

INTRODUCTION

The Composer In The Art Store

I wrote this book to alleviate the jealousy I was feeling every time I walked into an art store with my wife, or the graphics magazine section in Barnes and Noble. In either location, Caroline could find books or magazines on drawing mouths, smiles, eyes, hands, the anatomy, the brush strokes of Cezanne, the sketchbooks of Da Vinci, coloration and Degas, the Pre-Raphaelites, and on and on for literally hundreds of square feet. In the magazine section, there's row upon row of graphics magazines for all the programs which included tutorial upon tutorial upon tutorial!

Back over in the music book department I had the latest 28 rock biographies, the third edition of the *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, 263 different guitar books (with pictures), the occasional Dover score and...that's about it. So, off to the magazine racks. There are tons of music magazines mostly dedicated to rock, one or two on jazz, a couple on drums, recording, and of course the few publications that deal with music production software.

But no brush strokes. No smiles. No coloration. No neat and cool tutorials for writing music like Caroline was finding for creating art in Photoshop and 3D software.

So back to the table we sit, each with our own *Café Mocha*.¹ For upwards of two hours I hear my wife say things like, "Cool. Oh. Wow. Ahhh, so *that's* how he did that!" And so on.

By comparison, my music magazines read like a tech manual for GE's newest jet engine. No brush strokes there. I leave the table to wander around hoping I'll find something to feed *my* art and craft. After half an hour of wandering, the only thing I find that mildly interests my creativity is *Stupid Yo-Yo Tricks*.²

Having had enough of that, I look for the newest *Spenser For Hire* book by Robert B. Parker and meander back to the table. I finish my *Café Mocha*. Read. Stare at the cheesecake selections. Read some more. Look at the 10 or 12 different varieties of Starbucks coffee cups. Finally, it's time to go. As we check out, Caroline has a stack of useful magazines on her craft, and I've got a paperback about shooting someone in Las Vegas.³

After a few years of this, I decided to do something about this dilemma for composers that would be a good read and a good listen. And here it is, *How Ravel Orchestrated: Mother Goose Suite*.⁴

¹ Venti's in case you're curious, or for historical reasons - should this book still be around in a hundred years.

² *Not* a book by the cellist Yo-Yo Ma on the quirky things you can do with a cello bow.

³ What happens there, stays there.

⁴ First in a series.

A First in Many Ways

How Ravel Orchestrated: Mother Goose Suite is a first in a many ways. To enumerate, I had a brand new music engraving done of the entire score with the piano part at the bottom. Now you can see

1. How Ravel transcribed his own piano work for orchestra (a class in itself)
2. And, well, how Ravel orchestrated!

Next, we licensed from Naxos, the world's leading classical label, a complete performance of the work which is on the included CD. The performance was conducted by Kenneth Jean, and recorded by the Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra. With this is a third first – the recommendation that you load the disk into your computer, copy the contents and create an MP3 for your iPod or other MP3 player.

The third first is about to make more sense as I explain the fourth first.

You're going to register this book at the Alexander Publishing web site. Once done, you'll get a link that lets you download two PDF versions of the full score. The first is a duplicate matching the score in the book. But the second score is color coded. So you'll need a color printer and 8.5 x 14 paper to print it out. I've arranged the color coding to support what I call the *8 Keys to Learning Professional Orchestration* (which I've explained in this book). To register to get your free PDF, please see the cover page.

The idea behind this is portable learning. So whether with your MP3 player, your CD player, your car stereo, or the CD player in your computer, you can learn just about anywhere you want.

Even if you have weak music reading or score reading skills, this practical application of technology opens great doors for you.

The Stories Behind the Music

To confess, I haven't spent much time with Mother Goose stories now that my children are grown. So you can imagine my surprise to discover that these weren't nursery rhymes, but full length, and in places, very gritty stories. After reading a few, I decided to include the story that was the background for each piece. Doing this created an enormous payoff.

