

**Ravel à La Cité des Eaux:
A Literary and Musical Analysis of His Piano Masterwork Jeux d'Eau**

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Glossary

Alexandrins. Poetic lines that contain 12 syllables

Au-delà. Comes from a French preposition *beyond*; the term signifies the world beyond the realm of human experiences.

Bom Om Tuuk. A grandiose Cambodian water festival during the full moon of October or November 1 to celebrate the culmination of the country's rainy season. Different solemn ceremonies are held such as: honouring of the full moon in the pagodas, a lighted boat parade at night and the renowned boat racing in *Phnom Penh*.

Chef-d'oeuvre. French word meaning "masterwork" or "masterpiece"; often used by academic literary writers.

Cité. French noun meaning ancient places or cities in a country or region that have existed for long ages past; also a common false cognate for city in English.

Cosmopolitanism. The exchange of culture, ideas and natural resources between the East and the West. The want of other cultures started growing since the 17th century.

Correspondances sensorielles. Baudelaire's poem "Correspondances" also featured the idea of multi-sensory experience in a world beyond, which phenomenon is now known as synaesthesia¹.

Croisées. Poetic rhyme that follows the pattern ABAB.

Dandyism². According to Charles Baudelaire, dandy is the person or artist's desire to cultivate the idea of beauty in its finest; whether for oneself or as a sublime reflection in artistic outputs. To him, a dandy is not a social-climber, rather he or she longs to achieve the aristocratic superiority of the mind.

Embrassées. Poetic rhyme that follows the pattern ABBA.

Enjambment. Poetry: the continuation of a sentence or clause over a line-break.

Fête d'eau. Water festival.

Les outre-mer. French territories outside the country of France: French Polynesia, New Caledonia, West Indies, French Guyane, Mayotte and La Réunion (South Indian Ocean).

Obsession du "moi". (Literal translation: The "me" obsession) French term to describe the romanticist expression of sentiments, melancholy and desperation.

Parnasse. A cultural movement that was born during the second half of the 19th century; its pioneers include *Henri de Regnier* and *Théophile Gautier*. The Parnassian movement is a reaction against Romanticism's overuse of "me" sentimentality. To the Parnassian poets, poetry does not have any purpose but to produce a fine calibre of beauty.

Poésie. French for poetry

Solitaire. French adjective that describes a person that loves solitude and being alone.

Symbolisme. Cultural movement in the art of poetry during the late 19th century, which is equivalent to *Impressionism* movement in music and painting. Notable French Symbolist poets include *Charles Baudelaire* and *Stephane Mallarmé*.

¹ Zank, "Irony and Sound," 223.

² Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life."

A Closer Look on Maurice Ravel's *Jeux d'eau*

The academic interest on Ravel's mysterious life and state-of-the-art compositions has been growing since the composer's prolific years in the music scene. For this reason, the writer dedicates its subject and topics to all piano performers and instrumentalists alike who are seeking to unravel the colourful artistry behind his piano works, chamber and orchestral music. In this dissertation, the writer seeks to provide a detailed musical and literary analysis of Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* and Henri de Regnier's poem *Fête d'eau* in order to reveal the depth of Ravelian genius in every page of the music score, and also to enlighten the young musicians and researchers how Symbolist movement in literature has affected French composers Debussy and Ravel in their later music.

The most current literature that is available of Ravel's life and works include some detailed historical, musical, literary, cultural, and psychoanalytical aspects of his popular works such as *Daphnis et Chloé* and *Gaspard de la nuit* and even a psychiatric journal article about his mental illness, which may or may not have affected his creativity over the years¹. It may be a feasible conclusion to the meagreness of Ravel's output; most experts would beg to differ. Each musical work was made with particular attention to every detail²: harmony, form, poetry, orientalism, exoticism, and technique. The musical output then signifies something beyond one's senses: therefore making Ravelian music the perfect description of Baudelaire's idea of *correspondances sensorielle*³.

Aside from innovative harmonic and artistic analyses of *Jeux d'eau* (1901), no extensive research has been conducted specifically on the Symbolist (referring to the literary movement "*Symbolisme*" during the second half of the 19th century) and exotic features of the piece. Therefore, it is the endeavour of the writer to take a closer look on this marvellous *chef d'oeuvre* with three different lenses: musically, literarily, and aesthetically in order to discover its enigmatic colour and sensuality. Having examined various perspectives of Ravel's life: socio-political context, musical career, and his penchant for poetry, the writer argues that the piece *Jeux d'eau* encompasses not only the innovative harmonic devices; also, it represents the composer's

¹ Henson, "Maurice Ravel's Illness: A Tragedy of Lost Creativity," 1585-8.

² Orenstein, "Music: Maurice Ravel," 91.

³ Zank, "Irony and Sound," 223.

tableau of the *au-delà* by referencing beauty through neo-classicist musical form, Symbolist and Parnassian poetry, and exoticism from Far Eastern influences.

