Claude Debussy's manipulation of musical elements to compose impressionist music
Impressionism

The impressionist movement began in the late 19th Century with a small group of artists in Paris rebelling against the traditional nature of the fine arts at the time. The first mention of the term impression in relation to art was made in 1748 by Hume in his *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*. Hume described an impression as "the immediate effect of hearing, seeing or feeling on the mind" (Grove 190). The term impressionism was first used to describe artists by Jules-Antoine Castagnary in 1874, and it was used as a derogatory label in an attempt to degrade and shame artists who weren't following traditional concepts and rules. The expression came from an 1873 painting by French artist Claude Monet, *Impression-Sunrise*, depicting a misty harbor in the early morning and blurring water and sky into one another (Palmer 14).

Monet stood out from other artists in that he utilized *al fresco* painting, or painting in the open air outside, and he undertook a completely new and different technique for color and light. Among Monet's colleagues and friends were painters Sisley, Pissarro, Cezanne, and Renoir. These artists, together being callously labeled 'impressionists,' set about living up to their reputation by continuing to use new methods and ideas in their works. The artists focused on the scenery, lighting, and colors as being more important than the subject itself. Their intent was to create a more realistic image through their impressionistic portrayal of it by showing people what they would actually see when looking at it. Moving objects appear as blurs, and details melt together into vague dashes of color, as they would in a person's memory (Palmer 15).

The works' dream-like qualities and atmosphere resulted in a similar impressionistic movement in literature, symbolism. This movement, largely spearheaded by Edgar Allan Poe (Palmer 16), focuses on the merging of the worlds of both dream and reality into one vague idea
or story. Poe inspired Baudelaire's poetry, who then highly influenced Mallarme and Maeterlinck, both of whom became famous for their wholly symbolist poetry (Palmer 17). Mallarme believed that his poetry should emulate the qualities of music in its artistry (Grove2 101). These poets aimed, above all else, to write with ambiguity and elusiveness, attempting to create an impression or feeling rather than conveying specific meanings from the words they chose. The symbolist poets also gained inspiration from music in that they focused on what they wanted their audience to feel rather than know. Edgar Allan Poe related his works to music, "I know that indefiniteness is an element of true music, a suggested indefiniteness bringing about a definiteness of vague and therefore spiritual effect" (Palmer 16).

Just as symbolist poets gained ideas and inspiration from both visual arts and music, impressionist composers gained ideas and inspiration from both visual arts and literature. The first notable mention of impressionism in music was made in 1883 by Jules Laforgue, who noticed a similarity between Wagner's musical styles and impressionist art (Grove1 91). Chabrier was considered to be the first composer to begin to incorporate his impressionist ideas into his music (Grove1 91). Impressionist composers rebelled against the rigid rules and expectations for music, very similar to how Monet and his contemporaries rebelled against the traditionalist rules for art. These composers reasoned that if life doesn't operate from such rigid expectations, neither should their musical representation of life (Palmer 19). They also utilized the concept of al fresco painting by attempting to convey a feeling of naturalness and impulsiveness. From the literature movement, composers found the concepts of fantasy and dream as impressionistic worlds from which art could be created (Palmer 19). Claude Debussy was one composer who found particular inspiration in the impressionist and symbolist movements in other arts. Debussy expanded upon impressionist ideas and had an enduring impact on the music styles for
composers of his time as well as those after his time. He experimented with natural subjects and ideas, instrumental timbre, harmonies, rhythms, and even instrumentation of his ensembles (Grove 1 91). For much of his life Debussy regularly visited the same cafes that literary and artistic figures of the impressionist movement frequented. He became friends with many of the symbolist writers and impressionist painters at these cafes, including Paul Dukas, Robert Godet, and Raymond Bonheur (Grove 2 97). He also enjoyed acquaintances with symbolist writers Paul Bourget, Henri de Regnier, Paul Valery, and Andre Gide, and had a particularly strong relationship with Pierre Louys (Grove 2 101). His colleagues' techniques and ideas permeated Debussy's own style, as Debussy greatly admired and was highly inspired by these artists and poets (Palmer 18).

