

Debussy, Voiles  
Preludes, Book II (1910)

on example:

$x = a$   $i = 3a$   
 $\epsilon = b$   
 $f = c$   
 $c = d$

"Rhythmic motifs"

①

⑤

NB.

"traditional"

⑦

⑨

⑮ Motives combined

⑮ Middle pentatonic section associated with (not by 3-6 and whole-5 top dyads)

Beginning example?

General: effect of rhythmic patterns (motifs) on pitch structures (motifs)

In Debussy's Voiles (Preludes, Book 1) we have an extreme instance of pitch-rhythm interaction. Since in the first part of the composition the pitch material is limited to the whole-tone scale/hexachord on C, rhythm must supply differentiation in the temporal domain. [other resources: order, register, attack]

Only one measure is outside the whole-tone scale: m. 31, which has chromatic passing tones connecting dyads F#-Ab and D-C. The rhythm of these dyads is entirely unique in the composition. [Derivation?]

The pentatonic section features the whole-tone dyads from the first section, notably Ab-Bb and Db-Eb and the common trichord, 3-6.

The opening four measures are shown in Ex. \_\_\_\_\_, broken down into motivic constituents.

Motive c detaches the dyad C-Bb for special emphasis. <sup>expanded</sup>  
Motive e is subsequently developed by "traditional" contraction, in particular with the ascending line Ab-Bb-C of m. 7.  
Motive f<sup>1</sup>, the termination of the descending motion, is expanded to f<sup>2</sup> in mm. 5-6 and then becomes the terminal duration of the ascending figure in mm. 7-8, f<sup>3</sup>.  
In m. 11-13, e<sup>2</sup> concatenates with a motive derived from \*i, the repeated bass figure that began in m. 6

In m. 9, motive f<sup>3</sup> is developed by repetition to form the symmetry shown.

nb. pc  
motive

A detail: motive x, the quarter rest of m. 1 partitions e<sup>2</sup> of m. 7 as Ab/Bb-C, thus making distinct the relation between Bb-C (motive c) here and the same motive in m. 2

At m. 15 motives are combined to form a rhythmic counterpoint, as shown. One result: the last quarter of descending and ascending figures expresses the special dyad C-Bb (motive c).

\*\*\* The final segment of the middle section (pentatonic) is shown in Ex. \_\_\_\_\_ x in simplified form. Underlying this is the rhythmic pattern derived from motive i, the ostinato figure that began in m. 5.

Summary sketch

Voiles

in m. 13, with the combination of rhythmic motifs, the relations  
become specifically meaningful in their contribution to  
the whole . . .