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RAVEL'S PIANO MUSIC – A NEW EDITION

Editorial Method and Sources

There is no denying the excitement of holding in one's hand the autograph manuscript of a musical masterpiece; and where the autograph is itself a work of art, as many of Ravel's are, then aesthetic considerations also come into play to compound the excitement. But there is equally no denying that composers are, like all mortals, fallible, and that however beautiful and exciting an autograph is, it may nonetheless contain mistakes. The apparently laudable desire to go back to what the composer originally wrote needs therefore to be tempered with a certain amount of common sense.

With stage works, it is true, pressures of time, space, money and personalities often lead to deformations which the composer does not in any sense welcome but has to accept if the performance is to go ahead, and which may then find their way into the printed score. But in the case of piano works, the pressures on the composer in preparing an edition are much slighter, exerted for the most part by the printer in his desire for conformity with house style, so that changes introduced between manuscript and edition have a somewhat greater chance of representing decisions freely taken by the composer. Certainly, in the process of publication mistakes may be introduced as well as rectified and, when musicality and common sense indicate that this may have happened, the autograph can indeed sometimes provide vital evidence. But in the course of conversations with a number of composers of our own time, I am given overwhelmingly to understand that they would actually be angry if future editors ignored their carefully prepared printed scores and went back automatically to their original autographs for a so-called true reading.

In the case of Ravel's piano music, such a critical view of autograph evidence is more than ever justified, since the Music Department of the Bibliothèque nationale de France holds a bound volume containing Ravel's own printed copies, with autograph corrections, of the bulk of the first editions of his solo piano music.¹ To judge from the contents, the volume would appear to have been made up between 1911 and 1913. The works missing from this collection are *Sérénade grotesque*, *Sites auriculaires*, *Ma mère l'Oye*, *Prélude, A la manière de...*, *Le tombeau de Couperin* and *Frontispice*. Printed copies with autograph corrections of *Ma mère l'Oye* and *A la manière de...* are held separately in the same institution,² while Ravel's own printed copy of *Le tombeau de Couperin*, with autograph fingerings and one autograph correction, is on display in the Musée Ravel at Montfort l'Amaury. For *Sérénade grotesque* and *Sites auriculaires* the autographs may be said to assume paramount importance since these pieces were not published in the composer's lifetime. The autograph of *Frontispice* is also significant because Ravel's own printed copy has not been found. Unfortunately, for *Prélude* neither the autograph nor the composer's printed copy is extant.

No proofs are known to survive of the first editions of any of Ravel's piano works, apart from a set of first proofs of *Le tombeau de Couperin* in the Durand archives, marked up by the Durand editor with a request for second proofs (I am grateful to Roy Howat for providing me with a copy of this material). This set contains no autograph markings. All the editorial annotations found their way into the first edition except for the form of some of the multiple appoggiaturas in 'Prélude' and 'Forlane' of *Le tombeau de Couperin*, over which Ravel would seem to have changed his mind.

Primary Sources

Where Ravel's own corrected edition is available, I have taken it as my main primary source; discrepancies between this corrected edition (CE), the first printed edition (E) and the autograph are duly noted.

The autograph of *Valses nobles* (nine pages in the Taverner collection) has not itself been made available for study, but a microfilm (AM) is held in the Music Department of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (Vm. micr. 876).

Secondary Sources

The secondary sources fall into four groups:

- (a) Printed copies with corrections by musicians close to Ravel
 - (i) Copies of Ravel's piano music belonging to Robert Casadesus (CasCE), now also housed in the Music Department of the BnF; his copy of *Valses nobles* is shelved as Vm. Casadesus 940. It contains no markings in the composer's hand.
 - (ii) Some copies, including that of *Valses nobles*, belonging to Vlado Perlemuter (PerCE), also now housed in the BnF, but awaiting cataloguing.
 - (iii) Some copies with corrections by Lucien Garban. Garban worked for the Durand publishing house and was a close friend of the composer. The exact status of these corrections is impossible to determine but, given the links between the two men, it is feasible that at least some of the changes were dictated by Ravel. These copies are now in the library of Bakersfield College, California. Garban also made piano duet transcriptions of *Valses nobles et sentimentales* and *Le tombeau de Couperin*. These are published by Durand.
 - (iv) Copies not consulted include those belonging to Jacques Février, whose niece and pupil Mme Aboulker-Rosenfeld has assured me that they contain no markings beyond his fingerings; and those of Henriette Faure, which cannot be located.
- (b) Ravel's own orchestrations of a number of his piano pieces (RO). In chronological order of original composition (dates of orchestration in brackets), these are: *Menuet antique* (1929), 'Habanera' from *Sites auriculaires* (1908), *Pavane pour une Infante défunte* (1910), 'Une barque sur l'océan' and 'Alborada del gracioso' from *Miroirs* (1906 and 1923), *Ma mère l'Oye* (1911), *Valses nobles et sentimentales* (1912), 'Prélude', 'Forlane', 'Menuet' and 'Rigaudon' from *Le tombeau de Couperin* (1919).
- (c) Recordings

