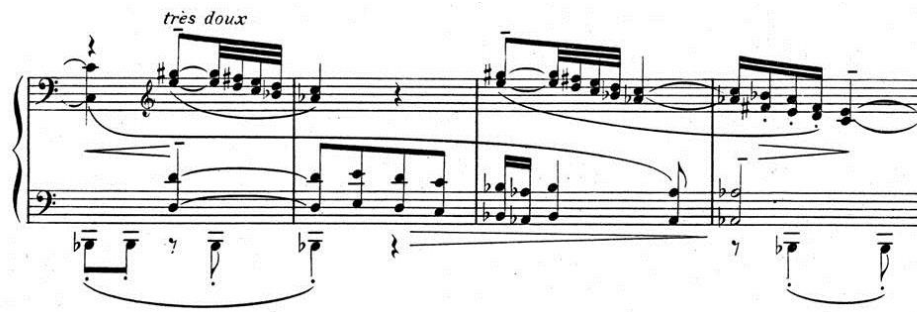
Example 2. C. Debussy. «Voiles», First «Book» of «Préludes». *Modéré*, mm. 1–13.

Modéré (♩ = 88)  
(Dans un rythme sans rigueur et caressant.)

*p très doux* *p* *più p*

*pp expressif*  
*pp* *toujours pp*

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Example 3. C. Debussy. «Le vent dans la plaine», First «Book» of «Préludes». Animé, mm. 1–6.

A musical score for the piano piece «Le vent dans la plaine» by Claude Debussy, specifically the first six measures. The score is written for piano and consists of two staves. The tempo marking is *Animé* (♩ = 126) and the performance instruction is *aussi légèrement que possible*. The dynamics are marked *pp*. The music features a constant rhythmic pulse in the right hand, often using sixteenth-note patterns, and a more melodic accompaniment in the left hand. The key signature has one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 4/4.

3. «Le vent dans la plaine», power of elementary force, toccata-like rhythm and character. There is a constant rhythmic pulse from which, almost seamlessly, derives short-breath melody. Formal shaping of this prelude resembles to the first one (a a<sub>1</sub> b a<sub>2</sub>), as well as use of pentatonic scale and relationship between chords a third apart. Tonal gravitational field is *in* B-flat (see Example 3). Considering these analogies, it is possible to interpret these

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three preludes as three-part form «A B A<sub>1</sub>» – where «Le vent dans la plaine» would represent highly dynamized reprise of «Danseuses de Delphes» and «Voiles» contrasting segment «B». Contrast brought by second prelude is precisely the way it should be in a three-part form. It does not bring contrast in all musical parameters, since it keeps connections with the first and the third prelude, but it does bring difference using whole-tone scale, as it was mentioned.

4. «Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir», impression of circularity and continuity, «bathing» with perfumes of sounds and sounds of perfumes; title of this prelude represents a citation from Charles Baudelaire's poem «Harmonie du soir» from his volume of poems «Les Fleurs du mal». It has a character that can be compared with «Danseuses de Delphes» – leaving the impression of a new starting point. Harmony language is unusually rich due to use of seventh chords and chromatic which results with full and saturated sound associated with inert motion (see Example 4). There are thematic resembles with the first prelude (starting theme from «Danseuses de Delphes» is familiar with the motive that appears in the third measure of the fourth prelude). Deflection from the first prelude, as well from complete first segment of a cycle is tonal center *in A*.

*Example 4.* C. Debussy. «Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir», First «Book» of «Préludes». *Modéré*, mm. 1–10.

The image shows a musical score for the first ten measures of the prelude «Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir» by Claude Debussy. The score is written for piano and is in 3/4 time. The tempo is marked «Modéré (♩ = 84)» with the instruction «(harmonieux et souple)». The key signature is one sharp (F#). The score begins with a piano (pp) dynamic and a fingering of (5) for the first note in the right hand. The music features a complex harmonic structure with many seventh chords and chromatic movement. The score ends with a mezzo-forte (m.f.) dynamic and a fingering of (4) for the final note in the right hand.

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5. «Les collines d'Anacapri», sunny Naples skies and freshness, a space soaked with quasi-bells sounds, mandolin or guitar, tarantella, diatonic melody of Neapolitan folk-song, movements of a slow waltz, superposing color over color in a harmonic sense; this prelude, comprised of a short introduction and three parts a b a<sub>1</sub>, has a function of genre-scene (see Example 5). On a scale level, the fifth prelude makes connection with «Danseuses de Delphes», «Le vent dans la plaine» and «Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir», while toccata-like sound refers to «Le vent dans la plaine». In tonal sense this prelude gravitates toward *in B* field.

Example 5. C. Debussy. «Les collines d'Anacapri», First «Book» of «Préludes». *Très modéré*, mm. 1–12.

A detailed musical score for the first 12 measures of 'Les collines d'Anacapri'. The score is in G major and 3/4 time. It is marked 'Très modéré' and 'pp' (pianissimo). The tempo is indicated as 'Vif (♩ = 184)'. The score includes dynamic markings such as 'pp', 'p', and 'f', and performance instructions like 'quitez, en laissant vibrer' and 'En serrant'. The score is divided into three systems, each with a treble and bass clef.