**Debussy**

Debussy was born the first of five children in St. Germain-en-Laye in August 1862 to his father Manuel-Achille, a marines veteran and china shop owner. Debussy's family struggled financially, so for the beginning of his life Debussy's musical talents went unnoticed. Manuel-Achille wished for Debussy to follow in his footsteps and become a sailor. In 1870 the Franco-Prussian war pushed Debussy and his family to live with Debussy's aunt Clementine. It was there that Debussy, at age eight, began to take his first piano lessons from the Italian pianist Jean Cerutti. Within the year Debussy's father was condemned and imprisoned for being a captain with the Commune, and Debussy was left to live with Antoinette Mauté (Grove 2 96). Madame Mauté, who lived in Fleurville, was known for her association with Chopin, a famous Polish composer. She continued to encourage Debussy in his musical endeavors, and in 1873 she had him enrolled at the Paris Conservatory studying piano and composition. Over his summers at the
Conservatory Debussy was hired by Nadezhda Filaretovna von Meck, a wealthy mother, to give her children piano lessons. Debussy was able to travel across Europe with the family and gained a lot of cultural influence for his compositions during these summer travels (Lockspeiser §2-3).

Though Debussy realized during his time at the Paris Conservatory that he was not going to be able to make a career for himself in professional piano performance as he had dreamed, he excelled in his other studies. He began his first composition in 1879 and by 1883 had composed over "thirty melódies, two scénes lyriques, choruses, a cello suite, and a symphony" (Grove2 97). In 1884 Debussy submitted his cantata L'Enfant prodigue in the Prix de Rome, a prestigious musical competition, and won the top prize. With the honor of this prize came the unique opportunity for Debussy to stay in Rome at the Villa Medici to continue his work. After two years at the Villa, he returned to Paris and a number of dramatic affairs. Amidst several mistresses (one of whom, Gaby, threatened to commit suicide), Debussy did have a wife, Lily (Lockspeiser §1,4). After being married to Lily for four years, Debussy met and fell in love with Emma, another married woman. When Debussy left Lily to move in with Emma, Lily attempted suicide. Though she was not successful, this drama managed to damage several friendships for Debussy (Grove2 98).

By the late 1880s Debussy had entered a period of financial struggle. It was also during this time that Debussy was using significant influence from German composer Richard Wagner. This influence can most apparently be seen in Cinq poémes de Baudelaire and his Fantasie. It was during this same time that Debussy began meeting the symbolist poets and impressionist artists with whom he would form friendships and from whom he would gain so much insight into the impressionist arts. By 1890 Debussy began to realize that he needed to move beyond the limits of Wagner's influence (Grove2 97). He met Mallarmé, who asked Debussy to write music
for a theater production of his symbolist poem *L'apres-midi d'un faune*. Though this project was never finished, it led Debussy to look further into the world of symbolist poetry for compositional ideas. He met Poe, Satie, and Maeterlinck the same year and began projects based on several of these poets' works. Debussy even attended a performance of Maeterlinck's work *Pelléas et Méisande* to support his newfound colleague. In 1892 Debussy undertook to write his own works in the style of his symbolist colleagues, and composed from these texts (Grove2 97).

Debussy first joined the "larger stage of Parisian artistic society in 1893, with performances of his *La damoiselle élue* at the Société Nationale" (Grove2 97). Debussy soon revisited his project for *L'aprés-midi d'un faune* after visiting Mallarmé's weekly salon for over two years, composing his *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune* (Grove2 97). The *Prelude* was completed in 1892 and first performed in 1894. This piece was, not surprisingly, highly influenced from Debussy's visit to the Paris World Exhibition in 1889. At the exhibition Debussy saw a Javanese ensemble which inspired several small changes to Debussy's compositional choices (Biography.com ¶5). In 1903, Debussy began writing one of his most famous pieces, the three-movement symphony-like piece *La Mer*. The first performance of *La Mer* was in October 1905 under the unfortunate direction of Camille Chevillard, who cared little about the piece (Grove2 99). This apathetic attitude from the director naturally resulted in a negative response from critics. Debussy directed another performance of the piece himself in 1908, however, with great success and a highly positive response from audience members and critics alike (Grove2 98).

