

# Reciprocal Influences: Ravel and Jazz

## By Emiliano Lasansky

Throughout history, European classical composers have drawn influence from folk idioms across the world. In the Baroque era, Bach implemented the German folk melody *Ich bin solang nicht bei dir g'west, ruck her, ruck her* ("I have so long been away from you, come closer, come closer") into his final variation of the fantastic *Goldberg Variations* (1741).<sup>1</sup> In the late-19<sup>th</sup> century, Dvořák's *Symphony No. 9, "New World Symphony"* (1893) drew influence from African American hymns, spirituals, and folk melodies. In the early 1900's, Hungarian composers Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály ventured into the Magyar countryside to record traditional folk melodies they would later incorporate into their own pieces. In 1889, so-called 'Impressionist' composers Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel heard Javanese gamelan music at the Paris Expo celebrating the centennial of the French Revolution.<sup>2</sup> Both artists were influenced by this 'exotic' music and went on to compose pieces inspired by their encounters with the gamelan.

### *Maurice Ravel: Influences and Milieu*

For Maurice Ravel, folk and 'exotic' music were sources of inspiration for him throughout his life. Born in the Basque region of France in 1875, Ravel maintained a life-long fascination with his Basque heritage. Thus, the region's melodies found their way into many of the composers works, extending all the way up to his late period.<sup>3</sup> For Ravel, musical inspiration

---

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Braatz, "The Quodlibet as Represented in Bach's Final Goldberg Variation BWV 988/30." Bach Cantatas.com, January 2005. <https://www.bach-cantatas.com/Articles/BWV988-Quodlibet%5BBraatz%5D.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Brent Campbell, "Gamelan and Western Classical Music." SF Classical Voice.org, August 15, 2011. <https://www.sfcv.org/articles/feature/gamelan-and-western-classical-music#>.

<sup>3</sup> Arbie Orenstein, "Earliest Years." *In Ravel: Man and Musician* (New York: Dover Editions, Columbia University Press, 1991 ed.), 8.

## Emiliano Lasansky: Reciprocal Influences: Maurice Ravel and Jazz

came from many different places. Around 1907, he composed multiple pieces which drew upon Spanish folk styles and rhythms. *Rapsodie Espagnol* (M54) and *L'Heure Espagnol* (M52) were both completed around the same time in this period and helped set a standard for Ravel's refined and adventurous forays into folk-inspired pieces.

An example of 'exotic' influence can be heard in *Tzigane* (M76). In the early 1920's Ravel attended a private concert of Hungarian musicians, Jelly d'Aranyi and Hans Kindler. Allegedly, after the concert Ravel asked d'Aranyi to play for him traditional gypsy melodies late into the night. This encounter served as the impetus for the *Tzigane* a 'gypsy' style violin rhapsody.<sup>4</sup> Ravel was continually searching for ways to grow and evolve as a composer. This constant desire to expand his musical vocabulary helped thrust him to the forefront of the French musical world in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly, another 'exotic' music that would influence Ravel made its way across the Atlantic to Paris in the early-1920's: Jazz.

European composers going back to Dvořák in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century recognized the uniquely American style of folk music that had originated in African American communities in the southern United States. Spirituals, hymns, work songs, and music from the southern black church are all outgrowths of the Black experience in America. This uniquely American style of folk music had a palpable weight for some European composers around the turn-of-the-century. By the mid-1910's, the style now known as Jazz had begun to develop in small communities centered around New Orleans, Louisiana. By the 1920's, Jazz had spread across much of the United States, and even to Europe. In Paris, Ravel frequented a *Boissy d'Anglas*

---

<sup>4</sup> Orenstein, *Man and Musician*, 85.

## Emiliano Lasansky: Reciprocal Influences: Maurice Ravel and Jazz

called *Le Bœuf sur le toit* where so-called “American Jazz” could be heard regularly<sup>5</sup>. Scholars have debated how authentic the American Jazz that Ravel heard during this period truly was. Regardless the fact that an American ‘exotic’ or rather folk music had pervaded Ravel’s musical world by this time is telling.

