

The background of the entire cover is a painting of two young girls. The girl in the foreground has long, wavy blonde hair tied with a blue ribbon and is wearing a pink dress. She is looking up at a music book. The girl behind her has brown hair and is wearing a red dress with a white collar. She is pointing at the music book. The music book is open and resting on a stand. The painting is in a soft, impressionistic style with warm colors.

RAVEL

Orchestral Works • 6

Piano Concerto in G major

Piano Concerto for the Left Hand • Tzigane

François Dumont, Piano • Jennifer Gilbert, Violin

Orchestre National de Lyon • Leonard Slatkin

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Orchestral Works • 6

From his father, a Swiss engineer, Ravel inherited a delight in precision and incidentally in mechanical toys, while from his Basque mother he acquired a familiarity with something of Spanish culture. Born in the village of Ciboure in the Basque region of France in 1875, he spent his childhood and adolescence in Paris, starting piano lessons at the age of seven and from the age of fourteen studying piano in the preparatory piano class of the Conservatoire. He left the Conservatoire in 1895, after failing to win the necessary prizes, but resumed studies there three years later under Gabriel Fauré. His repeated failure to win the Prix de Rome, even when well established as a composer, and his disqualification in his fifth attempt in 1905, resulted in a scandal that led to changes in that august institution, of which Fauré then became director.

Ravel's career continued successfully in the years before 1914 with a series of works of originality, including important additions to the piano repertoire, to the repertoire of French song and, with commissions from Diaghilev, to ballet. During the war he enlisted in 1915 as a driver and the war years left relatively little time and will for composition, particularly with the death of his mother in 1917. By 1920, however, he had begun to recover his spirits and resumed work, with a series of compositions, including an orchestration of *La valse*, rejected by Diaghilev, causing a rupture in their relations, and a number of engagements as a pianist and conductor in concerts of his own works at home and abroad. All this was brought to an end by his protracted final illness, attributed to a taxi accident in 1932, which led to his eventual death in 1937.

The two piano concertos of Ravel, the second, for left hand, commissioned by Paul Wittgenstein, brother of the philosopher, who had lost his right arm in the war, were written between 1929 and 1931. The *G major Concerto*, at first conceived as a Basque rhapsody, was dedicated to Marguerite Long, who was the soloist in the first performance at the Salle Pleyel in Paris on 14 January

1933. Originally conceived as a *Divertissement* for Ravel's own concert use, it is relatively lightly scored, although the percussion section includes triangle, drum, cymbals, side drum, gong, wood block and whip. Ravel claimed to have taken the slow movement of Mozart's *Clarinet Quintet* as a model for his *Adagio*, and for the composition of the whole work, which took him some time, made a close study of scores of concertos by Mozart and Saint-Saëns. The jazz element of the first movement, with suggestions of Gershwin, yet fully absorbed into Ravel's own idiom, leads to the beautiful and nostalgic piano solo that starts the second movement. The motor rhythms of the last movement and the lively syncopations complete a concerto of elegance, brilliance and wit.

Ravel's *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand* in D major is a remarkable tour de force, providing the one hand with as much to do as two hands. The slow first section is followed by a piano passage in the nature of an improvisation, introducing a jazz element, in fact derived from the opening. Scoring is for a larger orchestra than the two-handed concerto, with three trumpets, three trombones and tuba, where the other has only one trumpet and one trombone. The complement of percussion is similar. There is an ominous melody heard at the start, played in the depths of the woodwind section, with an accompanying repeated figure in the double basses. This slow introduction swells in volume, leading to the appearance of the piano, the solo passage ending with a fine flourish that ushers in the orchestra once more. When the piano returns, it is with material that shows more clearly the influence of jazz, although transformed by the idiosyncratic musical language of Ravel. The concerto was given its first performance in Vienna on 27 November 1931.

Ravel's *Tzigane*, a gypsy piece to end all such pieces, was written in 1924 for the Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Árányi, whose own improvised additions the composer added to the completed work, remarking, it is reported, that

he did not know what she was doing, but he liked it. The work was described by one of Ravel's friends as a violinist's minefield, and it is certainly designed to test the virtuosity and technique of any player who tackles it. The *Tzigane* opens in true gypsy fashion, with an unaccompanied violin introduction, making full use of gypsy melodic formulae.