Historical Background

Retrospect on Ravel's Life

The Nascent Genius

Ravel was naturally inquisitive and demonstrated musical talent at a very young age as promoted by his amateur pianist father Pierre Joseph; this event resulted to learning the piano with Henri Ghys at age eight. Four years later, young Maurice started to learn composition with Charles-René¹. The formal education he received was very much limited to music performance and composition due to his family's modest income. Even so, he managed to broaden his knowledge from French literature to natural sciences, and he learned to speak Basque fluently on his own!²

Not very long after, he was admitted to the Conservatoire de Paris at age fourteen and there, he earned a prolific musical education. According to historical accounts, the young Ravel was not very passionate about piano practising and required a reward-system approach to motivate him.³ This moment was pivotal not only in his life but also to music history—the young Ravel pursued that path of composition. As a young composer, there was inside him a dislike for conformity; this thwarted him four times from winning the prestigious Prix de Rome (though, he won second place once in 1901). Some of the musical devices he stubbornly uses were parallel fifths and a major seventh chord to end a fugue. Though innovative, the board of judges followed the conventional rules, and this angered many artists and musicians⁴ who felt that Ravel deserved the recognition. Be that as it may, his musical notoriety and originality grew amongst the musical audience and his works started to be published and performed by pianists all over Europe.

¹ Gordon, *History of Keyboard Literature*, 390; Kelly, "Ravel, Maurice."

² *Ibid.*, 390.

³ Orenstein, 92.

⁴ Kelly, "Ravel, Maurice."

Introspection, Symbolism and Perfection

Aside from music, Ravel was an aficionado of the *poésie française*¹—his genius in translating poetic language into a Symbolist musical tableau is impeccable. The decadent movement in literature (or poetry, to be specific) is called *Symbolisme*. The poets who promulgated symbolism had for its aim the achievement of an ideal world and to find solace in writing poetry in order to escape the wiles of the flesh. He was an avid reader of Charles Baudelaire, whose poem entitled *Correspondances* depicts a world full of symbols² that does not reveal itself until one communes with nature. The brilliant poet suggests that through introspection, one would decipher the world beyond the present, or in French, the *au-delà*. Also, Ravel was fond of Stéphane Mallarmé, another great Symbolist poet. In his poem *Brise Marine*, the nautical adjectives and vocabulary suggest a voyage to the *au-delà*—it beautifully portrays the disgust for fleeting carnal pleasures and the preference of being anchored by the pen's ink to a self-created world, where all is well³. His love of Symbolist poetry is very well noticeable in Ravel's solitary character and introspective nature.

His friends, colleagues and associates have described Maurice as a private and somewhat secretive person. Ravel spent most of his time alone and isolated—he walked the streets of Paris every night⁴ to seek inspiration in creating musical ideas. Some of his private activities consisted of playing and inventing new chords⁵. In comparison to a mechanical workshop, Ravel's compositional stints comprise of crafting every detail to perfection and requires years before publication—perchance, a characteristic he inherited from his father⁶. Hence, his output is not as many as one would expect of a leading composer of his time; nevertheless, each brush stroke in Ravelian music carries a vital meaning⁷.

The result of his highly crafted music, aside from beauty, is an underlying personality sketch; an essay on the dandyism and sublimation of Ravelian music reports that his works are media to catharsis—be it sexual repression or a self-portraiture⁸. Better yet, Puri also argues that as a connoisseur of Baudelaire, Ravel

¹ Kelly, "Ravel, Maurice."

² Baudelaire, "Correspondances."

³ Mallarmé, "Brise Marine."

⁴ Gordon, 391.

⁵ Orenstein, 92.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁷ Tarushkin, 107.

⁸ Puri, "Dandy and Sublimation", 318; Puri, "Ravel the Decadent."

applies to himself the metaphysical definition of *dandyism*: the state of aspiring to be sublime or perfect aesthetically and intellectually¹. These findings and presented historical literature strongly corroborate the writer's argument that *Jeux d'eau* is one of Ravel's music that reveals his desire for a perfected world and achieve a superior aesthetic quality.

Inspiration Behind Jeux d'eau: Classicism and Exoticism

Written earlier during his days at the Conservatoire de Paris, Ravel dedicated it to his composition professor Gabriel Urbain Fauré, who may have been a catalyst for evoking the fascination for water themes from his *Six Barcarolles*. The first autographed manuscript was dated *11 novembre 1901*, but it may have been started before then² (knowing the aptitudes of Ravel in writing new music). One cannot help but compare Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* with Franz Liszt's *Les Jeux d'eau à La Villa d'Este*³, which takes on the same theme of water fountains. On the other hand, the avant-garde Ravel claimed that his piece had more originality than its musical counterparts⁴. Aside from the virtuosic water flashes and hand crossing, *Jeux d'eau* takes its inspiration from poetry—he quotes a line from Symbolist and Parnassian poet Henri de Regnier's *Fête d'eau*, “*Dieu fluvial riant de l'eau qui le chatouille*”⁵ (River god laughing from the water that tickles him). This particular poem describes the *Bassin de Latone*⁶ a world-class water fountain known for its Greek sculpture is located in the heart of Versailles. In the sculpture is depicted Latone, the mother of Artemis and Apollo (also the River goddess being referred to), sitting on a tortoise and surrounded by frogs, from where the water spurts and bathes the goddess with water. As a lover of Greek antiquity⁷, Ravel's choice of the poem as an epigraph was no accident and clearly shows his reference to Classicism.