(i) Piano rolls made by Ravel in 1913 for Welte-Mignon (*Sonatine*, movements I and II, C2887; *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, C2888), and in 1922 for Duo-Art (*Pavane pour une Infante défunte*, 084; 'Oiseaux tristes' from *Miroirs*, 082). It was claimed that at this second session Ravel also recorded 'Le giber' from *Gaspard de la nuit* and the 'Toccata' from *Le tombeau de Couperin*, but these were in fact recorded by Robert Casadesus. It remains uncertain which of the two recorded 'La vallée des cloches' from *Miroirs* in 1929 for Duo-Art (72750), though I am almost certain it was Ravel. All these recordings have been transferred a number of times to LP, but unfortunately the piano roll equipment has not always been properly regulated.

(ii) Recordings made on disc by three pianists, all of whom had the benefit of the composer's detailed advice: Robert Casadesus (1955, CBS 13062–4³); Jacques Février (1972, ADES 7041–4); Vlado Perlemuter (1961, VOX VBX 410 1–3⁴; 1977, NIMBUS 2101–3, reissued CD NI 5005, 5011). Marcelle Meyer, although known to Ravel (together they gave the private two-piano performance of *La valse* which failed to impress Diaghilev), never studied his piano music with him, as her daughter, Marie Bertin, was good enough to inform me. I have therefore taken no account of Mme Meyer's Ravel recordings reissued by EMI on the Référence label.

- (d) Souvenirs of Ravel as a coach of his piano music
 - (i) from Vlado Perlemuter in his interviews with Hélène Jourdan-

Miroirs

I: Noctuelles

à Léon Paul Fargue

Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)

♩ = 128 environ
Très léger

pp

pp

mf

pp

p

pp

ppp

IV: Alborada del gracioso

à M. D. Calvocoressi

Assez vif $\text{♩} = 92$
sec
les arpèges très serrés

mf

1 2 3 2 1

5

f *f*

10

mf subito *p* *m.g.* *m.g.*

14

m.g. *m.g.*

CRITICAL COMMENTARY

For details of sources not listed under each movement heading, see 'Editorial Method and Sources', p. 4. A table of Source abbreviations appears on p. 5

Noctuelles

Sources: A - autograph (4 pp), signed and dated at the end "Maurice Ravel 10/05", held in the Robert Owen Lehman Collection, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York
E - first edition of *Miroirs* complete published by Demets, deposited at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, in the early months of 1906 (E. 1158 D)

