

# JOURNAL OF *Music*

RESEARCH ONLINE

A JOURNAL OF THE MUSIC COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

## ‘Jangling in symmetrical sounds’: Maurice Ravel as storyteller and poet

EMILY KILPATRICK

■ Elder Conservatorium  
of Music  
University of Adelaide  
South Australia 5005  
Australia

Email: emily.kilpatrick  
@adelaide.edu.au

Maurice Ravel’s perception of language was defined by his *métier*. He thought about words as a composer, understanding them in terms of their rhythms and resonances in the ear. He could recognise the swing of a perfectly balanced phrase, the slight changes of inflection that affect sense and emphasis, and the rhythm and melody inherent in spoken language. Ravel’s letters, his critical writings, his vocal music and, most strikingly, his poetry, reveal his undeniable talent for literary expression. He had a pronounced taste for onomatopoeia and seemed to delight in the dextrous juggling of rhymes and rhythms. As this paper explores, these qualities are particularly apparent in the little song *Noël des jouets* (1905) and the choral *Trois chansons pour chœur mixte sans accompagnement* (1915) for which Ravel wrote his own texts, together with his collaboration with Colette on the opera *L’Enfant et les sortilèges* (1925).

The common thread of fantasy and fairytale that runs through these three works suggests that through his expressive use of language Ravel was deliberately aligning his music with the traditions of storytelling, a genre defined by the sounds of the spoken word. Fairytales usually employ elegant and beautiful formal language that is direct, expressive and naturally musical, as typified in the memorable phrases ‘Once upon a time...’ and ‘... happily ever after’. When we tell stories to children, we naturally adopt our most expressive voices, utilising a much broader range of pitches and inflections than in normal spoken language. This is part of the reason why even children too young to understand all the words and imagery of fairytales love to be told them anyway: they respond instinctively to the assonances and cadences of the narrative.

Ravel well understood these qualities, for he was renowned as storyteller-in-chief amongst the children of his acquaintance. In 1910 he composed his piano duet suite *Ma mère l’Oye*, directly inspired by the classic fairytales of Charles Perrault, the Comtesse d’Aulnoy and Mme Leprince de Beaumont. He wrote the suite for, and dedicated it to, Mimi and Jean Godebski, the children of his close friends Cipa and Ida Godebski. Ravel was a favourite babysitter for Mimi and Jean, as Mimi recalled in later life:

There are few of my childhood memories in which Ravel does not find a place. Of all my parents’ friends I had a predilection for Ravel because he used to tell me stories that I loved. I used to climb on his knee and indefatigably he would begin, ‘Once upon a time...’ And it would be *Laideronnette* or *La Belle et la Bête* or, especially, the adventures of a poor mouse that he made up for me... (Quoted in Nichols 1987: 19)



[www.mca.org.au](http://www.mca.org.au)

JMRO

[www.jmro.org.au](http://www.jmro.org.au)



Ravel placed epigraphs from his chosen tales at the head of the three middle movements of *Ma mère l'Oye*, acknowledging that his movements were inspired not just by the general outline of their stories, but by specific moments, expressed in distinctive and elegant words and phrases. There is also a strong sense of the storytelling voice throughout the suite, particularly evident in the growls of the Beast and the falsetto cries of the Beauty, and in the melodic outline of the climactic phrase of 'Petit Poucet', which closely follows the spoken inflections of the final phrase of the accompanying epigraph ('...les oiseaux étaient venus qui avaient tout mangé' — 'the birds had come and eaten them all up') (Example 1).

**Example 1:** 'Petit Poucet', bars 33–38.

...les oiseaux étaient venus qui avaient tout mangé

Ravel's own first essay into the realm of poetry, *Noël des jouets*, depicts a nativity scene of small toys — a 'varnished flock of sheep' on wheels, 'rabbit drummers', and an enamel Virgin Mary who watches over a Child made of painted sugar. The 'black dog Belzébuth' is lurking around the stable, but the 'beautiful unbreakable angels' suspended by brass wire threads keep the peace as the mechanical animals lift up their voices and cry 'Noël! Noël!'

Composed in the winter of 1914–15, the *Trois chansons* also deal with themes of fantasy and fairytale. Here, however, the traditional narratives are ironically distorted. The first of the songs offers a sardonic twist on the tale of *Little Red Riding Hood*. It tells the story of Nicolette, who sets off to gather flowers in the fields. She encounters an old wolf who enquires whether she is going to grandmother's house. Fleeing, she meets a beautiful page who asks, 'Nicolette, would you like a gentle friend?' She 'wisely' turns away, although 'her heart grieves' to refuse him. The traditional third encounter is decisive: Nicolette comes across a white-haired lord, pot-bellied and smelly. 'Hé là! Nicolette!' he says, 'Would you like all of this money?' And Nicolette flies into his arms and never returns to her flowery field again.

The second song tells of three beautiful birds from Paradise, who speak with human voices, conveying messages between sundered lovers in typically picturesque fairytale style. The singer asks the birds what messages they bring. The first offers an azure-coloured gaze and the second a kiss placed on a brow purer than snow. The third bird, when questioned, answers chillingly, 'A beautiful heart, all crimson'. 'Ah, I feel my own heart growing cold... Bear it with you also', the singer replies. The song's repeated refrain 'Mon ami z-il est à la guerre' ['My love is at the war'] is a grim reminder that many fairytales came to bitter endings in 1914, while the three birds' colours — azure, snow-white and blood-red — are those of the French flag.

'Ronde' speaks first in the voices of the old men and women, who warn the young boys and girls not to go to the woods of Ormonde as they will meet there all manner of fantastic creatures — ogres, satyrs, centaurs, wicked fairies, devils, imps and 'ghouls coming from their Sabbath'. Finally, the young people sing that they will not go to the woods anymore, for the creatures are no longer there — 'the foolish old people have frightened them all away'.