While Ravel would not experiment with jazz styles in his own pieces until later in the decade, he would incorporate Ragtime vocabulary in 1919.<sup>6</sup> In the late 1910’s, Ravel struggled to return to composition after the death of his mother in 1917. His most prolific compositional years now behind him, the composer found himself unable to write. Around 1919, Ravel began work on a new opera entitled *L’Enfant et les sortilèges* (M71). This new opera would help rekindle his compositional flame. One element in *L’Enfant* that excited Ravel was his use of Ragtime for the cup and teapot song entitled *How’s Your Mug?* In a letter to the opera’s librettist Collette, Ravel excitedly inquired about the potential use of the African American musical style:

*“Another thing: what would you think of the cup, and teapot, in old black Wedgwood, singing a ragtime? I must confess that the idea of having two negroes singing a ragtime at our National Academy of Music fills me with great joy...Perhaps you will object that you’re not acquainted with American-negro slang. I don’t know a word of English, but I’ll do the same as you: I’ll manage it. I would be very grateful to have your opinion...”<sup>7</sup>*

---

<sup>5</sup> Orenstein, *Man and Musician*, 83.

<sup>6</sup> Ragtime is an American style of music which draws on marching band forms, and African American folk melodies. Ragtime predates and heavily influenced Jazz. It was popularized by African American composer Scott Joplin in the early 1900’s.

<sup>7</sup> Orenstein, *Man and Musician* 79.

## Emiliano Lasansky: Reciprocal Influences: Maurice Ravel and Jazz

In this writer's opinion Ravel's use of Ragtime in this piece only scratches the surface of the genre's rich style. Nonetheless *How's Your Mug?* displays Ravel's openness and intrigue towards African American music.

### *1928 Tour of North America*

By the late-1920's Ravel had achieved a level of fame across much of Europe, not seen earlier in his career. He was now broadly considered France's most eminent composer and performed concert tours regularly in Great Britain and Spain. On January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1928, Ravel boarded the *S.S. France* and set out on a four-month concert tour of the United States and Canada. Ravel's reception in America was overwhelmingly positive. Audiences enjoyed his performances at the piano of *Miroirs* (M43), *Valses nobles et sentimentales* (M61), *Le tombeau de Couperin* (M68), and *Sonatine* (M40), as well as conducting performances of *Rhapsodie espagnole*, *Daphnis and Chloe Suite no. 2* (M57b), and *La Valse* (M72b).

One of his most exhilarating stops along the tour occurred in New York City where he met American composer George Gershwin. After attending a performance of the musical *Funny Face* (Gershwin-1927), Ravel inquired about meeting the young composer and hearing a performance of his piece *Rhapsody in Blue* (Gershwin-1924).<sup>8</sup> On March 7, 1928, Ravel attended a party thrown by mezzo-soprano Èva Gauthier, Gershwin was in attendance and performed *Rhapsody in Blue* as well as his song *The Man I Love* (Gershwin-from *Lady Be Good*, 1924) for the French composer. Gauthier later wrote of the event:

---

<sup>8</sup> Louise Burton, "Fascinatin' Rhythm: When Ravel met Gershwin," Chicago Symphony Orchestra.org, December 14, 2021, <https://cso.org/experience/article/7984/fascinatin-rhythm-when-ravel-met-gershwin>.

## Emiliano Lasansky: Reciprocal Influences: Maurice Ravel and Jazz

*“The thing that astonished Ravel was the facility with which George scaled the most formidable technical difficulties and his genius for weaving complicated rhythms and his great gift of melody.”*<sup>9</sup> Not long after, in what has likely become an apocryphal telling of one such encounter between the composers, Gershwin famously inquired about composition lessons from Ravel. The French composer turned Gershwin down allegedly stating, “it would probably cause him (Gershwin) to write ‘bad Ravel’ and lose his great gift of melody and spontaneity.”<sup>10</sup> Clearly the admiration between the composers was mutual.

Throughout the rest of his time in New York City, Ravel spent evenings with Gershwin, frequenting jazz clubs in Harlem like the Savoy Ballroom and The Cotton Club where he heard Duke Ellington and his Orchestra, who were in the height of their residency at the historic venue. Additionally, Ravel visited Liederkranz Hall for a recording session of Paul Whiteman’s Orchestra, which featured the famous cornetist Bix Beiderbecke.<sup>11</sup> Throughout his stay in New York Ravel found himself taken by the new popular American art form. In a letter to his brother Edouard he exclaimed,

*“If I return to Europe alive, it will prove that I am long-lived!... I wasn’t even able to practice the piano a little during my stay in New York (4 days which seemed like 4 months). As soon as I settled down at the Langdon Hotel, a little nothing of a hotel which has only 12 stories (I was on the 8<sup>th</sup>), and delightfully comfortable (an entire apartment), the telephone didn’t stop ringing. Every minute they would bring me baskets of flowers,*

---

<sup>9</sup> Burton, “Fascinatin’ Rhythm.”

