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Ravel's Piano Music - A New Edition

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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 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', 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 (A) are duly noted. A further primary source is the set of printed editions belonging to Vlado Perlemuter, who studied almost all Ravel's piano works with the composer in 1927 (PerCE). These copies carry some valuable additions and corrections in Ravel's own hand, mainly for

Gaspard de la nuit. They also carry additions and corrections dictated by Ravel, but in Perlemuter's hand; these have not been treated as primary evidence. The copies belonging to Robert Casadesus are now in the possession of his widow, but Mme Casadesus has been kind enough to assure me that they contain no markings in the composer's hand. Likewise, Jacques Février's niece and pupil Mme Aboulker-Rosenfeld has assured me that her uncle's copies contain no markings beyond his fingerings.

Secondary Sources

The secondary sources fall into four groups:

(a) Printed copies with corrections by Lucien Garban (GarCE). 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* (GarT). These are published by Durand.

(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 (RR) 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 gibet' 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) (CasR, FévR, PerRI and PerRII). 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-Morhange, published as *Ravel d'après Ravel* (Lausanne, 1953) and in an English translation by F. Tanner as *Ravel according to Ravel* (New York/London, 1988; 2/1991) (PerS(HJM)).

(ii) from Vlado Perlemuter in conversation with the Editor of the present edition (PerS(conv)).

(iii) from Henriette Faure in *Mon maître Maurice Ravel* (Paris, 1978) (FauS). Mlle Faure, the sister of the politician Edgar Faure, was coached by Ravel for her recital of his music – in all

Le tombeau de Couperin

I: Prélude

à la mémoire du lieutenant Jacques Charlot

Maurice Ravel
(1875-1937)

Vif [♩. = 92]

1)

4

pp

2

3

1 2

2 3 5 4 2 1

4 5

3 2 3 1 2 3 5

pp

3

8

3 5 2 3

p

1 3 2

1 2 5 4 3 2

5 4

11

14

pp

3 1 2

1 1 1 2

4 3 4 3

4 3 4 5

2 3 5 3

2 2 3 1

5 2

18 *p*

21 *mp*

24 *f*

28 *ff* *p*

31 1.

34 2.

This musical score is for a piano piece, spanning measures 18 to 34. It is written for a grand piano with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-5. The piece features a variety of textures, from delicate piano passages to powerful fortissimo sections. A large, faint watermark is visible across the center of the page.

III: Forlane

à la mémoire du lieutenant Gabriel Deluc

Allegretto [♩ = 96]

p

5

10

mf

15

pp

1 Corde

20

CRITICAL COMMENTARY

Sources: the autograph (18 pp), signed and dated “juillet 1914, juin-novembre 1917”, is in the collection of Madame A. Taverne, Monaco. It was not made available for the preparation of this edition. However, part of page 1 (title and elements of bars 1-9) - A - appears on the cover of Marguerite Long: *Au piano avec Maurice Ravel* (Paris, 1971)

E - first edition published by Durand (D. & F. 9569), deposited at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, 25 May 1918

For details of all other sources see ‘Editorial Method and Sources’, p. 3. A table of Source abbreviations appears on p. 4

Prélude

- A, E: no metronome marking. Editorial ♩ = 92 supported by RO
- Bars 2, 4, 31, 33, 38, 40, 50, 52, 87, 89.** RH beats 1 and 2, if we assume RH ornaments in these bars to be similar, then Ravel’s 3-4-2 fingering at start of bar 38 means that, contrary to what has been sometimes claimed, the *a'* (*e'* in bars 50, 52, 87, 89) is to be replayed, not tied to the first grace note
- Bar 14.** E: RH beat 2, semiquaver rest. Amended editorially to *d'* in round brackets
- Bar 22.** RH beat 1, Ravel’s 3-1-2 fingering dispels any doubts regarding articulation of ornament. See note to bars 2, 4 etc.
- PerS(conv), FauS 87,90:** ...but in all cases, tenuto to be applied to first grace note, synchronised with LH, on the beat; second grace note and main note to be less distinct
- Bar 40.** E: LH beats 1 and 3, *F* ♯ s, no *laissez vibrer* ties. Added editorially by analogy with parallel passages
- Bar 59.** E: RH beats 1-2, *laissez vibrer* tie extends from second *d* ♯ to beginning of beat 3. Dotted quaver *d* ♯ inserted editorially at beat 2 (tied to previous note) by analogy with bars 55, 58. Supported by RO
- Bar 60.** As for bar 59, an octave higher
- E: RH, treble clef before beat 4. Moved editorially to end of bar 59
- Bar 68.** E: crescendo begins on beat 2. Brought forward editorially to begin on beat 1 as in RO and by analogy with bar 63
- Bar 77.** E: LH beats 1 and 2, no slur. Added editorially
- Bar 86.** E: LH beat 3, quaver *g*, no staccato dot. Added editorially by analogy with parallel passages
- E: LH beat 4, quaver rest above *B*. Augmentation dot added editorially
- Bar 90.** E: RH, *laissez vibrer* tie from *g* extends to end of beat 2. Shortened editorially by analogy with parallel passages
- Bar 91.** Editorial *mf* supported by RO
- Bar 93.** Editorial *p* supported by RO
- Bar 96.** Editorial *f* supported by RO