By 1915, Debussy's health was declining and he was diagnosed with colon cancer. He had productive last years, completing a cello sonata, a sonata for flute, violin, and harp, and several piano pieces. He had to have a surgery for his cancer, however, and Debussy lost most of
his independent abilities after the surgery, though he did return to several of his old, unfinished projects. Debussy's last public appearance was playing piano in a concert in September 1917. Debussy died in Paris, his home, in March 1918 (Grove 2 100).

It can clearly be seen that Debussy wished to emulate and gain inspiration from the impressionist painters and symbolist poets in Paris during his time. He considered his fellow artists not just colleagues, but friends. It is said that Debussy's most meaningful education took place not at the Conservatory, but rather at the cafes where Debussy met with his contemporaries in literature and art. The two pieces that most emulate Debussy's impressionist tendencies and ideas are La Mer and Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune.

Debussy manipulated traditional uses of harmony, timbre, rhythm, form, tonality, and melody in order to achieve an impressionist quality in his music, as well as to musically convey symbolist poetry. Debussy's Prelude al'apres-midi d'un faune illustrates how Debussy manipulated the elements of music to interpret Mallarme's symbolist poetry, and his La Mer exemplifies his manipulation of harmony and melody. The author undertook to examine Debussy's manipulation of these elements to achieve an impressionist sound and interpretation of Mallarme, as well as composed a piece incorporating research findings.

**Compositional analysis: Musical impressionism**

One characteristic aspect of Debussy's music was his manipulation of meter and rhythm. Debussy often avoided strict or predictable meter and rhythms, as can be seen in the excerpt from Claire De Lune in example 1. One rhythm he used particularly often, as shown in example 2, gives listeners no feeling of a direct beat to hold on to (Palmer 31). The melody of my piece
incorporates an augmented version of this Debussian rhythm, as shown in the oboe melody in example 3 beginning in measure 19. I also chose to write my piece in a 3/4 meter and intentionally avoided giving listeners any sense or feel of a three beat pattern. The chords at the beginning avoid down beats altogether, often even landing on off-beats. I also incorporated quarter and eighth note triplets in conjunction with quarter notes and eighth notes so that listeners will struggle to find a strong or steady beat.

Another compositional choice I made in order to reproduce the impressionist style was my decision to base my composition on an aspect of nature, particularly because it is based on water. The fact that my piece is written about the sea allowed me to manipulate the elements of music to portray a body of water as Debussy often did. Debussy was known to be enchanted by water and its ability to exemplify the impressionist qualities when translated to music (Palmer 27). La Mer was one of Debussy's most popular pieces inspired by water and the sea, but he also incorporates water themes into Petite Suite, Deux Arabesques, and a chilling scene in Pelléas et Mélisande (Palmer 32). My manipulation of musical components to represent water will be discussed in more detail in the poetic and harmonic analyses.

I also used a symbolist poem by Mallarmé to gain a better grasp of Debussy's style and the impressionist movement. As detailed above, Debussy had a particular respect for and
friendship with Mallarme and attempted several projects with him, the most famous and successful being his *Prelude*. This will be discussed further in the poetic analysis.

A final aspect of my piece with which I mimicked the general impressionist and Debussian style was my manipulation of dynamics to create a feeling of distance. Distance was a significant fixation for impressionist painters, and so Debussy often manipulated aspects of his music to reproduce a sense of distance musically (Palmer 24). I attempted to give listeners a feeling of distance from the 'waves' of chords at the beginning of the piece by having each chord fade in slowly before 'meeting' the listener. I also had the final chord of the composition slowly build then fade out until the listeners can no longer hear the waves as they fade into the distance and the sun comes out.

