# GASPARD DE LA NUIT

## Trois poèmes pour piano d'après Aloysius Bertrand

## FOR SOLO PIANO

by

MAURICE RAVEL

M.55

Edited by Richard Dowling

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# *Gaspard de la nuit* (1908)

## Trois poèmes pour piano d'après Aloysius Bertrand

## by Maurice Ravel

(born March 7, 1875 near Saint-Jean-de-Luz, France
died December 28, 1937 Paris, France)

PREFACE

One of Maurice Ravel's most impressive musical and technical achievements is *Gaspard de la nuit*. It is a monumental masterpiece of the entire piano repertoire and Ravel's greatest piano work—a triptych based upon the prose poetry of Aloysius Bertrand (born Louis Bertrand 1807-1841). Ravel's good friend and fellow Paris Conservatory student, the virtuoso Spanish pianist Ricardo Viñes, introduced him to Bertrand's *Gaspard de la nuit*, subtitled *Fantaisies à la manière de Rembrandt et de Callot* ("Fantasies in the Style of Rembrandt and Callot") Jacques Callot (1592-1635) was a French engraver well-known for his depictions of the grotesque. This large collection of poetry encompasses 51 poems in six books with an additional 13 *pièces détachées* ("independent works"). Bertrand finished it in 1836 but it was not published until 1842, one year after his death. It was finally reprinted in 1895 when Ravel was twenty years old. *Gaspard*'s dark visions of nightmarish dreams, magic, and evil spells must have made a significant impression on Ravel since thirteen years passed before this musical creation appeared in 1908.

Only three other piano works of Ravel have direct literary references: *Habanera* from *Sites auriculaires*, *Jeux d'eau*, and *Valses nobles et sentimentales*. In these works Ravel affixes a brief poetic quotation underneath his title as an epigram. Its quality is certainly evocative, but mostly just decorative. In *Gaspard* however, Ravel places each complete Bertrand poem prominently on a separate page before each movement. These musical works are the closest we come to having "programmatic" piano music from Ravel. Thus it is vitally important to read and understand Bertrand's poetry in order to appreciate fully Ravel's musical transformation and to perform his works effectively.

Although Catholic in his upbringing, as an adult Ravel was more or less a confirmed agnostic. Unburdened by institutionalized religion, he was intellectually free to pursue his curiosity about the supernatural, mysticism, cultures of the Near and Far East, and ancient paganism. He was fascinated in literature by fairy tales and fiction dealing with horror and the macabre, particularly the works of Edgar Allan Poe. In surveying Ravel's work we find that these religious and literary influences manifested themselves often throughout his musical career from the early *Sérénade grotesque*, *Menuet antique*, *Pavane pour une infante défunte*, and *Shéhérazade*, to *Ma mère l'oye*, *Daphnis et Chloé*, *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, and *Gaspard de la nuit.*

For *Gaspard*, Ravel selected three poems from Bertrand's collection. *Ondine* comes from the third book of Bertrand's *Gaspard* poems entitled *La nuit et ses prestiges* ("The Night and its Spells"). Both *Le gibet* and *Scarbo* are taken from the supplemental thirteen *pièces détachées*. While composing *Gaspard* Ravel wrote a letter to his close friend Ida Godebski dated July 17, 1908. Ravel describes the alleged diabolic authorship of the poems in the following terms: "*Gaspard* has been the very devil to write, which is only logical since He [i.e. the Devil] is the author of the poems." Ironically and paradoxically, in the preface to Bertrand's *Gaspard*, Bertrand recounts that he once discussed the nature of literary aesthetics with an old miserable man whose name was "Gaspard de la Nuit." In reply to his queries, the old man gave Bertrand the manuscript of these poems to read. The next day when Bertrand searched for Gaspard in order to return his manuscript he learned from a local farmer that Gaspard was actually the Devil and that Bertrand could look for him in hell. Bertrand then vowed to print Gaspard's book "on his behalf."

In the autobiographical sketch prepared by Ravel's friend and composer-critic Roland Alexis Manuel Lévy, (aka Roland-Manuel), Ravel described *Gaspard* as "three poems of transcendental virtuosity." Certainly the direct influence of Franz Liszt (his *Transcendental Etudes*) can easily be perceived. Alfred Cortot, the great French pianist and champion of Ravel, claimed *Gaspard* "enriched the piano literature of our epoch with one of the supreme examples of instrumental ingenuity which has ever been witness to the industry of a composer." Ravel told friend Maurice Delage that in writing *Scarbo* he set out to write a work more difficult than Balakirev's *Islamey*. Each movement extends piano technique and sonority to new levels of originality not previously seen nor heard. This is a remarkable achievement considering that Ravel himself was not a very proficient pianist. Nevertheless, like Liszt and Chopin in their time, he instinctively understood the as-yet untapped capabilities inherent in the piano (and the pianist) and created wholly new sound-worlds and the techniques to achieve them.

The dedications of the individual movements are important. *Ondine* and *Scarbo* were dedicated to pianists Harold Bauer and Rudolf Ganz respectively. They were among the first to program Ravel's works in their concerts regularly. *Le gibet* was dedicated to music critic Jean Marnold who was an early champion of Ravel's music. Was Ravel making an ironic statement in dedicating a work representing death by hanging to a music critic? No, he told Marnold humorously, "not because you deserve the noose, but because it is the least difficult of the three." *Le gibet* recalls both *Oiseaux tristes* and *La vallée des cloches* from his *Miroirs* of 1904-5, but surpasses both in its profundity and harmonic adventurousness.

