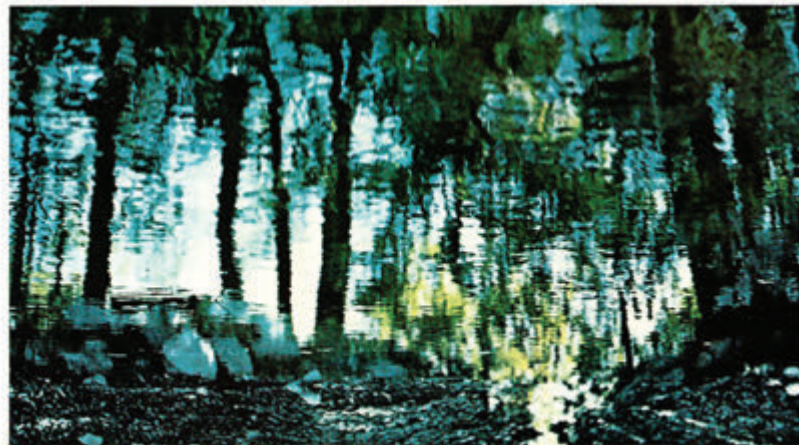


stimulated by the journey. His thoughts turned to Goethe's Faust, and, taking the Huit Scènes de Faust -- which he had published in 1829 as his Opus 1 only to recall and destroy every copy he could lay hands on -- as his starting point, he began to flesh out a new musical form. The resulting "légende dramatique," often called a cantata, is in the nature of a concert opera, similar to the "symphonie dramatique" Roméo et Juliette -- salient moments from familiar literary works projected as vocal scenes or by the expressive power of music alone, with plot complications and baneful recitatives elided, to be seen in the mind's eye, thus dispensing with the requirements of staging. This "open" dramaturgy had been one of the revelations of Faust, which Berlioz recalled in the Memoirs -- "The marvelous book fascinated me from the first. I could not put it down, I read it incessantly, at meals, at the theater, in the street." It was what Liszt and Berlioz had spoken of at their first meeting, on the eve of the Symphonie fantastique's premiere in December 1830. Faust, the tormented, suicidal philosopher who suddenly seeks the meaning of life in life itself -- not only in love but in the immense solitude of nature -- struck a chord, so to speak, with the Romantic generation. But reverence for a classic did not prevent Berlioz from finding the "hero" contemptible in his abandonment of the village girl he has, with Mephistopheles' help, seduced. The startlingly vivid, non-Goethean, cinematic Ride to the Abyss -- impossible to stage in Berlioz's day and awkward in ours -- is capped by Faust's screaming plunge into Hell as the soul of his lover, Marguerite, is welcomed by a choir of angels. La Damnation de Faust is dedicated to Liszt, whose own greatest symphonic work, Eine Faust Symphonie, would follow in 1854. Berlioz gave his work, at his own expense, before a half-empty house on December 6, 1846, and again on the 20th with the same result. "Nothing in my career as an artist wounded me more deeply than this unexpected indifference," Berlioz wrote. He was, to boot, financially ruined.



CHARLES MUNCH THE PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA

DAMNATION OF FAUST EXCERPTS □ BERLIOZ
MINUET OF THE WILL-O'-THE-WISPS
BALLET OF THE SYLPHS
RAKOCZY MARCH
PELLEÁS AND MÉLISANDE SUITE □ FAURÉ
VALSES NOBLES ET SENTIMENTALES □ RAVEL



Maurice Ravel could be slightly obsessive in the way he allowed certain musical interests to reappear throughout his compositions. Two such interests were dance and the past, and in *Valses nobles et sentimentales* one can hear how Ravel was able to effectively fuse these two curiosities together. While *Le Tombeau de Couperin* was inspired by the eighteenth century, the *Valses* was oriented toward the nineteenth century. Written out of homage to Schubert's piano piece of the same name, the composer declared that the work's title, "indicates clearly enough my intention of composing a chain of waltzes following the example of Schubert. The virtuoso element that was the basis of *Gaspard de la nuit* is here replaced by a writing of greater clarity, which has the effect of sharpening the harmony as well as the outline of the music." Ravel achieved his goal of clarity, as the waltzes were written using intense precision, sophistication, and technical flawlessness.