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6. «Des pas sur la neige» is at the very edge of silence; «stepping (des pas)»<sup>8</sup> is given as an ostinato repetition of seconds on a desolated path of a whole-tone scale, then within modal diatonic – this is a prelude of icy desolation of nature and soul. Three-part form (a b a<sub>1</sub>) and three-layered texture are part of a cycle vocabulary, as well as of this prelude. Its beginning in a melodic line/melodic layer could be connected with a very beginning of the first prelude and much more with a melody of the second one, which, as in this case, moves in the whole-scale sequence. Gravitational tonal center of this musical «ongoing» is *in d* (see Example 6).

Example 6. C. Debussy. «Des pas sur la neige», First «Book» of «Préludes». *Triste et lent*, mm. 1–7.

The image shows the first seven measures of the piano prelude «Des pas sur la neige» by Claude Debussy. The score is written for piano and consists of two systems of staves. The first system includes the right-hand part (treble clef) and the left-hand part (bass clef). The tempo is marked «Triste et lent» with a quarter note equal to 44 (♩ = 44). The dynamics are *pp* and *p expressif et douloureux*. The left hand features a triplet of eighth notes in the bass line, with a *ppp* dynamic marking. A note below the first system reads: «Ce rythme doit avoir la valeur sonore d'un fond de paysage triste et glacé». The second system continues the piece, with a *m.d.* (moderato) marking in the right hand. The piece concludes with a fermata over the final notes.

7. «Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest», an element of eruptive, stormy, infuriated nature, and man's powerlessness – a virtuously prelude in Liszt manner. Three-part form (A B A<sub>1</sub>) with *Coda* at the end, and three-layered texture characterized by melody in short strokes, virtuosic accompaniment and pedal tones make association, foremost, with «Le vent dans la plaine», while rich harmony and sort of harmony saturation make connection with

<sup>8</sup> More on this prelude, as well as, on sound pictures and photographic memory in Debussy's «Préludes» wrote Ivana Petković. [8, 133–144]

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«Danseuses de Delphes» and «Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir». Acoustically, this prelude involves wide dynamic range, from *pp* to *ff*, and it gravitates toward *in f-sharp* «field» (see Example 7).

Example 7. C. Debussy. «Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest», First «Book» of «Préludes». *Animé et tumultueux*, mm. 1–6.

The image shows the first six measures of the piano prelude «Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest» by Claude Debussy. The score is written for piano in G major, 4/4 time, and is marked «Animé et tumultueux». The first measure begins with a *pp* dynamic. The melody in the right hand features a series of eighth-note runs, often beamed together, with a *m. g.* (mezzo-giusto) marking above the first two measures. The left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and eighth notes. The piece concludes with a *molto* marking and a fermata over the final chord.

The past four preludes can be understood as the second relatively integral whole within the first «Book» cycle. Prelude «Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir» has a character of a new beginning; the intensity, in dramatic sense, is growing in «Les collines d'Anacapri» and it would logically be continued in the prelude «Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest» – that would be a culminating moment. However, the continuity of development is «interrupted» by the sixth prelude «Des pas sur la neige», which has the function of delaying the culmination, but at the same time, reinforcing it, with

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the moment when it occurs. In all four preludes, connections with the first segment/«wave» of the cycle are noticeable.

8. «La fille aux cheveux de lin», a musical «portrait» of a young Scottish girl who sings a simple song in the morning sun, inspired by verses Leconte de Lisle. This prelude-«drawing» has spontaneous melody and chord accompaniment within modal diatonic that gravitates towards *in* G-flat and has a function of a new beginning (see Example 8).

*Example 8. C. Debussy. «La fille aux cheveux de lin», First «Book» of «Préludes». Très calme et doucement expressif, mm. 1–13.*

The image shows the musical score for the first prelude of Debussy's 'Préludes' book, 'La fille aux cheveux de lin'. The score is written for piano and consists of three systems of music. The first system is marked 'Très calme et doucement expressif (♩ = 66)' and 'p sans rigueur'. The second system continues the piece with a 'p' dynamic marking. The third system includes the instruction 'Cédez - - Mouvt' and a 'dim.' marking. The music is in 3/4 time and features a delicate, flowing melody in the right hand and a simple, harmonic accompaniment in the left hand.

9. «La sérénade interrompue», new genre-scene, a scene from Spanish life with elements of humor. This prelude is characterized by guitar playing imitations and melody of Phrygian origin, which is occasionally enriched with oriental «spices»; a serenade that starts and ends intermittently, until the very end of the prelude when this anticipated serenade-like melody appears and takes on the indication of the Spanish lyric poem (see Example 9). Similar to

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the prelude «La fille aux cheveux de lin», «La sérénade interrompue» has a distinctive expression and color, and its tonal gravitational «field» is *in* b-flat.

Example 9. C. Debussy. «La sérénade interrompue», First «Book» of «Préludes». *Modérément animé*, mm. 1–24.