Ravel composed *Gaspard de la nuit* from May to September 1908, signing his name and the date September 5, 1908 at the end of his manuscript. Durand originally published it in 1909 in Paris. Pianist Ricardo Viñes gave the premiere performance at the Salle Érard in Paris at a concert of the Société National de Musique on January 9, 1909. It received good reviews in the press. The Durand edition, which contained numerous printing errors, is still in print today and has never been revised. This new Masters Music Publications edition is based on the original Durand edition and corrects its mistakes by comparison with Ravel's autograph manuscript held at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin and by my careful inspection and evaluation of the score over many years of performing this work. I would like to express my gratitude to curators Richard Workman and Dell Hollingsworth of the HRHRC for their personal assistance and enthusiastic encouragement, and my sincere appreciation to friends Steven Aubrey and Brian Vodicka for their generous support of this project.

I have added fingerings and translated the original French tempo and dynamic indications into English in parentheses. Many markings such as slurs and accents have been added or changed for the sake of conformity in recurrences of identical phrasing and articulation. Based on study and performing experience, I have also redistributed many notes between the hands in order to make certain complicated passages easier to play. Some of these redistributions are not rewritten and instead, are simply marked with brackets and abbreviated hand indications (*l.h.*, *r.h.*). I have added some additional pedaling suggestions in parentheses as well. In particular, *Le gibet* and *Scarbo* contain many passages with long, low bass notes that are virtually impossible to sustain. I have indicated use of the sostenuto (middle) pedal in parentheses *(sos. ped.)* in places where it could be used to an effective advantage. Ravel's 19th-century-style Érard piano had a thin tone and its notes did not sustain well. This permitted long damper pedalings containing multiple dissonant harmonies that would not sound well on today's modern instruments. I believe the sostenuto pedal affords today's pianist with the means to achieve Ravel's original compositional intentions while avoiding unnecessary blurring of harmonies. In passages where *una corda* is also indicated, use the left foot on both the soft and middle pedals simultaneously, leaving the right foot free for use on the damper pedal alone.

## *Ondine*

In Bertrand's poem a lake mermaid, a water-nymph named Ondine, seduces a mortal man to join her in her underwater castle as her king by singing to him. Ravel's musical depiction begins with a softly rippling, vibrating accompaniment out of which grows Ondine's magic siren-song. As the music continues, her ever-increasing entreaties are reflected in the expanding arpeggios that sound like showers and waves of water. Finally, she sings one final lament (the solo melody of Measures 84–87) before disappearing back into the lake in an enormous splash of water. Here Ravel's music comes very close to being explicitly programmatic, especially on the last page (Measure 88) where the violent arpeggios obviously represent Ondine's reaction to the man's rejection of her offer: "She shed some tears, broke into laughter, and vanished."

Ravel scholar Arbie Orenstein has best described the shimmering effects and beautiful sonorities of *Ondine* as "opulent iridescence." I can think of no better words to illustrate the wondrous sounds Ravel has created in this original work. French virtuoso pianist Alfred Cortot wrote of *Ondine* that, "It is positively a kind of miracle that Ravel knew how to renew, after the precedents of *Jeux d'eau* and *Une barque sur l'océan*, the pianistic effects destined to evoke, yet another time, the captivating mirage of water and its mysterious movements. Because far from becoming dulled by his exceptional descriptive successes, the imaginative power of Ravel found here the occasion to express itself without repetition, without imitation of himself, and with a constant spirit of invention and instrumental discovery." *Ondine* is truly one of Ravel's most elaborate and imaginative sound-pictures.

We have a few performances recommendations from Ravel handed down through his students. Vlado Perlemuter, who studied all of Ravel's piano music with the composer, remarked that Ravel did not want the tempo of *Ondine* to be too slow and that its main theme should be expressive and singing. The metronome marking found in this MMP edition was added by Ravel himself to Perlemuter's own personal score. It is not present in the Durand edition. Violinist Hélène Jourdan-Morhange recalls pianist Ricardo Viñes saying that the main theme should not be too prominent but rather should be absorbed into the surrounding accompaniment's atmosphere. Both suggestions seem wise and appropriate.

Ravel frequently uses the indication *2 Ped.* to mean simultaneous use of both the damper and soft pedals. I have added *(una corda)* in parentheses as a reminder that use of both pedals is requested. It is often easy to overlook the *2*. In the first measure of *Ondine* I have indicated an "alternate" slur grouping in parentheses below the upper treble staff to delineate the technical manner in which the accompaniment can most easily be played. These are not Ravel's slurs.

The most glaring error of the Durand edition is the altered pattern of the accompaniment figuration in Measures 4 through 7 and Measure 27. Ravel definitely intended for the pattern (xyxxyxxy) to continue from the beginning unchanged. This has been corrected here. In Measures 14 and 15, the left-hand rolled octaves will be much easier to coordinate with the accompaniment if the first (lower) note of each octave is played like a grace note *before* the beat and the second (top) note of each octave is played *on* the beat. In Measure 22, try to make the left-hand scale sound as much like a glissando as possible (similar to that found in Measures 72 and 73). Take careful note of the slightly different chord harmonizations found in the last beat of Measures 23 and 24.

Ravel did not indicate where the damper pedal should be released in Measure 41. Some pianists change it on the third beat; some change it on the downbeat of Measure 42. The dotted lines extending from the low bass-note appoggiaturas in Measures 57–60 are my suggestions for coordinated placement. They are not

found in the manuscript. In the bass staff of Measure 66 I have placed a D-natural in parentheses to indicate the option of deleting it to facilitate the coordination of this passage with the right hand's figuration. Similarly, for ease of execution I have rewritten the original rolled dotted-quarter-note A-sharp octave on the downbeat of Measure 70 as grace notes corresponding exactly with the right hand's arpeggios. At the end of Measure 73, Ravel did not mark the final two 32nd notes (G–C) in the bass staff *8v bassa*, but many pianists play it an octave lower and it makes sense technically and musically.