<sup>10</sup> Burton, “Fascinatin’ Rhythm.”

<sup>11</sup> Burton, “Fascinatin’ Rhythm.”

## Emiliano Lasansky: Reciprocal Influences: Maurice Ravel and Jazz

*and of the most delicious fruits in the world...In the evening, relaxation: dance halls, Negro theaters, gigantic movie houses, etc..."<sup>12</sup>*

in Ravel's tour he was asked to give a recital and lecture at Rice University. The composers lecture consisted of his opinions on what make up a country's musical voice and identity. Speaking about his time in America the Frenchmen said:

*"Before closing this short address I wish to say again how very happy I am visiting your country, and all the more so because my journey is enabling me to become still more conversant with those elements which are contributing to the gradual formation of a veritable school of American music...At all events, may this national American music of yours embody a great deal of the rich and diverting rhythm of your jazz, a great deal of the emotional expression in your blues, and a great deal of sentiment and spirit characteristic of your popular melodies and songs, worthily deriving from, and in turn contributing to, a noble heritage in music."<sup>13</sup>*

Intriguingly Ravel derived the American musical voice from three interlocking spheres, all of which carry equal influence: Jazz, the Blues, and Popular Music. For Ravel popular melodies, like the ones penned by his new friend George Gershwin were unique, yet clearly influenced by Jazz's rhythmic and melodic sensibilities. Jazz's unique voice in-turn was greatly influenced by the Blues which is a musical outgrowth of the African American cultural experience. Even though he was an outsider, Ravel was quite perceptive to identify three

---

<sup>12</sup> Orenstein, *Man and Musician* 95.

<sup>13</sup> Maurice Ravel, "Contemporary Music," Rice Scholarship.edu, 04-1924, [https://scholarship.rice.edu/bitstream/handle/1911/8425/article\\_RI152131.pdf?sequence=9&isAllowed=y](https://scholarship.rice.edu/bitstream/handle/1911/8425/article_RI152131.pdf?sequence=9&isAllowed=y).

## Emiliano Lasansky: Reciprocal Influences: Maurice Ravel and Jazz

separate musical genres that all drew upon the same musical roots: the Black experience in America

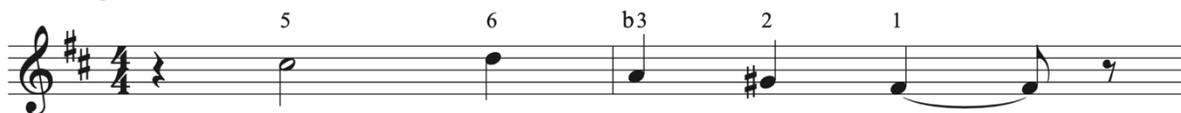
### *America's Musical Influence on Ravel: The Late-Piano Concertos*

Upon his return to France in April of 1928, Ravel resumed work on two new piano concertos, both of which would feature elements of Jazz, Blues, and American popular melody. While both new piano pieces were composed simultaneously, *Concerto pour la main gauche* (M82) was published first in 1931 followed by *Concerto pour piano et orchestra* (M83) in 1932.

The *Piano Concerto in G* while published second was started first. Beginning in the late-1910's, Ravel started to develop the idea for a piano concerto that was to be a "divertissement."<sup>14</sup> Initially the composer planned for a piece that would show influence from Mozart and Saint-Saëns. However, the piece remained in nascent stages throughout much of the 1920's. It was not until after Ravel's North American tour that the composition began to truly be birthed.

The first movement commences with the crack of a whip and an excited 'Basque' theme is played by the piccolo. Structured in sonata form, the first theme reaches its conclusion, and a subsequent transition theme occurs. This 'Gershwin-esque' theme is first heard at rehearsal number five: *Meno vivo*, played by the clarinet (fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Transition Theme



<sup>14</sup> Michael Russ, "The Cambridge Companion to Ravel: Ravel and the Orchestra," The Cambridge Companion.org, September 2011, [https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/E02B46903F87F8E8F867B08540FDAAB6/9781139002264c6\\_p118-139\\_CBO.pdf/ravel\\_and\\_the\\_orchestra.pdf](https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/E02B46903F87F8E8F867B08540FDAAB6/9781139002264c6_p118-139_CBO.pdf/ravel_and_the_orchestra.pdf).