In his 1938 homage entitled 'Ravel poète', the critic and musicologist René Dumesnil discussed the intrinsically musical nature of Ravel's poetry. He wrote that:

Ravel knew how to see and to release the essential [...] and to express it he always found the right word, not only by its precise meaning, but still more by its sonority. (Dumesnil 1938: 126)

Arthur Hoérée made a similar point in his 1925 study of Ravel's vocal music, when he suggested that Ravel's original syntax derived from 'the clear and precise *métier* of the musician' (Hoérée 1925: 51). In the four poems of *Noël des jouets* and the *Trois chansons*, Ravel's natural concision is illuminated by his flawless juggling with the rhythms and resonances of the language, together with sparkling descriptions formed of unusual combinations of words and phrases. Perhaps most importantly, the sounds of his words are often as expressive as their meanings. Consider the following lines depicting the vigilant angels of *Noël des jouets*: 'Et leur vol de clinquant vermeil / Qui cliquette en bruits symétriques...' ['And their glittering vermillion flight / Jangling in symmetrical sounds...']. Ravel combines here an evocative description with very



individual onomatopoeia: the hard c and t consonants and light i and ε vowels of ‘Qui cliquette’ really do sound ‘jangly’! Similarly, in the final line of the poem, the words used to describe the ‘thin bleats’ of the animals – ‘dont la voix *grêle bèle*’ – sound like the bleats themselves. It is almost tempting to sing the final ‘Noël! Noël!’ with a sheep-like stutter – ‘No-ë-ë-ë-ë-ll!’ (Example 2).

**Example 2: Noël des jouets, bars 60–67. \***

[en accélérant jusqu'au ff]



*mf* Dont la voix grêle bèle

*f*


*portando* *ff* **Allegro** le: Noël! Noël! No

**Allegro** *ff*

*Ped. jusqu'à la fin*

ël!


*fff*

\* Click  to hear the sound sample.



In ‘Ronde’, Ravel’s delight in the sounds and rhythms of his words is made particularly apparent. Ravel asked his friends for help in collecting his lists of fantastic beasts, but their ordering, assonances and cadences are his alone. Lines such as the tongue-twisting ‘Diables, diablots, diabolins’ and the galloping triplets of ‘Hamadryades, dryades, naïades, ménades, thyades’ are as satisfying and colourful to recite as to sing.

Ravel also uses the expressive sonorities of the French language to sketch his characters and scenes. In ‘Ronde’, for example, the lines ‘Des satyresses, des ogresses et des babaïagas / Des centaures et des diabesses, Goules sortant du sabbat...’ are full of hissing menace, the slower ‘ess’ sounds of the first words viciously snapped off in the final sharp ‘sortant’ and ‘sabbat’ (Example 3).

**Example 3:** “Ronde” (bass only), bars 37–42. 

In the rigidly strophic ‘Nicolette’, the sounds of the words are an important element in the creation of individual characters. Ravel’s description of Nicolette’s wolf is particularly vivid: ‘Rencontra vieux loup grognant / Tout hérissé, l’œil brillant...’ *Grognant* [growling] has a naturally onomatopoeic quality and the ‘o’ [ā] and ‘ou’ [u] vowels in the couplet and the five rolled ‘r’s give the wolf his character as effectively as the description of his ‘bristling’ fur and his ‘glowing’ eyes. Similarly, there is an earthy repulsiveness in what Dumesnil called the ‘Rabelasian’ assonances (Dumesnil 1938: 126) used to describe the lord – ‘tors, laid, puant et ventru’ [‘twisted, ugly, smelly and pot-bellied’]. Throughout the song, Ravel exaggerates his *dramatis personæ* to the point of caricature through his choice of rhyming sounds: the wolf adopts the deep, rounded ‘o’ [ā] vowel, the beautiful (but two-dimensional) page rhymes on the light ‘ee’ [i] vowel, while the words of the lord accentuate the sharp French u [y], a sound redolent of disgust. Like the big bad wolf who will ‘huff and... puff and *blow* your house down’, Ravel’s *loup grognant* and *seigneur chénu* are the creations of a storyteller reciting a fairytale with engaging dramatic effect.

Perhaps the only other French composer to have placed such importance on the sounds of the language was Clément Janequin (c.1485–?1559), whose tradition Ravel’s *Trois chansons* clearly follow (Watkins 2003: 172).<sup>4</sup> Janequin’s onomatopoeic *chansons* (of which *La guerre*, *La chasse* and *Le chant des oiseaux* are amongst the most well-known examples) imitate birdsong, horns, drums and trumpets, dogs and all sorts of other natural and manmade sounds. This is done principally through the combination and repetition of meaningless syllables (‘Von pa ti pa toc pa ti pa toc...’). Echoes of Janequin are particularly apparent in ‘Nicolette’, where the tenors and altos sing ‘Ta ka ta ka ta ka...’ in imitation of the sounds of Nicolette’s clogs as she flees from the wolf (Example 4). Scott Messing notes that in this passage Ravel also mirrors Janequin’s use of rapidly repeated pitches (Messing 1988/1996: 54). While Janequin’s onomatopoeia is used almost exclusively in the creation of soundscapes, Ravel adopted a more complex and multilayered approach to his poetry and its setting: the words themselves are beautifully crafted, expressive and meaningful but their sounds give an added layer of onomatopoeic resonance and suggestion. In the *Trois chansons* and in *L’Enfant et les sortilèges*, Ravel is able to create complex imagery not only through picturesque language and his colourful musical setting, but through the manipulation of the very sounds of the words themselves, a technique that has no parallel across the vocal canon.



Example 4: “Nicolette”, bars 22–23. 

**Vivo**

A per - te d'ha - lei - ne, s'en - fuit Ni - co - lette, A\_\_\_\_

Ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka

Ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka ta ka

A per - te d'ha - lei - ne, s'en - fuit Ni - co - lette, A\_\_\_\_


As Ravel used the sounds of his words to create character, so he used the structures of his poetry to subtly mirror and reinforce his desired atmosphere. There is, as Johnson and Stokes point out in *A French Song Companion*, ‘a certain angularity and stiffness’ in the text of *Noël des jouets* (Johnson and Stokes 2000: 452). Its meticulous rhyme scheme (ABBA in each stanza) governs lines that seem to lack a natural sense of metre and flow. In most poems this quality would detract from the overall effect; here it seems to enhance it. The halting awkwardness of Ravel’s words ensures we never forget that, although they may move and sing, his toys are made of enamel and painted sugar after all.

While the poetry of *Noël des jouets* appears to aim for a deliberately stilted effect, there are intricate patterns and subtle emphases in its verses. Ravel’s syllabic arrangement follows his rhyme scheme: in the first, third and fifth stanzas, the first and last lines (the A rhymes) have eight syllables and the second and third lines (the B rhymes) nine. In the second and fourth stanzas this arrangement is inverted, so the lines run 9/8/8/9. While Ravel freely shifts feet and emphasis across the lines of the poem, he tends to pair anapæsts with iambs (which stress the last syllable: di di da / di da), and dactyls with trochees (stress on the first syllable: da di di / da di). He thus ensures that, while the lines shift between two- and three-syllable feet, the emphasis remains on the first or last syllable of each group. These shifting feet become an important expressive device: in the second verse, the predominance of dactylic feet has a lulling effect that matches the image of Mary watching over her sugar Child. In the last two lines of the third verse, meanwhile, the sudden shift from amphibrachs (stress on the second of three syllables – di da di) to a dactyl followed by blunt trochees is a dramatic effect that emphasises the Child’s danger.