Valses nobles et sentimentales contains eight waltzes presented in the following order: *Modéré*, *Assez lent*, *Modéré*, *Assez animé*, *Presque lent*, *Assez vif*, *Moins vif*, and the *Epilogue*. Originally written for solo piano, the waltzes stimulate but do not disturb, while displaying different aspects of Ravel's imagination including pride, tenderness, and sentiment. The work was dedicated to Louis Aubert and it was he who gave the first performance on May 9, 1911, at a concert held by the *Société Musicale Indépendante*, where Schubert's piece of the same name was also premiered. As a little game, the composers' names were withheld, leaving the audience to guess who had written each piece. Audience suggestions included Eric Satie, Zoltán Kodály, and even a correct answer from Debussy, whose ears could not be fooled by the identifiable quality he appreciated. Even though several of Ravel's friends confessed their dislike, others claimed to be strongly drawn to the piece. Tristan Klingsor commented that he was one among several who, "were immediately seduced by the music, and yet he had taken a lot of risks, at least for the period....He had taken the use of unresolved dissonances to its furthest point. What we now find very piquant was extremely daring at the time. The first bars of the *Valses* seemed quite extraordinary. Then, since there was nothing there that was not well thought-out, the ear quickly grew to enjoy these pseudo-'wrong notes,' and a glance at the score revealed that they had a proper harmonic

justification."

As with *Ma mère l'oye* Ravel allowed only himself to alter *Valses nobles et sentimentales* through orchestration. He adapted the waltzes for the ballet *Adélaïde ou Le langage des fleurs*, for a performance by the troupe of Natasha Trouhanova, and it was premiered as an orchestral work on April 22, 1912, at the *Théâtre du Châtelet*. Some say that the ironic overtones of the *Valses* foreshadow the superb choreographic poem *La Valse* while confirming to audiences that dissonance was indeed an essential element of his musical style.

In 1898, the celebrated actress Mrs. Patrick Campell commissioned incidental music from Gabriel Fauré for a London production, in English, of *Pelléas et Mélisande*. Fauré composed this music between May 16 and June 5, 1898, and conducted it in the *Prince of Wales Theatre* at London on June 21. Fauré asked Charles Koechlin to orchestrate 17 cues (including a borrowed *Sicilienne* from 1893). After London, Fauré himself re-scored three of them as a concert suite, adding the *Sicilienne* a decade later. It is his masterpiece for orchestra -- tasteful, sweetly charming, expressively "proper" and basically chaste, as befits a play that depends on mood for its effect rather than on events.

The "Prélude" depicts the forest in which Golaud discovers fragile, amnesiac *Mélisande*. Beginning in G major, *Quasi adagio*, until Golaud's hunting horn approaches, it returns to G for a quiet close. "La fileuse" is the music before Act III, depicting *Mélisande* at her spinning wheel with *Pelléas* in rapt attendance -- same key and 3/4 time as the "Prélude." The tempo is *Andantino quasi allegretto* for its oboe and horn solos amid gently whirring strings. *Sicilienne*, from Act II of the play, is Fauré's portrait of *Mélisande*, no matter that he borrowed and re-scored it for solo flute, harp, and strings. The tempo is slightly quicker (*Allegretto molto moderato*), the key B flat major, the rhythm 6/8. "La mort de *Mélisande*" accompanied her cortège in Act V -- muted, poignant music marked *Molto adagio* that was played at Fauré's funeral in 1924.

Despite the hurly-burly and mixed reviews attending the dedication of Beethoven's statue in Bonn in August 1845, organized by his friend Liszt, Berlioz's imagination was



Charles Munch conducts Ravel, Faure, Berlioz - The Philadelphia Orchestra

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1 - Valses Nobles Et Sentimentales 18:22

Pelléas Et Mélisande Suite

2 Prelude 6:50

3 Fileuse 2:33

4 Sicilienne 3:46

5 Death Of Mélisande 5:28

Damnation Of Faust (Excerpts)

6 Minuet Of The Will-o'-the-Wisps 2:29

7 Dance Of The Sylphs 6:01

8 Rákóczy March 3:42

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