The image shows a musical score for the piano prelude «La sérénade interrompue» by Claude Debussy. The score is written for piano and is in the key of B-flat major (two flats) and 3/8 time. It is marked «Modérément animé». The score is divided into four systems of music. The first system is marked «quasi guitarra» and «pp (comme en préludant)». The second system is marked «mf» and «pp». The third system is marked «Rit.» and «p dim.». The fourth system is marked «a Tempo» and «pp». The score features a variety of rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The dynamics range from pianissimo (pp) to mezzo-forte (mf).

10. «La cathédrale engloutie» a b a<sub>1</sub> b<sub>1</sub> a<sub>2</sub> is based on an ancient Breton myth in which a cathedral, submerged underwater off the coast of the Island of Ys, rises up from the sea on clear mornings when the water is transparent. Sounds can be heard of priests chanting, bells chiming, and the organ playing, from across the sea. The movement of this prelude rests on depicting of the medieval practice of fauxbourdon, with a coral-like theme accompanied by parallel chords on the ostinato figure in a deep register, with the bubbling of the bells on pedal base from which the aliquot tones are released. Center of gravitation of this prelude is *in* C (see Example 10).



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Example 10. C. Debussy. «La cathédrale engloutie», First «Book» of «Préludes». *Profondément calme*, mm. 1–12.

The image displays the first twelve measures of the piano prelude «La cathédrale engloutie» by Claude Debussy. The score is written for piano and is in the key of E-flat major (three flats) and 6/8 time. The tempo and mood are indicated as «Profondément calme (Dans une brume doucement sonore)». The first system shows the initial chords and the beginning of the right-hand melody. The second system continues the right-hand melody, which is marked «Doux et fluide». The third system shows the continuation of the right-hand melody and the left-hand accompaniment. The score includes dynamic markings such as *pp* and *ppp*, and articulation marks like slurs and accents. The notation is characteristic of Debussy's style, with a focus on color and atmosphere.

11. «La danse de Puck», a portrait of the restless Shakespeare's spirit from «Midsummer night». Dotted rhythm and various musical materials in this prelude depict genre plays and point to Puck's antics, his sudden jumps and unexpected disappearances and appearances. It is precisely the melody of dotted rhythm that can be brought into connection with the pentatonic melody from the «Le vent dans la plaine» and the tarantella-like melody from the «Les collines d'Anacapri»; therefore, it is close to the type of toccata-like preludes and it gravitates toward *in E-flat* (see Example 11).

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Example 11. C. Debussy. «La danse de Puck», First «Book» of «Préludes». *Capricieux et léger*, mm. 1–12.

The image displays the musical score for the first twelve measures of 'La danse de Puck' by Claude Debussy. The score is written for piano in 2/4 time, with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The tempo and mood are indicated as 'Capricieux et léger' with a metronome marking of quarter note = 138. The score is divided into four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic and features a sixteenth-note melody in the right hand. The second system includes a sixteenth-note triplet and a 'Retenu' marking. The third system is marked 'Mouvt' and includes a piano (*p*) dynamic. The fourth system concludes with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The score is characterized by its intricate texture, with multiple voices and complex harmonic relationships.

12. «Minstrels», a grotesque group portrait of English minstrels. It is a prelude of high-density texture, harmony saturation, with a pentatonic motif interweaving into all segments of the music flow. It is latent music for the theater and has a function of the epilogue of the first «Book» cycle (see Example 12).

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Example 12. C. Debussy. «Minstrels», First «Book» of «Préludes». *Modéré*, mm. 1–17.

The image shows the first three measures of the piano piece 'Minstrels' by Claude Debussy. The score is written for piano and is in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tempo is marked 'Modéré (Nerveux et avec humour)'. The first measure is marked 'p' and includes the instruction 'les "gruppetti" sur le temps'. The second measure is marked 'pp' and includes the instruction 'Cédez - // Mouvt'. The third measure is marked 'p' and includes the instruction 'Cédez - // Mouvt (Un peu plus allant)'. The fourth measure is marked 'pp' and includes the instruction '(très détaché)'. The score consists of four systems of two staves each, showing the right and left hand parts.

Therefore, cycle starts with first three preludes, which are the most coherent group of the entire cycle. The first («Danseuses de Delphes») and the third («Le vent dans la plaine») preludes have similarities on a level of form, texture, type of used scales and motivic plane. Moreover, third prelude could be considered as significantly altered and prominently dynamized pandan to the first. Taking into account their relationship, second prelude («Voiles») represents decrease of intensity, i.e. anti-climax on a micro-level. While the first and the third resonate with tangibility and stability, second prelude has sort of vagueness, but at the same time retains motivic relationship with the

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first. Thus, it is possible to interpret these three preludes as a three-part form – «A B A<sub>1</sub>» where all three parts gravitate toward *in* B-flat «field».

