

Debussy, "... La cathédrale engloutie"**Theoretical exercise (not specific to this piece)**

The most even way to partition an octave into a 7-note scale, if your smallest increment is a half-step, is with 5 WS's and 2 HS's. The diatonic collection is one way of doing this. There are two others: figure out what they are and write them down in letter or staff notation.

Think carefully: you are looking for distinct patterns of WS's and HS's, not just different rotations (modes) or transpositions of the same pattern. For instance, D Dorian and F Lydian are not distinct in this sense, but are rotations of the same collection. Likewise D Dorian and E-flat Dorian do not present intervallically distinct patterns, but are transpositions ("translations") of the same pattern. This may help: Imagine that you have 7 beads, 5 white (whole steps) and 2 hazel (half steps). How many different ways can you string them to make a bracelet?

"Cathédrale": Scales and modes

1) List all the different pitches used in mm. 1-2: _____

2) Taking G as the keynote (modal tonic), what kind of scale do these pitches form? _____

Note that the rising quarter-note figure becomes an ostinato. The ostinato pitches used do not change, making this motive a sort of "super-pedal" or harmonic cloud that sounds a whole scale instead of one or two pitches.

3) The bass notes do change, adding new pitches. Using E (the goal of this bass line) as the tonic, what kind of mode or scale is formed by all the pitches of mm. 1-6, inclusive?

An E _____ scale

Note the prevalent parallel fifths, both in the quarter-note ostinato and in the long-term motion of the bass.

4) The E in m. 6 becomes a pedal tone, and is also a common tone to the new, contrasting pitch collection of mm. 7-12. This consists of six pitches, or most of what mode?

An E _____ scale

5) the pitches of mm. 68-71 belong to what kind of scale? _____

Motive: The quarter-note ostinato of the beginning outlines a 3-note motive, which we will call motive *x*, which unifies the whole piece. First stated as a rising step followed by a rising fifth (D-E-B), it is later transformed somewhat.

6) Find motive *x* in the second segment (mm.7-13). Indicate measure and pitches.

a) m. _____ ; pitches _____

b) m. _____ ; pitches _____

7) Find two different statements of motive *x* on the second page (mm.16-27). Indicate measure and pitches, and if the motive has been altered, note how.

a) m. _____ ; pitches _____

b) m. _____ ; pitches _____

(continued on reverse)

Harmony

- 8) Find a clear and extended example of parallel triads:
- 9) Find a clear and extended example of parallel dom7th (Mm7) chords:

Imagery

- 10) Describe the mood or atmosphere of the piece (preferably before answering the next question)
- 11) Translate the following (you may collaborate, use dictionaries, the internet, ask Québécois shoppers on Church Street...)
 - Profondément calme
 - Dans une brume doucement sonore
 - Peu à peu sortant de la brume
 - La cathédrale engloutie
- 12) Re-listen to the piece with these directions and images in mind. Now what does the piece suggest to you? Can you hear any program?
- 13) Only after you have done this, look up the legend of the Chateau d'Ys. Write down any reflections. Does this change how you hear the piece?
- 14) Notice that Debussy put the titles of his preludes after the music. How is that different for you, compared to the ordinary practice of putting the title at the top?