Fugue

- E: no metronome marking. ♩ = 84 found in later editions, but provenance unclear; Perlemuter says it came from Marguerite Long. Added editorially
- Bar 12.** RH beat 3, round brackets to *b'* added editorially
- Bar 14.** E: redundant diminuendo on final quaver. Deleted editorially. *Subito* added editorially to *pp* in bar 15
- Bar 16.** CE: beat 3, Ravel indicates *f'* ♯ and *e'* to be taken by LH
- Bar 19.** CE: beats 3 and 4, Ravel indicates *g'*, *f'* ♯ and *a'* to be

taken by LH

- Bar 30.** E: RH beat 1, slur from bar 29 ends incorrectly on *d'* ♯. Repositioned editorially to end on *f* ♯ in LH, beat 1
- Bar 34.** E: lower stave, no slur. Added editorially by analogy with LH of bar 32
- Bar 47.** E: RH beat 3, no augmentation dot to *e'*. Supplied editorially
- Bar 50.** E: RH beat 4, staccato dot above tied *d''*. Deleted editorially

Forlane

- E: no metronome marking. Editorial ♩ = 96 supported by RO
- Bar 1.** **PerS(HJM)** 66/71: “Ravel asked me not to put too much weight on the last quaver [*b'* of beat 1]; it merely hesitates before the second beat. It’s only a touch away from being a grace note.” (“Ravel m’avait demandé de ne pas alourdir la croche piquée, elle hésite simplement avant le 2^{ème} temps. De là à la faire comme une petite note, il y a une nuance”)
- Bars 5-6.** E: RH slur begins on first *b'* ♯ of bar 6. Amended editorially to begin on *d''* ♯ of bar 5 by analogy with parallel passages
- Bar 10.** E: RH beat 2, no augmentation dot to *b''*. Supplied editorially
- Bar 19.** E: soft pedal release not indicated. May be held until end of bar 24
- Bar 23.** E: RH beat 1, no augmentation dots to *a'* and *d''*. Supplied editorially. Present in RO (strings)
- Bar 28.** **PerS(HJM)** 67/72: “Ravel insisted on all the repeats.” (“Ravel tenait à toutes les reprises.”) **PerR** repeats bars 9-28; **CasR**, **FévR** do not
- Bars 29-31, 33-35, 46-48, 50-52.** E: LH slur extends to RH quaver *d'* in bars 31, 35, 48, 52. Shortened editorially to end on LH crotchet *g*
- Bars 33, 37, 38.** E: beat 2, redundant *pp*. Deleted editorially
- Bar 38, 39.** E: no crescendo. Present in RO
- Bar 39.** E: LH beat 2, tenuto. Deleted editorially
- Bar 41.** E: RH beat 2, dotted crotchet *e'* ♯. CE: *e'* ♯ transferred to LH, as printed here
- Bars 46-48, 50-52.** See note to bars 29-31 etc.
- Bar 57.** E: LH beat 2, no slur. Supplied editorially
- Bars 58-59.** E: RH, separate slurs for bar 58 beat 2 and bar 59 beat 1. Amended to one slur editorially by analogy with bars 4-5, 8-9. Similarly at bars 61-62, 99-100, 103-104
- Bars 61-62.** See note to bars 58-59
- Bars 66.** E: RH beat 2, no slur. Added editorially by analogy with bar 91
- Bars 70, 95.** E: RH beat 2, tremolo incorrectly notated as dotted quaver. Amended to dotted crotchet editorially
- Bar 88.** CE: RH beat 1, Ravel’s fingering $\frac{2}{3}$. Amended editorially
- Bars 99-100, 103-104.** See note to bars 58-59
- Bar 105.** E: beat 1, C ♯ / G ♯ dyad, dotted crotchet. Amended editorially to dotted minim by analogy with bar 10. RO: dotted crotchet tied to quaver on beat 2 in both bars
- Bar 114.** “1 Corde” suggested editorially by analogy with bar 19
- Bar 123.** E: RH beat 2, slur. Extended editorially to beat 1 of bar 124 by analogy with bars 28-29, 62-63
- Bar 135.** E: LH beat 2, lower part, no augmentation dot to *a'*. Supplied editorially by analogy with bar 133
- Bars 143.** E: RH beat 2, no slur. Slur to beat 1 of bar 144 extended to begin at *f''* ♯ trill of bar 143. Supported by RO
- Bars 156, 161.** E: beat 2, redundant *pp*. Deleted editorially