This is followed by music that, while more characteristic of Ravel in its harmonies, continues to use the repeated turns of phrase that give the work its character.

Keith Anderson

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937)

Œuvres orchestrales • 6

De son père, un ingénieur suisse, Ravel hérita des affinités pour la précision, et accessoirement pour les jouets mécaniques, tandis que par sa mère basque il se familiarisa avec une part de la culture espagnole. Né dans le village de Ciboure au Pays Basque français en 1875, il passa son enfance et son adolescence à Paris, où il commença à prendre des leçons de piano à sept ans ; à partir de quatorze ans, il intégra la classe préparatoire de piano du Conservatoire. Il quitta cet établissement en 1895, sans avoir réussi à décrocher les diplômes requis, mais il y reprit ses études trois ans plus tard sous la houlette de Gabriel Fauré. Ses échecs répétés pour obtenir le Prix de Rome, même lorsqu'il fut devenu un compositeur établi, et sa disqualification après la cinquième tentative en 1905, provoquèrent un scandale qui entraîna des changements au sein de l'auguste institution, dont Fauré devint alors le directeur.

Au cours des années qui précédèrent 1914, Ravel poursuivit une carrière jalonnée de succès, avec une série d'ouvrages originaux, y compris d'importants ajouts

au répertoire pianistique, à celui de la mélodie française et, par le biais de commandes que lui passa Diaghilev, au domaine du ballet. En 1915, il participa à l'effort de guerre en s'engageant comme chauffeur, et les années de conflit lui laissèrent relativement peu de temps et de motivation pour la composition, d'autant plus qu'il perdit sa mère en 1917. En 1920, néanmoins, il commençait à retrouver son élan créateur, et il reprit le travail sur diverses compositions, y compris une orchestration de *La valse* rejetée par Diaghilev, ce qui causa leur brouille, ainsi que plusieurs engagements en qualité de pianiste et de chef d'orchestre dans le cadre de concerts où il défendait ses propres œuvres, en France et à l'étranger. Toutes ces activités furent interrompues par la longue maladie attribuée à l'accident de taxi dont il fut victime en 1932, et elle finit par l'emporter en 1937.

Ravel composa ses deux concertos pour piano – le second étant écrit pour la main gauche suite à une commande de Paul Wittgenstein, le frère du philosophe, qui avait perdu son bras droit pendant la guerre – entre

1929 et 1931. Le *Concerto en sol majeur*, qui à la base devait être une rhapsodie basque, fut dédié à Marguerite Long ; celle-ci en donna la création Salle Pleyel, à Paris, le 14 janvier 1933. D'abord prévu comme *Divertissement* à l'usage de Ravel pour ses concerts, il bénéficie d'une orchestration assez légère, même si le pupitre de percussions comprend un triangle, un tambour, des cymbales, une caisse claire, un gong, un bloc de bois et un fouet. Ravel affirmait avoir pris comme modèle le mouvement lent du *Quintette pour clarinette* de Mozart pour son *Adagio*, et en vue de la composition de tout l'ouvrage, qui lui demanda un certain temps, il se livra à un examen approfondi de partitions de concertos de Mozart et de Saint-Saëns. L'élément jazzy du premier mouvement comprend des allusions à Gershwin, mais elles sont pleinement intégrées au propre langage du compositeur et mènent au solo de piano ravissant et nostalgique qui ouvre le deuxième mouvement. Les rythmes moteurs du dernier mouvement et ses syncopes enjouées parachèvent cet ouvrage à la fois élégant, brillant et spirituel.

