

*Barry Schrader*

*RAVEL*

*for piano and  
electro-acoustic music*

*Ex Machina Publications*

*for Vicki Ray*

*We should always remember that  
sensitiveness and emotion constitute the  
real content of a work of art.*

*Maurice Ravel*

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## Program Notes

Maurice Ravel is one of my favorite composers of the past. I admire his sense of economy with musical ideas, his expansion of developmental writing, and his extension of traditional structures, and I consider him to be a master orchestrator who greatly expanded the role of timbre. In *Ravel*, for piano and electro-acoustic music, I am not trying to imitate Ravel, but rather to create something that captures the spirit of his music. Only electronically generated sounds have been used in the electro-acoustic music accompaniment; no concrete material has been employed.

*Ravel* is in three continuous movements, each based upon a small amount of musical material from Ravel's works: the first movement is based on the first two measures of the *Prélude* from *Le tombeau de Couperin*; the second movement is based on the second, third, and fourth measures of the second movement of the *Piano Concerto* in G; the third movement is based on the first measure of the "dawning" section of *Daphnis et Chloé* and also the last two measures of *La Valse*. In creating larger musical structures from a very small amount of material, I continue a musical pursuit that has become foundational to my compositional style and thinking. To a great extent, the study of Ravel's music is one of the paths that has let me to this aesthetic.

"We should always remember that sensitiveness and emotion constitute the real content of a work of art." Maurice Ravel

## Performance Notes

*Ravel* is for live piano with the electro-acoustic music accompaniment (EAM in the score) played back on a CD. The score comes with a CD for rehearsal and performance. The "EAM Cues" do not represent everything that is occurring in the electronics, but enough information is given for the pianist to synchronize with the accompaniment. The score may also be had, by special request to the publisher, in an unbound version with the notation printed on only one side of the page.

While *Ravel* consists of three movements, they are continuous and, once begun, the CD plays without pause. While this necessitates that the pianist must synchronize to the music on the CD, there is also a great amount of freedom built into *Ravel*: there are *rubato* sections in the first movement, the second movement requires only approximate coordination with the EAM, and the third movement contains several *quasi rubato* sections. This is done to allow the pianist some freedom and individuality in performance and to create variety in the work. While the score is essentially self-explanatory, there are a few things that deserve special attention.

First Movement - The amount of time between the final event of this movement (page 24, system 3, measure 5) and the G# in the EAM on page 25 (the first EAM event in the second movement) is ten seconds. Since the piano does not play in the final measure of the first movement, there is sufficient time to silently depress the keys indicated on page 25 along with the sostenuto pedal and still play the G# in the piano part before this pitch is heard in the EAM accompaniment.

Second Movement - This section is in proportional notation where each system lasts for 10 seconds. The coordination between the piano and the EAM here is very approximate, and the pianist has freedom to work within these loose limitations. As the movement progresses and the density of the material increases within each system, the result will be an increase in tempo (amount of information per unit of time). However, there should not be attempt on the part of the pianist to impose meter on the music in this section, since the emphasis is on the agogic nature of the rhythm. At the end of the second movement is a cadenza for the piano. The time allotted for this cadenza (from 2:41 to and including the tremolo on the first measure of page 33) is 30 seconds. The pianist is free to play this music as they wish within this period of time. Please note that the beginning of this cadenza will be played over the fading EAM from the earlier portion of the second movement; the pianist should pay no attention to this and must not wait for this to fade out before starting the cadenza. The dovetailing effect that is intended here requires that the cadenza be started immediately after the final notated pitch in the EAM (B) is sounded at around 2:39 of the second movement (page 31, system 1).

Third Movement - The tremolo on the first measure of page 33 should be continued until the EAM in measure 2 of page 33 enters. The third movement consists of two alternating sections, the first based on the first measure of the “dawning” section of *Daphnis et Chloé* and the second based on the last measure of *La Valse*. In the “waltz” (3/4) sections of this movement, some measures are marked *quasi rubato*, and in these measure the pianist has a certain degree of freedom. Even if the EAM is clearly iterating the 3/4 meter, the pianist is free in the *quasi rubato* measures to play off of the beat a little if desired. However, when *tempo giusto* is indicated, the pianist must jump back to a strict synchronization with the EAM. The intention here is, again, to give the pianist some freedom, and also to create a somewhat schizophrenic quality to the third movement. At the very end of the piece, during the last six measures, the EAM thins out to only downbeat octaves so that the piano can shine through at the coda’s end.

Note that accidentals last for an entire measure.

The extreme dynamic nature of *Ravel* requires that the piano be amplified (using at least two mics) in performance. The piano should also be mixed in with the left and right channels, in equal amount, to the EAM from the CD so that a unified sound field is created. There also needs to be a pair of stage monitors for the pianist so that they can hear the mixed program while performing. In general, in *Ravel*, the piano is either as loud as or louder than the electro-acoustic music on the CD. The relative levels of the piano and the CD should be adjusted accordingly. On the whole, it should not be necessary to change these levels much once properly adjusted, but, if adjustment in performance is necessary to maintain a proper balance, then either the piano and/or EAM channels should be adjusted, as required, by an engineer during performance.

*Ravel* was premiered in Los Angeles at the Roy and Edna/CalArts Theatre in Disney Hall in Los Angeles on December 1, 2003, by pianist Vicki Ray.