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Miroirs d’après Perlemuter: A short biography of Vlado Perlemuter with a commentary on his interpretation of Maurice Ravel’s "Miroirs"

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Rice University, 1989

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MIROIRS d'après PERLEMUTER
A Short Biography of Vlado Perlemuter
With a Commentary on his
Interpretation of Maurice Ravel's Miroirs

by

Carla Dodek

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Houston, Texas
May, 1989
ABSTRACT

MIROIRS d'après PERLEMITER
A Short Biography of Vlado Perlemuter
With a Commentary on his
Interpretation of Maurice Ravel's Miroirs

by
Carla Dodek

Vlado Perlemuter is the last direct link to Maurice Ravel and is considered to be the most authentic interpreter of his music. Not only is he the last living student of Ravel, but he is the only pianist to have studied Ravel's complete solo piano works with the composer.

As a pianist, Perlemuter was influenced by his teachers, Moritz Mozskowski and Alfred Cortot, and is a product of the Paris Conservatoire—the institution that was to define the French School of piano playing. Ravel influenced Perlemuter's playing as well by exposing him to new styles of piano writing and by opening his imagination to innovative sounds, mainly orchestral in nature.

Perlemuter's approach to Miroirs reflects these many influences and offers an interesting study of how he achieves such diverse sonorities out of the piano. Examples of some of these ideas include passages where he uses the thumb to bring out melodies, redistribution of voices for both technical and interpretive purposes, and pedallings that create orchestral effects. Perlemuter remembers many specific interpretive ideas that Ravel had shared with him in his lessons. These ideas are of special importance because, since Ravel rarely spoke about his compositions, they serve as a valuable source of information that may have otherwise remained unknown.
Vlado Perlemuter has shared his music with three generations of students and audiences. He will be remembered for many years by his admirers for his enlightening lessons and concerts. In addition, Vlado Perlemuter has made a valuable contribution to the musical world through his recordings and through the book that he co-authored with Hélène Jourdan-Morhangé, Ravel d'après Ravel.
Ravel at the piano

(Lipnirski)
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PREFACE

The background to this study is of special importance to me as it involved one of the most exciting and stimulating experiences of my life. It began with my encounter with the renowned pianist Vlado Perlemuter in April of 1987, which was to inspire me to delve further into the music of Maurice Ravel. This meeting also led to a period of intensive study with Mr. Perlemuter which was most revealing, as he is the last living student of Ravel. Mr. Perlemuter was able to share with me many anecdotes and comments he had received from the composer. "It seems as though it were just yesterday," Mr. Perlemuter often said during my lessons as he would describe in detail a passage that Ravel had so carefully explained to him.

Not only will the uncanny feeling of having studied with Ravel himself remain with me, but the experience of learning from a living legend has changed my entire concept of creating sounds from the piano. Being from the school of piano playing often referred to as the Golden Age of Piano Playing, Perlemuter possesses a technical approach to the keyboard capable of creating a multi-layered spectrum of sound which is surely a rarity in this twentieth-century world of technicians.

I felt compelled to share my experiences with Mr. Perlemuter by documenting my lessons and by presenting a detailed commentary on Miroirs, one of the works of Ravel that I studied with him. My lessons were all recorded and, from these tapes, I have presented what I felt was most important. The commentary on Miroirs is based on Vlado Perlemuter's interpretation, including interesting fingerings, pedallings, and other interpretive ideas. These ideas consist of a fine mixture of Ravel's suggestions and a lifetime of study of the score by Perlemuter personally. His approach is based on first-
hand experiences with the composer as well as on the training he received from a legendary lineage of French-school piano teachers.

In order to substantiate Vlado Perlemuter's approach to playing *Miroirs*, I have prefaced these ideas with a biographical sketch of Mr. Perlemuter, a discussion of his training and the French approach to piano playing, and a discussion of the work, *Miroirs*.

I would like to thank the Friends of Perlemuter Society for forming solely for the purpose of bringing Vlado Perlemuter to Houston on April 10 through 14 of 1987. It was at this time that I had the opportunity of hearing him play two recitals and give two master classes in which I was a participant. I would also like to thank Ms. Gini Ellis and Ms. Pnina Granirer for helping me to translate the book, *Ravel d'après Ravel* by Vlado Perlemuter and Hélène Jourdan-Morhange, and Mr. Perlemuter's personal copy of the original 1906 E. Demets edition of *Miroirs*. It was from this edition that Mr. Perlemuter learned the score, studied from with Ravel, and continues to study from today. Lastly, but most importantly, I would like to thank Mr. Perlemuter for all that he has given me and for extending his link to Ravel and to a nearly forgotten past of piano playing in general.
PART I

VLADO PERLEMUTER

The last direct link to Ravel and his music, Vlado Perlemuter is known today for his legendary performances and teaching which have left a permanent imprint on many of his audiences and students. Mr. Perlemuter was born in Kaunas, Lithuania, in 1904. He came from a musical family, as his father was an accomplished lieder singer. Both his parents were Polish, and his mother was Jewish. Because of religious persecution, they suffered severely under the cossack pogrom of 1904 and 1905. To escape further persecution, the family moved to Berlin in 1906. The following year, in 1907, they moved to Paris. It was in Paris that Perlemuter received his musical training and where he has lived to this day. He could not have been raised in a more stimulating artistic environment. Paris, in the first quarter of the century in particular, was the center of art, music, literature and theater. Artists of both French and foreign backgrounds flocked to the city to be a part of the many artistic developments that emerged. Movements such as impressionism, symbolism, and neo-classicism were only some of the innovations that resulted from the intense cultural activity that was occurring at this time.

Vlado Perlemuter's artistic and technical approach to piano playing was influenced not only by Ravel, who once named Perlemuter as his favorite interpreter, but by teachers whose lineage can be traced back to Liszt and to the founders of the late nineteenth-century French school of piano playing. At the age of eleven he began studies with his first
important teacher: the Polish pianist-composer, Moritz Moszkowski (Breslau 1854 - Paris 1925). In an interview with Dean Elder, Perlemuter recalls,

I am grateful for the lessons Moszkowski gave me. He was part of a great pianistic tradition, having been a friend of a generation of pianists like Rosenthal, Hofmann, and Godowsky. He was very interested in the technical parts of piano playing; especially the fingering. Many pupils and teachers neglect these aspects of piano playing. Fingering must not only be easy; it has to be musical.¹

This recollection is significant because one of Perlemuter's primary attributes is his ability to achieve many expressive and dramatic effects through a well thought-out fingering. Moszkowski was a pupil of Kullak and Liszt; therefore it is no wonder that technical aspects of piano playing were greatly emphasized. Besides effective fingering, Moszkowski consistently stressed the importance of maintaining a loose wrist, a free arm, legato by overlapping of notes, and demanded the utmost in clarity. His influence must have been a positive one since Perlemuter still enthusiastically recommends the study of Moszkowski's *Quinze Études de Virtuosité*, Op.72, which concentrate on developing independence of the fingers. While under Moszkowski's training, Perlemuter studied mainly etudes and works by Mendelssohn.