As someone who spent over 20 years in Los Angeles with many hours on the scoring stage, after reading the stories and comparing them to the score, I was pleasantly surprised to discover how cue-like Ravel's music is. Since each suite represents a specific story, or portion of a story, you actually have five mini problem/solution case studies for scoring specific dramatic elements. You'll find the full range of dramatic, romantic and comedic writing in *Mother Goose Suite*. In fact, every compositional technique used by Ravel, you'll find in the film scores of Jerry Goldsmith, John Williams and many others.

Analysis For the Working Composer

First the story, then the score, then the orchestration analysis. To create an analysis that would manage your time well, be interesting to read, yet practical, I started by

having the score engraved with bar numbers at page bottom. This allows for quick and easy referencing.

The colorized PDF also speeds the learning curve, because if you're in a hurry, you can quickly look things up and glance at the colorized score to get what you need.

Jazz, Baby

There are places where I've looked at Ravel's harmonic vocabulary. When I did this, I used the standard jazz/pop music notation citing the chord symbol, altered tones, pitch in the bass, and where applicable, chord scales (modes). To make this as accessible as possible, there's no figured bass.

When going through the score, especially *The Dialog of Beauty and The Beast*, one must be impressed by the way Ravel absorbed the jazz language he was learning in the Parisian nightclubs, and made it his own in a concert environment. Through jazz/pop harmony eyes, you see his use of altered dominant chords, the altered Mixolydian scale, polytonality, and triads with the added 9th, to name a few innovations.

By knowing the story, the lessons from Ravel are enhanced as we see how he combined harmony and orchestration to support the story dramatically.

From the Piano to the Orchestra

We learn an important lesson from Ravel: what you write for piano and what for orchestra are two different things. As a professional writer, you should look at the piano and the orchestra, each as two totally different performance media. To translate from piano to the orchestra is like translating from book to stage or book to movie. How you can explain in a book is one thing, how you tell a story and visualize for the screen or for the stage is something entirely since each has its demands and limitations for story telling.

You can see Ravel's thinking. "I've written this work for the piano. Now I have a full orchestra to work with. How do I orchestrate and recompose to take full advantage of the that medium?" With this approach, Ravel felt total freedom to change as needed with his own music.

When it was the music of another composer, he made few changes to the piano part, wanting to keep to the composer's original intent.

In your own writing, you'll have to make similar choices.

French to Italian

Purists may disagree with my choice, but because we're more accustomed to working with Italian musical terms than French, we translated the French into Italian. In some cases, we wrote the performance instruction in English because we felt that more conveyed Ravel's instructions. I also did this for copyright purposes to clearly establish our ownership of the re-engraved score.

Score Layout

The score faithfully follows the original Durand edition of Mother Goose Suite, with this one difference: for study and note taking purposes there is only one (1) orchestral system per page. Thus, some pages will look a little empty, but for a student, I think our layout approach is much easier to work with. The book is laid out so that the first page of the score is always on the left page. This lets you see two pages at once.

How Ravel Worked

Following this introduction, I have a short section detailing the working methods of Ravel. I think you'll find this useful in seeing how Ravel developed his craft.

The Influence of Edgar Allan Poe

After the five suites, I've included two major works written by Edgar Allan Poe that clearly impacted Ravel and his art. The first is called *The Poetic Principle*. The second is called *The Philosophy of Composition*.

Both of these are, again, good reads. And their inclusion gives us a more complete picture of the man and how he approached his craft. Ravel's music wasn't just impacted by other musical works, it was touched and influenced by art (*Pictures At An Exhibition*), story (*Mother Goose Suite*, *The Child and The Magic*, *Scheherazade*), machinery (*Bolero*, which was written to musically imitate a machine), and poetry (*Three Poems* by Stephen Mallarme).

Finale

My prayer is that this work will be blessing and a joy that adds to your learning.

*Peter Lawrence Alexander
Petersburg, Virginia
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