Another notable feature of the piece is the structure of thematic material—an impression of the sonata-allegro form. The recapitulation of *Jeux d'eau* (m. 62-85) changes the order of thematic material from the exposition (m. 1-33); evidently, the harmonic structure follows otherwise. Although the harmonies do not

¹ Baudelaire, “Mon cœur mis à nu”, from *Journaux intimes*.

² Jost, preface to “Ravel: Jeux d'eau.”

³ Liszt, “Les Jeux d'eau à La Villa d'Este” from *Les Années de Pèlerinage: Troisième Année*.

⁴ Gordon, 391.

⁵ De Regnier, line 4 from “Fête d'eau.”

⁶ See Appendix, “Figure 2.1 Le bassin de Latone.”

⁷ Gordon, 390.

follow the sonata-allegro form, it still makes a reference to classicism through observance of symmetry—whole-tone scales, theme on major thirds, tritone relationship of chords, cycles of minor sevenths, and symmetrical rotations with augmented chords. These intervals are known to have dissonant qualities in them; yet in Ravel’s hands, these turned into beautiful music that flatters the senses.

Although the young Ravel grew up in Paris, he possessed great pride in his Basque roots, and he always considered himself to be “exotic.”¹ He made frequent visits in his homeland in the *Pyénées* (South West Region of France) to seek solitude and inspiration to create high-calibre music. He had a keen relationship with his mother, whom he heard speak Spanish during his childhood², while he and Ricardo Viñes sight-read music from different genres and composers³. The reminiscence of Spanish influences is well heard in the melodic motifs and harmonies of *Rhapsodie espagnole* and the opera, *L’heure espagnole*. He also had a fervent interest for other exotic cultures—Russia and Southeast Asia, which is notable in his piece *Jeux d’eau*.

Since the 17th century, France and the rest of Europe developed a strong taste for the Orient: spices, porcelain, gunpowder, broader territories, and music. Aside from *les outre-mer* territories of France, Cambodia became a French protectorate during the decline of King Norodom’s reign in August 1863: an agreement of friendship, economic trade, and military protection⁴. This pact permitted the cultural exchange between the two nations and the growing cosmopolitanism in Paris; there are two reasonable explanations of Cambodian influence of which Ravel may have been familiar. Taking the same idea of river gods and goddesses from De Regnier’s poem, the writer’s first assertion is the famous water festival *Bom Om Tuuk* or *Fête des Eaux* in French. This grand holiday celebrates the river flow reversal of *Tonlé Sap* River and also marks the end of the country’s rainy season. The festivities last for three days and different activities include water boat racing, water ceremonies in honour of the water gods, fluvial parades, fireworks, and social gatherings all around.⁵ Whence, the reference to River God may possibly signify this grand event.

The second assertion is quite coherent to the former—The grand *Exposition Universelle à Paris de 1889*. The grand international exhibit showcased several sectors such as the performing, visual and liberal

¹ Tarushkin, 107.

² Orenstein, 92.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Corfield, *History of Cambodia*, 23.

⁵ Chandler, Hansen, and Legerwood, *At the Edge of the Forest*, 290.

arts, and new industrial technologies from different countries to demonstrate new inventions and exotic attractions. Many ethnic groups from different cultures presented their respective national dance and music performances, which included the Javanese gamelan performers from Cirebon¹. Avant-garde symphonic work of Bourgault-Ducoudray, the *Rhapsodie Cambodgienne* (1882) was premiered in the *Exposition Universelle de 1889*² featuring the Javanese gamelan that added a new colour never heard before; this fascinated Debussy greatly, and he told his friend, Pierre Louÿs that “Palestrina’s counterpoint is an apprentice to the oriental colours of the Javanese gamelan and Western music is only a bunch of noises in a party.”³ Also in attendance was the young and promising Ravel⁴, who feasibly may have taken the inspiration of *Bom Om Tuuk* in his piece *Jeux d’eau*, written 12 years after the *Exposition Universelle de 1889*.

Taking a closer look on the preface of *Rhapsodie Cambodgienne*, the composer gives a brief historical background of the piece *Khénh Préavossa* ou *La Fête Des Eaux du Cambodge*: Each year, Cambodia is subject to flash floods that last several months. At the advent of the river water’s reversal, the population celebrates pompously and joyously the event that provides the earth’s natural resources to sustain daily life in Cambodia.”⁵ These assertions supported by existing literature strongly holds the writer’s theory on Ravel’s possible inspiration in creating *Jeux d’eau*: Classicism and Exoticism.

A Sketch of Henri de Regnier

The Symbolist and Parnassian

Born in French Normandy on 28 December 1864, the poet and novelist Henri de Regnier was raised in an aristocratic family and first intended to pursue law as a career. Right from the beginning, he knew immediately that a diplomatic career was not for him—de Regnier entered the world of literature with such prowess in poetry that stunned even his contemporaries. In 1885, Henri de Regnier began doing literary reviews and writing some verses in France and Belgium; he achieved his first breakthrough in literature when

¹ Cooke, “The East in the West,” 258.

² Sorell, *A Guide to Gamelan*.

³ Cooke, 259. The writer paraphrased Debussy’s reaction to Javanese gamelan music.

⁴ Kelly, “Ravel, Maurice.”