Vlado Perlemuter's next important teacher was Alfred Cortot (Nyon, Switzerland 1877 - Geneva 1962), whom he went to study with at the Paris Conservatoire in 1917 at the age of 13. Along with Isidor Philipp (1863 - 1953) and Marguerite Long (1874 - 1966), Alfred Cortot exemplifies twentieth-century French piano teaching. At this point, it would be beneficial to discuss this French school, a long established tradition dating back nearly two-hundred years.

Like other European countries in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, France experienced a rise in nationalism which led to a greater awareness of its country's historical, political, and cultural significance. As a result, the Paris Conservatoire, the institution that was to define modern French teaching and playing, was established in 1795. The founder of the French school of piano playing was, therefore, its first piano teacher, Louis Adam (1758 - 1848). Adam was influential, not only through his writings of piano methods, but because he was the teacher of Friedrich Kalkbrenner (1785 - 1849), who was to have a profound effect on French piano playing. Kalkbrenner wrote a handbook in 1831 entitled *Méthode pour apprendre le piano-forte à l'aide du guide-mains*, Op. 108. This method incorporated the use of an adjustable horizontal rail which ran parallel to the keyboard. The forearm was to rest on this rail to prevent any arm involvement so that the pupil could concentrate solely on developing independence of the fingers. This was an adaptation of Johann Bernhard Logier's (1777-1846) chiroplast which held the hand in place, also encouraging independence of the fingers. An important element of both Kalkbrenner's and Logier's methods was that the finger was to remain in contact with the keys at all times. The term *carezzando*, or stroking touch, is particularly associated with Kalkbrenner. This touch had the capabilities of producing a sensual and well controlled sound which immediately differentiated the Parisian School from the brilliant playing of the Viennese School. This emphasis on finger technique was to dominate French piano playing well into the twentieth century.

Pierre Zimmermann (1785 - 1853), a contemporary of Kalkbrenner, is particularly important to this study because it is through his impressive class of students that the link to Vlado Perlemuter can be made. Some of his students included Alkan (1813 - 88), Ambroise Thomas (1811 - 96), César Franck (1822 - 90), and Antoine Marmontel (1816 - 98). Marmontel taught the great pedagogue, Louis Diémer (1843 - 1919), who produced among many great pianists, Alfred Cortot.
Leschetizsky felt that "French pianists did not possess great emotional intensity but flew lightly up in the clouds reflecting the suave, sophisticated Parisian culture."² French pianism has also been described as being immaculate, fluent, transparent, elegant, and precise. Virtuosity in the German or Russian style has not been an element of French piano playing, but rather an obsession with subtleness in phrasing, suppleness in finger and hand technique, and sensitivity to pedalling and coloristic shadings have always been of primary importance.

Alfred Cortot, therefore, represented his country's style of piano playing well. He was not recognized as a virtuoso, but rather as an intellectual. Through listening to any of his hundreds of recordings, it is possible to discern an aristocracy, profundity, elegance, and logic in his playing. In spite of the occasional wrong notes, Cortot displays a certain pointedness and clarity of line, and an unmistakable rubato.

Cortot founded the Casals-Thibaud-Cortot piano trio in 1905, was an active faculty member at the Paris Conservatoire from 1907, and was largely responsible for founding the Ecole Normal de Musique in 1919. He became a leading musical figure in France before the age of thirty as a conductor and was assistant conductor at Bayreuth for a short time. Cortot was a true Wagner enthusiast. He had all of Wagner's operas memorized and was able to play them through at the piano. He also gave the Paris premieres of Parsifal, Tristan und Isolde, and Götterdämmerung as conductor in 1902. His reputation for interpreting Wagner grew even more through his many legendary performances with the French pianist, Edouard Risler (1873 - 1929), of Risler's arrangement of Das Rheingold for two pianos. Perhaps Cortot's interest in Wagner influenced him to play with more of both emotional and physical force than most French pianists have ever displayed.

Table I: Important teachers and their students of the Paris Conservatoire
Besides studying with Diémer, Cortot had the privilege of studying with Emile Decombe (1829-1912), one of the last pupils of Chopin. It is no wonder that his reputation also rested greatly on his intimate understanding of Romantic music, especially on his interpretation of works by Chopin.

As a pedagogue, Cortot is well-known for his Chopin "éditions du travail," which include extensive commentaries and practice suggestions. In the preface to his edition of the Chopin études, for example, he explains his intent:

The essential principle of this method is to practise, not so much the difficult passage taken as a whole, but the particular difficulty it presents by reducing the latter to its elements.

A sense of logic and methodology can also be found in his Rational Principles of Pianoforte Technique (Paris: Editions Salabert, 1928). This collection of technical exercises is well thought out and includes five chapters dealing with what Cortot believes to be the primary factors in developing a sure piano technique. The chapters are as follows:

I)      Finger training; evenness, independence and mobility of the fingers
II)    Thumb - passing under of the thumb - Scales - Arpeggios
III)   The technique of double notes and polyphonic playing
IV)    The technique of extensions
V)     The technique of the wrist - the execution of chords

Taking into account that each chapter is subdivided and the exercises as a whole must be transposed into all twelve keys, Cortot notes that it should take thirty-six practice sessions to complete each chapter.

Despite Cortot's apparent obsession with technical matters, his teaching concentrated on interpretation, the relationship between accent, phrasing, and tempo, and on the actual quality of the sound. It was these elements that Perlemuter believes he gained most from
his lessons with Cortot. He recalls his lessons at the Paris Conservatoire being only half an hour each. First he would play, and then, after making a few general comments, Cortot would sit down at the piano and play for the remainder of the lesson. Perlemuter commented once that "it was the pupils who listened intently, not with their brain, but with their heart, with everything, who benefitted the most from Cortot's teaching." Perlemuter said that in just one month, that type of pupil's playing could change so dramatically that their playing would be virtually unrecognizable from the way they played before. The other type of pupil would be less fortunate. Perhaps it was this influence that helped to develop the depth of color and sound in Perlemuter's playing. It may also have been the inspiration to Perlemuter in his teaching techniques, as he will often sit down at the piano and demonstrate. Wrong notes and all, the message is always clear and the variety of colors endless.

Perlemuter's studies with Cortot consisted of works by Chopin and Schumann, and these composers' works remain an integral part of Perlemuter's performing and teaching repertoire. In fact, to many, Perlemuter is more closely associated with his playing of works by Chopin than his playing of works by Ravel. He has recorded all the major works of Chopin including the préludes, waltzes, études, ballades, and mazurkas, and his recording of a Chopin recital won the Grand Prix du Disque in France. Interesting is an insightful review of one of his performances of Chopin's Second Piano Concerto:

...plenty of rubato and personal freedom throughout recall the poetic peregrinations of Cortot.4

Vlado Perlemuter's relationship with Ravel began with his first hearing of Jeux d'eau in 1925. He was so enthralled by it that he decided to learn all of the piano music that Ravel

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3 See Appendices A and B.
had written. It took him two years and, in 1927, Perlemuter wrote to Ravel and asked if he could play for the composer. "I hardly dared to approach him, but he wrote back and asked me to come. I think he was intrigued." Other pianists such as Robert Casadesus and Marguerite Long played for Ravel, but Perlemuter proudly says that he was the only one to play all of Ravel's oeuvre for the composer. This included even the shorter works such as Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn (the two concerti had not yet been written). Ravel must have taken a particular interest in this project.