Car, près de là, sous un sapin  
 Furtif, emmitoufflé dans l'ombre  
 [Du bois, Bel-] [zé-buth, le] [chien som-bre]  
     amphibrach      amphibrach      amphibrach  
 [Guet-te l'En-] [fant de] [su-cre] [peint]  
     dactyl      trochee      trochee      trochee  
 (Italicised syllables indicate stresses; the emphases follow Ravel’s setting.)



Ravel heightens the impact of the metric alteration here with hemiolas in the left hand of the piano part, while the trochees are set to duplets that pull against the berceuse-like 6/8 metre. The first line of the next verse employs the same dactyl plus trochee combination (*Mais les beaux anges in-cas-sab-les*). This line too is set to duplet crotchets, a small gesture that reflects Ravel's awareness and deliberate reflection of his metrical shifts. Here, though, the return of the gentle descending piano figurations of the opening bars has a reassuring effect that serves to calm the agitation of the preceding line (Example 5).

**Example 5: *Noël des jouets*, bars 29–40.** 

bois Bel-zé-buth, le chien som-bre.

32 Guet-te l'En-fant de su-cre peint

35

38 Mais les beaux an-ges in-cas-sab-les





The fluidity of accent and poetic rhythm here is a characteristic typical of French verse, which tends to be – as Paul Roberts has observed – more flexible and musical than the ‘strong, dramatic emphases and ruggedness of contour’ commonly observed in English poetry ([Roberts 1996: 93](#)).

Like *Noël des jouets*, the *Trois chansons* all employ regularly rhyming verse forms, although each adopts a different rhyme scheme and metric pattern. Here, though, there is no ‘mechanical’ awkwardness in Ravel’s texts. The lines of each poem flow naturally and musically, never misplacing an accent or syllabic shift. Each of the *Trois chansons* emphasises its regular structure by the exact or almost exact repetition of melodies in each stanza. These rigidly strophic settings are unique across all of Ravel’s vocal writing.

‘Nicolette’ is bound by a particularly inflexible rhyme scheme, AABABA, with the repetition of Nicolette’s name forming the B rhyme in three of the four verses (the B rhyme in the first verse is also *ette* – ‘paquerette / guillerette’). The first four lines of each verse consist of seven syllables and the final two twelve and nine respectively, and the whole is organised in trochaic feet (*Ni-co-lette à la ves-prée / s’a-lait pro-me-ner au pré*).

‘Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis’ comprises six four-line stanzas, each of which has for its second line the refrain ‘Mon [or *ton*] ami z-il est à la guerre’. Four of the stanzas use ‘i’ rhymes on the other three lines; the remaining two offer slightly different rhyming patterns but are connected by the repetition of the phrase ‘couleur de neige’ on the third line. Syllabically the verses are arranged as follows (again, the emphases accord with the placement of strong beats in Ravel’s setting):

*Trois beaux oi-seaux du pa-ra-dis*  
*Mon a-mi z-il est à la guer-re*  
*Trois beaux oi-seaux du pa-ra-dis*  
*Ont pas-sé par ic-i*

Here, succeeding lines alternate between first-syllable stresses (the dactyls/trochees in lines 1 and 3) and last-syllable stresses (lines 2 and 4; the final syllable of *guerre* is the barely articulated schwa, so the stress on *guer-* sounds effectively as the final syllable). This arrangement seems to formalise the freer patterns of *Noël des jouets*.

‘Ronde’ uses the most flexible rhyme scheme of the three songs (necessitated by its vast and complicated lists of beasts), but each fourteen-line stanza conforms to an identical syllabic pattern and there is a multiplicity of internal rhymes and assonances. Here too Ravel alternates dactyls and trochees. Each verse opens with trochaic feet (*N’a-lez pas au bois d’Or-mon-de*), but as the creatures are reeled off, trochees blend with dactyls (*Des faun-es, des fol-lets, des la-mi-es*). As each verse moves to each climax, the trochees disappear altogether (*Des en-chan-teurs et des ma-ges, des stry-ges, des syl-phes, des moi-nes bour-rus, des cy-clopes...*). The last line of each verse returns us to trochaic stresses (*N’a-lez pas au bois d’Or-mon-de*). Musically, the opposition of trochees and dactyls is made explicit by the use of duplet and triplet quavers (which are heard against each other in bars 16–20 and 43–48) (Example 6). Ravel’s poetic and musical juggling of stress and syllable here echoes the sense of conflict between the stolid elders and the young people in search of adventure: the triplets/dactyls can never quite break away from the relentless reality of the duplets/trochees.

In an article published in the journal *Musica* in March 1911, Ravel expressed his views on the connections between verse forms and song settings:

It seems to me that for truly poignant and emotional situations, free verse is preferable to regular verse. The latter, however, can produce very beautiful things, on condition that the composer is willing to disappear entirely behind the poet and agrees to follow his rhythms step by step, cadence by cadence, without ever displacing an accent or even an inflection. In a word, if the musician wishes to set regular verse, his music will simply underline the poem and sustain it, but will be unable to interpret it or add anything to it. I believe that if one is specifically dealing with emotion and fantasy, it is preferable to adopt free verse. (Reproduced in [Orenstein 1990: 338](#))



Example 6: "Ronde", bars 15–28. 

*cre - - -*

*p* Des chèv re pieds, des gno mes, des dé mons, Des loups ga rous, des el-fes, des myr-mi- dons, Des en chan teur set des

Des chèv re pieds, des gno mes, des dé mons, Des loups ga rous, des el-fes, des myr-mi dons, Des en chan teur set des

la la la la la la la la la la la la

la la la la la la la la la la la la

*scen - - - do - - -*

ma- ges, des stry- ges, des syl- phes, des moi- nes- bour - rus, des cy - clo- pes, des djinns, go - be- lins, kor - ri -

ma- ges, des stry- ges, des syl- phes, des moi- nes bour - rus, des cy - clo- pes, des djinns, go - be- lins, kor - ri -

la la la la Tra la la la Tra la la ta la ta la ta la

la la la la Tra la la la Tra la la la

*f*

gans, né - cro- mans, ko- bolds, Ah!

gans, né - cro- mans, ko- bolds, N'al - lez pas au bois d'Or mon - de, N'al - lez pas au bois d'Or- mon - de,

ta la ta la ta la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la

ta la ta la ta la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la la





Given that about half of Ravel's songs are settings of regular verse and that his music never does 'disappear entirely' behind the poetry, one should perhaps take these comments with a grain of salt. Yet a famous passage from Jules Renard's *Journal* regarding Ravel's 1906 song cycle *Histoires naturelles* (which use an unrhymed prose text) quotes Ravel expressing a similar viewpoint: 'I did not intend to add anything, only to interpret them ... I have tried to say in music what you say with words ... I think and feel in music, and should like to think and feel the same things as you' ([Orenstein 1991: 52](#)).