## Emiliano Lasansky: Reciprocal Influences: Maurice Ravel and Jazz

This theme comes straight from the Gershwin's bluesy popular melodic style. On the surface the theme appears to portray a minor key sonority, but interestingly Ravel is draws on the very essence of the blues: the use of both major and minor thirds simultaneously, as though to reach for a middle sonority in between the thirds! This 'note between the notes' in Jazz is often referred to as the so called 'Blue Note.' As the clarinet plays the minor third (A natural in an F# sonority), the piano underneath rolls F#-major triadic shapes up-and-down the piano (fig. 2). Underneath the strings hold out a sustained F#-major triad, obscuring the major/minor quality of the tonal center and as a result emphasizing a bluesy harmonic texture.

Fig. 2 (F# Major)

The image shows a musical score for Piano and Strings. The Piano part is written in F# Major and consists of two staves. The right hand plays a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes in the first measure, followed by a series of eighth notes. The left hand plays a sustained F#-major triad. The Strings part is also written in F# Major and consists of two staves. The strings play a sustained F#-major triad throughout the section. The score is labeled 'Fig. 2 (F# Major)' and includes the instrument names 'Piano:' and 'Strings:'.

This theme's occurrence in F#-major with the key signature of D-major is no coincidence. The concerto utilizes elements of bitonality, especially that of two major triads a half step apart. While Ravel had utilized bitonal concepts previously (going back to his piece *Habanera* M54),<sup>15</sup> the composer's use here helps exploit this theme's bluesy and complex character. G and F# triads are heard against each other in the piano throughout this section, thus an illusion of G-major and G-minor simultaneously further emphasizes a bluesy feeling.

<sup>15</sup> Russ, "Ravel and the Orchestra."

## Emiliano Lasansky: Reciprocal Influences: Maurice Ravel and Jazz

The first movement of the Concerto in G carefully weaves together the 'Basque' theme with the second 'Gershwin-esque' theme throughout, toggling back-and-forth rapidly as though the listener is being teleported from tranquil southern France into the bustling streets of New York City and back again. The first movement ends when the final hearing of the 'Basque' theme gives way to a raucous descending whole-tone scale, blasted out by the brass and wind sections (fig.3). The end to the first movement suggests scenes of an exhilarated drawing-of-the-curtain at the end of a Broadway show.



The finale movement of the concerto calls to mind a trip to a boisterous circus tent or perhaps a lively Harlem Jazz club. The movement begins with a brief fanfare which sets an excited tone. The first thematic section is kicked off with a fast upward clarinet run, followed by a trombone glissando (Fig. 4). Undoubtedly Ravel here is tipping his hat to the aesthetic of the 'Hot' American Jazz of the 1920's.

Fig. 4

Clar. Solo: Trombone Gliss

The image shows a piano score for two staves. The top staff is for the Clarinet Solo, starting with a 6-measure run of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4), followed by a 3-measure triplet of eighth notes (G4, A4, B4), and then a series of eighth notes (C5, B4, A4, G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2). The bottom staff is for the Trombone Gliss, starting with a 6-measure run of eighth notes (G2, F#2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1, F#1, E1, D1, C1, B0, A0, G0).

In the late 1920's the front line of most jazz bands traditionally featured a Trumpet/Cornet, Clarinet, and Trombone. In most cases in the melody was played by the Trumpet or Cornet with an obligato accompaniment line heard in the Clarinet and glissando interjections from the

## Emiliano Lasansky: Reciprocal Influences: Maurice Ravel and Jazz

Trombone. In this movement of the concerto Ravel uses the trombone glissando throughout as a way of interjecting between various melodic statements.

Later in the movement Ravel even briefly alludes to a Stride-Piano technique. In the 1920's, New York City was a hotbed for stride pianists. Performers like Willie 'the Lion' Smith, 'Fats' Waller, James P. Johnson, and even a young Art Tatum had gained popular appeal through their 'cutting contest' performances at various Harlem night clubs. It is likely that Ravel in one of his evening excursions to Harlem heard one or more of these stride pianists. One common stride piano effect developed by 'Jelly Roll' Morton was to play descending low clusters with the left-hand palm across the piano keys as a way of simulating the sound of a marching bass drum, interjecting rhythmically with the melody played in the right-hand. Ravel incorporates the same effect in his piano part (fig. 5).