For several months Perlemuter travelled once every one or two weeks to Ravel's home in Montfort l'Amaury, fifty kilometers west of Paris. At the time, it was quite a distance to travel and the entire journey took an hour and a half. After Ravel had become somewhat of a celebrity, he found it necessary to live close enough to Paris to travel there whenever he desired, but far enough away to deter any unwanted guests. Today, in thirty minutes, it is possible to visit Ravel's small house, called "Le Belvédère," which still sits on the edge of the forest of Rambouillet.

As a pianist, Ravel's abilities were summed up well by the French pianist, Henri Gil-Marchex:

He sat incredibly low at the piano and this peculiarity may perhaps be the reason why he never used octave passages; the long and agile fingers, the slender hand joined to an extremely supple wrist seemed to be those of a conjuror; he could twist his thumb into the palm of the hand with unbelievable facility which allowed him without any trouble to press down three keys at a time. This thumb explains the passages in seconds in "Scarbo."

Ravel was fifty-two at the time Perlemuter was studying with him and he was no longer able to play well. Ravel must have been an outstanding pianist at one time, though,

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because while he was at the Paris Conservatoire he won the Premier Prix in piano. Of the few recollections Perlemuter has of Ravel demonstrating at the piano, he remembers an extraordinarily beautiful and Romantic opening of "Ondine" from *Gaspard de la nuit*. Perlemuter also remembers Ravel demonstrating the opening measures of "Ondine" superimposed over the closing measures to prove that they were the same musical thought. Gil-Marchex's comment on the agility of Ravel's thumb is of particular significance because of the emphasis Ravel put on its use. Perlemuter remembers numerous occasions when Ravel suggested fingering a passage with the thumb when another fingering would have been easier or seemingly more logical.

Perlemuter's recollections of his lessons with Ravel are as clear today as they were in 1927. He recalls Ravel as being aloof and reserved. Their relationship was not a personal one, but simply one between a composer and a pianist who had an interest in playing his works. Ravel was not especially interested in Perlemuter's career as a pianist, but rather made sure that he had learned and understood his works correctly.

Ravel was meticulous about tempo and pedalling in particular. He was adamantly opposed to the Liszt and Cortot school of playing in which rallentandos were inserted at the discretion of the performer. An incident during a lesson Cortot had with Ravel proves how concerned Ravel was about a true reading of his music. Not only did Cortot add an "F" to the last chord of the Menuet of the *Sonatine*, but he also added an extra measure to "Scarbo." Ravel's displeasure was shown by saying, "I don't ask that my music be interpreted but only for it to be played."

Ravel went through each work with Vlado Perlemuter in detail and demanded a true and simple renduring of the score. Perlemuter remembers a particularly grueling session on *Valses nobles et sentimentales* in which Ravel made him go over the opening measures at least ten times:
I remember with a certain emotion the sight of Ravel, sitting at his desk near the piano, score in hand, while he took me through these Valses. I had never seen his eyes so bright—he was determined to be understood, on letting nothing slip by either in the notes or, just as much, in its interpretation. Through this passion for perfection in the letter, one found oneself in tune with the spirit.  

Vlado Perlemuter is also very meticulous and always presents a sincere interpretation of any music that he plays.

Perhaps the greatest influence Ravel had on Perlemuter was to push him to explore new and daring means to achieve orchestral sounds out of the piano. Ravel's compositional techniques for piano were a logical outgrowth of the late nineteenth-century style of writing and playing in which orchestral timbres were expected out of the instrument. Not only were operatic and orchestral transcriptions commonplace, but the era encouraged programmatic and flamboyant writing and playing. Ravel's obsession with orchestral sounds emanating from the piano can be observed in his many subsequent transcriptions for orchestra: Pavane pour une Infante Défunte, the Menuet from Sonatine, Alborada del gracioso, Les Valses nobles et sentimentales, Menuet Antique, Le Tombeau de Couperin (except for the Fugue and Toccata), Ma Mère l'Oye, Debussy's Sarabande and Danse, Chabrier's Menuet Pompeux, Schumann's Carnaval, and Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition. Perlemuter once asked Ravel why he had not also orchestrated "Scarbo" from Gaspard de la nuit. Ravel's reply was, "Why do you want me to orchestrate 'Scarbo' when it is already orchestral in nature?" The idea of evoking colors from the piano was not new in concept but in the means in which it was achieved. Ravel used innovative compositional techniques such as new harmonies involving secondary seventh and ninth chords, long pedal tones over wildly changing harmonies, double glissandos, and repeated notes to produce both a virtuosic and coloristic effect.

Any first-hand insight into Ravel's music was important because Ravel rarely spoke about his compositions. Perlemuter's lessons with Ravel were especially significant to his own understanding of the composer's works and were of major importance to future pianists who were, later, to study with Perlemuter. Perlemuter's contribution is unique because even though other pianists had the same privilege of studying with Ravel, they did not pass on Ravel's thoughts in the same manner. Marguerite Long's association with Ravel from 1910 to his death in 1937 should have revealed many of Ravel's ideas on his works. She was a close friend of Ravel, she premiered Le Tombeau de Couperin, and she played his G-major Concerto, which was dedicated to her, numerous times with the composer as conductor. Long even wrote a book entitled Au Piano avec Ravel (Paris: Juilliard, 1971). Unfortunately, it either focuses on Ravel as a person or presents an egotistic account of Long's role in promoting Ravel's music. Other pianists who knew or studied with Ravel, such as Ricardo Viñes (1875 - 1943) or Robert Casadesus (1899 - 1972), also left little documentation on Ravel's personal ideas about his own works. Perlemuter has not only been able to share his insight into Ravel's music as a teacher of three generations of pianists, but he is unique in that he and Hélène Jourdan-Morhange, a violinist and close friend of Ravel, wrote a book entirely devoted to all the piano works of Ravel. This book (Ravel d'après Ravel. Lausanne: Editions du Cervin, 1953; reprint ed., 1970), began as a series of interviews on a French radio program. When approached about trying to find a copy of this book, which is now out-of-print, Perlemuter explained:

It was such a success. I wrote it with a great friend of Ravel, Mme. Hélène Jourdan-Morhange. We did it first as a series of interviews on the radio, and when a publisher heard it, he wanted to make a book out of it. Of course, we changed a lot of things and then we made the book. I thought it was essentially for professionals but, my God, after three editions, you can't find it anywhere! I had ten left over from the publisher and, when I was playing in Perpignon, in the southwest of France, I took them with me.
Five minutes after they saw the book there were none left. If I had known, I could have kept one for you!