⁵ Bourgault-Ducoudray, preface to *Rhapsodie Cambodgienne*. Idiomatically translated by the writer. See Appendix 2.2

he published *Poèmes anciennes et romanesques* on 1889¹. Henri started out as a Parnassian poet—a literary movement that served as a reaction to hyper-lyricism and the “obsession du moi” from Romanticism; its only purpose is to create beautiful poetry. Parnassian poetry tends to revive Greek and Roman antiquity by referencing mythology. The French writer and critique, Remy Gourmont comments on Henri de Regnier’s style: “Weak verses that contains no rhythm nor colour are extremely extinct from his works; his poetry is well-regulated by a majestic flow of ideas and feelings, just like a solemn procession in a basilica²,” and this statement clearly attests the Parnassian strokes in his works. Later in his career, he was greatly influenced by the great Symbolist poet Mallarmé and also José-Maria de Hérédia, his father-in-law. De Regnier was elected to the prestigious *Académie Française* on March 1908 and is now considered to be one of the immortals of French literature.

L’art pour l’art: The Parnassian Theory

The Parnassian movement takes its name from Mt. Parnassus in ancient Greece, where the god of music and poetry Apollo and his nine muses dwelt. The backbone of Parnassian poetry is beauty; it celebrates the beautiful, devoid of any social, political, and emotional influences; its only aim is to create beautiful rhyming verses, majestic alliterations, and colourful images of the ideal³. Théophile Gautier, a French writer and poet, first coined the term *l’art pour l’art*⁴: meaning to create an artwork for the sake of art—no “I” or “me” involved. He also claimed that everything that is useful is ugly; to Gautier, the ills of the present society are catastrophic enough and beauty should be used to remedy the unpleasant feelings produced; instead of explicitly expressing resentments and melancholy. This artistic movement is the precursor of Symbolism—to seek a transcendent world where everything is sublime, ideal, and beautiful.

¹ Académie Française, “Henri de Regnier (1864-1936).”

² Gourmont, “Promenades littéraires.” Idiomatically translated by the writer.

³ “Le Parnasse.”

⁴ Gautier, preface to “Mademoiselle de Mauphin.”

La Cité des Eaux: An Ancient City Modernised

La Cité des Eaux (1902) is a collection of poems by Henri de Regnier describing the beautiful attractions in the heart of Versailles, France. Aside from the symmetrical gardens, chateaux, Baroque paintings and Greek sculptures, Versailles is also known for its beautiful water fountain displays, and this city receives millions of tourists all year round. For this reason, the government seeks to preserve these ancient cities and allow the rest of the world to experience the beauty of French history and culture. A *cité* is the French term that describes an ancient city or the oldest existing place or town in a country; the usage of such term perfectly sets the Symbolist and Parnassian context¹ of the whole work. The introductory poem is entitled *Salut à Versailles*, which serves as the preface to the collection. The poet starts out by euphemistically expressing that the soul is sombre and seeks to revive the ancient Versailles—the golden years of the monarchy, French culture, and a place where everything is beautiful. Few lines later, he expresses the idea that listening to the silence of the gardens, one would discover the secrets of the past (the same thought was reiterated in the last couplet² of the poem *Fête d'eau*). Ravel also shared the same thought about nature,³ and it is no wonder that Ravel would quote such a great poet for his epigraph. Also lover of Greek antiquity and Classicism, Henri de Regnier's *La Cité des Eaux* is the perfect kind for Ravelian taste. The composer quotes the line “*Dieu fluvial riant de l'eau qui le chatouille,*” from the poem *Fête d'eau*⁴, which correlates strongly to the historical context of the piece—*Bom Om Tuuk* or *Fête des Eaux* from Cambodia, and the premiere of the symphonic work *Rhapsodie Cambodgienne*. As described by Zank⁵, Ravel is the master artist to combine the West with Eastern influences and music with poetry and visual arts, which creates a high quality standard of beauty.

Aforementioned from the historical sketch of *Jeux d'eau*, the subject of the poem is the basin of *Latone*, the mother of the gods Apollo and Artemis. In the poem, Latone is the “Dieu” or river goddess being described as being bathed by the water fountain works. To depict the symmetrical beauty of Greek sculpture, each line contains 12 syllables—a line based on 12 syllables in French poetry is called *alexandrins*,

¹ Cunningham, “Lecture rhétorique du recueil *La Cité des Eaux* de Henri de Regnier.”

² De Regnier, last three lines of “*Fête d'eau*.” See Appendix 2.3

³ Zank, 269.

⁴ De Regnier, “*Fête d'eau*.” See Appendix 2.3 for the entire analysis of the poem.

⁵ Zank, 268.

and the pervasive rhyming pattern (ABBA) is called *embrassées*. De Regnier also divides the poem in two quatrains and two couplets—the former being the Parnassian aspect and the latter represents the Symbolist feature of the poem. Also, the rhetoric device enjambment is noticeable in the beginning and ending of the two quatrains, which gives the impression of flowing water, and providing a smooth conclusion to the Parnassian portion of the poem. The enjambments used also imitate the rhyming pattern (*embrassées*) of the two quatrains. As the artistic style changes to Symbolism, so does the rhyming pattern, which is now in *croisées* (BCBC). The two couplets are divided by enjambments of three lines (lines 9-11 and 12-14) and clearly express the idea of introspection. These enjambments also functions as a device to make the poetic recitation smoother and allows the line breaks to end with a complete thought. Deciphering the symmetrical use of rhetoric devices leads towards the revelation of the Parnassian and Symbolist characteristic of the poem.