In any case, the last line of the quotation above is of particular interest, because in both *Noël des jouets* and the *Trois chansons* (texts which deal 'specifically' with fantasy and fairytale) Ravel uses rhyming verse forms. *Noël des jouets* is through-composed, and this quality, combined with its shifts of feet and emphasis, obscures the formality of its poetic structure. The song's cast of inanimate characters also seems better conveyed through a regularly rhyming poetic structure. The case of the *Trois chansons* is rather more complex. Ravel certainly follows his own guidelines for text-setting in these three songs: he never does displace an accent or inflection and he adheres meticulously to the rhythms and patterns dictated by the flow of the text. Is Ravel thus repudiating his statement that free verse is preferable in dealing with fantasy? Perhaps not. The formal constructions and implacable metric and rhythmic demands of the *Trois chansons* serve to emphasise the distortion of their fairytale narratives (Nicolette elopes with the repulsive lord; the birds bring not the absent lover but word of his death; the magical creatures have been banished from the woods of Ormonde).

Just over a decade after he completed the *Trois chansons*, Ravel's second opera premièred in Monte Carlo. As the curtain rises on *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, we meet a bored and restless Child seated at his desk, listening to the purr of the cat and the kettle boiling on the fire. The Child refuses to do his homework; he would rather go for a walk, eat up all the cakes, pull the cat's tail and cut off the squirrel's – but most of all, he wants to 'put Maman in the corner'. His mother enters and reproaches him for his laziness. He sticks his tongue out at her, and she condemns him to stay by himself until dinner, with dry bread to eat and no sugar in his tea. After she leaves, he is seized by a 'frenzy of perversity'. He shrieks and stamps, breaks the teapot and cup, pricks the caged squirrel with his iron pen, pulls the cat's tail, upsets the tea-kettle, wrenches the pendulum from the clock, rips up the books on the table and seizes the poker to stir up the fire and tear the wallpaper. 'Satiated with devastation', he goes to rest in a large armchair, but – 'O surprise! The arms of the chair fall apart, the seat steals away and the chair, hobbling heavily like an enormous toad, removes itself.' One by one the injured objects come to life and condemn the Child for his destructive acts. He finds himself in the garden, where amongst the birds, insects and little creatures there are more reminders of the havoc he has wrought. He becomes lonely and afraid and calls for his mother, rousing the fury of the animals, who unite against him, each attempting to be the one to harm him. In their frenzy a little squirrel is injured and the Child takes a ribbon from his neck and binds up the wounded paw before falling back weakly. Suddenly, there is a 'profound silence, stupor' amongst the animals. The Child has finally atoned for his wrongdoing with his act of love and reparation. Repenting their own violence, the animals try, hesitantly at first and then with confidence, to repeat the word the Child had sobbed: 'Maman!'

Here we find many of the hallmarks of the fairytale narrative: a timeless setting, unnamed characters (the Child, the Fire, the Frog etc.), reciprocal events and actions (the destructive Child is himself injured and becomes 'good'), a happy ending that suggests a clear moral, and a narrative shaped by 'magical' events.

The creation of the opera's libretto and the degree of collaboration between Ravel and Colette are beyond the scope of this essay. Nevertheless, the manipulation of language in several key scenes bears a striking resemblance to Ravel's earlier poetic ventures. The penultimate scene in the first half of the opera is described in the libretto as a 'Ronde'. With a tape measure for a belt,  $\pi$  for a hat, and armed with a ruler, a Little Old Man [Le Petit Vieillard] dashes around the stage shouting out absurd sums, to the bewilderment of the Child. The Man (Arithmetic personified) is accompanied by a chorus of Numbers, who, as the 'Ronde' becomes 'folle', madly repeat the phrases 'quatre' et quat" (pronounced kat-e-kat) and 'cinq et sept' (Example 7).

The repeated consonant and vowel sounds here provide an obvious connection to the almost identical 'ta ka ta ka ta ka' of 'Nicolette' and the 'satyresses' and 'ogresses' of Ravel's earlier 'Ronde'. Later, at the opera's climactic moment, the animals' overlapping cries of 'Unissons-nous!' again use the sharply hissed 's' to create an atmosphere of danger, cutting through the textures of the full orchestra with striking percussive and dramatic effect.



**Example 7:** *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, Rehearsal Figure 91. 

LES CHIFFRES  
*crié*

Cinq et sept, cinq et sept, cinq et sept

Quatre et quat', quatre et quat', quatre et quat', quatre et

There are other, less direct parallels between the *Trois chansons* and the Arithmetic scene. The lines ‘Millimètre, centimètre, décimètre, décimètre, hectomètre, kilomètre, myriamètre, faut t’y mettre, quelle fête!’ take the same delight in whirling rhythms and dancing assonances as did Ravel’s ‘hamadryades, dryades, naïades...’ The marvellous Janequin-like onomatopoeia of ‘Deux robinets coulent [kulə], coulent, coulent, coulent...’ [Two taps flow, flow, flow, flow...], meanwhile, recalls the ‘loup grognant’ and ‘seigneur chénu’ of ‘Nicolette’.

Ravel himself created the lyrics – if so they can be called – of the ‘Cat’s Duet’ (the libretto specifies only ‘Duo Miaoulé’). Not content to repeat a miaou or two in the manner of Rossini, he spent hours ‘conversing’ with his family of Siamese cats and summoned his friend Hélène Jourdan-Morhange to imitate them on her violin. Jourdan-Morhange recalled that the enthusiasm of their imitations brought Ravel’s cats into the room in some distress ([Jourdan-Morhange 1938: 197](#))! His comprehensive feline vocabulary (‘môrnão’, ‘mi-inhou’, ‘méinhou’, ‘mêrâhon’...) is testimony to both his love of musical experimentation, and his awareness of the infinite subtleties of both the feline and the human voice. The cats conclude with precisely the sort of noises that have awakened most of us in the dark depths of night, as Example 8 demonstrates:

**Example 8:** *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, Rehearsal Figure 99. 

La Chatte

Houin houin hon houin houin\_hon, houin houin-hon houin-hon, hin...