Ravel d'après Ravel is purely objective in its approach, as it focuses on how Ravel wanted his works to be played. It includes discussions on tempo indications, touch, fingerings, and general interpretive ideas. This book and comments from Perlemuter's lessons or master classes reveal many of Ravel's thoughts and interpretive ideas that may have otherwise remained unknown.

Vlado Perlemuter's performing career was launched shortly after his studies with Ravel. In 1929, Perlemuter became the first pianist to perform all the solo works of Ravel in recital; he performed them in two consecutive programs with Ravel present at both. At the time of these two legendary recitals, Perlemuter was just becoming known in Paris. In 1919 he was awarded the Premier Prix in piano from Cortot's class at the Paris Conservatoire. In 1920 he received the Prix d'Honneur, a prize created by Fauré (who was the director of the Paris Conservatoire at the time). This prize was intended for the most outstanding pianist who had won the Premier Prix within the past five or six years. The compulsory test piece was the Variations, Interlude, et Finale sur un Thème de Rameau by Paul Dukas, a piece which Perlemuter has retained in both his teaching and performing repertoire. In 1921 Perlemuter received the Prix Diémer, also from the Paris Conservatoire. Honorary awards that have been given to Perlemuter include the Légion d'Honneur in 1968, an honor that Ravel had also received but turned down. Perlemuter was also made a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Music in London.

Perlemuter has been active throughout his career as a teacher, adjudicator, and performer. He joined the faculty of the Paris Conservatoire in 1951, continuing his lineage of training, and remained there until 1977. Since his retirement from the conservatory, he has attracted private pupils from around the world. He also conducts master classes regularly in London, Manchester, Dartington, Rotterdam, Montréal, and Tokyo. As an
adjudicator, Perlemuter has been on the juries of most of the major international competitions, including the Queen Elizabeth, Chopin, Beethoven, Busoni, Clara Haskill, Liszt-Bartók, Montréal, Santander, and Van Cliburn competitions.

Vlado Perlemuter is a rarity in that he was able to obtain first-hand advice on every solo piano work of Ravel. His mesmerizing performances reveal that he does, indeed, have a special interpretation that no other pianist has shown. He has recorded these complete works twice; the first set was recorded for Vox (mono VBX410, 10/16 - long deleted), and, in 1979, he recorded the complete oeuvre for Nimbus (Nimbus QS 2101, 2102, 2103). The Nimbus recording has recently been released on two compact discs. After comparing several recordings of works by Ravel played by such pianists as Andrei Gavrilov, Artur Rubinstein, Vladimir Ashkenazy, and Pascal Rogé, a reviewer of Perlemuter's 1979 Nimbus recording stated that:

I have little doubt that it is against Perlemuter's set as a whole that future attempts will have to be judged.7

We are, indeed, fortunate that Vlado Perlemuter, this last link to Ravel and the distant past of piano playing, will remain with us in print, on record, and in the memories of those who have known him.

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7 The Gramophone 57 (July 1979): 233.
PART II

MIROIRS

Background

The set of five piano pieces called Miroirs (1905) marks the beginning of a new stage of development in Ravel’s compositional style. Differences from his previous works can be found in his use of complex and less traditional harmonies as well as in his use of more innovative writing for the piano. In addition, Miroirs displays Ravel’s philosophical views and stands as a landmark for his newly found inspiration and creative energy.

In an interview with Alexis Roland-Manuel (1891-1966), Ravel said that these pieces

marquent dans mon évolution harmonique un changement assez considérable pour avoir déconcerté les musiciens les plus accoutumés jusqu’alors à ma manière.8

8(these pieces) "mark such a considerable change in my harmonic evolution that even the musicians most accustomed to my style up to now have been disconcerted." This quote was taken from an interview with Roland-Manuel on October 15, 1928 at the request of Aeolian Company pianola makers. It was to appear as record-jacket notes but remained unpublished until after Ravel’s death. It appeared in Revue de Musicologie 38 (July 1956), and is generally referred to as "Biographical Sketch" in most writings about Ravel.

Harmonically, new and daring innovations appear in Miroirs such as a greater avoidance of tonic triads and many unresolved chords that often appear over extended pedal tones. An example of a new type of chord that became characteristic of Ravel's writing is made up of an unresolved auxiliary note which appears as the seventh degree. Specifically, this chord appears in Miroirs as "G♯-B-D-G." Following the true French harmonic style, Ravel refused to limit tonality to the duality of major and minor and, as a result, he incorporated the use of modes into the diatonic system. The two most common modes that appear in this work, and in many other works of Ravel, are the Dorian and Phrygian modes. Not only are these modes commonly found in Medieval music, but they are both very much a part of Ravel's immediate heritage. The Dorian mode is commonly found in old French folk-songs and was used by two composers whom Ravel admired greatly—Chabrier and Mussorgsky. The Dorian mode is also characteristic of Basque music. The Phrygian mode is common to Andalusian Cante Flamenco and appears frequently in other Spanish provincial songs. Although Ravel's mother was Basque, it is interesting to note that he did not become aware of Spanish musical idioms until about the time he composed Miroirs. Other characteristics of Ravel's compositional style include the use of gapped scales, which he became intrigued with after hearing music of the Far East at the Great Exposition of 1889, and his use of freer forms. Structurally, this work is less Classically oriented than his earlier works.

Pianistically, Miroirs reaches out into new territory but clearly confirms Ravel's admiration for Scarlatti, Chopin, and Liszt in particular. He uses the full range of the keyboard with sweeping arpeggios, trills, tremolos, glissandos in double notes, an exploitation of rapid figures in the high register, and a wide range of cross rhythms between the hands. Miroirs was a logical outgrowth of the new virtuosity that Ravel used in Jeux d'eau (1901), which he specifically said should be played as one would play Liszt,
and it led the way to even more challenging difficulties for the pianist in *Gaspard de la nuit* (1908).

Philosophically, *Miroirs* reinforces Ravel's idea that man's interpretation of an object has more value than that of the object in its original form.

Ravel had a curious predilection for reproductions of reality (trompe l'oeil) and preferred copies, if well made, to the originals. If an imitation was so successful that it deceived others into believing it to be authentic, this seemed to him more truly art than the real in itself. An artist, he maintained, should be a conscious creator (that is, an interpreter according to his understanding of the actual) rather than merely "sincere", for sincerity from an artistic standpoint implies impulsiveness, or lack of self-control, and is likely, he said, to be no more than a form of indiscretion, whereas consciousness--"artificiality", as he sometimes called it--implies self-control and a transformation of the emotions into art. Man's superiority over the animals, according to Ravel, consists in his ability to counterfeit Nature through the intelligence of his control.⁹

In "Le Belvédère," Ravel's house, one can sense the composer's ideals strongly: it is filled with mimetic art. Ravel himself stenciled symmetrical patterns on the wallpaper to give the impression of a Grecian design. His wooden mantle has imitation marble on it and the walls of his bedroom are painted with Roman columns. He had a collection of "faux objets d'art" including porcelains and owned a fake Monticelli which he prized dearly.