Next group of preludes represent new stage in development that is, with exception of anti-climax sixth («Des pas sur la neige» – interpolated, in specific way, crucial and very significant episode with a completely different character), in constant growth and reaches climax in seventh prelude («Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest»). The fourth prelude («Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir») has motivic references to the first one, as well as similar harmonic solutions, and could be considered as new beginning with heightened intensity. Fifth prelude («Les collines d'Anacapri»), similarly to the third, has toccata-like rhythm, while it shares prominent mobility of metro-rhythmic structure with seventh and ninth («La sérénade interrompue») preludes. Sixth prelude («Des pas sur la neige») is an anti-climax of the second «wave», being almost at very edge of silence, in the acoustic frames of *pp* and *p* dynamic. With its distant, unfathomable atmosphere, it mostly resembles to the second one («Voiles»). Power of culmination point reached in the seventh prelude («Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest») follows from anti-climax of the sixth. In addition, the seventh prelude represents more intense, almost eruptive form of the sound picture given in the third prelude («Le vent dans la plaine»).

The next «wave» of preludes is the most interesting one; it has similar dramaturgical flow as the previous, where the eighth prelude («La fille aux cheveux de lin») marks new beginning of the heightened intensity compared to the fourth, the same way that the fourth does to the first. Culmination reached in the seventh prelude emphasises that new beginning of the third «wave» in the eighth prelude. This prelude resonate on a scale level, that is, modality, with the sixth one («Des pas sur la neige»), and also, on a level of

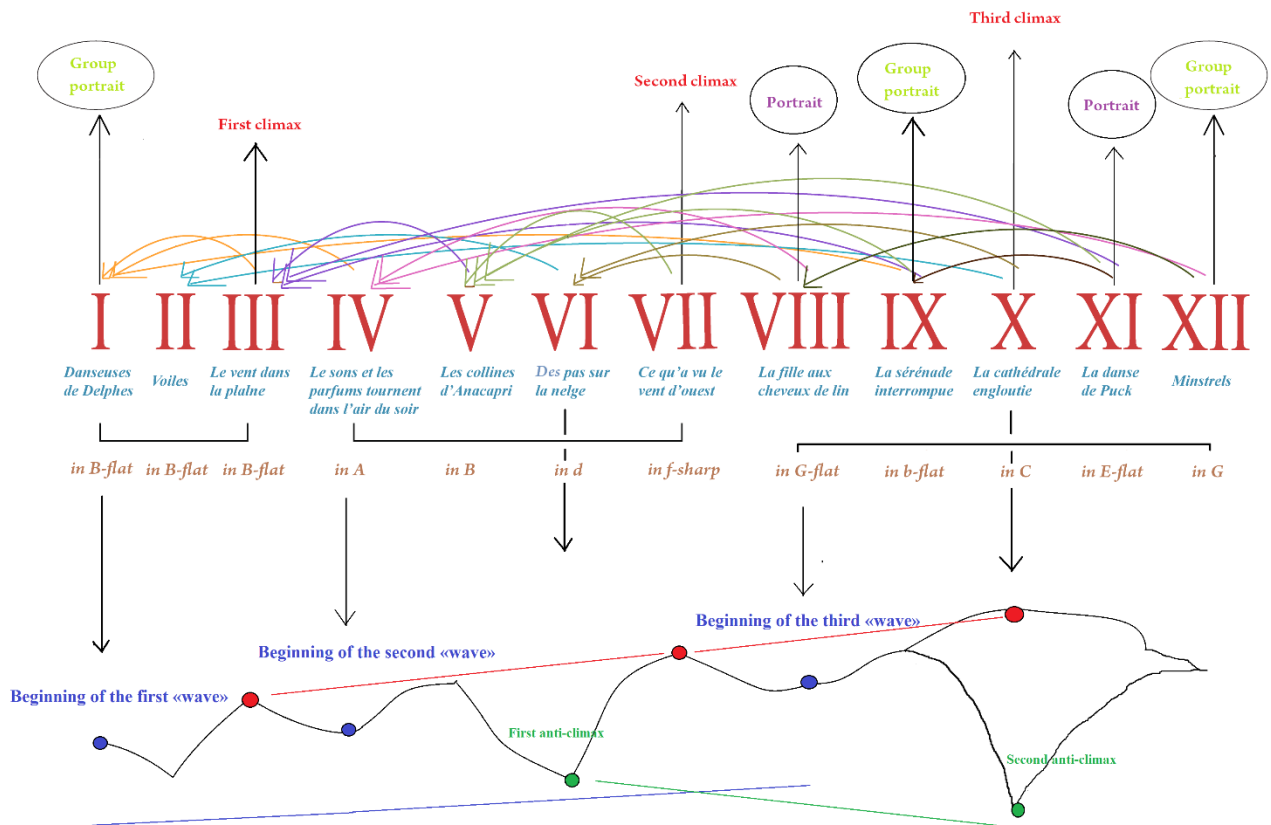
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Javanese gamelan sonority, with the second one («Voiles»). The ninth prelude («La sérénade interrompue») musically «communicate» with the fifth («Les collines d'Anacapri») and the third («Le vent dans la plaine») – toccata-like rhythm, but as well as, partially, with the first one («Danseuses de Delphes») on a harmonic level. Anti-climax/climax of the third «wave», the tenth prelude («La cathédrale engloutie») has significantly more impact than the sixth («Des pas sur la neige») and the seventh («Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest») together, previous pair of anti-climax and climax. Indeed, seemingly paradoxical, the tenth prelude represents, simultaneously, climax and anti-climax of the First «Book». Although, it is harmonised on diatonic basis in a slow tempo and mainly *pp* dynamics, it achieves powerful sound volume, no less than that of the seventh prelude. In addition, it resonates with the sixth and the second («Voiles») preludes on the basis of a short, but striking whole-tone fragment. Based on the motivic level and metro-rhythmical configuration, the eleventh prelude («La danse de Puck») corresponds with the third, the fifth and the ninth, while the grotesque-like twelfth prelude («Minstrels») resonates with the fourth prelude («Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir») as its far-reaching *scherzo* transformation, and with ninth one on the level of fragmentary structure that was built similar to the concept of collage of Picasso and Braque. The last miniature from the third «wave», a sort of music for a theatre, has a function of an epilogue of the entire First «Book». If we look at the third «wave» separately from the previous musical flow, we could reach to the different conclusion about its own dramaturgical curve: increase of the intensity in the eighth and ninth preludes, reaching culmination in the tenth and then, conditionally said, decline through the fantastic world of the eleventh until an interrupted grotesque epilogue of the twelfth. This symmetrical scheme is centred on