**Compositional analysis: Reading Mallarme**

Of Debussy's *Prelude à l'après-midi d'un faune* and its basis on Mallarme's poem David Code wrote, "Debussy reads Mallarme closely and in detail, achieving a sophisticated compositional equivalent of the aesthetic principles pursued by the poet" (Code 493). Debussy did so by manipulating various elements of music such as timbre, form, harmony, and embellishments to represent various parts of the theme, form, character development, and even specific lines and words of the poetry.

Mallarme's poem contains what scholars consider to be a literary fugue. It begins and ends with a seven-line section separated from the rest of the poem by blank space. The first seven lines are followed by a fifteen-line section stating the original pattern or subject (Code 510). There is then a twenty nine-line (almost twice as long) augmentation of the statement. Within this augmentation is also a diminution of the original subject that is seven lines (almost
half of the length of the original) in length. The augmentation contains three different literary themes (Code 511). Though Debussy's Prelude is far from a fugue, Code observes that Mallarme's literary fugue gave Debussy a "clear template" for his composition (Code 517). Debussy set up his interpretation of Mallarme's fugue with a statement of the subject musically representing the contrast between Mallarme's two nymphs. To achieve this contrast Debussy manipulated timbre, using the contrast in timbre between winds and strings. He has winds present his theme then has the violins echo the melody exactly (Code 518). Debussy depicted Mallarme's augmentation by manipulating form, with a clearly distinguished longer section in which the timbre contrast from the melody passing between winds and strings continues. Another part of the form of the poem that Debussy utilized in his reading is typeface. Debussy represented a change in the typeface by manipulating melody and tonality. He passed a modal harp melody to oboe and exchanged the melody to a whole-tone tonality (Code 520). Debussy also represented some parts of Mallarme's form through a manipulation of musical form and length. Debussy composed a seven-measure section to represent a seven-line section of the poem. Further, to represent this section ending in ellipses and the vagueness this implied, Debussy ended his seven measures with a subtle shift away from whole-bar phrases (Code 525). A final aspect of the form that Debussy represented in his Prelude was Mallarme's central climactic section, which, but for one extra line, lies perfectly in the center of symmetrical sections as shown in example 4 (Code 532).
Debussy represented this structural choice of Mallarme's by again manipulating form. He made his own central climactic section a perfectly parallel sixteen measures. Debussy used four measures of a D-flat melody, four measures of a climactic phrase, four measures of a descending echo of the climactic phrase, and another four measures of the D-flat melody (Code 540).

I reproduced the structure and form of Mallarme's *Sea Breeze* in a couple of ways. The first and clearest way in which I did this was by using a traditional form. The poem has no blank spaces or particularly long lines. It is in a simple one-stanza form. Similarly, my composition is in a simple arch form, ABCBA. The other part of Mallarme's form which I signified in my piece was his frequent use of exclamation points. I manipulated articulations, dynamics, rhythm, and harmony to compose my own musical explanation points throughout the piece. At the beginning of the piece, there are several chords on which the ensemble is in rhythmic unison at a mezzo-forte dynamic. This contrasts with the staggered and quieter entrances of the other chords to create an exclamation-like effect. I also included an exclamation point in measure 30 by
including an accent marking on the chord entrance. Finally, I composed an exclamation point using a forte dynamic marking on the striking modulating chord in measure 47.

Debussy also manipulated instruments and their characteristic timbres in order to read Mallarme's *L'après-midi d'un faune*. Debussy's most obvious timbral manipulation in his reading of Mallarme's poem is his use of the flute to represent the faun's solitude at the beginning of the poem (Code 517). Berlioz described the flute's character as more of a lack of clear character in all registers, making it an appropriate choice for representing the faun and his vague and unsure place in his world (Code 528). The oboe, on the other hand, has a more wild and untamed character, and the clarinet has a tone of nobility, pride, and "heroic love," comparable to the brass section in character (Code 529). Through the manipulation of these timbral qualities Debussy sets up a translation of both the faun's character and struggles and his visual experiences. As mentioned, Debussy uses the unclear character of the flute to represent the faun's vague character. He contrasts this unsure theme with the more clearly characterized instruments to represent the faun's concrete visual experiences (Code 530). The use of violins is also purposeful, as Berlioz asserts that they are the "female voice of the orchestra" and that they "penetrate to the depth of the heart" with their sound quality (Code 530). Finally, Berlioz notes that Debussy's manipulation of the horn timbre utilizes its tendency to portray "sentiments and situations in which the imagination intervenes in an active way" (Code 531). The French horn brings about feelings of love, anticipation, desire, and memory (Code 531).