The title that Ravel chose for these pieces, *Miroirs*, clearly refers to a reflection of something rather than the thing itself. Marguerite Long's description of *Miroirs* is as follows:

This title in itself is an aesthetic proposition. It underlies what the Impressionists have amply proved--the pre-eminence of reflected light from the direct image in the appeal to our sensibility and in the creation of an illusion.

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These pieces are intensely descriptive and pictorial. They banish all sentiment in expression but offer to the listener a number of refined sensory elements which can be appreciated according to his imagination.10

Because of the similarity in titles, one might naturally compare Miroirs to Debussy's two sets of piano pieces, Images (1905-07). This comparison can be misleading, however, because in contrast to Debussy's ideals, Ravel portrayed his "reflections" as objectively as possible. The first three pieces in Miroirs represent different aspects of nature--moths, birds, and the ocean; the fourth piece represents Spanish guitars, song, and dance; and the final piece in this set represents a valley resonating with the sounds of bells. Perhaps a similarity can be drawn to the seventeenth and eighteenth-century French clavecinist school in which, in a secular tradition, composers sought to paint an atmosphere rather than to express emotion.

Miroirs marked a new period of inspiration for Ravel. He had been in a dejected state after the "Affaire Ravel" in which, after four attempts, he failed to receive the Prix de Rome from the Paris Conservatoire. He had competed for this prestigious prize in 1901 and was, to his disappointment, awarded only second prize. In 1902 he entered again, but this time Ravel was not awarded a prize at all. The same fate occurred in 1903, and, in 1905, the judges refused to allow Ravel to enter even the preliminary stages of this competition. This caused a major public scandal as Ravel had already premiered works such as Jeux d'eau, Schéhérazade, and his string quartet, all of which were received with great enthusiasm.

Ravel was also trying to shake off his reputation for being the composer of the Pavane pour une Infante Défunte (1899), which

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10Burnett James, Ravel — His Life and Times (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1983), p. 44.
gained him the esteem of the salons and the admiration of young ladies who do not play the piano over-well, and scarcely deserves, in the eyes of musicians, the extraordinary popularity which for thirty years it has enjoyed with the public at large.11

He was also tired of being associated with Jeux d'eau. He had become stuck in a niche in which he was unprepared to stay. In June of 1905, Ravel took a boat trip through Holland with two close friends in order to escape the pressures of his unhappy existence. It must have been extremely effective because upon his return, Ravel was seized with a passion for work. Between the time of his return from Holland and the death of his father in 1908, Ravel composed more works than in any other period. He wrote the Sonatine, Miroirs, Histoires naturelles, Rapsodie espagnole, L'Heure espagnole, Gaspard de la nuit, Ma mère l'oye, and sketches for La cloche engloutie.

Miroirs stands as a symbol for Ravel's association with a group of artists, musicians, and writers called "Les Apaches"—each of the five pieces in this work is dedicated to one of its members. The first piece, "Noctuelles," is dedicated to the poet Léon-Paul Fargue; the second piece, "Oiseaux tristes," to the pianist Ricardo Viñes; the third, "Une barque sur l'océan," to the painter Paul Sordes; the fourth, "Alborada del gracioso," to the musicologist and critic M.D. Calvocoressi; and the last piece, "La Vallée des cloches," is dedicated to one of Ravel's pupils, Maurice Délage. "Les Apaches" met regularly, first at Paul Sordes' house on rue Dulong in Montmartre, and later at Maurice Délage's house on rue de Civry in Auteuil. They all had progressive thoughts and values and, through their camaraderie, shared ideas and discussed their latest works, which they often presented at their meetings. A common interest among all the members of this group was a love for Chinese art, Mallarmé, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Corbière, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Rameau,

Chopin, Whistler, Valéry, the Russians, and Debussy. Some other members of this group included the poets Tristan Klingsor and Charles Guerin; the musicians André Caplet, Paul Ladmirault, and D.E. Inghelbrecht; the critics Emile Vuillermoz and Lucien Garban; the painter Edouard Benedictus; and from Maison Durand, Abbé Léonce Petit.

It was Ravel who decided on the name for this group after an incident that occurred to him and Viñes on their way to an Apaches meeting. In the street, a rough looking man bumped into both of them and angrily called, "Attention les apaches!" The expression "Les Apaches," at that time, was a popular word of insult. It implied one who had no respect for law and order, a social outcast, and referred to one associated with the underworld. It seemed so appropriate that Ravel convinced Viñes and the rest of the members that "Les Apaches" should be the name of their group.

It was also at one of these Apache meetings that Ravel may have had the inspiration to compose Miroirs. One evening, Viñes arrived at the rue de Civry after having just spoken with Debussy. Debussy had told him that he hoped to compose music with a form so free that it would sound as if it were an improvisation. Ravel took a great interest in this idea and returned to a meeting with "Oiseaux tristes."

Although Ravel had actually premiered "Oiseaux tristes" at an Apaches meeting shortly after it had been written, the official premiere of Miroirs was given by Ricardo Viñes at a Société Nationale concert on January 6, 1906.
Miroirs According to Vlado Perlemuter

Noctuelles

Vlado Perlemuter considers "Noctuelles" to be the most difficult of all five pieces in Miroirs, and even more difficult to play than "Scarbo" from Gaspard de la nuit. He has often commented on Ravel's insight into the piano music of Liszt and feels strongly that Ravel was greatly influenced by such works as the Transcendental Etudes. While writing the Concerto for Left Hand, for example, Ravel kept a copy of these Liszt etudes with him for reference. Perlemuter specifically compares "Noctuelles" to "Feux Follets" (Transcendental Etude No. 5). The last six measures, he feels, are "absolutely like Liszt's writing." 12 In general, Perlemuter feels that this piece demands a very supple hand and a loose wrist and says that "it is all fluidity." The "très léger" marking by Ravel should be taken literally and calls for a very light, shallow touch.

The opening measures must be played with a well pronounced crescendo in which the last four sixteenth-notes in each of the first two measures, Perlemuter says, should be "bruissant" (noisy). The most important aspect of these crescendos, though, is to return to "piano" immediately, as written. These "soufflets" crescendos, as Perlemuter describes them, are typical of Ravel and occur throughout "Noctuelles." Another important example of this type of crescendo is in measures 23 and 26 (also measures 107 and 110), in which the dynamic level increases from "pp" to "f" in one bar. Perlemuter again wrote "bruissant" in his score to describe this measure. Perlemuter feels that these outbursts foreshadow the hysteria of "Scarbo."

12 See example 1.
Example 1: Comparison of Feux Follets (m. 18-23) with Noctuelles (m. 126-31).
Another recurring element of "Noctuelles" is the sixteenth-note figures. Ravel had written in Perlemuter's score "égal," "égalité sonore," and "très colori." Perlemuter says that the sixteenth-notes should be equal and very clear throughout. They function as a textural element and serve to produce a colorful effect through their harmonic outlines. In measures 14 - 19 (also measures 98 - 103), he asks that the texture of the sixteenth-notes link with the texture of the melodic eighth-notes, acting as an underlying support for the theme.