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tenth prelude, and formal organization of the third «wave» can be seen as «A B A<sub>1</sub> B<sub>1</sub> A<sub>2</sub>», which is also a formal organization of the tenth prelude itself, that is a b a<sub>1</sub> b<sub>1</sub> a<sub>2</sub>. See Illustration 1.

*Illustration 1. Preludes grouping into «waves» – intensity diagram and interconnection of preludes of the First «Book»*

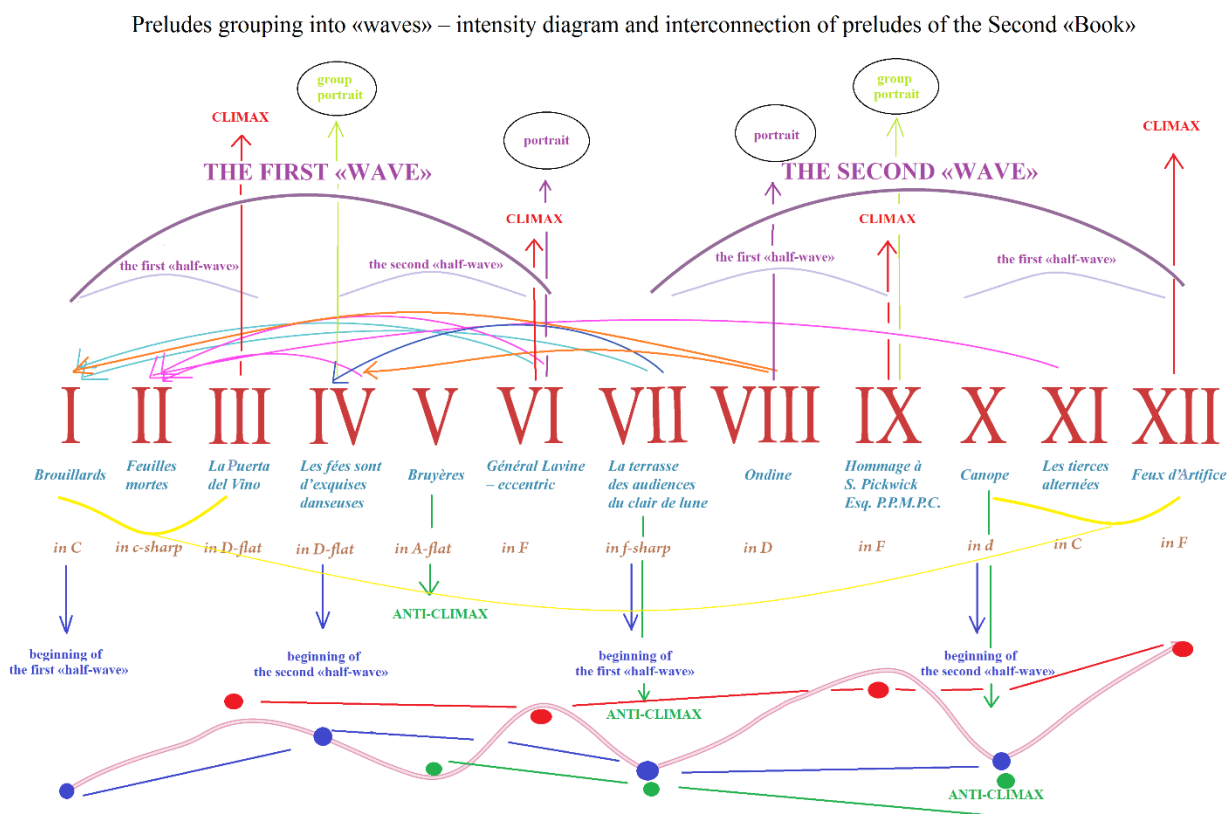


The Second «Book» of «Préludes» also contains 12 miniatures that in compositionally technical and expressive sense follow the path of the previous twelve. They give impression of reaching higher level in work with elements that are seen in the first «Book». Their structural organization, as well as texture, become more complex, and combination of musical means are more subtle. More complex structure of each individual miniature contributes to

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their independence and therefore weaker mutual interconnections (see Illustration 2). That is way sometimes relationships between preludes of the Second «Book» with those of the First «Book» are stronger than within Second «Book» itself.