The pedal release marking (✻) found in Measure 83 is from Ravel's autograph manuscript and is very important. It does not appear in the Durand edition. Many pianists hold the pedal through the recitative of Measures 84–87. Ravel was very precise about his indications however. It should be played alone without the harmonic continuation of the passage beforehand. Perlemuter also mentions that Ravel wanted no ritard in Measure 83 and only a short pause at the end before beginning the recitative. Take note that the first 32nd note (F–A) of Measure 83 is *not* tied to the rolled whole note chord. Also according to Perlemuter, the attack of the arpeggios in Measure 88 should be suddenly rapid and virtuosic, not carefully deliberate. I have added a tie in parentheses to the final C-sharp in the right hand at the end of Measure 88. Holding this note through the change of pedal at the end of the measure helps maintain the continuity of the sonority. Be sure to follow Ravel's rests exactly in the last measure of the work. After the final eighth note has been played in the right hand, the pedal should be lifted to clear the arpeggiated harmony in order to "reveal" the already-sounded final C-sharp major chord being held (*con fermata*) in the left hand. This creates an amazing sonic effect.

## *Le gibet*

In the early 1890s Ravel and Viñes "discovered" the works of Edgar Allan Poe and read much or all of his work in French translation by Baudelaire. The macabre horrors contained in Poe's stories captivated the two teenage boys and made a lasting impact on young Maurice. Of particular allure to Ravel was Poe's *The Raven* with its insistent refrain. In Bertrand's poem *Le gibet*, Ravel found the perfect opportunity to merge his lifelong fascination of bell sounds with his obsession of Poe's *Raven* refrain. *Le gibet* describes in gory detail a sunset scene of a gallows, accompanied by all manner of grotesque imagery and emotions suitable for a horror movie: a man's corpse hanging by the neck, a howling wind, sterility, pity, deafness, a buzzing fly, a beetle plucking bloody hair from a skull, a spider weaving a web, and a tolling bell.

Prior to *Gaspard de la nuit*, among Ravel's piano works we find church bell motifs in *Entre cloches* from *Site auriculaires* and in *La vallée des cloches* from *Miroirs*. Ravel returns to this motif in *Le gibet* but from an entirely different aesthetic point of view. Rather than the numerous bells of different pitch and timbre of *Entre cloches* and *La vallée* that chime beautifully and somewhat cheerfully together, Ravel describes just one single bell heard from far away in *Le gibet*. It is an incessantly repeated B-flat octave from beginning to end. Ravel explicitly translates Bertrand's poetry into music, "the bell that tolls from the walls of a town beyond the horizon, and the corpse of the hanged man reddened by the setting sun." Throughout his poem, Bertrand sonically depicts this tolling bell through repetition of the words *Serait-ce* ("Might it be") appearing at the beginning of each line except the last. Finally the initial question of "What is that sound?" is answered directly: "It is the bell that tolls." I have purposely chosen to translate *gibet* as "gallows" since it is a more familiar American English word than the precise "English" English translation, "gibbet."

In some ways, *Le gibet* is the most musically difficult to perform of all three *Gaspard* movements since the B-flat octaves must be consistently well-executed to produce Ravel's morbid effect. Ravel was clear in his direction that they should be played "monotonously and at an absolutely unvarying tempo." (There is no metronome marking in the autograph manuscript. The one found here is my own suggestion.)

Ravel complained in a letter to a critic friend that even Ricardo Viñes would not follow his instructions for *Le gibet* perfectly and thus could not give a performance that he felt conveyed the correct atmosphere. Perlemuter recounts that Ravel said there should be no ritard at the end of the work. The bells should continue at the end as they started at the beginning as though the piece were being played in a loop. Underneath the tempo marking over Measure 1 Ravel writes "No rushing or ritarding until the end." The English translation of the French (*jusqu'à la fin*) is perhaps a bit misleading. Ravel is not implying that rushing or ritarding might be permissible near the end. What he means is that it is not permissible anywhere *all the way to the end*.

To establish a firm pulse, begin "playing" *Le gibet* by mentally counting (in eighth notes) the first quarter and eighth-note rests of Measure 1 before striking the first B-flat octave. Make note of the difference in expression between the first and second themes (Measures 3-5 and 6 respectively). Ravel indicates that the first theme be played "a little marked" (slightly brought out). The second theme is indicated to be played "expressively." Perlemuter tells us that Ravel wanted the first chordal theme played rather straightforward and expressionless, with the second theme played as a very expressive response. Similarly, in Measure 28 Ravel clearly indicates that the melody be played "without expression." As reinforcement of this "expressionlessness" of the middle section beginning in Measure 26, Ravel has purposely deleted the accent marks over the A-sharp (enharmonic B-flat) octaves. The desired effect is one of desolation—a *lointain* ("far away") quality. Notice that the accents return beginning in Measure 35.

In Measures 12 and 13 the five-note chord on the fourth beat is very difficult to play for pianists with small hands. I suggest leaving out the A-flat rather than rolling the chord. We find the same problem in the last chord of Measure 25. I suggest leaving out the lowest G-sharp in the bass and taking the F-sharp of the chord with the left hand. Similarly, in the chords of Measures 20, 23 and 40, pianists with small hands are advised to leave out certain notes rather than rolling the chords. Doing so would spoil Ravel's intended effect.

Ravel writes long, tied whole-note bass octaves in Measures 20–21, 23–24, and 41–51. These are more effectively executed by employing the sostenuto (middle) pedal to sustain them. At the beginning of the movement, Ravel indicates that the soft pedal should remain depressed throughout the piece. If the sostenuto is used for these tied octaves, press down both the left and middle pedals simultaneously with the left foot while leaving the right foot free to continue making half-pedal changes among the harmonies that follow.