Also, De Regnier uses a prolific amount of alliterations¹ that makes the recitation musical and colourful all at the same time. Ravel parallels this poetic rhyming pattern and measurements with his neo-classicist sonata-allegro form, harmonic symmetry and orientalism (which will be shown in the next chapter: “Jeux d’eau: La Musique”). With the literary analysis presented, and historical background of the composer and the piece, the writer asserts that Ravel’s *Jeux d’eau* is a modernised homage to the ancient *cité* of water fountains—a Symbolist picture of the composer’s idea of the Parnassian *au-delà*.

Jeux d’eau: La Musique

Reviving the Classical Era: Sonata-Allegro Form and Symmetry

The Classical Era was the period of simplicity, natural and symmetry—it was a counter reaction to the extravagance of the Baroque period. The piece *Jeux d’eau*, though harmonically and structurally complex, has notable Classicist features. Many different versions of musical analysis are available, though most experts would agree on the Classical form of the piece. Perhaps Ravel intended it to be to allow the musician/performer to use his or her imagination and leave the room for further introspection to find their

¹ Cunningham, 11.

own *au-delà*. The most outstanding feature is probably the hidden sonata-allegro form; it would seem like a through-composed music due to the absence of definite cadences to indicate the borderline of each section. Again, it is another ingenious trait of Ravelian music.

The exposition contains three thematic groups: theme 1 (m. 1-8), bridge (m. 9-18), theme 2 (m. 19-23), second bridge (m. 24-28), and theme 3 (m. 29-34). Theme 1¹ starts in E Major: the tonic and the subdominant with a 7th to make an illusion of the Classical I-IV-I harmonic progression. Measures 4-6 definitely do not sound harmonically functional in any way; rather, it functions symmetrically². The second half of measure 4³ demonstrates symmetrical rotations: the left hand does the minor seventh cycle separated by minor thirds and the right hand rotates in augmented triads. Another example of symmetry is found on the second half of measure 6⁴—a series of whole-tone scales on the right hand and chromatic linear movement of dominant sevenths, the last one functioning as a French⁺⁶ chord resolving to I⁷.

The last notable pattern of symmetry in the exposition can be seen on the third theme; the left hand melody moves on a major third cycle, a Russian influence⁵ that Ravel was fond of (and this Russian fantasy features will be seen later on in the piece).

The Love of Poetry: Jeux d'eau and Its Title Revisited

Analysis of music does not encompass the music alone, but also the title and the textual content⁶. Ravel may have been experimenting with poetry himself and a hidden pattern of *embrassées* is revealed in the rearrangement of thematic material of the exposition. The word *jeux* means games in French; arguably a mockery of the sonata-allegro form, the composer probably intended to do a *jeux de la forme* (Fr: a play of the form). *Eau* means water, which evidently serves its purpose as the main subject of the musical painting.

¹ See Appendix, “Figure 3.1 Theme 1 of Jeux d’eau.”

² Tarushkin, 112.

³ See Appendix, “Figure 3.2 Measure 4 of Jeux d’eau.”

⁴ See Appendix, “Figure 3.3 Measure 6 of Jeux d’eau.”

⁵ Taruskin, 117. See Appendix, “Figure 3.4 Measure 29-30 of Jeux d’eau.”

⁶ Pistone, “Quelques clés pour l’analyse musical et la dissertation.”

The development begins on measure 34, where the tempo accelerates and the theme is based on a modified octatonic scale: D, C-sharp, F-sharp, G-sharp and B (it would make more sense to rearrange it to F-sharp, G-sharp, B, C-sharp, D)¹. Measures 48-49 contain the famous black-key glissando that requires advanced technique to play. But aside from the virtuosic water display by the glissando, measure 51 is the place where the play on form begins; Ravel wrote a false recapitulation by taking the third theme before returning to the first theme (m. 62). The return of theme 1 is similar but this time, there is a dissuading G-sharp pedal tone in the left hand, which buffers the real recapitulation. This G-sharp note in the lower range gives the impression of a low-register gong playing the down beats; therefore fusing the Western and Eastern music into the recapitulation².

Another octatonic theme serves as a bridge to the next theme groups—the cadenza (m. 67-72) features a play of major, minor and augmented triads. In measure 72³, Ravel uses F-sharp major and C Major arpeggios ascending and descending; obviously polytonal, the relationship between the two chords is a tritone and the two chords also make an octatonic scale. It is no accident that Ravel made use of these harmonic devices; he was using symmetry and also referencing Russian influences (the same harmonic theme was used to depict the underwater world of the Sea King in Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *Sadko*⁴).

After the octatonic water display, theme 3 comes in first before the expected theme 2 (m. 78-85). The play of form, therefore, shows that Ravel's intention was poetic. If the thematic material of the exposition were labelled as A, B, and C and the recapitulation as A, C, and B, the over-all pattern of the music would be **ABC-Dev-ACB**. Hence, the pattern BCCB follows the *embrassées* rhyme, which is parallel to Henri de Regnier's poem *Fête d'eau*.

¹ See Appendix, "Figure 3.5 Pelog scale in Jeux d'eau."