*Illustration 2.* Preludes grouping into «waves» – intensity diagram and interconnection of preludes of the Second «Book»



Thus, prelude **1/13**, «Brouillards» unequivocally corresponds to **2**, «Voiles». Namely, in both cases there is some form of unsteadiness and vagueness. Representation of indeterminacy is achieved using whole-tone scale (also without anchor) in **2**, «Voiles», and bitonality, *in C – in B-flat*, in **1/13**, «Brouillards». Prelude **2/14**, «Feuilles mortes» can be linked with **1**,

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«Danseuses de Delphes» and **4**, «Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir» on musical level on similar chords factures and saturated harmonic language which is rich in seven-chords and nine-chords, as well as open chromatic scale. Prelude **3/15**, «La puerta del Vino» has its reference in **9**, «La sérénade interrompue». The latter brings simulation of playing a guitar, which accompanies melody of Phrygian origin with occasional oriental «spices». Base of «La puerta del Vino» makes ostinato repetition of Habanera rhythm (in D-flat «field»), over which, in some sort of bitonal relationship, develops melody coloured by ornaments, oriental adulterants, with characteristic augmented second, elements of chromatic-scale, with base *in* E as a specific gravitational centre with prominent second step of Phrygian mode and Andalusian fifth.<sup>9</sup>

Prelude **4/16**, «Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses» is analogues to **11**, «La danse de Puck». Music determination of the two, points out to fantastic worlds. Structures of the compositions are similar: initial and final parts of both miniatures are based on rapid passages (with punctuated rhythm in the first and steady pulse in the second), while the contrasting segment of musical flow characterize chord-facture and is wealthier in harmonic sense. Movement itself unfolds in frame of modal diatonic. This prelude has, above all, clear connection with **1/13**, «Brouillards» and **2/14**, «Feuilles mortes». Probably the most prominent similarity is between **5/17**, «Bruyères» and **8**, «La fille aux cheveux de lin». Pentatonic melody, characterizing «Bruyères», coexisting with simple harmonic progression in frame of major diatonic with the elements of modality, represents sound *equivalent* or even more elaborated «sound picture» of the prelude «La fille aux cheveux de lin». The next couple of similar preludes are **6/18**, «Général Lavine – eccentric» and **12**,

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<sup>9</sup> More details on Debussy's prelude «La puerta del Vino», see [11, 27–40; 12, 119–135].



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«Minstrels», both serving as epilogue. Arsenal of expressive means is similar and characterized by use of breakthrough of mediant relationships, emphasised rhythmical component and agogic, *staccato* effects and saturated harmony, which in case of «Général Lavine – eccentric» creates an impression of grotesque, while in second Minstrels' merrymaking. Prelude **6/18**, «Général Lavine – eccentric» is on a motivic level strongly connected also with **1/13**, «Brouillards» and **2/14**, «Feuilles mortes».

Therefore, similarities between preludes go as following:

- **7/19**, «La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune» with **1/13**, «Brouillards» and **4/16**, «Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses», as well as **2**, «Voiles»;

- **8/20**, «Ondine» also with **4/16**, «Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses» and **1/13**, «Brouillards», and based on *scherzo*-like character with **12**, «Minstrels»;

- Sonority of **9/21**, «Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C.» can be recognized in **10**, «La cathédrale engloutie», motivic material and scale in **5**, «Les collines d'Anacapri» and metro-rhythmical configuration in **12**, «Minstrels»;

