



DEBUSSY

La Mer ~ Nocturnes

Boston Symphony Orchestra, Pierre Monteux, Conducting

Words About the Sea

Of all things on earth, it is the restless and changeable alone which man has been unable to master or reject. Adventurers and explorers have challenged the deserts and the mountains, the tropical forests and the polar ice. Ordinary men have wandered at them, and some have lived among them. But the sea has "engaged" man, has teased him and seduced him, has led him, tormented him, cradled him. If Earth is Mother, then perhaps the Sea is Wife. However we think of the sea, the fact remains that she stirs the wellsprings of creativity which give birth to artistic offspring aided by man's imagination and drenched by the sea.

From The Book of the Sea by A. C. Spectator
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There were little trills of sunny clouds all over the heavens, and little fancies of foam all over the sea. . . . Never did I realize till now what the ocean was: how grand and majestic, how solitary, and boundless, and beautiful and blue. . . . As I looked at it so mild and sunny, I could not help calling to my mind my little brother's face, when he was "drowsing an infant in the cradle. It had just such a happy, careless, innocent look; and every happy little wave seemed to look up at your face as it passed, as if it wanted to be petted and caressed.

From Redburn by Herman Melville



Remember a day in which gigantic, gently slithering cloud continents take outline from the blue depths below, rolls the sea, darkening to green against the clear horizon, surging upward in seven or eight whirling basins of swirl, spreading irresistibly far in either direction. Yonder in the distance a magnificent pier of action is in play, where the sea-sunk repels the initial shock attack of the

oncoming waves. The wall of water flashes bottle-green, metallic, as it rears up, billows, arches forward, plunges flat, shattering into square, the thunder of its ever-recurring crash playing deep below the higher liss and murmur of the inshore breakers and the receding wash. . . . My eye is never sated with the drama, my ear never wearies of this music.

From Thomas Mann's Introduction to
Anne Kervina by Tolstoy
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Literary quotes describing the many aspects of the sea could fill a library, yet there is but one famous musical composition that truly is "of the sea." Musicians, throughout the ages, wrote by no means less susceptible to the compelling forces of the sea, but they were handicapped by the vastness of the sea itself, a vastness that could not be captured in a fugue, nor put into sonata form. The sea had to wait for the nineteenth century, era of free musical expression, and for Claude Debussy, master of impressionism in music, before it was given musical justice.

Debussy created *La Mer* out of recollections of days spent at the seashores of France and England. The three movements of the work, entitled 1) *De l'aube à midi sur la mer* (From dawn till noon on the sea); 2) *Jeux des vagues* (Play of the waves); 3) *Dialogue du vent et de la mer* (Dialogue of the wind and the sea), form a vivid tonal picture of winds and waves, sunlight and spray. But beneath all the shimmering beauty of the surface the sea *La Mer* suggests the mysterious spirit of the deep and hidden waves.

Time painter and tone poet became one in Debussy's *Nocturnes*, entitled *Nuages* (Clouds), *Fleurs* (Flowers), and *Libanés* (Sims). Here Debussy created a distance of tones and captured fugitive images that defy the spoken word. Originally composed for solo violin and orchestra,

the work was recast by Debussy into its presently known form—a purely orchestral composition with the addition of women's voices, without words.



It is with considerable pride that we present this recording, featuring the Boston Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Pierre Monteux, whose special affinity for his compatriot has made him a Debussian conductor par excellence. The members of the Berkshire Festival Chorus, heard in the last movements of the *Nocturnes*, were rehearsed and prepared under the direction of Lou De Witt in association with Hugh Ross.

The cover illustrations named by Lester Kuba, center the unaltered motif in its ultimate conclusion, inspiring a facile glimpse at the drama, the action now poised as a piece of deftly cut actors by the score.

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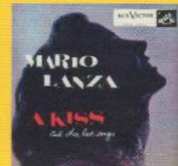
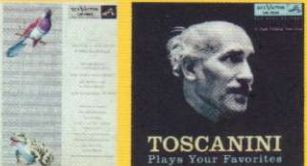
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BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PIERRE MONTEUX