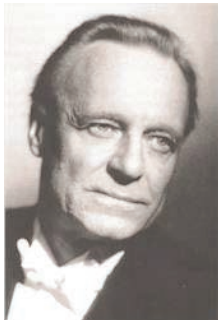


André Cluytens was among the leading French conductors of his time. His father, Alphonse Cluytens, was also a conductor, and recognized the boy's musical talents. André was enrolled in the Royal Flemish Conservatory at the age of nine. He studied in the piano class of Emile Bosquet, and received first prize for piano at the age of 16. The next year he won first prize in harmony, theory, counterpoint, and fugue.

His father was conductor at the Royal French Theater of Antwerp. André became his assistant and a choirmaster there. When an illness prevented Alphonse from conducting, André made his performance debut in 1927 in Bizet's *Les Pêcheurs de perles*. After that experience he devoted his efforts to orchestral and opera conducting rather than choral work, and he became a resident conductor in the house.

In 1932 he accepted a position as the musical director of orchestral concerts at the Capitole de Toulouse, and he became a French citizen. In 1935 was appointed the opera director in Lyons. He was an assistant of Josef Krips in a summer series in Vichy and, once again, was called on to substitute when that conductor could not perform. He became musical director of the Lyons Opera in 1942, conductor of the Conservatoire Concerts and the French National Radio Orchestra in Paris in 1943, and in 1944 conducted at the Opéra de Paris. From 1947 to 1953 he was music director of the Paris Opéra-Comique, and in 1949 was appointed as principal conductor of the Conservatory Concerts. He retained that position for the rest of his life. In 1955 he was invited to conduct *Lohengrin* at the Bayreuth Festival, the first French person to appear on the podium there. He debuted in the United States in 1956, and in Britain in 1958, when he substituted for Otto Klemperer. He formed a close relationship with the Vienna State Opera, which he first conducted in 1956, becoming a permanent guest conductor in 1959. In 1960 he became conductor of the Belgian National Orchestra in Belgium, also holding that post until his death. He also formed a close link with the Berlin Philharmonic, with which he made a notable recording of the Beethoven symphonies. However, he was primarily known for French repertoire, premiering works by Françaix, Jolivet, Messiaen, Milhaud, Tomasi, Büsser, and Bondeville. He was invited back to Bayreuth in 1965.



# Ravel

**Bolero • LaValse • Rapsodie Espagnole**

**André Cluytens**

**Orchestre De La Société Des Concerts Du Conservatoire**

**HD TT**  
HIGH DEFINITION TAPE TRANSFERS

**DSD256**  
**DSD**  
Direct Stream Digital

Mastered in DSD256

Boléro is a one-movement orchestral piece by the French composer Maurice Ravel (1875-1937). Originally composed as a ballet commissioned by Russian actress and dancer Ida Rubinstein, the piece, which premiered in 1928, is Ravel's most famous musical composition.

Before Boléro, Ravel had composed large scale ballets (such as Daphnis et Chloé, composed for the Ballets Russes 1909-1912), suites for the ballet (such as the second orchestral version of Ma mère l'oye, 1912), and one-movement dance pieces (such as La valse, 1906-1920). Apart from such compositions intended for a staged dance performance, Ravel had demonstrated an interest in composing re-styled dances, from his earliest successes – the 1895 Menuet and the 1899 Pavane – to his more mature works like Le tombeau de Couperin, which takes the format of a dance suite.

Boléro epitomises Ravel's preoccupation with restyling and reinventing dance movements. It was also one of the last pieces he composed before illness forced him into retirement. The two piano concertos and the song cycle Don Quichotte à Dulcinée were the only completed compositions that followed Boléro.

The work had its genesis in a commission from the dancer Ida Rubinstein, who asked Ravel to make an orchestral transcription of six pieces from Isaac Albéniz's set of piano pieces, Iberia. While working on the transcription, Ravel was informed that the movements had already been orchestrated by Spanish conductor Enrique Fernández Arbós, and that copyright law prevented any other arrangement from being made. When Arbós heard of this, he said he would happily waive his rights and allow Ravel to orchestrate the pieces. However, Ravel changed his mind and decided initially to orchestrate one of his own works. He then changed his mind again and decided to write a completely new piece based on the musical form and Spanish dance called bolero. While on vacation at St Jean-de-Luz, Ravel went to the piano and played a melody with one finger to his friend Gustave Samazeuilh, saying "Don't you think this theme has an insistent quality? I'm going to try and repeat it a number of times without any development, gradually increasing the orchestra as best I can." This piece was initially called Fandango, but its title was soon changed to "Boléro".