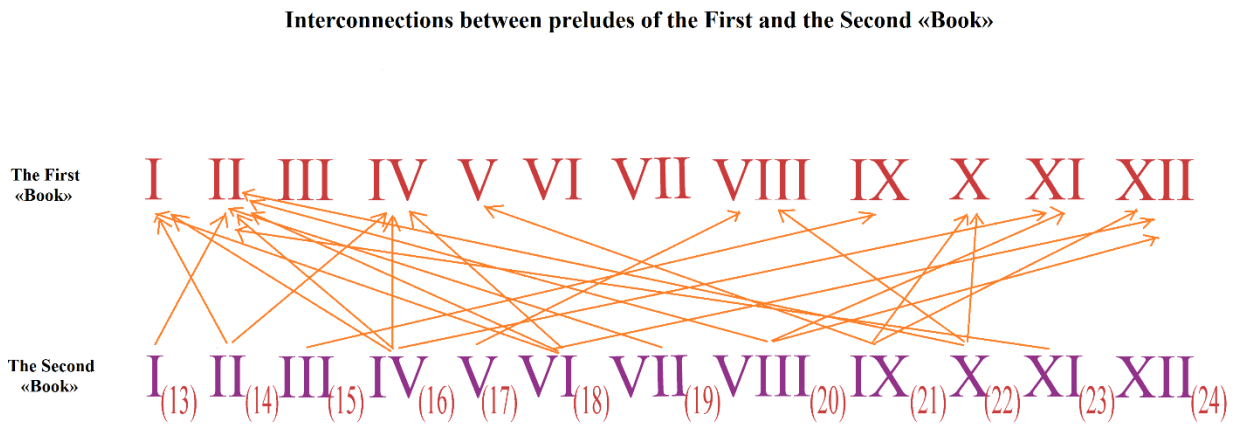
- prelude **10/22**, «Canope» resonates, on the basis of sonority, harmony progression with dominant modality and chromatised melody built on fragments with **10**, «La cathédrale engloutie», and with Javanese gamelan-like sound of **8**, «La fille aux cheveux de lin» and **2**, «Violes»;

- Whole-tone scale in a crucial part of musical flow of prelude **11/23**, «*Les tierces alternées*» can be related with **2/14**, «Feuilles mortes» and **2**, «Voiles». Thus, the last segment of global development is more complex and it leads toward sound explosion in **12/24**, «Feux d'artifice». «Canope», **10/22**, as an anti-climax of this «half-wave», precede to an effective sound flickering

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**11/23**, «Les tierces alternées», and sonorous outburst prelude **12/24**, «Feux d'artifice». In that sense, one could realise that the most prominent dramaturgical points are **7**, «Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest» and **12/24**, «Feux d'artifice», that represent culmination points of the entire musical development. Along with them, **10**, «La cathédrale engloutie» serves a function of global anti-climax, characterized by extremely high volume (see Illustration 3).

*Illustration 3.* Interconnections between preludes of the First and the Second «Book»



Particularly interesting compositional solutions come into focus regarding the entirety of musical dramaturgy while interpreting tonal «fields» dramaturgy,<sup>10</sup> both in analysis of individual preludes and grouped in «waves», in each Book separately and as a 24-preludes cycle. They seem to make a strong argument to consider both books of preludes as an integral music-

<sup>10</sup> More details on tonal «fields» dramaturgy of Debussy's «Préludes», see [2, 179–204].

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dramaturgical whole. Namely, in first segment/«wave», all three preludes gravitate toward *in* B-flat «field» making the beginning of cycle to be stable. In second segment/«wave» preludes gravitate toward *in* A (the fourth prelude), *in* B (the fifth), *in* d (the sixth), *in* f-sharp (the seventh) marking (with changed order) tones of minor seventh chord: B-d-f-sharp-A. Therefore, first appears tone of a seventh of seventh cord, then root and third and finally fifth. Order of tonal gravitational «fields» in the third «wave» is: *in* G-flat, *in* b-flat, *in* C, *in* E-flat, *in* G, which, similarly as in previous «tonal plateau», represents tones of minor seventh chord or half-diminished seventh chord. This duality comes from the fact that there are two possible fifths of the seventh chord: G and G-flat, thus consequently forming chords c – e-flat – g – b-flat (minor seventh) c – e-flat – g-flat – b-flat (half-diminished seventh). It is interesting to notice that Debussy alternated interval of fifth in the third «wave».

### **First «Book»:**

#### **First «wave» (1-3 preludes)**

*in* B-flat

#### **Second «wave» (4-7 preludes)**

*in* A, *in* B, *in* d, *in* f-sharp (tones of minor seventh-chord)

#### **Third «wave» (8-12 preludes)**

*in* G-flat, *in* b-flat, *in* C, *in* E-flat, *in* G (tones of minor seventh-chord or half-diminished seventh-chord)

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First six preludes of the second book gravitate toward *in C*, *in c-sharp*, *in D-flat*, *in D-flat*, *in A-flat*, *in F*. Even «tonal plateaus» of these preludes, in different order, give tones of major seventh chord: d-flat – f – a-flat – c/c-sharp. In case of this segment of a cycle, increase of preludes number in a group is solved by repeating tone of a root and addition of a tone of alternative seventh. Tones of both seventh appear first, then root, fifth and at the end minor third of seventh chord. Last segment of musical flow is characterized by following «tonal plateaus»: *in f-sharp*, *in D*, *in F*, *in d*, *in C*, *in F*. Even in this group, one can observe tones of minor major seventh and minor seventh chord, but not in complete form since fifth (tone a) is left out: d – f-sharp/f – c.