Melodic figures should be as expressive as possible. Perlemuter said that Ravel had continually been criticized for writing music that did not have any melody when, in fact, Ravel believed his music was only melody. The first example of an important melodic element to bring out is in measure 6 in which the "F" in the right hand must project and function as a resolution of the previous measure. The melody in measures 14 - 19 (also measures 98 - 103) should be played cantabile. He specifically mentioned that measures 17 and 18 (measures 101 and 102) should not sound too accented nor should the second eighth-notes in each group have more sound than the first ones. He was careful in making a distinction between phrasing the two-note groups as opposed to accenting them. The same material occurs in measures 29 and 30 (measures 113 and 114), but this time the two-note groups should be absolutely equal with a gradual diminuendo to "pp" in measure 31. In addition, he plays these latter measures "sans rallentando mais à l'aise" (without slowing but relaxed). The melody in measures 21 - 22 and 24 - 25 (also in measures 105 - 06 and 108 - 09) is marked "expressivo," and Perlemuter spent a considerable amount of time demonstrating how this should sound. He vocalized it several times and demanded a true singing quality. Also important in these sections are the contrasts between these expressive, sustained melodies and the outbursts in measures 23 and 26 (measures 107 and 110).
Pedalling in "Noctuelles" is difficult in that, in spite of the necessity to use the pedal to enhance harmonies and melodies, the clarity must never be lost. Two places of interest where Perlemuter uses the pedal are in measures 6 - 9 (measures 90 - 93) and measures 19 - 20 (measures 103 - 04). He admits that he is one of the only pianists who does not play these passages dryly, but says that it was Ravel's wish that he play it that way. He uses a flutter pedal through measures 6 and 7 (90 and 91), and half-pedals on the third beat of measure 8 and on the eighth-note in measure 9 (92 and 93). With this pedalling, the sound will still resonate through the rests. One other important pedalling is in measure 36 (measure 120), after the descending filigree, or "Valenciennes" as Perlemuter wrote in his score, in which Perlemuter changes the pedal completely on the sixteenth-note rest. This allows breathing space before the second pedal so that it may lead into the next section. In the final measure of the piece, Perlemuter half-pedals both the first eighth-note and the final chord.

Rhythmically, "Noctuelles" should be played with suppleness and flexibility. The piece, after all, was inspired by a line from a poem by Fargue:

Les noctuelles des hangars partent d'un vol gauche cravater
d'autres poutres.  

The character of this piece should reflect the fluttering of the moths' wings and their unpredictable turns. Measures 33 - 35 (measures 117 - 19), however, should be played in strict time, according to Perlemuter. The rubato that is marked by Ravel is the result of the emphasis that should be made on the cross rhythms between the hands. The triple meter of the left hand should be well pronounced below the duple meter of the right hand, creating a rubato in the style of Chopin in which the rhythm is not affected. In the opening, 

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13Lace.
14The owlet-moths fly clumsily out of the old barn to drape themselves round other beams.
Perlemuter has written a note to himself on his score to practice the thumb: "trav. le pouce." Rhythmically, the end result is that the left hand beats will be marked clearly.

Perlemuter said that the "Pas trop lent" section (measures 37 - 62) "for me holds all the intensity or power that one finds in 'Le Gibet'." He says that this section foreshadows "Le Gibet" in its use of a pedal tone, in this case "F", which is reiterated through the first fourteen measures. He also compares this section to "Le Gibet" because of the succession of legato chords. Perlemuter demonstrated how to achieve this "pseudo-legato" by using finger substitution and by turning the hand in the direction of the next chord to be played. He demonstrated excerpts from this piece as well as measures 20 - 25 from "Le Gibet," and the opening of the theme to the Symphonic Etudes by Robert Schumann to show that every time a succession of legato chords occurs, it is essential to make them sing and to join them as much as possible. Some examples of fingerings that Perlemuter suggests are:

Example 2: Noctuelles (mm. 37-44)
Other ideas Perlemuter has about this middle section refer to the general atmosphere that should be created. He remarked that it should be played "triste" and "plaintif," and comments that Ravel's marking of "sombre et expressif" are the ultimate and lost inspiring indications possible. If one adheres to all of Ravel's phrasings and dynamic markings, the right effect will be made. In his score Perlemuter has written "plus souple, à l'aise" and Ravel has written "trop droit--sec."

Perlemuter compares measures 47 - 49 to the Sonatine because of the falling fourth motive. This falling figure is a recurring motive in Ravel's works, as it also appears in a similar context in his fantaisie lyrique, L'Enfant et les Sortilèges. Perlemuter says that it should be played "comme une plainte" (like a complaint or lament).

Redistribution of voices is an interesting aspect of piano playing in that, when done well, it can enhance the sound quality tremendously, but when done against the composer's wishes may destroy an effect that the composer was trying to achieve. Perlemuter has some interesting comments about this. First, he uses many different redistributions of voices in Ravel's writing to enhance the color, but was given permission to do so by Ravel himself. Perlemuter remembers a performance in Tokyo by a young student who played for him in a master class. She played "Ondine" from Gaspard de la nuit with so many redistributions that he finally had to stop her and ask, "Where is Ravel!" Perlemuter does not referee only to make the music easier to play, but searches for the most effective musical solution. When asked why Ravel had not written the music differently, Perlemuter explained that, in 1905, Ravel was still not experienced enough to write the music any other way. He wrote down the most logical solution on his manuscripts, not necessarily the most pianistic. The second comment that Perlemuter had about redistribution of voices was, "An arrangement must not be a new difficulty. If it helps, do it." He is cautious about forcing his personal solutions on his students but offers the following suggestions in "Noctuelles":
Measure 36: tremolo--right hand plays "E A F" and left hand plays "B-flat G C"

Measure 51: take arabesque with left hand

Measure 85: take "D-flat" on third beat with left hand

Measure 86: left hand plays "B-flat" and "D-flat" on third beat and right hand plays second group of nine sixteenth-notes.

Measure 87: left hand plays "G" on second beat

Last bar: it is possible to exchange hands on the final chord

Perlemuter's timing of "Noctuelles" is 4 minutes and 35 seconds.

Oiseaux tristes

In "Oiseaux tristes," Perlemuter has some of the most vivid memories of his lessons with Ravel. Perlemuter is particularly interested in teaching this piece because, although Ravel rarely talked about his music, in "Oiseaux tristes" he had many specific things to say. Besides the discussion with Vîlès about Debussy's idea to write something improvisational in nature, Perlemuter shared Ravel's own personal statement that:

J'y évoque des oiseaux perdus dans la torpeur d'une forêt très sombre aux heures les plus chauds de l'été.\(^\text{15}\)

When Perlemuter asked Ravel what type of bird he was trying to evoke, Ravel answered that it was not a special one, but the piece was meant to evoke a feeling or atmosphere of birds. There are several passages that remind one of the sounds of birds:

\(^{15}\) I evoke birds lost in the torpor of a somber forest, during the most torrid hours of summertime.
the opening repeated-note figure, the arabesque figure, the falling thirds, the figure in measure 15 which Perlemuter says is "comme un cri d'oiseau," and measures 15-17 which Perlemuter says should be "frémissent, bruissant comme des battement d'ailes" (trembling, rustling like the flapping of wings). "Oiseaux tristes" looks ahead to the evocation of birds in Messiaen's *Catalogue d'oiseaux*, *Oiseaux érotiques*, and *Reveil des Oiseaux*.