As an orthographic aid, I have taken the liberty of transposing the chordal passage of Measures 20–22 enharmonically into "A Major" (three sharps), which is much easier to read than the original key of six flats with its numerous double-flat accidentals. This change neither affects the interpretation nor the performance in any way of course. In Measure 39, a rolled chord symbol appears in parentheses on the B-flat octave of the second beat. This roll appears in Ravel's autograph manuscript (without parentheses) but does not appear in the Durand edition. It is possible that Ravel changed his mind and removed it from the first printing proof or that Durand simply overlooked it. It is the only time in the movement where the octave is to be broken, which is rather odd. I have chosen to include it in parentheses since it appears in Ravel's manuscript. In Measure 42, take note that the *8v bassa* indication below the bass staff also should apply to the upper B-flat octave on the downbeat. That downbeat B-flat octave is also to be played *8v bassa* and consequently the indication is given in parentheses as a reminder.

In 1922 Ravel's name appeared as performer on an Aeolian Duo-Art reproducing player piano roll of *Le gibet*. In fact it was actually pianist Robert Casadesus who recorded the work (along with the *Toccata* from *Le tombeau de Couperin*), probably under Ravel's supervision. Ravel did record his *Pavane* and *Oiseaux tristes* at the same session, but obviously did not feel technically adequate for the other two works. These recordings have been re-released on compact discs under various labels.

## *Scarbo*

Musically speaking, *Ondine* is remarkable for its exquisite melodic character and sonorous textures and *Le gibet* for its exotic extended tertiary (jazz) harmonies. *Scarbo* completes the triptych with its emphasis on rhythmic effects and bravura fireworks that exploit the outer registers of the keyboard. It is a brilliant virtuoso piece in the manner of Ravel's own *Jeux d'eau* and the *Toccata* from *Le tombeau de Couperin*, but reaches far beyond their technical demands. *Scarbo* is extraordinarily difficult to perform and is one of the pinnacles of the entire piano repertoire. Its form is a virtuoso scherzo reminiscent of Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz* but taken to new extremes. According to one music critic, *Scarbo* "demands wrists of steel, fingers with eyes in them, a perfectly equalized mechanism, and an ability to be all over the keyboard at once."

Bertrand's poem describes a dwarf-sized poltergeist named Scarbo who enjoys being a wicked and mischievous little spirit. The brief E. T. A. Hoffman quotation that precedes the poem aptly describes the mystery surrounding Scarbo's sudden magical appearance and disappearance: "He could not understand how he had gotten in, nor gotten out." The diabolical nature of this goblin is evident immediately at the beginning of Ravel's nightmarish musical depiction. He summons Scarbo ominously with a nervous repeated-note figuration low in the bass that blossoms into a screeching tremolo high in the treble. (In a footnote on the first page, I have noted two good fingering options for the repeated notes. Depending on the regulation of the piano's action, alternate fingers 3-1-3-1 or use fingers 321 *simultaneously* with a firm wrist, not letting the key fully rebound.) The main theme that follows (Measure 32) is a frantic but passionate waltz tune that stops and starts in rhythmically unpredictable patterns that render it frustrating to perform. Ravel biographer Vladimir Jankélévitch ruefully observed, "It is impossible for the hands to acquire patterns because *Scarbo*, by its brutal interruptions, and by the continual readjustments that it imposes on the pianists, breaks all muscular innervations as soon as they are established." Along the way, there are unexpected long pauses of rests that serve to heighten the dramatic tension even further. Pianist Henri Gil-Marchex studied *Scarbo* with the composer. Ravel told him that *Quelle hor–reur!* ("What a fright!") could be set to the first three notes of the theme in the treble staff. (Notice that the first three notes of the main theme are an accelerated version of the three-note opening motif in Measure 1.) Ravel told Perlemuter that he originally envisioned *Scarbo* to be a caricature of Romanticism, "but perhaps I let myself get carried away!" Ravel provided no metronome marking in the autograph manuscript. The one given at Measure 32 is my suggestion.

The second theme is a toccata-like figure that first appears in Measure 52. It is a literal depiction of Bertrand's *pirouetter* from the third line of the poem. The repeated-note figurations are very similar to those found in Ravel's *Alborada del gracioso* from *Miroirs*. The lower D-sharp of the downbeat chord of Measure 73 is in parentheses because Ravel crossed it out in Perlemuter's score. Similarly, I have placed parentheses in Measures 268 and 272. The third theme, a two-note fanfare motif, is introduced at Measure 121 and is interrupted by bell-like broken octaves. Here we have a perfect example of the careful craftsmanship that Ravel religiously pursued in his compositions. To aid the pianist in memorizing, I have numbered the repetitions of the broken octave passages beginning at Measure 121. Notice how Ravel shortens each repetition by two. First appear nine, then seven, then five, and finally three. His diminution is purposeful, yet is not really apparent to the ear. We see here how Ravel deliberately concealed the technical control within his compositions in order to render them organic. Ravel ingeniously alternates the first and second themes in a long passage beginning at Measure 314 that climaxes with the return of the third theme at Measure 366. The orchestral timbres and symphonic sweep of this passage are extraordinary.

After a return of the introduction at Measure 395, Ravel follows with a new section that transforms the second theme via augmentation beginning at Measure 431. The arpeggiated hand crossings are very similar to those found in *Jeux d'eau*. Beginning in Measure 448, the long passage in major seconds in the right hand

was inspired by the unusually wide and elongated shape of Ravel's thumbs. The fingerings shown in this section are Ravel's own as notated in his manuscript. However, they are peculiar to his unique right thumb and may not suit every pianist. I have included other fingerings in parentheses above Ravel's as a more practical alternative. Measures 450 and 451 are repeated in Ravel's autograph manuscript but are missing from the Durand edition for unknown reasons. Perhaps Ravel deleted them in his proof or Durand overlooked them. I have placed the repeat signs in parentheses to indicate that they are at the discretion of the performer.