### **Second «Book»:**

#### **First «wave» (1-6/13-18 preludes)**

*in C*, *in c-sharp*, *in D-flat*, *in D-flat*, *in A-flat*, *in F*

(tones of the major/minor seventh-chord)

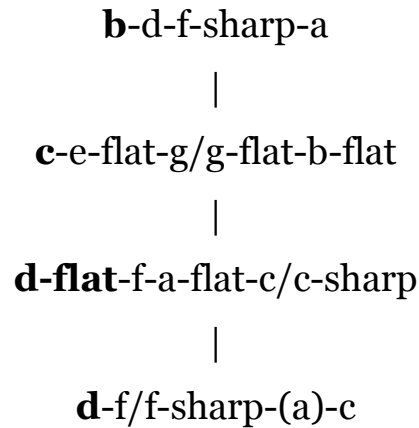
#### **Second «wave» (7-12/19-24 preludes)**

*in f-sharp*, *in D*, *in F*, *in d*, *in C*, *in F*

(tones of minor major seventh-chord or minor seventh-chord)

So, basis of this *quasi* tonal progression holds chain of seventh chords whose root represents half-tone step upward: **b**-d-f-sharp-a → **c**-e-flat-g/g-flat-b-flat → **d-flat**-f-a-flat-c/c-sharp → **d**-f/f-sharp-(a)-c, which contributes to a tight integration of a cycle in to unify whole.

**Tonal progression - chain of seventh chords:**

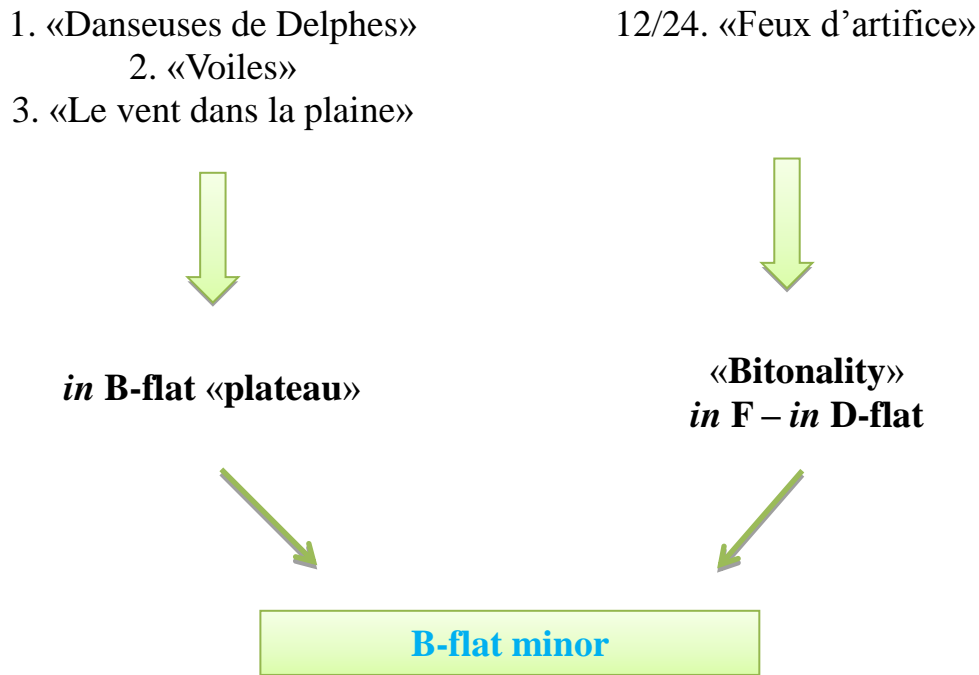


In that sense, Debussy's choice of seventh chord as «base harmony»/«base chord», a sort of *gamma* of this cycle, is interesting because it can be linked with his harmonic way of thinking characterized by emancipation of dissonance, parallel movements of seventh chords and ninth chords, as well as extension of tonal way of thinking to the extreme. In a relation to that, «colour» and sound «softness» of seventh chord can be interpreted as base/dominant «tone/colour/shade» of Debussy's cycle. It is author's «signature» in harmonic language realm, «signature» that projects/predicts upcoming period of music history.<sup>11</sup> On the same level, «echo» of past times can be found being exposed through affirmation of (possible) *quasi* tonal centre of the cycle. Namely, «bitonality» of the last prelude – «Feux d'artifice» (*in F – in D-flat*), together with starting *in B-flat* «plateau» (first three preludes), affirms b-flat minor chord, so it is possible to mark b-flat minor as «tonal centre» of the cycle and integrative factor of «Préludes» [2, 198–199].

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<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to notice that Kholopov emphasizes specific harmonic way of thinking in shaping of a musical flow in Debussy's preludes, see [1, 484–549].

**Possible tonal centre of a cycle:**



In the end, it seems that the integral performance of all preludes of the first and second «Book» really represents the fulfilment of the global compositional idea. This idea confirms the manner in which the musical flow set of twenty-four miniatures is structured. An integral whole is accomplished by using specific compositional principles and compositional procedures, compositional-technical solutions, as well as programmatic content determinations of compositions. Nevertheless, Debussy delegated the performer to make a decision on how he or she will perform «Préludes» – a piece or integral. In that sense, it would be interesting to deal with the choice of preludes and their combinations the performers made when decided not to present one or, on the other hand, all twenty-four miniatures. The question is would it still be present logic of a cycle?

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