Ravel composed this music in 1907, but didn't orchestrate it until just before the premiere on March 15, 1908, with Edouard Colonne conducting "his" orchestra at one of "his" Paris concerts. It is lavishly scored, with winds and brass mostly in threes and fours, and plenty of percussion. In fact if not in title, this kaleidoscope from Ravel's 33rd year is a symphonic suite in four related movements that derive -- like the single-act comic opera, L'Heure espagnole, finished in 1909 -- from his Basque mother's memories of Madrid, where she spent much of her childhood. During that time, the "Habanera" from Cuba -- without a tilde over the "n," please -- had enjoyed special but ephemeral popularity. Ravel's "Habanera" in the Rapsodie is a note-for-note orchestration of his early work for two pianos, composed in 1895, which he and Ricardo Viñes played.

The first performance was feebly conducted and restively heard by the audience in expensive seats on the main floor. In the upper gallery, however, Ravel's students and friends made a great noise, calling for an encore of the second movement ("Malagueña"), after which the young composer Florent Schmitt called out in a stentorian voice, "Just once more, for the gentlemen below who haven't been able to understand." Like most concert-hall outbursts in Paris, this one added to (rather than subtracted from) Ravel's reputation.

In the Prélude à la nuit (Très modéré (3/4, open key), two octaves apart, muted violins and violas play a descending four-note motif that repeats over and over, never louder than mezzo-forte throughout. A six-measure theme interrupts, in effect a cadenza for clarinets and later bassoons, before the music evanesces on a chord in the high strings. Ravel's own description was "voluptuously drowsy and ecstatic."

The Malagueña (Assez vif) begins in 3/4 with an open key, but later changes to 2/4 and B major. Originally a Spanish courting dance, this quick-moving evocation of Málaga is a long crescendo that begins very quietly with an

ostinato motif in the bass, until a muted solo trumpet plays the main theme with tambourine accompaniment. The tempo slows for a new melody of Moorish cast, sung plaintively by the English horn, following which the opening motif from Movement 1 returns.

Ravel subtitled the Habanera in A major "Au pays parfumé que le soleil caresse" (In the fragrant land that the Sun caresses) both in his two-piano original of 1895 and 12 years later in this orchestral setting, with minor-second dissonances in the accompaniment and triplet-spiced themes.

The Feria, a high-spirited holiday scene, came several years after Debussy's "Fêtes" movement in Trois Nocturnes, but predated a similar fiesta finale in Debussy's Ibéria, the second Image pour orchestre. Ravel interrupts his celebration with a languorous interval, soft as suede, played by the English horn and solo clarinet, followed by the four-note motif from movement one, before the merriment resumes even more frenziedly and brilliantly.

Ballet impresario Serge Diaghilev asked Ravel to write what would become La valse for the Ballets Russes, on a program to be shared with Stravinsky's Pulcinella, and thus was responsible for one of Ravel's most popular orchestral concert works. Ironically, the two-piano "test-drive" reduction of La valse never met with Diaghilev's approval, and so this is the work that precipitated the break between the composer and the producer, whose relations had been strained since disagreements over Daphnis et Chloé.

Ravel had for years intended to write some sort of tribute to Johann Strauss II, a Viennese-style waltz on Ravel's own terms. Strauss, had he been alive, would probably have found the result to be gruesome. Ravel's waltz is both nostalgic and sinister, rising from nothing but a vague rhythmic pulse, proceeding through several distinct waltz sequences (much more closely linked thematically than in any Strauss waltz), each culminating in an increasingly powerful crescendo and ending in apocalypse. Along the way come disturbing accelerations and ritards (making this particularly unsuitable for ballroom dancing), dynamic extremes, and eerie glissandi, creating an atmosphere of violence, decadence, and decay. In short, it is a portrait of Vienna (and Europe) in the years surrounding World War I.

Ravel's preface in the score hardly hints at any of this: "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."

Ravel prepared the orchestral version first, but presented the music to Diaghilev in 1920 in a two-piano reduction, which Ravel played with Marcelle Meyer. Diaghilev declared it to be "a masterpiece...but it is not a ballet. It is the portrait of a ballet." He refused to have it choreographed. Stravinsky, who was also present, maintained absolute silence. Ravel gave the first concert performance of the two-piano version in Vienna that year with fellow composer Alfredo Casella. This reduction is very faithful to the orchestral score, right down to the glissandi. Ravel's solo-piano version is extremely difficult, and so it is infrequently played, although it did meet with the approval of Glenn Gould, who rarely bothered with Ravel's other music.

# Ravel

## Bolero • LaValse • Rapsodie Espagnole

André Cluytens - Orchestre De La Société Des Concerts Du Conservatoire

1 Boléro 15:20

Rapsodie Espagnole

2 Prélude À La Nuit 3:59

3 Malagueña 2:16

4 Habanera 3:24

5 Feria 6:12

6 La Valse - Poème Choréographique 11:40

Total Time:42:51

Recorded 1962 by EMI records

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