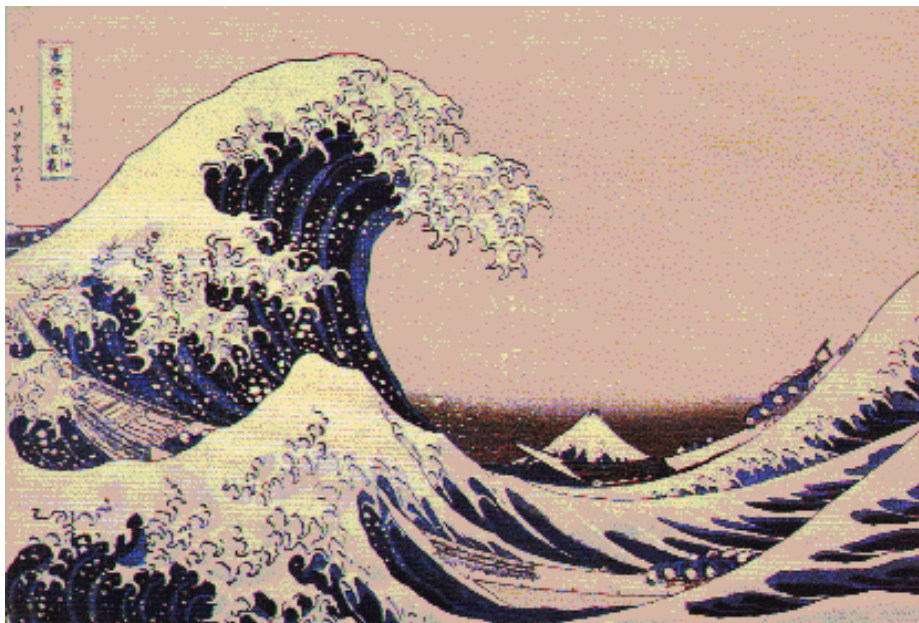


## Lesson 2: Resource

**Debussy's orchestral work *La Mer*, inspired by Hokusai's *The Great Wave Off Kanagawa*:**

Hokusai experimented with effects of light, patterns, shapes, and silhouettes and this painting shows a wave breaking over into spray, foam, and smaller waves. It is an image of terror, elegance, and awesome power.

In the third movement, of Debussy's *La Mer*, called *Dialogue of the Wind and the Sea*, the shape of the piece feels directly inspired by this painting, dark and tense and rising in waves of sound, ending with a terrifying climax which suddenly dies away.



### **Suggestions for this:**

Get students to listen to the first 90 seconds or so and draw their response to it (without being told anything about the piece first of all). Hopefully wave-shapes may be included!!!

Then show the class the Hokusai painting that initially inspired this large piece and listen again – how does Debussy create musical 'waves' and a sense of danger and tension?

Musical pointers:

- Dynamic swells
- Beginning at the low end of the orchestra and moving through to the

- middle range
- Rising and falling pitch motifs
- Rumbling timpani/bass drum

### Debussy's *L'Isle Joyeux*

Debussy' work for piano solo is inspired by Watteau's *The Embarkation For Cythera*, set on a mythical island of love.



One element which Watteau explores in most of his work is a juxtaposition of comedy and sadness. The painting has been seen as a symbol of sadness that love is fleeting, of beauty and elegance, and a mixture of real and dreamlike worlds.

How does Debussy reflect this dreamlike feel and the sense of beauty and grace?

Musical pointers:

- Trills and lots of ornamentation
- Use of sustained pedal
- Sudden rushes over the range of piano
- His harmony/pitch material –particularly the use of the whole-tone scale