20 Fig. 5 Piano Marching Bass Drum Illusion

*ff*  
8va

The musical score consists of two systems of piano notation. The first system is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. The right hand (RH) plays a melodic line with a descending low cluster (marked with 'x' on the notes) and a triplet of eighth notes. The left hand (LH) plays a descending low cluster (marked with 'x' on the notes) and a triplet of eighth notes. The second system is in B-flat major (two flats) and 2/4 time. The RH continues the melodic line with a descending low cluster and a triplet of eighth notes. The LH continues the descending low cluster and triplet of eighth notes. The score is marked with a forte dynamic (*ff*) and an octave sign (8va) for the left hand.

Throughout the entire third movement various wind instruments are used to interject with the piano lines to evoke the feeling of a soloists in a Jazz Band. The effect here is as if each wind player were to stand up to play a brief solo like a jazz musician, in order to break up the various

## Emiliano Lasansky: Reciprocal Influences: Maurice Ravel and Jazz

ensemble melodies. The overall impression left with the listener is a movement meant to evoke excitement and a party-like atmosphere, with a Jazz-style aesthetic used to fuel the festivity.

Ravel's other piece from this era: *Concerto for the left hand* uses jazz infused harmonic techniques in a similar fashion to the *Piano Concerto in G*. In the middle Scherzo section of the piece, Ravel again turns to the technique of mixing major and minor thirds. This technique can be heard first in the string accompaniment with E-chords containing both thirds being played in a pizzicato accompaniment figure against the piano melody. This perhaps mimics the sound of strummed bluesy guitar chords. Above this accompaniment the piano plays rapid descending triads in the key of C-major (fig. 6), against the string key of E-major. This bitonal clash clouds the major/minor key center with both G-natural and G-sharp, D-natural and D-sharp and F-natural and F-sharp all featured at various melodic moments in this section (fig. 6).

Fig. 6  
16 Piano: Blusey Mixing of Major/Minor Sound

The image shows a musical score for a piano and strings. The piano part is in the upper staff, starting with a treble clef and a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). It features a series of rapid descending triads. The strings part is in the lower staff, starting with a bass clef and the same key signature. It features a pizzicato accompaniment with both major and minor thirds. The score is labeled 'Fig. 6' and '16 Piano: Blusey Mixing of Major/Minor Sound'. The strings part is labeled 'Strings: Both 3rds'.

The 'Jazz' theme played by the piano in next section of the concerto employs both G-sharps and G-naturals, A-sharps and A-naturals, as well as D-naturals, all in the key of E-major! The accompaniment texture provided by a pair of Clarinets, a Bassoon, and the Bass section continue the E-triadic blues guitar texture underneath this new 'Jazz' theme (fig. 7).

## Emiliano Lasansky: Reciprocal Influences: Maurice Ravel and Jazz

17 Fig. 7  
Piano: 'Jazz Theme'  
*spiccato*

The musical score is presented in three systems. The first system shows the main melody in the upper staff and the piano accompaniment in the lower staff. The melody is marked *spiccato* and *f*. The piano accompaniment consists of chords with rhythmic patterns indicated by '7' symbols. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment, with an *8vb* marking above the melody. The third system shows the melody and accompaniment concluding with a final flourish, also marked *8vb*.

### *Ravel's Reciprocal Influences on Jazz*

Jazz of the late-1920's made a substantial influence on Ravel's compositional technique regarding his late piano concertos. Intriguingly Ravel's pieces would go on to influence jazz composers use of harmony throughout the rest of the century and even on into the current millennium. Two of the first jazz composers to be influenced by Ravel's compositional style are Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn. The two pianists began working together as writing partners in the early 1940's after discovering a compositional kinship. One element of their shared aesthetic was a love for Ravel's work. This is most evident in Strayhorn's composition which he wrote and arranged for Duke Ellington's Orchestra entitled *Chelsea Bridge* (1941). The first four bars of the tune are practically a direct quotation from Ravel's *Vales nobles et sentimentales* second waltz entitled *Assez lent-avec une expression intense* (fig. 8).