Avec son *Concerto pour la main gauche* en ré majeur, Ravel accomplit un remarquable tour de force, donnant à une seule main autant de travail qu'à deux. La première section lente est suivie par un passage de piano qui relève de l'improvisation et introduit un élément jazzy découlant de l'introduction. L'orchestration réclame un plus grand effectif que le concerto à deux mains, avec trois trompettes, trois trombones et tuba, alors que le précédent ne fait appel qu'à une trompette et un trombone. Le

complément de percussions est de même nature. Au début, on entend une mélodie menaçante, jouée dans les profondeurs du pupitre de bois, avec l'accompagnement d'un dessin répété aux contrebasses. Le volume de cette introduction va croissant, menant à l'apparition du piano, et le passage soliste s'achève par une belle envolée qui introduit à nouveau l'orchestre. Quand le piano reparait, c'est avec du matériau qui dénote nettement l'influence du jazz, même s'il est métamorphosé par le langage musical idiosyncrasique de Ravel. Ce concerto fut créé à Vienne le 27 novembre 1931.

Tzigane de Ravel, pièce tzigane par excellence, fut écrit en 1924 pour la violoniste hongroise Jelly d'Arányi, et le compositeur ajouta les propres passages improvisés par sa soliste à l'ouvrage achevé, observant que même s'il ne comprenait pas ce qu'elle faisait, cela lui plaisait beaucoup. Le morceau fut décrit par un proche de Ravel comme un champ de mines pour le violoniste, et en effet, il met à l'épreuve la virtuosité et la technique de tout interprète qui s'y mesure. *Tzigane* débute d'une manière tout ce qu'il y a de tzigane, avec une introduction de violon sans accompagnement qui met à profit tout le potentiel des formules mélodiques tziganes. Vient ensuite une musique qui, si elle est plus typique de Ravel de par ses harmonies, continue à utiliser les tournures de phrases répétées qui confèrent à l'ouvrage tout son caractère.

Keith Anderson

Traduction française de David Ylla-Somers

Jennifer Gilbert



Jennifer Gilbert is the leader of the Orchestre National de Lyon. She also enjoys an international career as a soloist and chamber musician. Highlights include concerto performances with the Orchestre National de Lyon, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Galicia, the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra, the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra, and the Kyoto Symphony Orchestra. Chamber music festivals around the world are a regular part of her schedule, including Marlboro, the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival and Sangat, in Mumbai, India. She has collaborated with Leon Fleisher, Emanuel Ax, Hélène Grimaud, Renaud Capuçon, and Sol Gabetta. Jennifer Gilbert is a concertmaster and member of the Saito Kinen Orchestra, conducted by Seiji Ozawa. She is also music director of Music Masters Course Japan (MMCJ), an international music summer school in Yokohama, Japan. During the year, she teaches at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et Danse in Lyon. She received a Bachelor's degree in English and American literature from Harvard University. Her violin is a Guadagnini from 1781.

François Dumont



Photo: Joseph Berardi

A prizewinner of the International Chopin Piano Competition and the Queen Elisabeth Competition, François Dumont has appeared as a soloist with the Mariinsky Theatre Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Colombia and the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra among others, under the baton of conductors such as Antoni Wit, Leonard Slatkin, François-Xavier Roth, David Reiland and Alexander Sladkovsky. Dumont has performed at the Festival International de Piano de la Roque d'Anthéron, Festival Piano aux Jacobins, Toulouse, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., and regularly tours Japan and China. Solo recordings include the complete sonatas of Mozart, the complete piano music of Ravel, and albums featuring works by Chopin, Mussorgsky and Bach. Dumont was just 14 when he began studies at the Conservatoire de Paris with Bruno Rigutto, later studying at the International Piano Academy Lake Como with William Grant Naboré. Recent projects include appearances at the Seoul International Music Festival and Nohant Festival Chopin, his debut at the Philharmonie de Paris, performances with Les Siècles and the Orchestre Symphonique de Bretagne, and concert tours of Europe.