Le Chat

hon houin houin hon, houin houin-hon houin-hon houin-hon, hin...

*8<sup>ve</sup>*

A [1992 paper by Marie-Pierre Lassus](#) (‘Ravel l’Enchanteur: Structure poétique et structure musicale dans *L’Enfant et les sortilèges*) explored elements of the creation and setting of the text of *L’Enfant et les sortilèges*. This is the only extant study to approach the use of language in the opera from the perspective of its aural and dramatic effect. Lassus found that many of the *sortilèges* were given additional depth of character through the emphasis and opposition of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ vowel and consonant sounds. The consonants p/t/k and the clenched-teeth fricatives of ‘je’ [ʒ], and s, together with the ‘a’ [chat] and nasal ɔ̃ [bon] vowels are ‘hard’ sounds. They characterise the Child’s opening monologue, the Clock,



the Arithmetic scene, the Fire and the Teapot: the Child sings 'J'ai pas envie de faire ma page' (Figure 2 of the Durand orchestral score); and the Teapot's scene opens with the line 'Black and costaud, black and chic...' (Figure 29 of the Durand piano-vocal score) (Lassus 1992: 43-44).

The scenes of the Princess, the Cats, the Dragonfly and the Squirrel make more use of 'soft' sounds: the consonants b/d/g, the fricative z [rose], the light i [libre] and  $\epsilon$  [aime and cherche], and the slow  $\emptyset$  [jeu]  $\alpha$  [cœur] and o [rose] vowels. The contrast between these two linguistic affects can be seen in a comparison of the Fire's words with the Dragonfly's:

[The Fire]

Je rechauffe les bons

Je brûle les méchants

Petit barbare, barbare imprudent

Tu as insulté à tous les dieux bienveillant

Qui tendent entre le malheur et toi

Le fragile barrière!

...

Gare au feu dansant!

Gare, gare, gare, gare à toi!

[The Dragonfly]

Où es tu?

Je te cherche

Le filet

Il t'a prise

O toi chère

Longue et frêle

Tes turquoises

Tes topazes

L'air qui t'aime

Les regrette

Moins que moi...

In addition to the 'hard' a and  $\tilde{\text{O}}$  vowels and  $\text{ʒ}$ , s and f fricatives in the Fire's aria, the proliferation of rolled r sounds (the double helpings in the repeated 'barbare' is particularly striking) gives a threatening percussive edge to her words. Lassus also observes that Ravel's choice of the 'a' vowel for the Fire's coloratura passages – 'the most intense sound in the language' – has an immediate dramatic effect in 'overpowering the will of the Child' (Lassus 1992: 42). The Dragonfly's aria, by contrast, is filled with the softer 'i',  $\epsilon$  and 'z' sounds. The drawn-out, gentle effect of the  $\epsilon$  vowel combined with the *ch* [ʃ] fricatives (*chère*) contrasts sharply with the combination of *ch* with the Fire's nasal vowels (*méchant/meʃā*). Similarly, the 'hard' f sound of the Fire's 'réchauffe' is softened by its succeeding vowels in the Dragonfly's *filet* and *frêle*. The 'sweet' extended vowels and soft consonants are also evident in the Squirrel's 'mes beaux yeux' and the Child's 'toi, le cœur de la rose' (Lassus 1992: 45).

In her article, Lassus focussed principally on the words of the opera, without examining how those distinctive affects were recognised and conveyed in its musical score. Ravel's settings of the texts in fact clearly demonstrate his awareness of these subtleties of sound and language. In the Dragonfly's aria, the soft *ʃ* syllables often fall on the first beat of the bar and are subtly emphasised: *cherche*, at Fig. 107+3, is accented; *prise* (107+7) is reinforced by brief glissandi in the harp and the contrabass (in harmonics), while on the word *chère* (107+9) bass clarinet, bassoons and horn enter with sustained chords. Similarly, in the waltz of the Bat, the Child's line 'sans mère!', in which the 'soft'  $\epsilon$  (Fig. 115+6) contrasts with preceding 'hard' phrases of the Bat ('Rends-la moi!'), is accompanied by bowed strings that stand out from the pizzicato accompaniment in the preceding bars.

Throughout the opera, Ravel frequently uses winds and pizzicato strings to reinforce the attack of 'hard' sounds (the Fire's aria, for example), while 'soft' sounds are given added sweetness by *arco* strings. At the start of the opera, the Child's opening monologue is accompanied by a pair of oboes (together with a solo contrabass playing *arco* in harmonics, a sound so unlike the characteristic string timbre that it can be overlooked here). Maman's first lines mirror the sounds of the Child: his 'J'ai pas envie de faire ma page' ['Don't want to do my lesson'] and her 'Bébé a été sage?' ['Has Baby been good?'], Fig. 3+3] share the same hard 'a' and incisive 'e' vowels, together with the consonant sounds f, t and z. These



opening lines are accompanied by winds (clarinets and bassoons). However, when Maman sings the ‘softer’ words ‘Regrettes-tu ta paresse?’ [‘Do you regret your laziness?’, Fig. 4], she is accompanied by gentler string chords (Example 9).

**Example 9:** *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, Rehearsal Figure 3.2. 

The musical score for Example 9 is presented in two systems. The first system features the vocal line for Maman and the accompaniment for Clarinets and bassoons. The vocal line begins with the lyrics 'Bé-bé a é-té sage? Il a fi-ni sa page? Oh, tu n'as rien fait! Tu'. The accompaniment for Clarinets and bassoons is marked 'Suivez' and includes dynamics such as *p* and *mf*. The second system shows the vocal line continuing with 'as é-cl-bous-sé d'en-cre le ta-pis! Re-gret-tes tu ta par-resse?'. The accompaniment for strings is marked '2 vlms, 1 vla, 1 vc [Soft sounds]' and includes dynamics like *p* and *espress*. A box with the number '4' is placed above the vocal line in the second system.