## Emiliano Lasansky: Reciprocal Influences: Maurice Ravel and Jazz

Fig. 8  
Ravel- Vales II

Strayhorn- Chelsea Bridge  
\*Inner voices provided for example

Chord symbols: Eb7#11, Db7#11, Eb7#11, Db7#11, Bb7

Strayhorn takes the minor-major seven chord quality from Ravel's waltz and places it over a bass-note up a fourth, making it a dominant chord with natural 9<sup>th</sup> and sharp-11<sup>th</sup> extensions. Though these specific chord extensions are not unique to impressionists like Ravel, when used in this nostalgically dreary ballad setting one cannot help but hear the link to early 20<sup>th</sup> century French composers. Other compositions by Strayhorn and Ellington from this period of the early 1940's onward into the 1950's tap into the emotional and harmonic aesthetics used by Ravel twenty years prior. Some of these songs include, *Take the A-Train* (Strayhorn-1939), *Passion Flower* (Strayhorn-1941), *A Flower is a Lovesome Thing* (Strayhorn-1946), *A Single Petal of a Rose* (Ellington/Strayhorn-1958), *Mood Indigo* (Ellington- composed 1930, \*1950 arrangement for *Masterpieces by Ellington*).

1959 is often considered the 'Greatest Year in Jazz' as so many seminal records were released in this year. These works include *Time Out* by Dave Brubeck, *The Shape of Jazz to Come* by Ornette Coleman, and *Mingus Ah Um* by Charles Mingus, each one a groundbreaking album.

## Emiliano Lasansky: Reciprocal Influences: Maurice Ravel and Jazz

However, Miles Davis' record *Kind of Blue* stands above all other projects in 1959 and stands alone as the highest selling jazz record of all-time. In an interview with musician Ben Sidran, Davis recounts the process of preparing for *Kind of Blue's* recording.<sup>16</sup>

*"It (Kind of Blue) wasn't a simple record to make back then. His (Bill Evans) approach to the piano brought that piece (Kind of Blue) out. He used to bring me pieces by Ravel like Concerto for the left hand...Bill used to tell me about different modes, and we just agreed on something and that's just the way the album went. We would just lean into it, like Ravel, like playing a sound with only the white keys, dorian-minor modes. It was just the thing to do."*

Ravel's influence on Evans and Davis is perhaps most clearly heard through two pieces that share a link: *Flamenco Sketches* (Davis-1959) and *Peace Piece* (Evans-1958 \*from an earlier record date). Both compositions use the same technique: a 5-1 bass motion with a freely improvised melody. *Peace Piece* from 1958 by Evans uses this technique in a single mode, C-Ionian. Evan's improvises a solemn yet fragile melody that slowly grows more dissonant throughout the recording. *Flamenco Sketches* similarly uses this compositional idea across five modes. Each soloist is to improvise in the first mode over a 5-1 bass motion, then the soloist 'cues' the next mode to move on (fig. 9).

---

<sup>16</sup> Ben Sidran, "Miles Davis, Talking Jazz," Ben Sidran.com, 1986, <http://bensidran.com/conversation/talking-jazz-ben-sidran>.



## Emiliano Lasansky: Reciprocal Influences: Maurice Ravel and Jazz

stacking triads that derive from the octatonic scale, as well as linear melodic playing based in the octatonic sound. Corea's chord-voicings and harmonizations from this period share a clear link to Ravel, and Russian composers Rimsky-Korsakov and Mussorgsky, both influences on Ravel as well. Corea's composition *Windows* (1968) middle section goes back and forth between two dominant chords a half-step apart (fig.9)

Fig. 10

Chick Corea-  
*Windows*



In this section we can see Corea blurs the tonal center by playing both C-natural and C-sharp, F-sharp and G-natural, and E-flat and E-natural. This is a similar technique to that used by Ravel in both the *Concerto for the left hand* as well as *Concerto in G*. In his solo Corea colors the A-flat sonority by superimposing A-flat diminished-major seven over top of the A-flat bass note drawing on the A-flat octatonic collection.

Herbie Hancock's piano work in the 1960's pushed the harmonic boundaries of jazz piano into the stratosphere with his complex harmonic voice. One characteristic of Hancock's style from this period is the use of polychords that stack triads. This style of chord-voicing draws influence from classical composers from the early-20<sup>th</sup> century like Ravel, Messiaen, Debussy, Stravinsky, and Vaughn-Williams. In conversation with this writer, when asked about Ravel's influence on him, Hancock replied:

*"I definitely was influenced by Ravel's pieces. I checked out a lot of Daphnis and Chloe and also Mother Goose...You know Ravel, like a lot of European composers came to America and were influenced by Jazz because it was America's music, and I think they (European Composers)*