www.francoisdumont.com

Orchestre National de Lyon



Photo: Niko Rodamel

The Orchestre National de Lyon (ONL) has a core of 104 permanent musicians. Its current music director laureate is American conductor Leonard Slatkin, who was music director from September 2011 to June 2017. Nikolaj Szeps-Znaider is music director designate, beginning his tenure in September 2020. Successor to the Société des Grands Concerts de Lyon, founded in 1905 by Georges Martin Witkowski, the ONL became a permanent orchestra in 1969 at the instigation of the City of Lyon Council cabinet member for culture, Robert Proton de la Chapelle. Following Louis Frémaux (1969–1971), it has been under the successive musical direction of Serge Baudo (1971–1987), Emmanuel Krivine (1987–2000), David Robertson (2000–2004) and Jun Märkl (2005–2011). The ONL has the privilege of rehearsing and performing in its own dedicated venue, the 2,100-seat Lyon Auditorium. Aside from its concerts in the Auditorium, the ONL also performs in concert halls across the world such as Carnegie Hall, New York, the Berlin Philharmonie, Suntory Hall, Tokyo, and the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Shanghai. In 1979, it was the first European symphony orchestra to perform in China.

www.auditorium-lyon.com

Leonard Slatkin



Photo: Niko Rodamel

Internationally acclaimed conductor Leonard Slatkin is music director laureate of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra (DSO) and directeur musical honoraire of the Orchestre National de Lyon (ONL). He maintains a rigorous schedule of guest conducting throughout the world and is active as a composer, author, and educator. Highlights of the 2018–19 season include a tour of Germany with the ONL, a three-week American Festival with the DSO, the Kastalsky *Requiem* project commemorating the World War I Centennial, Penderecki's 85th birthday celebration in Warsaw, five weeks in Asia leading orchestras in Guangzhou, Beijing, Osaka, Shanghai, and Hong Kong, and the Manhattan School of Music's 100th anniversary gala concert at Carnegie Hall. He will also conduct

the Moscow Philharmonic, the Balearic Islands Symphony Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France, the Louisville Orchestra, the Berner Symphonieorchester, the Pittsburgh Symphony, the St. Louis Symphony, the RTE National Symphony Orchestra, and the Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo. Slatkin has received six GRAMMY® Awards and 33 nominations. His recent Naxos recordings include works by Saint-Saëns, Ravel and Berlioz (with the ONL), and music by Copland, Rachmaninov, Borzova, McTee, and John Williams (with the DSO). In addition, he has recorded the complete Brahms, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky symphonies with the DSO (available online as digital downloads). A recipient of the prestigious National Medal of Arts, Slatkin also holds the rank of Chevalier in the French Legion of Honour. He has received Austria's Decoration of Honour in Silver, the League of American Orchestras' Gold Baton Award, and the 2013 ASCAP Deems Taylor Special Recognition Award for his debut book, *Conducting Business*. His second book, *Leading Tones: Reflections on Music, Musicians, and the Music Industry*, was published by Amadeus Press in 2017. Slatkin has conducted virtually all the leading orchestras in the world. As music director, he has held posts in New Orleans, St. Louis, Washington, D.C., London (with the BBC Symphony Orchestra), Detroit, and Lyon. He has also served as principal guest conductor in Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Cleveland. www.leonardslatkin.com

Composed between 1929 and 1931, Ravel's two piano concertos reflect his enthusiasm for jazz, though one that was thoroughly absorbed into his own idiom. The *Concerto in G major*, originally conceived as a Basque rhapsody, is lightly scored but sports a vivacious percussion section, galvanising motor rhythms and a slow movement of astonishing beauty. The *Concerto for the Left Hand*, commissioned by Paul Wittgenstein who had lost his right arm in the First World War, is a single movement tour de force, as is *Tzigane*, a gypsy violin showpiece of dazzling virtuosity.

Maurice
RAVEL
(1875–1937)

Piano Concerto in G major (1931)	22:01
1 I. Allegramente	8:25
2 II. Adagio assai	9:26
3 III. Presto	4:07
4 Tzigane for violin and orchestra (1924)	10:41
Piano Concerto for the Left Hand (1929–30)	19:08
5 I. Lento –	8:48
6 II. Allegro	10:20

Jennifer Gilbert, Violin 4

François Dumont, Piano 1–3 5–6

Orchestre National de Lyon • Leonard Slatkin

Recorded: 27 November 2012 4 and 10–13 June 2015 1–3 5–6 at the Auditorium de Lyon, France

Produced, engineered and edited by: France Musique 1–3 5–6, Tim Handley 4

Booklet notes: Keith Anderson

Cover: *Young Girls at the Piano* (1892) by Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841–1919)

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