Ravel shared three important interpretive ideas with Perlemuter. First, he wanted the arabesque figure in measures 2, 8, and 22 to be played with a special rubato. The fast notes should be played slightly faster and the long note should be prolonged. This rhythmic freedom is important because, as Perlemuter explained, "If one plays strictly what is written, it becomes characterless." Ravel said that one should not be afraid to linger on the long note. In addition, a crescendo and diminuendo should be made with the loudest part on the dotted sixteenth-note. The second idea that Ravel told Perlemuter was to not take the "Lent" at measure 25 literally. It refers only to the chord in the left hand. The measure before should link with this chord without a "point d'orgue" (pause), and the following filigree should be quite fast. The third idea is very subtle and Perlemuter found it "frightfully difficult" in the beginning. Ravel had asked him to balance measures 29 - 31 in such a way that the chords dominate completely. As a further guide, Ravel had written in Perlemuter's score to divide the right hand into two distinct voices. The inner voice ("G-flat" and "A-flat") should dominate over the eighth-notes in the top voice. Perlemuter suggests practicing this passage by first playing it without the eighth-notes in the top voice and then adding them very softly. He says that the chords should smother the sounds of the inner voices to achieve the correct effect.

Perlemuter uses his thumb often to achieve certain musical effects. An example of this is in the opening repeated-note figure which he fingers 1-2. He achieves a natural accent with his thumb and uses the same fingering in the left hand whenever this figure appears. It works extremely well on any type of piano action, whether it be stiff or light. There is
one exception to this fingering in measure 23-24, where the fifth finger in the right hand must be used on the repeated notes.

Perlemuter suggests some other helpful fingerings. In measure 10, the left hand should play the repeated notes throughout the measure. This allows for the thumb to play this figure and for the right hand to remain in position on the chordal figure through to the next measure. In measure 15, Perlemuter suggests playing the right hand repeated notes with 5-3-3-3-3. He also advocates taking the "F" and "G" (seventh and eighth notes of left hand) with the right hand. He takes the "B" and "B-sharp" in measure 19 with the left hand and takes the last two notes in measure 24 with the right hand.

Some dynamic suggestions Perlemuter makes are to keep the left hand quiet without making a crescendo through measure 14 so that the "mf" is a sudden outburst. Measure 20 should not be too "p," so that measure 21 can be even softer. This return should be subtle. Ravel had written in Perlemuter's score not to make measure 23 too soft so that there may be a color change in measure 24. Measures 22-24 should also be "très enveloppé des pedales."

Perlemuter's timing of "Oiseaux tristes" is 3 minutes and 45 seconds.

Une Barque sur l'océan

"Une Barque sur l'océan" is one of many examples of "water music" that were written during the Impressionistic era. These pieces can be compared to paintings of this time which display their artists' infatuation with reflections of light and the play of water. Contrary to the aesthetic implications of this piece, Ravel did not want to be considered an impressionistic composer and often exclaimed, "Je ne suis pas un compositeur comme Debussy." There is no doubt, however, that Ravel wrote in a descriptive or impressionistic
style in this piece more than in any of his other works. As water music, "Une Barque" may be considered an outgrowth of *Jeux d'eau* and a predecessor to "Ondine" in Ravel's oeuvre alone. As much as Ravel hated to be compared to Debussy, "Une Barque" may be classified with Debussy's "Reflets dans l'eau" as a further example of water music written at this time.

The inspiration of "Une Barque sur l'océan" can be traced to one of two sources. First, Ravel may have been inspired by one of his many toys: a blown-glass ship which, when manipulated, could rock among its painted waves. The other source is consistent with Ravel's admiration for the piano music of Liszt, as "Une Barque" may have been directly inspired by Liszt's "Les jeux d'eau a la Villa d'este" from the *Années de Pèlerinage: Troisième Année*.

The dedication to Paul Sordes is significant as Sordes was known as "le Ravel de la palette." He tried to capture in the colors of his paintings the subtle musical effects of Ravel. These musical colors are portrayed pianistically through sweeping arpeggiated figures encompassing the entire range of the keyboard. Ravel made a conscious effort to depict orchestral sounds, and he subsequently made an orchestral transcription of this piece in 1906. It was first performed on February 3, 1907. Perlemuter heard a performance of this transcription only once, possibly in 1926, and he recalls, "It was terrible! I don't remember what instruments he used in the opening, but it was very funny. And later, with all the brass..." Ravel later admitted that the piano version looked more orchestral on paper than it truly was. After he had written the transcription, Ravel decided that an orchestra could never match the timbres of the original source and prohibited any further performances of it. Eschig, in deference to Ravel's wishes and those of his executors, has preserved the unpublished manuscript.

Although Ravel was not happy with the actual result of his transcription, it is important to understand his intentions to produce orchestral effects in "Une Barque." Perlemuter said
that not only does the work demand an acute ear for orchestral timbres, it is essential for the pianist to be thoroughly familiar with Ravel's method of orchestration in general before attempting to play this piece.

The first examples of orchestral sounds can be found in the opening left-hand figure which must be "liquide et très fondue" and must be very quiet to produce a harmonic texture. These figures, which appear throughout the piece, should be played "comme une harpe," as Ravel had indicated on Perlemuter's score in measure 117. Also like a harp are measures 44 and 74 and all the figures similar to the one in measure 39. The theme in measures 4-10 should be played "doux mais comme un appel" (soft but like a call). Perlemuter describes this melody as a call in the middle of the sea. He plays these inner melody notes with his thumb to create the desired effect. The section at measures 28-37 is particularly orchestral. Perlemuter hears the "st" "B-flat" "comme le coup de timbales" (like the striking of timpanis) and the following left-hand chords as a brassy sonority. Another passage that Perlemuter describes as brassy is in measures 121-24. This section must be "expressif, mais sans dureté" (expressive but without harshness) and the accent in measure 124 must be "lourd" (heavy).