## Emiliano Lasansky: Reciprocal Influences: Maurice Ravel and Jazz

*were curious about this new original art form in a similar way that we (Jazz musicians) are curious about classical music.”*

Into the 21<sup>st</sup> century jazz composers today still draw influence from Ravel. Pianist and composer Billy Childs singles out Ravel as an influence on his compositions and harmonic concept. Childs has developed an impressive career working as both a jazz pianist and arranger for symphony orchestras in the concert hall. Childs' compositions for his innovative ensemble The Billy Childs Chamber Ensemble use of larger, more 'Classical' forms within a jazz context. Child's contrapuntal writing for strings and harp in this ensemble are greatly informed by early 20<sup>th</sup> century masters like Ravel. When asked by this writer about Ravel, Childs commented:

*“I'd have to say that there are so many pieces and passages from Ravel which have influenced me, that it would be hard to name them all. That being said, here are a few pieces that stand out for me. To me, his absolute masterpieces are L'Enfant Ét Les Sortilèges, Daphnis Ét Chloé, and Gaspard De La Nuit. L'Enfant (my favorite) ...it's textbook on how to orchestrate imaginatively...All of these pieces have influenced me directly.”*

Ravel's influence on jazz musicians and their music is lasting and far-reaching. It is fascinating how jazz music influenced Ravel in his later period and equally beguiling that Ravel's pieces continue to reciprocally influence generations of jazz musicians.

# Emiliano Lasansky: Reciprocal Influences: Maurice Ravel and Jazz

## Bibliography:

- Braatz, Thomas. "The Quodlibet as Represented in Bach's Final Goldberg Variation BWV 988/30." Bach-cantatas.com. May 24, 2022. <https://www.bach-cantatas.com/Articles/BWV988-Quodlibet%5BBraatz%5D.html>.
- Campbell, Brent. "Gamelan and Western Classical Music." SF Classical Voice.org. May 24, 2022. <https://www.sfcv.org/articles/feature/gamelan-and-western-classical-music#>.
- Orenstein, Arbie. "Ravel: Man and Musician." New York: Dover Editions, Columbia University Press, 1991 ed.
- Burton, Louise. "Fascinatin' rhythm: When Ravel met Gershwin in Jazz Age New York." CSO Sounds and Stories.org. April 24, 2022. <https://csosoundsandstories.org/fascinatin-rhythm-when-ravel-met-gershwin-in-jazz-age-new-york/>.
- Ravel, Maurice. "Contemporary Music." Rice Scholarship.edu. May 29, 2022. [https://scholarship.rice.edu/bitstream/handle/1911/8425/article\\_RI152131.pdf?sequence=9&isAllowed=y](https://scholarship.rice.edu/bitstream/handle/1911/8425/article_RI152131.pdf?sequence=9&isAllowed=y).
- Russ, Michael, edited by Deborah Mawer. "The Cambridge Companion to Ravel: Ravel and the Orchestra." Cambridge.org. May 28, 2022. [https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/E02B46903F87F8E8F867B08540FDAAB6/9781139002264c6\\_p118-139\\_CBO.pdf/ravel\\_and\\_the\\_orchestra.pdf](https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/E02B46903F87F8E8F867B08540FDAAB6/9781139002264c6_p118-139_CBO.pdf/ravel_and_the_orchestra.pdf).
- Ravel, Maurice. "Concerto Pour la main gauche: pour piano et orchestre." First Edition. Paris, France: Durand Editions Musicales. 1931.
- Ravel, Maurice. "Concerto En Sol: pour piano et orchestra." First Edition. Paris France: Durand Editions Musicales. 1932.
- Carroll, Christopher. "Secret Music: On Duke Ellington's the Queen's Suite." Lapham's Quarterly.org. May 30, 2022. <https://www.laphamsquarterly.org/music/secret-music>.
- Jazz at Lincoln Center. "10 Billy Strayhorn Songs You Should Know." Jazz.org. May 30, 2022. <https://www.jazz.org/blog/10-billy-strayhorn-songs-you-should-know/>.
- Sidran, Ben. "Talking Jazz: Miles Davis." Ben Sidran.com. May 30, 2022. <http://bensidran.com/conversation/talking-jazz-ben-sidran>.
- Bill Evans.Nl. "Bill Evans-Pianist: Classical." Bill Evans.nl. May 30, 2022. <https://www.billevans.nl/classical/>.