- A: no metronome marking. ♩ = 128 *environ* taken from E
- Bars 1, 2, 10, 11. A: crescendo begins on beat 2. E: crescendo begins after *pp*. Reading in A adopted as being more in keeping with subject of piece, and because Ravel is known to have complained that pianists tended to begin his crescendos too early
- Bars 2-3, 11-12, 95-96. It is unclear whether the crescendo should be continuous or whether Ravel intended a *subito* dynamic at the beginning of bars 3, 12 and 96
- Bars 6, 90. A, E: beat 1, lower part, 7 semiquavers. In view of alignment with quaver *f'*, first 4 notes of bar amended editorially to demisemiquavers
- Bars 7, 91. A, E: LH beat 3, semiquaver followed by semiquaver rest. Amended editorially
- Bars 9, 93. A: duration of dyad extended by *laissez vibrer* ties. Suppressed in E
- Bars 10, 11. See note to bars 1, 2
- Bars 11-12. See note to bars 2-3
- Bar 13. A: LH, first note, accent. Omitted in E
- Bar 14. A, E: 5/8. Uncorrected in CE. Amended editorially
- Bars 14, 15, 27, 28, 31, 32. A: RH, final note, staccato. E: dot replaced by wedge. Reading in A preferred in view of diminuendo
- Bars 14, 15, 98, 99. A, E: final note, no downward quaver stem. Added editorially in view of lower slur extending to final note
- Bars 16, 17. A, E: 6/8 3/4 at bar 16. Amended editorially to 6/8. 3/4 added editorially at bar 17; bars 17-20 are clearly notated in 3/4
- Bars 18, 102. A, E: beat 3, upward quaver stem at end of first demisemiquaver group has no rhythmic logic, but Ravel presumably wanted this melody note to sound before final quaver beat. '5' added editorially in bar 18
- Bars 19, 103. Beat 2, extra beam added editorially to grace notes
- Bars 23, 26. E: LH beat 1, augmentation dots to *d''b* and *e'b*. Missing in A. Reading of A for upper note preferred in view of repeated *d''b* followed by semiquaver rest on beat 3. Reading of E for *e'b* retained, but notated as a crotchet tied to a quaver on beat 3. See also note to bars 107, 110
- Bar 24. A: "*p subito*". E: "*subito*" omitted. Restored editorially
- Bars 27, 28, 31, 32. See note to bars 14, 15
- Bars 30, 114. A, E: RH slur extends to final semiquaver. Shortened editorially to end on quaver *e'b*
- Bars 31, 32, 111, 112, 115, 116. RH quaver beat 4, upward quaver stem added editorially by analogy with bars 27, 28
- Bars 31, 115. Extra beams added editorially to RH and LH grace notes; duration of rest halved accordingly
- Bars 34, 118. A, E: LH, no augmentation dot to first note. Added editorially
- Bars 35, 119. A, E: LH beat 2, no augmentation dot to first note. Added editorially
- Bar 36. E: LH, treble clef repeated unnecessarily at beginning of bar. LH, extra beam added editorially to final group of grace notes
- Bar 37. A: no metronome marking or LH staccato dots. Both present in E with exception of dot above fourth octave F. Supplied editorially
- Bar 38. A, E: RH beats 1-3, minim rest only beneath chord on beat 2. Amended editorially
- Bar 39. A, CE: RH beat 1, ♯ to *a*. Omitted in E
- Bars 41-42. A: octave F tied across the barline. Lower tie omitted in E
- Bar 43. A: LH final note, dotted crotchet. E: crotchet followed by quaver rest. Reading of A adopted, but notated as quaver tied to crotchet
- Bar 44. A, E: LH beat 2, upper stave, no staccato dot to chord. Added editorially
- Bar 45. A, E: LH, upper stave, beats 3-5, no slur. Added editorially
A: LH beat 2, *laissez vibrer* tie. Omitted in E
- Bar 48. A: beat 1, *ab/c'* dyad taken in LH, no arpeggiation. Reading of E retained
- Bar 50. A: LH, *laissez vibrer* tie. Omitted in E
- Bar 51. RH, 1 beam deleted from grace notes editorially
A: LH beats 2-5 unclear. Triad on beat 2 only crotchet in length; no further indication until quaver rest on second half of beat 5. E: similarly unclear, but with crotchet triad *ab/c'b/e'b* on beat 5, replacing quaver rest. Uncorrected in CE. Since neither reading satisfactory, amended editorially to dotted minim triad at beat 2 followed by crotchet triad (from E) at beat 5
A: LH beats 2-5, *Ab* notated as crotchet tied to minim; quaver rest at end of bar. Quaver rest omitted in E with introduction of LH crotchet triad at beat 5. These two sources conflated editorially
PerS(conv): Perlemuter prefers *f* to *ab* in final LH chord. Reading of *f* has virtues of avoiding parallel approach to octave *Ab*s, of richer sonority and, possibly, of consistency with bar 53
- Bar 53. A, E: LH beat 2, bass dyad, minim. Amended to semibreve editorially
A, E: LH beat 2, *d'q* incorrectly notated as dotted minim after quaver rest. Amended editorially
- Bar 55. RH, lower part, slur added editorially
A, E: final arpeggiated chord, *c'* notated on upper stave. Amended editorially to make sense of LH slur
A: LH beat 3, *laissez vibrer* tie from *B'b*. Omitted in E
- Bar 56. E: RH beat 3, upper slur extends to *a'q*. Shortened to conform with A
A: LH, final quaver, dyad *flaq* continues tenor line. E: dyad replaced by quaver rest. Illogical as this latter reading may seem, it does strengthen entry of Ravel's favourite descending fourth motif in bar 57 and has been retained
- Bars 58, 59, 60. LH *B'bs*, ties unclear in A and E. Clarified editorially
- Bars 61-62. A: "revenez au 1er Mt. peu à peu". E: "peu à peu" omitted, since "1^{er} mouvement" comes only 2 bars later
A: RH dyad extended by *laissez vibrer* ties. Suppressed in E
- Bar 64. A, E: LH, *B'b* quaver. Amended to semiquaver editorially
A: *B'b* extended by *laissez vibrer* tie. Suppressed in E
- Bars 66, 70. A: quaver 2, chords extended by *laissez vibrer* ties in RH of bar 66 and both hands of bar 70. Suppressed in E. Similar ties supplied editorially in LH of bar 66
- Bar 70. A, E: LH beat 1, crotchet rest below first chord. E: quaver rest added below second chord. Both rests deleted editorially
- Bar 85. A, E: beat 3, crotchet rest on LH stave, notes on RH stave. Present layout clarifies phrasing of LH *c''* to *d''b* and avoids RH leap to crotchets of bar 86
- Bar 86. LH, first note bracketed editorially
- Bar 90. See note to bar 6
- Bar 91. See note to bar 7
- Bar 93. See note to bar 9
- Bars 94, 95. A: no crescendo. E: crescendo begins after *pp*. Amended editorially by analogy with bars 1, 2, 10, 11 of A
- Bars 95-96. See note to bars 2-3