The first and most prominent timbral manipulation I made in my composition was my decision to add a marimba to the traditional woodwind quintet instrumentation. The marimba has a very distant, dream-like quality and can readily imitate rolling waves with dynamically dramatic rolls. Mallarme's *Sea Breeze* gives me a sense of far-off memories and looking out at a
distant sea, so the marimba was my way of incorporating that overall impression of the poem into my piece. I also manipulated the wild character of the oboe by having oboe play the first and last appearances of the melody. There are several lines throughout the poem that give the reader a sense of the untamed and spontaneous. Two lines in particular, "Nothing...Can restrain this heart that drenches itself in the sea" and "Lift your anchor towards an exotic rawness!" made me feel that an oboe, with such an untamed tone quality, would be the most appropriate instrument to present the melody and represent the author's uncontrollable desire for the sea and the wildness of the sea. When the melody comes back in measure 66 in the French horn and flute, it is a combined timbre of the flute's mysterious character and the horn's powerful emotional value. I intended it as a representation of the vague but intense emotion in the lines "A Boredom, made desolate by cruel hope/Still believes in the last goodbye of handkerchiefs!"

Debussy also manipulated musical elements to create several more literal musical interpretations of aspects from the poem. To represent the sparks that blind the faun from being able to see the classical tradition in Mallarme's poem, Debussy used two techniques in combination. To represent the sparks Debussy manipulated melody, using grace notes in the harp part. To represent the faun being blinded to the classical tradition Debussy manipulated tonality, using the highly non-traditional whole tone scale (Code 520). Another example of Debussy's more literal reading of the poem comes from the faun addressing himself as "the one who searches for the A." Debussy, manipulating tonality and melody, left out only the note 'A' from the oboe's Dorian melody representing this section (Code 525). Later, the faun emphasizes "le la" (the A) and to represent this emphasis Debussy manipulated rhythm, allowing the flute to finally move down to the missing A twice, on rhythmically strong beats to represent the italics (Code 526).
I similarly included several more literal musical translations from Mallarme's *Sea Breeze* in my composition. One of these occurs in a three measure phrase in which I manipulated rhythm, dynamics, and harmony, beginning in measure 59. The instruments moving in unison octaves at a forte dynamic, shown in example 5, are the sailors chanting in the line "But, oh my heart, listen to the sailors’ chant!" Further, I manipulated melody, timbre, and rhythm to represent a line from the poem. The C section beginning in measure 48, shown in example 6, is my representation of "the birds, intoxicated, fly." This section contains only the high woodwind instruments which are frequently understood to represent birds and flight, particularly the flute. The notes are fast and jump around the staff to represent flocks of birds separating and coming back together in wild flight.
Compositional analysis: Harmony and melody

Debussy once responded to a compositional criticism from his Conservatory teacher Ernest Guiraud, "There is no theory. You merely have to listen. Pleasure is the law" (Palmer 22). Debussy made it a point to manipulate harmony, melody, and tonality by avoiding the use of major and minor keys, scales, and tonalities. Debussy manipulated these elements by depending merely on his ear and personal tastes to decide where his pieces were to go harmonically and melodically (Palmer 20). He frequently manipulated melody and tonality by utilizing the whole-tone scale to achieve the oriental style he so admired, as well as the pentatonic scale to emulate the melodies of Russian folk music. Naturally, the use of these non-major and minor scale patterns to create new melodies resulted in the necessity for new non-traditional harmonies (Palmer 21).