Both Ravel and Colette seem to have perceived language in terms of sounds, rhythms and resonances. In the opera’s Garden scene, the croaking frog’s line *Kékékékécékéça?* (i.e. ‘Qu’est ce que c’est que ça?’; ‘What’s that?’) could have come from the pen of either author. A letter from Ravel to Ida Godebska written in 1908 includes the line ‘Monday I received a card from... Bourbonne-les-Bains! Then, nothing. Kécèkécèkécélà?’ (Orenstein 1990: 98). Orenstein traced this onomatopoeic touch to the libretto of Ravel’s unfinished opera *La Cloche engloutie* (Orenstein 1990: 99); Henri Prunières noted that a much earlier equivalent can be found in Aristophanes’ *The Frogs* (Prunières 1925: 108). Regardless of the authorship of particular lines and phrases, the use of language in the libretto of *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, together with Ravel’s subtle emphasis of characteristic vowel and consonant sounds, repeatedly illustrates the artistic affinity between composer and librettist. André Mirambel wrote in 1938 that:

Ravel had the qualities of a prosodist, not only in his choice of subjects... but also in his handling of musical language, which he constructed in the manner of a [written or spoken] phrase; one could say that Ravel elevated musical language to the heights of musical prose. (Mirambel 1938: 116)

Were the sense of this passage inverted, it could apply equally well to Colette’s writing. She had a profound understanding of and sympathy for the French language and her sentences were always assembled with as much care as a musical phrase. Her lifelong love of music, her considerable musical literacy and her many friendships with musicians and composers undoubtedly contributed to the development of a prose style notable for its fluidity and its satisfying and expressive rhythms and assonances.<sup>2</sup> Like Ravel, Colette could make her point with exquisite elegance combined with simplicity and straightforwardness; like him her work juxtaposed insight and tenderness with sparkling wit. These shared qualities and similar perceptions far outweigh the disparate personalities of two individual and charismatic artists and offer a revealing insight into one of the most skilful meldings of words and music in the operatic repertory.



Hélène Jourdan-Morhange wrote that Ravel proved himself a poet not only in his own writing but also in his unerring choices of texts. She noted that he was attracted by writers – Clément Marot, Evariste Parny, Franc-Nohain, Mallarmé, Jules Renard, Léon-Paul Fargue – whom few other composers set, their poetry seemingly unsuited to being ‘clothed with music’ ([Jourdan-Morhange 1945: 134](#)). Yet, as Jourdan-Morhange writes, Ravel was not repelled by the difficulty of setting the ‘unmusical’ poems of his chosen writers:

...on the contrary. Filled with wonder by a sonnet, a lament or any other sort of poetry, he would express its beauty, its harmony, without ever becoming its slave, and it is this mixture of respect for the poem combined with his own musical personality that gives to his songs that very special flavour of freedom based upon a foundation of necessary restraint. ([Jourdan-Morhange 1945: 134](#))

Ravel’s sympathetic affinity with his native language is immediately apparent in both his own poetry and his meticulous and inspired settings of the poetry of others. However, it is in his works most closely connected with fantasy and fairytale that Ravel made most expressive use of the resonances and rhythms of his words. Regular and natural rhythmic patterns, expressive inflections, and illustrative rhymes and assonances are defining elements of the fairytale narrative, particularly when read aloud. Ravel’s emphasis on the sounds of the language in *Noël des jouets*, the *Trois chansons* and *L’Enfant et les sortilèges* suggests a deft homage to the traditions of fairytales and story-telling.

In his insightful 1938 analysis, René Dumesnil surmised:

To write in verse, to count the feet and align the rhymes, is not truly to be a poet. However, to seek and to divine the euphonic accord of words and ideas, of harmony and verbal sonorities, the metre within the structure, the true internal music that imparts a profound resonance to the verse which will find its echo in the ear of the reader, to use to the best of one’s knowledge the power to suggest particular images: *that* is what it is to be a poet. In this art, Ravel acquired the techniques just as he learnt his musician’s trade. ([Dumensil 1938: 124-125](#))

Dumesnil acknowledges here that ‘Ravel poète’ and ‘Ravel musicien’ were one and the same. Beyond the colourful imagery conveyed through the sense of his texts, Ravel loved the musical and dramatic possibilities inherent within the sounds of the language itself. His love and understanding of language informed his approach to musical composition, just as his awareness of musical sound resonated in his understanding and creation of poetry.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Janequin’s *chansons* had been regularly performed in Paris since the 1840s; *La bataille de Marignan*, *Les cris de Paris* and *Le chant des oiseaux* were particularly popular. The Chanteurs de Saint-Gervais were the most notable performers of this repertoire around the turn of the century, including *La bataille de Marignan* at their 1900 Exposition Universelle concert ([Ellis, 2005: 106, 157–8](#)). Nine years later, the Orchestre de la Société des concerts du Conservatoire included Janequin songs in their concert of 28 March 1909 (recorded in the diary of [Marguerite de Saint-Marceaux, ed. Myriam Chimènes, 2007: 541](#)).

<sup>2</sup> Like Debussy, with whom she was acquainted, Colette wrote music reviews for *Gil Blas* around the turn of the century (see [Langham Smith: 1977](#)). In *Mes apprentissages* (1936) she wrote movingly of her affection for Fauré; she also knew Déodat de Séverac.



## APPENDIX: TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS

### *Noël des jouets*

Le troupeau verni des moutons  
Roule en tumulte vers la crèche  
Les lapins tambours, brefs et rêches,  
Couvrent leurs aigres mirlitons.

Vierge Marie, en crinoline,  
Ses yeux d'émail, sans cesse ouverts  
En attendant Bonhomme hiver  
Veille Jésus qui se dodine.

Car, près de là, sous un sapin  
Furtif, emmitoufflé dans l'ombre  
Du bois, Belzébuth, le chien sombre  
Guette l'Enfant de sucre peint.

Mais les beaux anges incassables  
Suspendus par des fils d'archal  
Du haut de l'arbuste hiémal  
Assurent la paix des étables

Et leur vol de clinquant vermeil  
Qui cliquette en bruits symétriques  
S'accorde au bétail mécanique  
Dont la voix grêle bêle  
Noël! Noël! Noël!

### *The Toys' Christmas*

The varnished flock of sheep  
Rolls in tumult towards the crèche  
The rabbit drummers, small and rough  
Cover their shrill reed pipes.

Virgin Mary, in crinoline  
Her enamelled eyes always open  
Waiting for Father Christmas  
Watches Jesus, who is sleeping.

For, nearby, under a pine tree,  
Furtive, cloaked in the shadow  
Of the woods, Belzébuth, the dark dog  
Watches the Child of painted sugar.

But the beautiful unbreakable angels  
Suspended by threads of brass wire  
From the top of the winter bush  
Assure the peace of the stables.

And their glittering vermilion flight  
That jangles in symmetrical sounds  
Harmonises with the mechanical animals,  
whose thin voices bleat  
Noël! Noël! Noël!