² See Appendix, "Figure 3.7 Recapitulation of Jeux d'eau."

³ See Appendix, "Figure 3.9 Cadenza from Jeux d'eau."

⁴ Taruskin, 117.

The Glamour of the Orient: The Javanese Gamelan

Ravel commented in an interview¹ that he has always been fascinated with the Orient and had longed to visit the country of the gamelan, witness with his own eyes the beautiful pagodas and arguably, be able to see the grandiose *Fête des Eaux* in Cambodia. He also stated that he thinks Javanese music is the most glamorous music of the Far East and that he frequently quoted themes from it. The gamelan² is an ensemble of ethnic instruments ranging from huge gongs, bamboo flutes, snare drums, metallophones, and pot gongs. In Southeast Asia, there are a variety of gamelans coming from different countries: Javanese and Balinese *gamelan*, Cambodian *piphat*, and the *kulintang* from southern part of the Philippines. Aside from the exotic colours of each instrument, the main soloists are the pot gongs. These little gongs are tuned into scales: the *pelog* and the *slendro*, which could be compared to the scales of Western music. The *pelog* is an almost octatonic scale (D, E^b, F, G-sharp, A, B^b, C), while the *slendro* is a pentatonic scale (C, D, F, G, A). In retrospect, Ravel uses these pot gong themes as thematic materials for his piece; he might not have been able to travel in the Far East, but certainly he created his own sublime world of beauty through mixing Western music with Eastern influences.

In *Jeux d'eau*, the bridge from the first theme transitioning to the second theme contains oriental themes that are similar to the first two scales mentioned above. In measures 13 and 14³, Ravel wrote a pattern of fourths and fifths in a pentatonic scale: B, C-sharp, D-sharp, F-sharp and G-sharp (left hand). Measures 15 and 16⁴ pronounce the pentatonic scale louder in the left hand—therefore, giving the bridge a more prominent oriental flavour and prepare the entry of theme 2. As expected, theme 2 is based on a pentatonic scale—the right hand having a pattern of major seconds. This pattern could be analysed as the dominant 7th in the key of E major, resolving to a deceptive cadence (m. 19-22)⁵.

Revisiting the development⁶, the theme (D, C-sharp, F-sharp, G-sharp, and B) when rearranged constitutes an intervallic pattern similar to the octatonic scale (F-sharp, G-sharp, B, C-sharp and D), which is

¹ Ravel, in an interview for De Telegraaf on 1931. Cited in Zank, 195.

² See Appendix, “Figure 3.6 The Javanese Gamelan Instruments.”

³ See Appendix, “Figure 3.8 Pentatonic scale on m. 13-16.”

⁴ See Appendix, “Figure 3.8 Pentatonic Scales or Slendro in m. 13-16.”

⁵ See Appendix, “Figure 3.10 Theme 2 from Jeux d’eau.”

⁶ See Appendix, “Figure 3.5 Pelog scale in Jeux d’eau”

the inverted pattern of the *pelog* scale. The intervallic pattern of the *pelog* is as follows: semitone, whole tone, minor third, semitone, semitone and whole tone; while that of Ravel's is a whole tone, minor third, whole tone and semitone¹.

With the musical analysis presented, the writer reiterates the argument that *Jeux d'eau* is a reference to the aesthetic ideals of beauty through Classical sonata-allegro form, harmonic symmetry, love of poetry through the title and rearranging the thematic materials and most of all, the over-arching evidence of oriental themes in the piece.

Conclusion

After having reviewed Ravel's life as a composer, the parallelism of his character with Symbolism, the socio-political context of France during his lifetime, and both literary and musical analysis of Ravel's *Jeux d'eau*, the writer concludes with the following assertions: that the hidden sonata-allegro form, harmonic symmetry and the imagery of Greek mythology goddess *Latone* are a reference to Classicism; the Symbolist and Parnassian poetry quoted, aside from neoclassicism, also characterises the introspective nature of Ravel, and the desire to create a better world; the *Exposition Universelle de 1889 à Paris*, and Cambodia as a French protectorate arguably may have educated Ravel of the Far Eastern culture and the arts, therefore the evidences of orientalism in *Jeux d'eau*. Most importantly, the writer asserts the conclusion that Ravel's idea of beauty and the *au-delà* comprises the fusion of the West and the East. These assertions supported with substantial literature prove that Ravelian music is not limited to the printed pages and that his genius is the perfect execution of Baudelaire's idea of beauty—conglomeration of music, poetry, visual arts and cultures.

¹ See Appendix, "Figure 3.11 Comparing the Pelog and Ravel's Development."

Appendix A: Historical Background



Figure 2.1 *Le Bassin de Latone* in the garden of Versailles, France. Photo source from <http://andrenotre.com/2011/09/17/bassin-de-latone-jardins-de-versailles-vue-surplombante/>. Accessed on December 3, 2014.