The complex tempo changes and relations in *Scarbo* are very important, yet difficult to understand. Ravel frequently indicates metrical shifts with the words *du mouvement précédant* ("of the preceding tempo") accompanied by note equivalencies. (See Measures 395, 430, 460, and 616.) It is important to remember in these places that the *first* note that appears before the equals sign (=) represents the section of music going forward, and the *second* note after the equals sign represents the music just finished. For example, at Measure 395 the tempo of the eighth note starting in Measure 395 should be equal to the tempo of a dotted quarter note (three eighth notes, or an entire measure's worth) of music of Measure 394 and before. Thus the "new" eighth note of Measure 395 is equal to a dotted quarter "of the preceding tempo" from Measure 394. (The note values appear "backwards" visually and that is how metrical confusion is created. A better notational system would have the two respective note values appearing adjacent on either side of the double bar line. Each note value would then represent its corresponding temporal section of music.)

I have provided an alternate rewritten version of Measures 256–259 at the bottom of the page. The musical effect is nearly identical, and the passage is much more easily rendered. Beginning at Measure 412 I have numbered the three measures of repeated notes in order to call the pianist's attention to Ravel's decision to include an "extra" measure. (Compare with the two previous passages, Measures 397–398 and 404–405, which contain only two measures of repeated notes like the introduction.) Ravel masterfully elongates the repeated-note effect to prepare the transition to the next section. Similar to passages found in *Jeux d'eau* and *Une barque sur l'océan*, Ravel obviously intended non-existent notes lower than those found on pianos in Measures 15, 334, 395, 402, and 409. These could be easily played on a Bösendorfer piano equipped with extra bass keys. For ease of reading, I have rewritten Ravel's original chordal trills as tremolos in Measures 435–436 and 439–440. The effect is the same; no harmonies have been altered. In Measures 563 and 568 I have recommended in the footnote that pianists with small hands leave out the lower G-natural in the left hand chord or try using the fifth finger to play both the E-sharp and G-natural simultaneously.

Similar to Ondine's final disappearance into the lake, Scarbo vanishes into thin air. Ravel recalls the introductory three-note motif at Measures 617–619 and ends the work in an enigmatic musical puff of smoke ("and suddenly he blew himself out" like an extinguished candle): a staccato note in the low bass followed by a quick pianissimo arpeggio in the treble.

Alfred Cortot once recalled that Ravel told a student, "I do not wish my music to be interpreted; merely to play it is sufficient." I do not believe Ravel actually meant that literally, he simply desired performers to follow his indications very closely and not to *over-interpret*. Ravel was extraordinarily careful about his dynamic, articulation, and tempo indications. His road map is well marked for the performer.

*Richard Dowling, D.M.A.*
*New York, March 2006*

*This edition is respectfully dedicated to pianists*
*Madge Waterston Hunt, Ruth Tomfohrde, Abbey Simon, and Joan Panetti.*
*Their artistry inspires all who hear them, and those who are fortunate to study with them.*

# *Ondine*

. . . . . Je croyais entendre
Une vague harmonie enchanter mon sommeil,
Et près de moi s'épandre un murmure pareil
Aux chants entrecoupés d'une voix triste et tendre.
CHARLES BRUGNOT – *Les deux Génies*

— "Écoute! — Écoute! — C'est moi, c'est Ondine qui frôle de ces gouttes d'eau les losanges sonores de ta fenêtre illuminée par les mornes rayons de la lune; et voici, en robe de moire, la dame châtelaine qui contemple à son balcon la belle nuit étoilée et le beau lac endormi.

Chaque flot est un ondin qui nage dans le courant, chaque courant est un sentier qui serpente vers mon palais, et mon palais est bâti fluide, au fond du lac, dans le triangle du feu, de la terre et de l'air.

Écoute! — Écoute! — Mon père bat l'eau coassante d'une branche d'aulne verte, et mes sœurs caressent de leurs bras d'écume les fraîches îles d'herbes, de nénuphars et de glaïeuls, ou se moquent du saule caduc et barbu qui pêche à la ligne."

★

Sa chanson murmurée, elle me supplia de recevoir son anneau à mon doigt, pour être l'époux d'une Ondine, et de visiter avec elle son palais, pour être le roi des lacs.

Et comme je lui répondais que j'aimais une mortelle, boudeuse et dépitée, elle pleura quelques larmes, poussa un éclat de rire, et s'évanouit en giboulées qui ruisselèrent blanches le long de mes vitraux bleus.

ALOYSIUS BERTRAND
*Gaspard de la Nuit: Fantaisies à la manière de Rembrandt et de Callot*, 1836

# *Ondine*

. . . . . I thought I heard
A vague harmony casting a spell over my sleep,
And near me, a similar murmur radiating
Songs interrupted by a sad and tender voice.
CHARLES BRUGNOT – *The Two Spirits*

— "Listen! — Listen! — It is I, it is Ondine brushing drops of water on the resonant panes of your window lit by melancholy moonbeams; and here in a gown of watery silk, the lady of the castle gazes from her balcony upon the beautiful starry night and the beautiful sleeping lake.

Each wave is a water-sprite swimming in the current, each current is a path winding toward my palace, and my palace is built of water at the bottom of the lake, in a triangle of fire, earth and air.

Listen! — Listen! — My father whips the croaking water with a green alder branch, and my sisters caress with their arms of foam the cool islands of herbs, water lilies and gladioli, or mock the leafless and moss-covered willow tree with its branches like fishing-lines."

★

Her murmured song finished, she begged me to put her ring on my finger, to be the husband of a water-nymph, and to visit with her in her palace as king of the lakes.

And when I told her that I loved a mortal, sullen and upset she wept some tears, burst into laughter, and vanished in a shower of water that streamed down white along my blue windowpanes.