**Trois chansons pour chœur mixte sans accompagnement**  
**Three songs for unaccompanied mixed choir**

**I. Nicolette**

Nicolette, à la vesprée  
S'allait promener au pré  
Cueillir la paquerette  
La jonquille et le muguet  
Toute sautillante, toute guillerette  
Lorgnant ci, là, de tous les côtés.

Rencontra vieux loup grognant  
Tout hérissé, l'oeil brillant,  
Hé là! ma Nicolette,  
Viens-tu pas chez Mère-Grand?  
À perte d'haleine s'enfuit Nicolette  
Laissant là cornette et socques blancs.

Rencontra page joli  
Chausses bleus et pourpoint gris  
Hé là! ma Nicolette,  
Veux-tu pas un doux ami?  
Sage sans retourna, pauvre Nicolette,  
Très lentement, le coeur bien marri.

Rencontra seigneur chenu,  
Tors, laid, puant et ventru  
Hé là! ma Nicolette,  
Veux-tu pas tous ces écus?  
Vite fuit dans ses bras, bonne Nicolette,  
Jamais au pré n'est plus revenue.

**I. Nicolette**

Nicolette, in the evening,  
Went walking in the field  
To pick daisies,  
Jonquils and lilies of the valley.  
Skipping and cheerful,  
Looking here, there, on every side.

She met a growling old wolf,  
All bristling, its eyes shining,  
'Hey there Nicolette,  
Aren't you coming to Grandmother's?'  
Out of breath Nicolette ran away,  
Leaving there her mob-cap and white clogs.

She met a pretty young page,  
Blue breeches and grey doublet  
'Hey there, Nicolette,  
Would you like a gentle friend?'  
Wisely, she turned away,  
Very slowly, her heart grieved.

She met a white-haired old lord,  
Twisted, ugly, smelly and pot-bellied  
'Hey there Nicolette,  
Would you like all of this money?'  
Quickly she was in his arms, good Nicolette  
Never came back to the field again.



## II. Trois beaux oiseaux du Paradis

Trois beaux oiseaux du paradis  
(Mon ami z-il est à la guerre)  
Trois beaux oiseaux du paradis  
Ont passé par ici.

Le premier était plus beaux que ciel  
(Mon ami z-il est à la guerre)  
Le second était couleur de neige  
Le troisième rouge vermeil.

Beaux oiselets du Paradis  
(Mon ami z-il est à la guerre)  
Beaux oiselets du Paradis,  
Qu'apportez par ici?

'J'apporte un regard couleur d'azur  
(Ton ami z-il est à la guerre)'  
'Et moi, sur beau front couleur de neige  
Un baiser dois mettre, encore plus pur.'

Oiseau vermeil du Paradis  
(Mon ami z-il est à la guerre)  
Oiseau vermeil du Paradis  
Que portez-vous ainsi?

'Un joli coeur tout cramoisi  
(Ton ami z-il est à la guerre)'  
Ah! Je sens mon coeur qui froidit,  
Emportez-le aussi.

## II. Three beautiful birds from Paradise

Three beautiful birds from Paradise  
(My love is at the war)  
Three beautiful birds from Paradise  
Passed this way.

The first was bluer than the sky  
(My love is at the war)  
The second was the colour of snow,  
The third vermilion red.

Beautiful little birds from Paradise  
(My love is at the war)  
Beautiful little birds from Paradise,  
What are you bringing here?

'I bring an azure-coloured gaze  
(Your love is at the war)'  
'And I, on your fair brow, the colour of snow  
Must place a kiss, still purer.'

Vermilion bird from Paradise  
(My love is at the war)  
Vermilion bird from Paradise,  
What are you bringing here?

'A pretty heart all crimson  
(Your love is at the war)'  
Ah! I feel my heart growing cold  
Bear it with you too.

### III. Ronde

(Les vieilles)

N'allez pas au bois d'Ormonde, jeunes filles, n'allez pas au bois:

Il y a plein de satyres, de centaures, de malins sorciers, des farfadets et des incubes, des ogres, des lutins, des faunes, des follets, des lamies, diables, diablots, diabolins, des chèvre-pieds, des gnomes, des démons, des loups-garous, des elfes, des myrmidons, des enchanteurs et des mages, des stryges, des elfes, des moines bourrus, des cyclopes, des djinns, gobelins, korrigans, nécromans, kobolds....  
N'allez pas au bois d'Ormonde.

(Les vieux)

N'allez pas au bois d'Ormonde, jeunes garçons, n'allez pas au bois:

Il y a plein de faunesses, de bacchantes, et de males fées, des satyresses, des ogresses et des babaïagas, des centaresses et des diablesses, goules sortant du sabbat, des farfadettes et des démons, des larves, des nymphes, des myrmidones, hamadryades, dryades, naïades, ménades, thyades, follettes, lémures, gnomides, succubes, gorgones, gobelines....  
N'allez pas au bois d'Ormonde.

(Filles et garçons)

N'irons plus au bois d'Ormonde, hélas!

Plus jamais n'irons au bois

Il n'y a plus de satyres, plus de nymphes ni de males fées, plus de farfadets, plus d'incubes, plus d'ogres, de lutins, de faunes, de follets, de lamies, diables, diablots, diabolins, de chèvre-pieds, de gnomes, de démons, de loups-garous, ni d'elfes, de myrmidons, plus d'enchanteurs ni de mages, de stryges, de sylphes, de moines bourrus, de cyclopes, de djinns, de diabloteaux, d'éfrits, d'aegipans, de sylvains, gobelins, korrigans, nécromans, kobolds....

N'allez pas au bois d'Ormonde.

Les malavisées vieilles, les malavisés vieux les ont effarouchés.

### III. Roundelay

(The old women)

Do not go to the woods of Ormond, young girls, do not go to the woods:

They are full of satyrs, centaurs, wicked sorcerers, hobgoblins and incubi, ogres, sprites, fauns, spirits, monsters, devils, imps, little imps, goat-footed creatures, gnomes, demons, werewolves, elves, myrmidons, enchanters and magi, vampires, sylphs, curmudgeonly monks, cyclops, djinns, goblins, wicked fairies, necromancers, kobolds....  
Do not go to the woods of Ormonde.

(The old men)

Do not go to the woods of Ormonde, young boys, do not go to the woods:

They are full of fauns, bacchantes and wicked fairies, she-satyrs, ogresses and babi-yagas, centaurs and she-devils, ghouls coming from their Sabbath, hobgoblins and demons, worm-creatures, nymphs, myrmidons, hamadryads, dryads, naiads, maenads, thyades, spirits, lemurs, gnomes, succubi, gorgons, goblins....  
Do not go to the woods of Ormonde.