I largely emulated Debussy's style through my manipulation of melody, harmony, and tonality, shown by my avoidance of traditional major and minor tonalities in both my melodies and my harmonies. The piece is based mostly on the whole tone scale during the beginning and end, and in the middle I use the acoustic scale, a scale derived from the first thirteen partials in the overtone series (Marcus 62), to create my melodies and harmonies. Neither the whole tone scale nor the acoustic scale foster traditional chord progressions or melodic passages.

In Debussy's music, harmony and melody did not necessarily have to connect. In fact, Debussy often considered the harmonies in his pieces to be a free-standing aspect of his music, far more important than the melodies. In this way, Debussy manipulated the traditional roles of melody and harmony. Debussy's harmonies were independent from the melody and important to the meaning of the piece, not meant to be heard or understood as an accompaniment to the traditionally essential melodies (Palmer 21). One of the main focuses of impressionist painters
was the atmosphere rather than the subject, similarly contrary to traditional values. Debussy musically achieved this focus on atmosphere through his manipulation of harmony to make it its own entity (Palmer 20).

One of my main methods of creating an impressionist piece was imitating Debussy's tendency to manipulate harmony and make it a self-sufficient aspect of the music. I began my piece with moving chords that illustrated the wave effect and emotion I desired and allowed these chords to speak for themselves for several measures. After establishing these chords, I allowed a melody to rise up out of the harmony I had created. Rather than writing a melody then composing harmonies to enhance or accompany that melody, I composed a melody to enhance the already self-sufficient harmony. In this way, I established from the beginning of the piece, where there is no melody, that the harmony is going to be the most important aspect of the piece.

Debussy also manipulated harmony by utilizing a scalar approach to guide harmony and melody. The four scales that Debussy most typically used are the acoustic, whole tone, diatonic, and octatonic scales (Marcus 55). None of these scales contain intervals other than half- and whole- steps and none have any two half-steps in a row, as can be seen in example 7 from page 59. This lends to a sound that is different from major and minor tonalities, but not too dissonant or unfamiliar (Marcus 64). Nearly all of Debussy's harmonies can by analyzed as deriving from these four scales (Marcus 57). They create harmonies that "offer similar melodic intervals and chord structures, while providing subtly new tinges of color and feeling" (Marcus 65). Debussy manipulates harmony by using dissonant chords that can be found within the structure of these four scales, such as the augmented triads that are inherent in the whole tone scale (Marcus 65). The fact that none of the four scales have two half-steps in a row lends to Debussy's habit of avoiding [012] patterns vertically, a single consistency that can be found in his harmonies.
Debussy didn't always use the full range of the scales, though, nor did he always use only the notes of the designated scale. He often manipulated even the scalar patterns by using just segments of the scales or adding chromatics (Marcus 56). In this way, Debussy manipulated the typical harmonic structure of music to avoid the predictability of traditionally tonal music (Marcus 57). Debussy also manipulated melody by still intentionally neglecting to give listeners a tonic or pitch center within the scalar patterns (Marcus 61). Debussy also used acoustic, whole tone, etc. collections, or scales with no apparent root, to manipulate melody (Marcus 66).

I similarly manipulated melody and harmony in my piece using a scalar approach. In measure 18 of my piece on beat two I begin using augmented triads derived from the whole tone scale. In this way, I am, like Debussy, manipulating the traditional triadic harmonic structure within the context of a whole tone scale structure, making the triads dissonant. The oboe melody starting in measure 18 is also based in the whole tone scale. This allows me to manipulate the melody in such a way that it gives the listener no sense of a comfortable and predictable major or minor tonality, as there are no half steps to give the listener a sense of where the melody is going.
to go. In measure 47 the harmony is derived from the acoustic scale and beginning in 48 the four disparate melodies are all based on the A acoustic collection, as I avoid giving listeners any consistent sense of a root. I also fog the impression of the acoustic collection in measures 54 and 55 by adding chromatics that do not fit within the scale pattern, as shown in example 8.