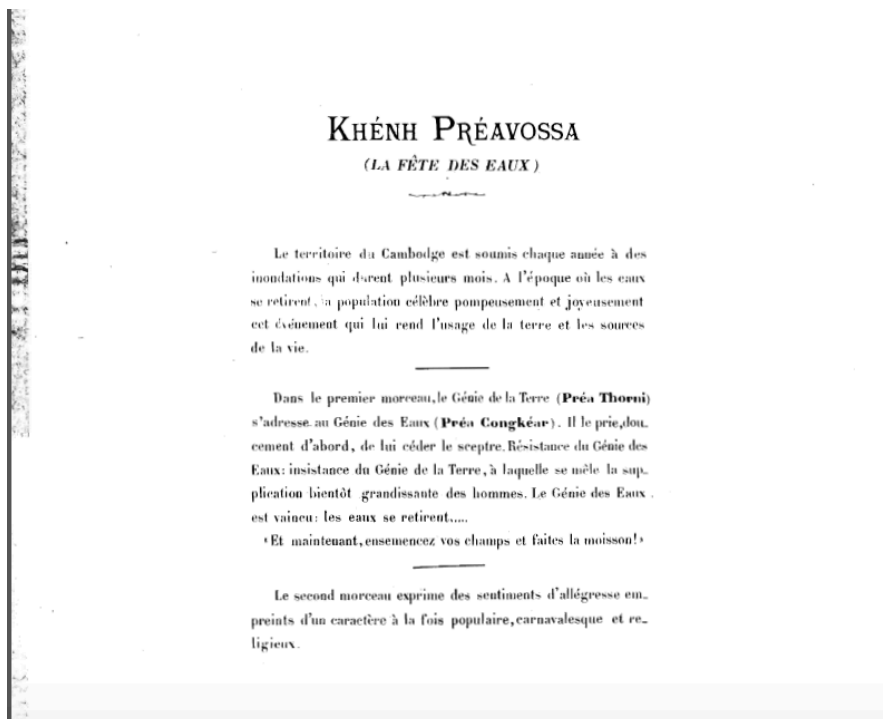


Figure 2.2 Preface of *Rhapsodie Cambodgienne* by Louis-Albert Ducoudray-Bourgault (1882).

Figure 2.3 Writer's Analysis of Henri de Regnier's Fête d'eau

Fête d'eau

Two quatrains - Parnassian

Le dauphin, le triton et l'obèse grenouille (A) *Green: Alliterations with the article le and l', enjambment of line 1 and 2
 Diamantant d'écume d'or Latone nue, (B) *Yellow: Alliterations with the letter d, *Cyan: Alliterations with the sound « u »
 Divinité marine au dos de la tortue, (B)
 Dieu fluvial riant de l'eau qui le chatouille; (A) *Fuschia: alliterations with the sound, short « o »

La vasque qui retombe, ou la gerbe qui mouille, (A) *Fuschia : alliterations with the sound, short « a »
 La nappe qui décroît, se gonfle ou diminue, (B) *Cyan : Alliterations with the letter « e »
 Et la poussière humide irisant la statue (B) *Fuschia : alliterations with the sound of long « è » ; Enjambment line 7-8
 Dont s'emperle la mousse ou s'avive la rouille; (A)

Two couplets - Symbolist

Toute la fête d'eau, de cristal et de joie (A) *Yellow : alliterations with preposition « de », enjambment line 9-11
 Qui s'entrecroise, rit, s'éparpille et poudroie, (A) *Green: alliterations with the sound « wa », Cyan: the long sound « ee »
 Dans le parc enchanté s'est tue avec le soir; (B) *Fuschia : Alliterations with the sound, short « é »

Et parmi le silence on voit jaillir, auprès (C) *Green : alliterations with the nasal sound « en »
 Du tranquille bassin redevenu miroir, (B) *Fuschia : alliterations with the long sound « ee »
 La fontaine de l'if et le jet du cyprès. (C) enjambment line 12-14

The theme of silence with nature: introspection

Henri de Regnier describes the aesthetic beauty of *the basin of Latone* in the gardens of Versailles. This work is both an example of Parnassian and Symbolist poetry: Parnassian because of no other purpose but to create beautiful poetry and imagery and Symbolist, because of the introspective nature and seeking to create a world better than the present.

The poem follows the form sonnet both Shakespearean and Petrarchan forms: the rhyme ABBA or embrassées in French, having an octave comprised of two quatrains (a verse with 4 lines) and two couplets having 3 lines each. The two couplets changes in rhyme pattern (BCBC) to signify the Symbolist portion of the poem. Also, the poem was written in *alexandrins*: lines that contain 12 syllables. Aside from which, Henri de Regnier uses enjambments to make the recitation more fluid. As shown with highlighters, the poet uses a prolific amount of alliterations that makes that recitation fluid and musical; a similar characteristic it shares with Ravel's *Jeux d'eau*.

Appendix B: Analysis of Jeux d'eau

Figure 3.1 Theme 1 of Jeux d'eau

Très doux (♩ = 144)

pp

2^{da}

8

Detailed description: This figure shows the first four measures of the Theme 1 from Ravel's 'Jeux d'eau'. The music is written for piano in a key with three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a common time signature. The tempo is marked 'Très doux' with a quarter note equal to 144 beats per minute. The dynamics are 'pp' (pianissimo). The score consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The first two measures are in common time, and the last two measures are in 3/4 time. The melody in the treble staff is characterized by flowing eighth-note patterns, often beamed together in groups of four. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and moving lines. A first ending bracket labeled '2 da' spans the first two measures, and a second ending bracket labeled '8' spans the last two measures.