(Girls and boys)

We will no longer go to the woods of Ormonde, alas!

Never again will we go to the woods

There are no more satyrs, no more nymphs or bad fairies, no more hobgoblins, no more incubi, no more ogres, or sprites, fauns, spirits, monsters, devils, imps, little imps, goat-footed creatures, gnomes, demons, were-wolves, nor elves, myrmidons, no more enchanters, nor magi, vampires, sylphs, curmudgeonly monks, cyclops, djinns, little devils, elfrits, Pans, woodland spirits, goblins, wicked spirits, necromancers, kobolds....

Do not go to the woods of Ormonde.

The foolish old women, the foolish old men have frightened them away.



## REFERENCES

- Colette. 1936/1990. *Mes apprentissages*. In *Œuvres*, vol. III. Paris: Gallimard.
- Dumesnil, René. 1938. 'Maurice Ravel poète'. *La revue musicale* 19:187 (Special number dedicated to Ravel), pp. 124–7.
- Ellis, Katherine. 2005. *Interpreting the musical past: Early music in nineteenth-century France*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hoérée, Arthur. 1925 'Mélodies et œuvre lyrique'. *La revue musicale* 6:6 (Special number dedicated to Ravel), pp. 46–64.
- Johnson, Graham and Richard Stokes. 2000. *A French Song Companion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jourdan-Morhange, Hélène. 1938. 'Mon ami Ravel'. *La revue musicale* 19:187 (Special number dedicated to Ravel), pp. 192–7.
- Jourdan-Morhange, Hélène. 1945. *Ravel et nous*. Geneva: Milieu du monde.
- Langham Smith, Richard. 1977. 'Colette as Critic'. *Music and Musicians* 25, pp. 26–8.
- Lassus, Marie-Pierre. 1992. 'Ravel, l'Enchanteur: Structure poétique et structure musicale dans *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*'. *Analyse Musicale* 26, pp. 40–7.
- Messing, Scott. 1988/1996. *Neoclassicism in Music: From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press.
- Mirambel, André. 1938. 'L'inspiration grecque dans l'œuvre de Ravel'. *La revue musicale* 19:187 (Special number dedicated to Ravel), pp. 112–18.
- Nichols, Roger, ed. 1987. *Ravel remembered*. London: Faber.
- Orenstein, Arbie, ed. 1990. *A Ravel Reader: Correspondence, Articles, Interviews*. New York: Columbia.
- Orenstein, Arbie. 1975/1991. *Ravel, Man and Musician*. New York: Dover.
- Prunières, Henri. 1925. '*L'Enfant et les sortilèges* à l'Opéra de Monte Carlo'. *La revue musicale* 6:6 (Special number dedicated to Ravel), pp. 105–9.
- Roberts, Paul. 1996. *Images: The Piano Music of Claude Debussy*. Portland: Amadeus.
- Saint-Marceaux, Marguerite. 2007. *Marguerite de Saint-Marceaux, Journal, 1904–1927*. Edited under the direction of Myriam Chimènes. Paris: Fayard.
- Watkins, Glenn. 2003. *Proof Through the Night: Music and the Great War*. Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.



## ABSTRACT

Maurice Ravel's perception of language was defined by his *métier*. He thought about words as a composer, understanding them in terms of their rhythms and resonances in the ear. Ravel's letters, his critical writings, his vocal music and, most strikingly, his poetry, reveal his undeniable talent for literary expression. He had a pronounced taste for onomatopoeia and seemed to delight in the dextrous juggling of rhymes and rhythms. These qualities are particularly apparent in the little song *Noël des jouets* (1905) and the choral *Trois chansons pour chœur mixte sans accompagnement* (1915) for which Ravel wrote his own texts, together with his collaboration with Colette on the opera *L'Enfant et les sortilèges* (1925). The common thread of fantasy and fairytale that runs through these three works suggests that through his expressive use of language Ravel was deliberately aligning his music with the traditions of storytelling, a genre defined by the sounds of the spoken word. The formal and expressive content of Ravel's poetry, together with his manipulation of the rhymes and rhythms of Colette's libretto, reveal a composer fascinated by the musical and dramatic possibilities inherent within the French language itself.

Article received by the editors December 7th, 2007; accepted for publication (in revised form) September 23, 2008.

**Keywords.** Ravel, opera, poetry.

## SOUND SAMPLE CREDITS

**Example 1:** (No sound sample.)

**Example 2:** *Noël des jouets*, bars 60-67. Artists: Kerry Wake-Dyster (soprano), Emily Kilpatrick (piano). Recorded in Flinders St Baptist Church, Adelaide, South Australia, 13 May 2007, by Radio 5MBS.

**Example 3:** "Ronde", bars 37-42. Artists: The Cambridge Singers, dir. John Rutter. CD: Cambridge Singers: A Cappella, UK: Collegium Records, COLCD 119, 1993. Reproduced with permission of Collegium Records.

**Example 4:** "Nicolette", bars 22-23. Artists: The Cambridge Singers, dir. John Rutter. CD: Cambridge Singers: A Cappella, UK: Collegium Records, COLCD 119, 1993. Reproduced with permission of Collegium Records.

**Example 5:** *Noël des jouets*, bars 29-40. Artists: Kerry Wake-Dyster (soprano), Emily Kilpatrick (piano). Recorded in Flinders St Baptist Church, Adelaide, South Australia, 13 May 2007, by Radio 5MBS.

**Example 6:** "Ronde", bars 15-28. Artists: The Cambridge Singers, dir. John Rutter. CD: Cambridge Singers: A Cappella, UK: Collegium Records, COLCD 119, 1993. Reproduced with permission of Collegium Records.

**Example 7:** *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, Rehearsal Figure 91. Artists: André Previn cond., Ambrosian Opera Chorus, London Symphony Orchestra and soloists. CD : Ravel – *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*. Hayes, Middlesex : EMI, CDC 7 47169 2, rec. 1982. Reproduced with permission of EMI.

**Example 8:** *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, Rehearsal Figure 99. Artists: André Previn cond., Ambrosian Opera Chorus, London Symphony Orchestra and soloists. CD : Ravel – *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*. Hayes, Middlesex : EMI, CDC 7 47169 2, rec. 1982. Reproduced with permission of EMI.

**Example 9:** *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, Rehearsal Figure 3.2. Artists: André Previn cond., Ambrosian Opera Chorus, London Symphony Orchestra and soloists. CD : Ravel – *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*. Hayes, Middlesex : EMI, CDC 7 47169 2, rec. 1982. Reproduced with permission of EMI.