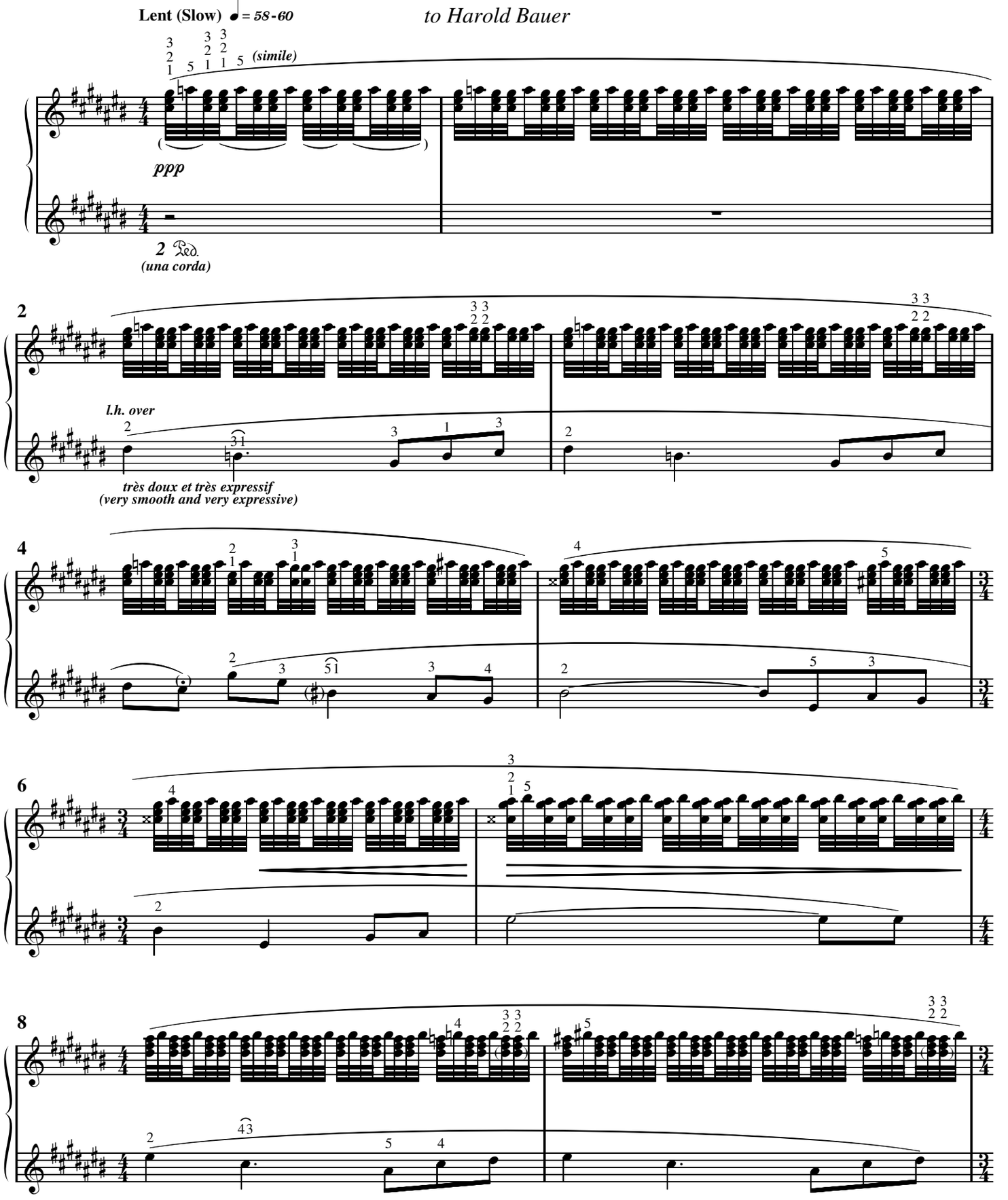
ALOYSIUS BERTRAND (TRANS. R. DOWLING)
*Gaspard of the Night: Fantasies in the Style of Rembrandt and Callot*, 1836

# Gaspard de la nuit

**Maurice Ravel**
**(1875-1937)**
**Edited by Richard Dowling**

## I. Ondine

*to Harold Bauer*

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# *Le gibet*

Que vois-je remuer autour de ce Gibet?
FAUST

Ah! ce que j'entends, serait-ce la bise nocturne qui glapit, ou le pendu qui pousse un soupir sur la fourche patibulaire?

Serait-ce quelque grillon qui chante tapi dans la mousse et le lierre stérile dont par pitié se chausse le bois?

Serait-ce quelque mouche en chasse sonnant du cor autour de ces oreilles sourdes à la fanfare des hallali?

Serait-ce quelque escarbot qui cueille en son vol inégal un cheveu sanglant à son crâne chauve?

Ou bien serait-ce quelque araignée qui brode une demi-aune de mousseline pour cravate à ce col étranglé?

C'est la cloche qui tinte aux murs d'une ville sous l'horizon, et la carcasse d'un pendu que rougit le soleil couchant.

ALOYSIUS BERTRAND
*Gaspard de la Nuit: Fantaisies à la manière de Rembrandt et de Callot*, 1836

# *The Gallows*

What is it I see stirring around that gallows?
FAUST

Ah! That which I hear, might it be the howling night wind, or the hanged man uttering a sigh on the sinister scaffold crossbeam?

Might it be some singing cricket hidden in the moss and the sterile ivy with which the forest covers itself out of pity?

Might it be some fly hunting and sounding its horn around those ears that are deaf to the fanfare of the morts*?

Might it be some scarab beetle plucking, in its unsteady flight, a bloody hair from his bald skull?

Or might it even be some spider embroidering a half-yard of muslin as a tie for that strangled neck?

It is the bell that tolls from the walls of a town beyond the horizon, and the corpse of the hanged man reddened by the setting sun.

