

orchestrated is the fourth section of the 1905 *Miroirs*, *Alborada del Gracioso*, usually translated as "Morningsong of the Jester." The music, dedicated to the critic and fellow Apache, Dmitri Calvocoressi, won instant appreciation for its Spanish atmosphere and virtuosity (both in piano and orchestral versions). It was first performed in its symphonic dress on May 17, 1919.

Jacques Ibert (1890–1962) began his musical studies at a comparatively late age: although as a boy he learned to play the piano from his mother and soon attempted some composition, it was not until he reached twenty-one that he entered the Paris Conservatory. His studies with Gédalge, Roger-Ducasse, and Fauré were interrupted, however, by the onset of the war in 1914. At first as a sailor and then as an officer, Ibert served with the French Navy, only continuing his musical curriculum in 1919, when he entered the class of Paul Vidal. In spite of his teacher's opposition, Ibert decided the same year to enter the Prix de Rome competition, which he won with his cantata *Le Poète et la Fée*. The prize included the standard sojourn at the Académie de France in Rome, whose director Ibert became from 1937 until 1955, when he took up a similar position with the Paris Opéra and Opéra-Comique.

Ibert's three years in Rome resulted not only in an opera plus a symphonic poem based on Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, but his most celebrated orchestral work as well, *Escales*. His cruise in the Mediterranean while on naval duty provided the stimulus for this three-movement suite which depicts, in impressionistic terms, three ports of call. Three popular themes heard during the voyage were expanded by the composer and clothed in opulent harmonies and lavish instrumentation: Rome-Palermo is introduced by a warm Italian melody, Tunis-Netta by both oriental rhythm and melancholy phrase, and Valencia by a Moorish-Hispanic subject that soon develops into a full-blooded and colorful Spanish rhapsody. *Escales* was completed in 1922 and first performed in Paris at the Concerts Lamoureux on January 6, 1924, with Paul Paray conducting.

NOTES BY IGOR KIPNIS



**RAVEL**  
**RAPSODIE**  
**ESPAGNOLE**  
**LA VALSE**  
**PAVANE POUR UNE**  
**INFANTE DÉFUNTE**  
**ALBORADA DEL**  
**GRACIOSO**  
**IBERT**  
**ESCALES**  
**(PORTS OF CALL)**  
**PAUL PARAY**  
**DETROIT SYMPHONY**

Maurice Ravel (1875–1937) began work on his *Rapsodie Espagnole* during the summer of, 1907. With the exception of the early overture, *Sheherazade*, and the first orchestration of *Une Barque sur l’Ocean*, both unpublished, it was the thirty-two-year-old composer’s first purely symphonic piece, as well as the earliest of the great orchestral works. The *Rapsodie* was completed in only thirty days, Ravel having given up the distractions of his Paris apartment that August for comparative peace and quiet on board the *Aimée*, a yacht moored at Valvin that was owned by his friends, the Alfred Edwards.

The premiere, held on March 28 of the following year at the Sunday Colonne Concerts, was by and large successful, although real enthusiasm for the brilliantly scored work was at first restricted to the galleries. After the playing of the second section, the vivacious *Malagueña*, Florent Schmitt, Ravel’s fellow composer and member of their comradeship, the *Apaches*, shouted down to the conservative listeners, “Play it again for those below who haven’t understood.” No wild demonstration and catcalls, however, greeted the voluptuous third part, the *Habanera*, originally one section of the suite for two pianos, *Les Sites auriculaires*, which had been so derisively received at its premiere in 1898. The remaining two movements consist of the opening, the mysterious *Prelude a la nuit*, and the final brilliant festivities of the *Feria*.

In December, 1919, Ravel left Paris for six months to find both seclusion and inspiration in the village of La Praz. The war had had a completely demoralizing and depressing effect on the composer, and the now gray-haired Ravel, whose personality had become not only melancholy but cynical, tried to throw himself into his new work, an idea for a ballet for Diaghilev. *Wien* (Vienna), as it was called at first, was momentarily interrupted when the composer received the news that he was being awarded the *Légion d’Honneur*; out of pride and a sense of injustice at the state’s

previous treatment of his compositions (he lost the coveted *Prix de Rome* three times) Ravel refused the decoration and returned to his choreographic poem. Just as the atmosphere of Spain appealed to the composer (*Rapsodie Espagnole*; *Alborada del Gracioso*; the opera *L’Heure Espagnole*), so too did the world of the waltz fascinate him (*Valses nobles et sentimentales*; *Beauty and the Beast* from *Ma Mere l’Oye*; *A La Maniere de Borodin*, a little waltz for piano); but in *La Valse*, as the new work was subsequently renamed, in addition to the brilliance of the nineteenth-century Viennese court Ravel evoked the disillusionment of the post-World-War years.

The score’s preface reads: “*Mouvement de Valse Viennoise*. Drifting clouds give glimpses, through rifts, of couples waltzing. The clouds gradually scatter, and an immense hall can be seen filled with a whirling crowd. The scene gradually becomes illuminated. The light of chandeliers bursts forth. An imperial Court about 1885 . . . ” Diaghilev, to the composer’s extreme annoyance, did not see any possibilities of staging the music, due no doubt to the expenses of mounting such a setting, and the work received its first performance in purely orchestral form at the *Lamoureux Concerts* on December 12, 1920. Nearly eight years later, the dancer *Ida Rubinstein* (who was responsible for the *Bolero*) presented *La Valse* as a ballet at the *Paris Opéra*.

The earliest piece to win success for Ravel was the tender *Pavane pour une Infante Defunte*, which was first written for solo piano in 1899. “I no longer see in it any virtues but, alas, I do see its faults the influence of Chabrier, very flagrant, and its poor form,” the composer depreciatingly commented later. He orchestrated it in 1910 and steadfastly insisted that the title was not programmatic but only chosen for alliterative purposes. “It is not a funeral lament for a dead child,” he added when pressed about the piece’s meaning, “but rather an evocation of the pavane which could have been danced by such a little princess as painted by Velasquez at the Spanish Court.”

Another of the many works which began as a piano solo and was subsequently

# Ravel Music

# Ibert Escales

## Paul Paray / Detroit Symphony

- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <b>Ravel Rapsodie Espagnole</b> | <b>5 Alborada Del Gracioso 6:32</b>           |
| <b>1 Prélude À La Nuit 3:38</b> | <b>6 Pavane Pour Une Infante Défunte 5:53</b> |
| <b>2 Malagueña 2:05</b>         | <b>7 La Valse 11:33</b>                       |
| <b>3 Habanera 2:49</b>          | <b>Ibert Escales</b>                          |
| <b>4 Feria 5:51</b>             | <b>8 Rome - Palermo 5:31</b>                  |
|                                 | <b>9 Tunis - Nefta 2:42</b>                   |
|                                 | <b>10 Valencia 5:24</b>                       |

Recorded on 35mm film by Mercury in March 1962 at Cass Technical High School Auditorium, Detroit  
Recording Engineer - C. R. Fine      Producer - Wilma Cozart  
Music Supervisor - Harold Lawrence      Technician - Robert Eberenz



For more info e-mail us:  
[info@highdeftapetransfers.ca](mailto:info@highdeftapetransfers.ca)  
or visit our website:  
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