



STÉPHANE LEMELIN
pianist

*The Complete Solo Piano Works of
Maurice Ravel, Part I.*

**Friday, November 15, 1991
at 8 pm**

Convocation Hall, Arts Building

Program





MAURICE RAVEL

(1875-1937)

Menuet antique (1895)

Pavane pour une infante défunte (1899)

Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn (1909)

Valses nobles et sentimentales (1911)

- I. Modéré - très franc
- II. Assez lent
- III. Modéré
- IV. Assez animé
- V. Presque lent
- VI. Vif
- VII. Moins vif
- VIII. Epilogue. Lent

INTERMISSION

Sonatine (1903-05)

Modéré

Mouvement de Menuet

Animé

Gaspard de la Nuit (1908)

Poems by Aloysius Bertrand read by Professor Nicole
Mallet

Ondine

Le Gibet

Scarbo

PROGRAM NOTES

Maurice Ravel, born in 1875 in Ciboure to well-educated and cultured parents, lived and worked in Paris until his death in 1937. His studies at the Paris Conservatoire spanned the years 1889 to 1905 and included five unsuccessful entries in the Prix de Rome. He studied composition with Gabriel Fauré. His output includes two operas, eighteen ballets and orchestral works, over thirty-five solo songs, several chamber and instrumental works, five pieces for two pianists and twelve for solo piano. Some distinctive characteristics of Ravel's music are his use of musical imagery, his fascination with old forms, harmonic inventiveness while adhering to the diatonic system, use of repeated notes and parallel chords as structural and prolongational devices, free treatment of dissonances, and abrupt juxtaposition of conflicting harmonies.

Menuet antique (1895), orchestrated 1929), Ravel's first published piano work, is in ternary song-form (ABA), with the three sections contrasting in character and key. The 'antique' qualities come from the use of the natural minor scale with its lowered leading-tone and the many sequential phrases. Menuet antique was dedicated to and first performed (1898) by the pianist Ricardo Viñes, who also premiered Pavane pour une infante défunte in 1902 and Gaspard de la Nuit in 1908. The Pavane, composed for solo piano in 1899 and transcribed for orchestra in 1910, quickly became one of Ravel's most popular works. Its success was a source of annoyance to Ravel, who later deplored its weak form and obvious influence of Chabrier. The title should be translated as "Pavane for a deceased princess."

The incidental piece Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn (1909) is based on an adaptation of the 16th-century "soggetto cavato", in which a musical subject is 'carved out' of a word or sentence. The pitch names of the transcribed H-A-Y-D-N becomes B-A-D-D-G, a motif which occurs forward, backward, and upside down.

Valses nobles et sentimentales, written for piano in 1911 and orchestrated for a ballet in 1912, is a series of eight waltzes. Ravel intended to imitate the waltzes of Schubert, with their lilting rhythms, rubato, balanced phrases, clear form, and unexpected harmonic subtleties. Character varies from vigorous to

Program Notes (continued)

sentimental. Each waltz is briefly recalled in the closing epilogue.

The Sonatine (1903-1905) reveals Ravel's interest in 18th-century elegance and clarity. The opening movement is in sonata form, beginning with the motivic descending fourth which is prominent throughout the work. The descending fourth becomes a rising fifth in the slow second movement and a rising fourth in the third movement, eventually returning to its original descending form in the quiet secondary theme.

Gaspard de la Nuit (1908) is a three-movement setting of a collection of poems in prose of the same title (c.1830) by Aloysius Bertrand. The poems (and music) conjure up mystery, bewitchment, lakes, castles, bells, and strange nocturnal visions. Ondine, with Jeux d'eau and Une barque sur l'océan, is one of three piano works by Ravel whose thematic matter is water. "Le Gibet" (the gallows) is a slow movement built on an incessantly repeating ostinato pitch portraying the death knell.

The ostinato is presented in melody, bass, and inner voices, surrounded by chromatic harmonies. "Scarbo", the final movement, is the name of a nighttime whirling devilish imp. A fast scherzo, "Scarbo" is also one of Ravel's most fiendishly difficult works.

(Notes by Tom Holm)

TRANSLATIONS

UNDINE

...I thought I heard a vague harmony enchanting my slumber and, near me, spreading, a murmur like the interrupted songs of a sad, tender voice.

C Brugnot.--The Two Genii

"Listen! Listen! It is I, it is Undine brushing with these drops of water the resonant diamond-panes of your window illuminated by the dull moonbeams; and here, in a dress of moire, is the lady of the castle on her balcony gazing at the beautiful starry night and the beautiful slumbering lake.

"Each wave is a water sprite swimming in the current, each current is a path winding toward my palace, and my palace is of fluid construction, at the bottom of the lake, within the triangle formed by fire, earth and air.

"Listen! Listen! My father is beating the croaking water with a branch of green alder, and my sisters are caressing the cool islands of grasses, water lilies and gladioli with their arms of form, or are laughing at the tottering, bearded willow that is angling."

After murmuring her song, she besought me to accept her ring on my finger, to be the husband of an undine, and to visit her palace with her, to be the king of the lakes.

And when I replied that I was in love with a mortal woman, she was sulky and vexed; she wept a few tears, burst out laughing and vanished in showers that formed white trickles down my blue windowpanes.

THE GIBBET

What do I see moving around that gibbet?

Faust

Ah! Could what I hear be the cold night wind yelping, or the hanged man uttering a sigh on the gallows fork?

Could it be some cricket singing from its hiding place in the moss and sterile ivy with which the forest covers its floor out of pity?

Could it be some fly hunting for prey and blowing its horn all around those ears deaf to the fanfare of the mort?

Translations (continued)

Could it be some cockchafer plucking a bloody hair
from his bald scalp in its uneven flight?

Or could it be some spider embroidering a half-ell of
muslin as a tie for that strangled neck?

It is the bell ringing by the walls of a city below the
horizon, and the carcass of a hanged man reddened by the
setting sun.

SCARBO

He looked under the bed, in the fireplace, in the
chest: nobody. He could not understand where he had
entered or where he had escaped.

HOFFMANN.—Nachtsücke.

Oh, how often I have heard and seen Scarbo when at
midnight the moon shines in the sky like a silver shield on
azure banner semé of golden bees!

How often I have heard his laughter booming in the
shadow of my alcove, and his nails grating on the silk of
my bed curtains!

How often I have seen him come down from the
ceiling, pirouette on one foot and roll around the room
like the spindle that has fallen from a witch's distaff!

Did I at such times think he had vanished? Then the
dwarf would grow bigger between the moon and me like
the bell tower of a Gothic cathedral, a round golden bell
shaking on his pointed cap!

But soon his body would become blue, diaphanous as
the wax of a taper; his face would become pale as the
wax of a candle end--and suddenly he would be
extinguished.

Translated by Stanley Appelbaum
Copyright 1986. Dover Publications

Tonight's recital is being recorded by CBC for future broadcast on *Arts National*, with host Terry Campbell, heard weeknights on CBC Stereo 90.9 at 8 pm



CBC Stereo
Edmonton 90.9

Part II (including Miroirs, Jeux d'eau, Le Tombeau de Couperin) will take place on Friday, November 29, at 8 pm in Convocation Hall.