ALOYSIUS BERTRAND (TRANS. R. DOWLING)
*Gaspard of the Night: Fantasies in the Style of Rembrandt and Callot*, 1836

* *Hallali/Morts*: horn calls that announce the successful kill of an animal during a hunt

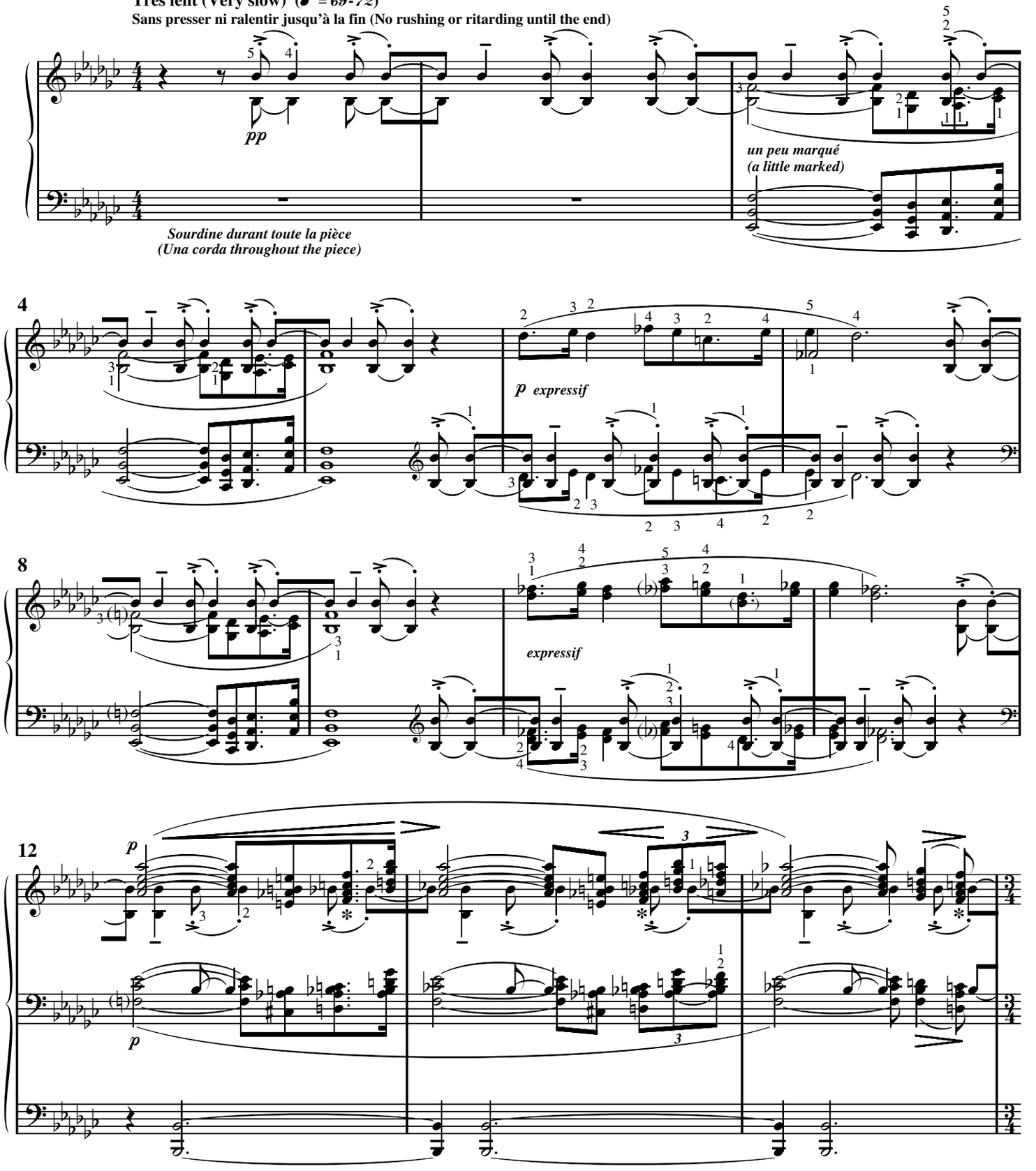
# Gaspard de la nuit

**Maurice Ravel**
**(1875-1937)**
**Edited by Richard Dowling**

## II. Le gibet

*to Jean Marnold*

**Très lent (Very slow)** (♩ = 69-72)
**Sans presser ni ralentir jusqu'à la fin (No rushing or ritarding until the end)**




* Large hands play as written. Small hands should leave out A♭.

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# *Scarbo*

Il regarda sous le lit, dans la cheminée,
dans le bahut; — personne. Il ne put
comprendre par où il s'était introduit,
par où il s'était évadé.
E. T. A. Hoffmann – *Contes nocturnes*

Oh! que de fois je l'ai entendu et vu, Scarbo, lorsqu'à minuit la lune brille dans le ciel comme un écu d'argent sur une bannière d'azur semée d'abeilles d'or!

Que de fois j'ai entendu bourdonner son rire dans l'ombre de mon alcôve, et grincer son ongle sur la soie des courtines de mon lit!

Que de fois je l'ai vu descendre du plancher, pirouetter sur un pied et rouler par la chambre comme le fuseau tombé de la quenouille d'une sorcière!

Le croyais-je alors évanoui? le nain grandissait entre la lune et moi comme le clocher d'une cathédrale gothique, un grelot d'or en branle à son bonnet pointu!

Mais bientôt son corps bleuissait, diaphane comme la cire d'une bougie, son visage blémissait comme la cire d'un lumignon, — et soudain il s'éteignait.

Aloysius Bertrand
*Gaspard de la Nuit: Fantaisies à la manière de Rembrandt et de Callot*, 1836

# *Scarbo*

He looked under the bed, in the chimney,
in the cupboard; — no one. He could not
understand how he had gotten in,
nor gotten out.
E. T. A. Hoffmann – *Nocturnal Tales*

Oh! How many times have I heard and seen him, Scarbo, when at midnight the moon shines in the sky like an ancient silver coin on an azure banner dotted with golden bees!

How many times have I heard his laughter buzzing in the shadow of my alcove, and his fingernails scratching on the silken drapes of my bed!

How many times have I seen him jump down to the floor, twirl on one foot and roll around the bedroom like a spindle that has fallen off a witch's spinning staff!