Another technique Debussy uses to manipulate harmony is parsimonious voice leading, which refers to the process of changing as few voices as possible by the smallest intervals possible when moving between chords (Marcus 103). This process "operates as a unifying principle in La Mer" (Marcus 104). One method Debussy uses to utilize parsimonious chord changes is a split-fifth, in which the fifth of a chord splits into its two chromatic neighbors. The fifth can be split in separate registers or voices to achieve the intended effect (Marcus 109). He uses a similar technique to manipulate melody, scale-to-scale parsimony. This technique allows Debussy to pass smoothly between scale types using the notes that overlap between the scales. In this technique, the common tones between the scales are maintained and the composer can change one pitch up or down by a half-step, split a tone to its two chromatic neighbors, or merge two tones into their chromatic neighbor (Marcus 112). For example, in order to transition from a whole tone collection to an acoustic collection, one note needs to be split into its chromatic neighbors, as shown in example 9 (Marcus 114). This effect allows the music to have some consistency while still ever-changing, like the moving surface of a body of water (Marcus 139).
It also allows each chord to exist in itself in each individual moment, not necessarily resulting from or leading to any other chords (Marcus 140).

I manipulated harmony and melody by utilizing parsimonious chord and scale changes, as well. This occurs in measures 46 and 47 of my piece, in which I transition from the whole tone scale to an acoustic collection, as shown in example 10. In the clarinet melody, I use scale-to-scale parsimony to transition from a C-sharp whole tone scale to a C-sharp acoustic scale, changing G-double sharp into its two chromatic neighbors, G-sharp and A-sharp. Also in these measures, I move from an augmented triad on C-sharp based in the whole-tone scale to a seventh chord on C-sharp derived from the acoustic collection. In order to transition these harmonies, I hold over the C-sharp and E-sharp. On the fifth of a chord, G-double sharp, I perform a variation.
on Debussy’s split-fifth model. I split the G-double sharp to a half-step below (G-sharp) and a whole step above, B.

A final way in which I mimicked Debussy’s harmonic manipulation can be seen in my final measures. Debussy ended each of the three movements of La Mer with a major harmony (Marcus 55). He also often resolves dissonant chords by allowing the dissonant harmony to slowly decrescendo then gently resolve to a more stable chord, creating a sound that might remind a listener of foam washing up on the beach (Marcus 95). Debussy also used monophony to set up listeners for something new and unexpected (Marcus 144). In my final measures, the fully-diminished seventh chord decrescendos, leaving only the flute in monophony, to prepare listeners for a new tonality. Other instruments join in staggered entrances to slowly and gently form an E-major chord in first inversion, as shown in example 11.

Example 11
It can be seen that Debussy clearly manipulates various elements of music including timbre, melody, harmony, rhythm, and form in order to challenge and avoid traditional musical practice and achieve an impressionist quality in his works and to properly represent symbolist texts through his music. This manipulation can most clearly be observed in *La Mer* and *Prelude al'apres-midi d'un faune*. 
Work Cited


Sea Breeze

Ashley Howard-Lewis

[Staff notation for various musical instruments]
Sea Breeze, Mallarme

The flesh is sad, alas! – and I’ve read all the books.

Let’s go! Far off. Let’s go! I sense

That the birds, intoxicated, fly

Deep into unknown spume and sky!

Nothing – not even old gardens mirrored by eyes –

Can restrain this heart that drenches itself in the sea,

O nights, or the abandoned light of my lamp,

On the void of paper, that whiteness defends,

No, not even the young woman feeding her child.

I shall go! Steamer, straining at your ropes

Lift your anchor towards an exotic rawness!

A Boredom, made desolate by cruel hope

Still believes in the last goodbye of handkerchiefs!

And perhaps the masts, inviting lightning,

Are those the gale bends over shipwrecks,

Lost, without masts, without masts, no fertile islands...

But, oh my heart, listen to the sailors’ chant!

http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/cas/fnart/symbolist/texts/mallarme_breeze.html