

*Dieu! Qu'il la fait bon regarder!*  
Claude Debussy  
Charles d'Orleans

Claude Debussy was born in 1862 and grew to be one of the most prominent composers in Impressionist music. He studied music at the Paris Conservatory for eleven years, where he was a gifted piano player before he became a hugely popular composer. Debussy primarily composed for orchestral settings and, being a keyboardist, many of his most famous works are for solo piano. Debussy stood out as a composer because of the new, more dissonant textures he was using that were experimental at the time. He composed with harmonies that do not have immediate functions, did not prepare modulations, and frequently used the whole tone and pentatonic scales. Debussy did not follow the rules and his resulting work made him an all time great composer.

Charles d'Orleans was the Duke of Orleans but he is most remembered for his poetry. He wrote most of his poetry while in captivity, as he was a prisoner of war for 25 years. Charles d'Orleans could have been released for a ransom but his family had all passed away, so the ransom was never paid. He was deemed too important to be set free. Much of his poetry is about the captivity and a lot of it is quite melancholy. He wrote *Dieu! Qu'il La fait bon regarder!* about his wife who died while he was imprisoned. The text is as follows:

*Dieu! Qu'il la fait bon regarder  
La gracieuse bonne et belle;  
Pour les grans biens que sont en elle  
Chascun est prest de la loüer.  
Qui se pourroit d'elle lasser?  
Tousjours sa beauté renouvelle.*

*God! How lovely she is to look at!  
She is graceful, good and beautiful  
For her excellent qualities  
All are ready to praise her  
Who could grow tired of her?  
Her beauty constantly renews itself*

*Par de ça, ne de là, la mer  
Ne scay dame ne demoiselle  
Qui soit en tous bien parfaits telle.  
C'est ung songe que d'i penser:  
Dieu! Qu'il la fait bon regarder!*

*On neither side of the sea  
Do I know any girl or woman  
Who is in all things so perfect  
Thinking of her is just a dream  
God! How lovely she is to look at!*

*Trois Chansons* by Debussy are some of Debussy's only unaccompanied choral works. What moved Debussy to put these texts by Charles d'Orleans to music is likely his turbulent personal life. Debussy was very dramatic, had affairs with multiple women, and even threatened suicide if one of his wives refused him. The text of *Dieu! Qu'il La fait bon regarder!* is about Charles d'Orleans' dream of his wife's beauty and clearly resonated with Debussy.

The song starts off with the loudest dynamic marking of the piece in mezzo-forte, as if startled by the view of a loved one who has not been seen in a long time. It immediately softens into an elegant melody in the altos where the text describes how beautiful this dream lady is to look at. Sixteenth note triplets define this melodic theme and remain prominent for most of the song. The picture Debussy paints of this beautiful woman becomes more detailed as the text gets more specific. He does this by making the harmonies more colorful and the tempo less defined. Debussy achieves unique textures and colors throughout the work by using Mixolydian, Lydian, and Dorian scales. The sixteenth note triplets are present through the beginning of the piece as the dream seems real, but as the text is further immersed in the dream, the rhythm becomes more fluid, as does harmony of the piece. Just as the text gets lost in this woman's beauty, it is remembered that she is only a dream and the gentle theme from the beginning returns to slowly bring the dream to a close.

Overall Form	A	B	C	D	A'
Measures	1-5	6-13	14-17	18-25	26-29
Phrase	3+2	4+4	1.5+1.5	4+4	1.5+1.5
Bar Grouping	(1+2) (1+1)	(2+2) (2+2)		(2+2) (2+2)	
Dynamics	<i>mf</i> > <i>p</i> < <i>mp</i> > <i>p</i>	<i>p</i> < <i>p</i> +> <i>p</i> <i>p</i> < <i>mf</i> > <i>p</i>	<i>p</i> < <i>mp</i> > <i>p</i> > <i>p</i> > <i>pp</i>	<i>pp</i> < <i>pp</i> < <i>p</i> < <i>mf</i> > <i>p</i> > <i>pp</i>	<i>p</i> < <i>p</i> +> <i>p</i> <i>p</i> > <i>p</i>
Section Focus	Altos	S+A & T+B	S to A to SATB	SATB to B+A	Sopranos (slow)
Mode	F# Mixolydian	D9 B9 D9 B9 to C# Dorian	F# Mixolydian	F# Lydian to F# Dorian	F# Mixolydian
Text	Dieu! Qu'il la fait	Pour les grans biens	Dieu! Qu'il la fait	Par de ça	Dieu qu'il la fait