Did I think he had vanished then? The dwarf grew large between the moon and me like the belfry-steeple of a Gothic cathedral, a golden bell jingling on his pointy cap.

But soon his body turned blue, translucent like the wax of a candle, his face turned pale like the wax of a candlelamp — and suddenly he blew himself out.

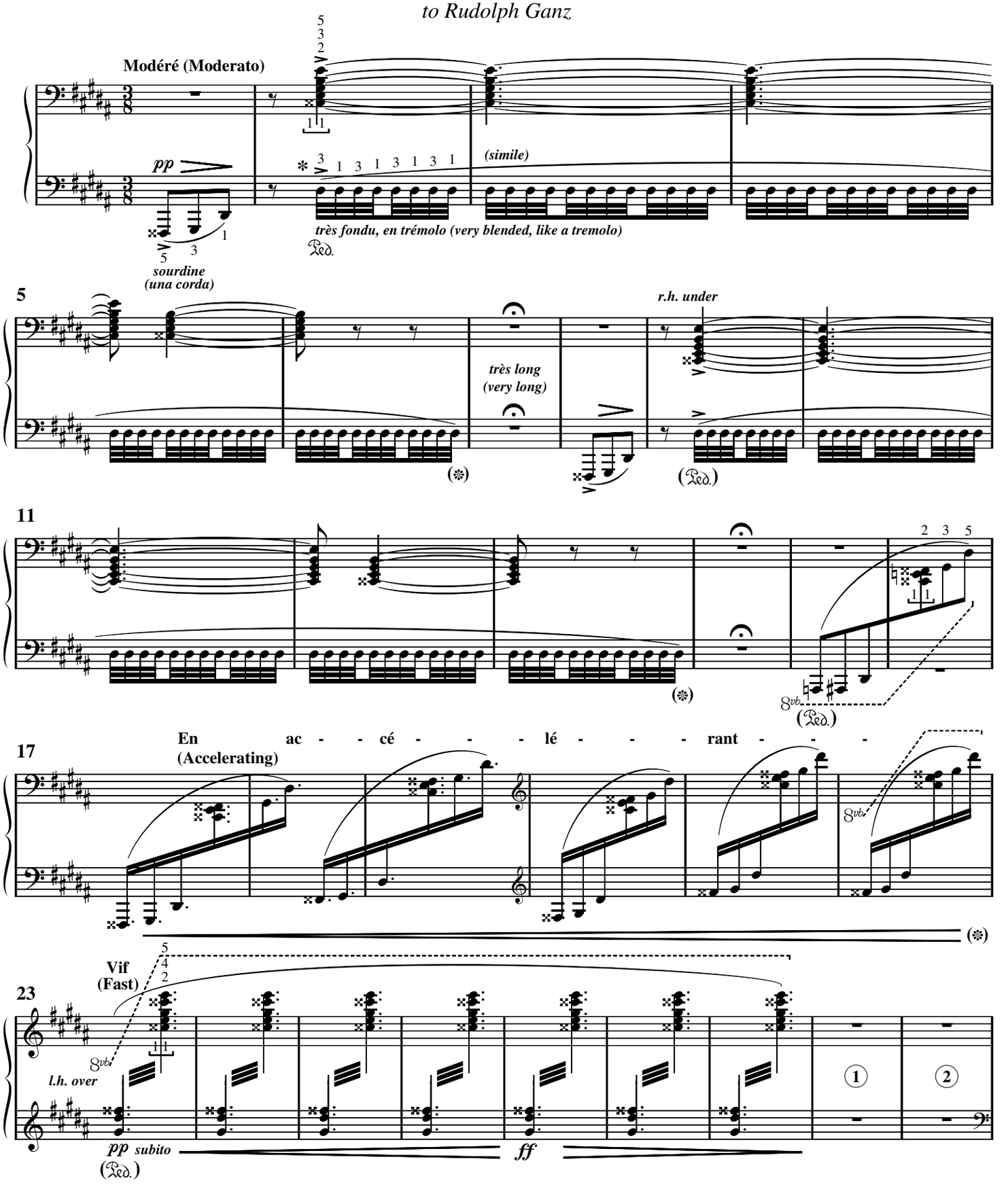
Aloysius Bertrand (Trans. R. Dowling)
*Gaspard of the Night: Fantasies in the Style of Rembrandt and Callot*, 1836

# Gaspard de la nuit

**Maurice Ravel**
**(1875-1937)**
**Edited by Richard Dowling**

## III. Scarbo

*to Rudolph Ganz*




* Use 3131 or 321 321 321 321 on these repeated notes depending upon the regulation of the piano's action.

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*photo: Peter Schaaf*

Pianist **Richard Dowling** consistently wins high praise for his musical abilities. *American Record Guide* wrote of his all-Gershwin Klavier Records CD, *Sweet and Low-Down*, "Dowling dances through 29 numbers with exuberance and a natural feel for rubato…if you love Gershwin, don't miss this!" In a review of his *World's Greatest Piano Rags* album another *ARG* critic said that "Dowling plays with tremendous zip and zest…I am sure he is the best ragtime pianist I have ever heard." *The New York Times* has described him as an "especially impressive fine pianist." *The Singapore Business Times* hailed him as "a master of creating beautiful sounds with impeccable control of colors and textures" and for giving "a superb recital that left the audience craving for more at the end." *The San Antonio Express-News* called him "a musician with something to say, the skill to say it and the magnetic power to make you want to listen." *The Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel* wrote that he "gave a high-voltage recital and obviously has technique to spare." His repertoire includes the complete solo piano works of the renowned French composer Maurice Ravel. He is currently preparing a new authoritative multi-volume edition of Ravel's complete piano works for Masters Music Publications. For more information about Mr. Dowling's performances, recordings, and his MMP sheet music editions please visit his official website at **www.richard-dowling.com**.

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