Figure 3.2 Measure 4 of Jeux d'eau

Detailed description: This figure provides a close-up view of measure 4 from the Theme 1. It shows the continuation of the eighth-note melodic line in the treble staff and the corresponding harmonic accompaniment in the bass staff. The key signature remains three sharps. The measure is marked with a first ending bracket at the top left.

Figure 3.3 Measure 6 of Jeux d'eau

Detailed description: This figure shows measure 6 of the Theme 1. The treble staff features a more complex melodic line with sixteenth-note runs and slurs. The bass staff continues with chords and moving lines. The key signature is three sharps. The measure is marked with a first ending bracket at the top left.

Figure 3.4 Measures 29-30 of Jeux d'eau



Figure 3.5 Pelog scale in Jeux d'eau



Figure 3.6 The Javanese Gamelan Instruments. Photo source from:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamelan#mediaviewer/File:COLLECTIE_TROPENMUSEUM_Reeks_van_tien_kleine_gongs_naast_elkaar_hangend_in_een_frame_onderdeel_van_gamelan_Slendro_TMnr_500-20.jpg



Bonang



Saron



Gendér



Slenthem



Kethuk/Kenong



Peking



Gong



Kendang

Figure 3.7 Recapitulation of Jeux d'eau (m. 62-63)

The musical score for Figure 3.7 is for a single string (1^{er} Corde). It features a tempo marking of "1^{er} Mouvement" and a dynamic marking of "pp". The music is in A major (three sharps) and common time. The first system (measures 62-63) consists of a melodic line in the right hand with a slur over the first two measures and a fermata over the last measure, and a bass line with a slur over the first two measures and a fermata over the last measure. The second system (measures 64-65) continues the melodic line in the right hand with a slur and a fermata, and the bass line with a slur and a fermata. The time signature changes to 2/4 at the end of the second system.

Figure 3.8 Pentatonic Scales or Slendro in m. 13-16

The musical score for Figure 3.8 is for two strings (1^{er} and 2^e Corde). It features a dynamic marking of "ff". The music is in A major (three sharps) and common time. The first system (measures 13-16) shows the right hand playing a series of chords with a slur and a fermata, and the left hand playing a series of chords with a slur and a fermata. The second system (measures 17-20) shows the right hand playing a series of chords with a slur and a fermata, and the left hand playing a series of chords with a slur and a fermata. The time signature changes to 2/4 at the end of the second system.

Figure 3.9 Cadenza from Jeux d'eau (m. 72)

The musical score for Figure 3.9 consists of three systems of piano notation. The first system is marked *très rapide* and *ppp*, with a dynamic marking of *fff* at the end. It includes the instruction *(3 Cordes)* and a fermata. The second system is marked *f*. The third system is marked *mf*, *dim.*, *p*, and *rall.*, with a fermata at the end. The score features complex rhythmic patterns and dynamic contrasts.

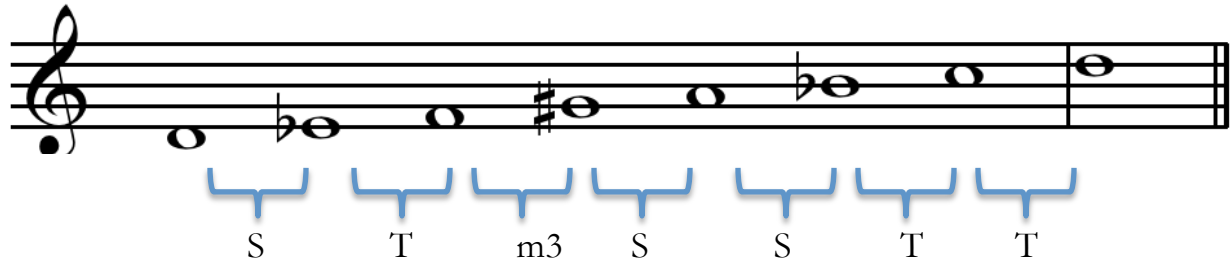
Figure 3.10 Theme 2 from Jeux d'eau

The musical score for Figure 3.10 consists of two systems of piano notation. The first system is marked *pp* and includes a sixteenth-note figure with a '6' above it. The second system is marked *3 Cordes* and features a complex rhythmic pattern in the bass clef. The score includes various dynamic markings and articulation symbols.

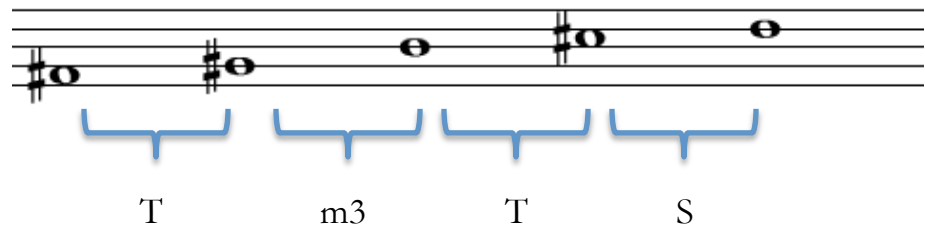
Figure 3.11 Comparing the Pelog scale and Ravel's Development (Rearranged)

Photo source : http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pelog#mediaviewer/File:Pelog_on_D.png

Pelog



Ravel's Development (Rearranged)



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