The rhythm in "Une Barque sur l'océan" is of particular importance. Perlemuter notes that this piece is the only one of Miroirs that does not have a metronome marking. He also notes that Ravel's indication "d'un rythme souple" as well as the combined time signatures of six-eight and three-four shows that the piece should be very flexible. Ravel had asked Perlemuter to play the opening "pas bousculé et pas trop vite" (not rough and not too fast). He was concerned that the piece not become a springboard for virtuosity. As much as this piece should be free and supple like the waves of the ocean, Perlemuter emphasizes that there should be no exaggerated ritenuitos or accelerandos if they are not marked. Ravel did not like unnecessary rubatos. Perlemuter adheres to the score within the inner rhythm of the piece except in a few passages. Between measures 11-12 and 21-22 he makes a slight
break. Before each tremolo in measures 38-42, 68-72, and 111-15 he makes a pause on the up-beats, delaying the entry of these tremolos. Similarly, Perlemuter waits slightly before the harp-like figure in measure 117. Perlemuter plays measures 129-31 "plus lent," and in measure 131 Ravel had specifically asked him to slow up. There are hand-written tenuto marks in Perlemuter's score on the last three notes of this measure. In measure 132 there should be a sudden return to the original tempo. The last three measures should be very calm, and Perlemuter waits before the last notes of the piece. Some of the places in which Perlemuter warns about keeping the tempo strict are: measure 23 in which the right hand must enter on time; measures 29-37 in which Perlemuter feels that this section is the most intense of all of "Une Barque" and its intensity should not be lost by hurrying; measures 55-60 should not be slow. It serves as a link to the next key area and should not be slower than the theme. There should be no rallentando in measure 60; measures 76-78 should not get faster; measures 107-10 should be "mesuré." The rallentando is written into the music by an augmentation of note values; the left hand should be exact in measures 119-24; the flourish before the return of the theme in measure 132 should be as fast as possible so that the rhythm is not disturbed; and measure 134 should be on time.

Although there are only a few pedal markings indicated (measures 74, 117 and 124), Ravel wanted the entire piece to be "très enveloppé de pedales." Perlemuter has some additional ideas on pedalling that are not obvious to the pianist and that enhance the harmonic outlines of the piece. The section in measures 28-37 should be pedalled so that the "B-flat" remains in the pedal at all times. Not only is this note a pedal-tone, but the extended slurs imply that these notes should sound beyond their written values. The pedal should be changed just before each set of "B-flats" to create the effect of having the pedal down during the entire passage. Perlemuter feels that this pedalling is the best way to create a "formidable crescendo" and that the way it is most often played is too weak. Furthermore, Perlemuter says that this pedalling will create the sound of an orchestra, and,
if pedalled with every chord, may otherwise sound like a Classical piano. The crescendo as well as the general balance will be easier to control if measure 29 begins subito "pp" but with well-accented top notes.

Perlemuter uses many fingerings and redistributions in this piece which are of particular interest. In the opening right-hand figure, he achieves a pure legato by the following substitute fingering:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
5 & 4-5 & 4 & 3 \\
1 & 2 & 1 & 2 \\
\end{array}
\]

In measure 13 the "F-A-F" in the left hand may be taken with the right hand. This simpler fingering will make it easier to create an exciting swell which is to depict the rolling of the waves. The ocean, Perlemuter emphasized, is neither quiet or immobile. Similar distributions with the same musical effect are in measures 23 and 24.

Perlemuter redistributes the passages after the tremolos (i.e. measures 39, 41, 43, and other similar passages) so that the first notes in the right hand and the left hand are both taken with the left hand. He feels that with this fingering it will be easier to mark this most important strong first beat. The following arpeggiated figures are distributed so that the thumb does not have to cross over and as many consecutive fingers are used at one time as possible to produce a more even tone. The right hand takes the next seven notes, the left hand takes the next seven notes after that and the pattern continues in a similar fashion. The following excerpt illustrates this redistribution as well as Perlemuter's suggested fingering:
Example 3: Une Barque sur l’océan (mm. 37-40)
Perlemuter incorporates the use of his thumb on the accented notes in measures 107 and 108. He feels that the sonority of these notes is far more important than the fact that they are slurred together. Another example of Perlemuter's preference for using his thumb is in measure 103, where he gives a special accent on the middle notes of the flourish by standing his thumbs straight up on end. He has written in his score "Formidable! le pouce debout, plus mordant, tous les notes bien appuyés, éclatent, and molto crescendo" (Fantastic, thumb standing on end, more biting, all the notes into the keys, brilliant).

Another interesting fingering that Perlemuter explained was his use of the second and third fingers on the "A's" in measures 95-97. He said that it is common to use two fingers on black notes but he also prefers to use two fingers on white notes when he desires a full, round sound.

Perlemuter believes that the only truly expressive section in "Une Barque sur l'océan" is in measures 98-103, while the rest of the piece is all descriptive. This section must sing. Perlemuter plays measure 97 "souple à l'aise" (supple and relaxed) and in measure 98 he plays this "plus libre et pas strict" (more free and not strict). It is interesting that he regards measure 90 as a foreshadowing of this more expressive section. The left-hand melody should be played "pas comme le premier fois, accent expressif" (not like the first time; i.e. measure 83, and with an expressive accent). Contrary to measure 83, in which the left hand is to be played "sans nuances," this repetition of the melody becomes more expressive.

Perlemuter constantly stressed that this piece should be played as if it were an orchestra, not a piano. It needs more sound than a piano, but not just in volume. There are important things and less important things which make a variety of sonorities and this is what will ultimately determine the timbres to be created. In general, Perlemuter believes that "Une Barque" should have great contrasts and large dimensions. "It is not a barque on a little river or a barque in a small pool. It is a barque in the ocean." It must have a huge
flow of sonorities and must move constantly. In closing, Perlemuter feels that the greatest difficulty in "Une Barque sur l'océan" is to find the music in the middle of this sea of notes.

Perlemuter's timing of "Une Barque sur l'océan" is 6 minutes and 30 seconds.

Alborada del gracioso

This energetic piece stands out from the rest of the pieces in Miroirs because of its dance-like character, its Scarlatti-like sparkle, and its sheer excitement, so rare in French music in general. Perlemuter remarked that it is essential to play this piece with as much virtuosity as possible. He also noted that, though it is rare for a student to come to him with the complete Miroirs, pianists bring "Alborada del gracioso" to him more often than most other works of Ravel. Because it is played so often, Perlemuter realizes that there are many interpretations of this piece and, like anything that one becomes more and more familiar with, new ideas and new approaches are constantly being sought out. Perlemuter's comments on "Alborada del gracioso" pertain to interpretive ideas he received from Ravel, but perhaps the most interesting advice that he has to offer includes many unconventional fingerings. These fingerings are both musically effective and solve many of the pianistically challenging passages that appear throughout this piece.

The tempo marking for "Alborada del gracioso" which appears in all published editions is dotted quarter-note=92. There are, however, several other markings written in Perlemuter's score by hand, such as 76, 84-88. These alternatives indicate that Perlemuter prefers to play this piece slightly slower, especially since he or Ravel had also written in the score, "trop vite." The tempo should remain steady, however, and the accents should be well pronounced. Ravel had written at the top of Perlemuter's score "plus sec et moins
lourd, très vivant et très colori." These indications suggest that Ravel heard this piece orchestrally and wanted it to be played as an imitation of the orchestral transcription that was to appear thirteen years later, in 1918. The piece must evoke the sounds of Spanish guitars, castanets, song, and dance.

Perlemuter's ideas will be discussed in the following sections: opening (measures 1-42); repeated-note section (measures 43-70); middle section (measures 71-165); recapitulation (measures 166-95); and coda (measures 196-229).

In the opening, Perlemuter suggests an effective fingering for the left hand: 1-2-3-2 1-2-5-1-5(4) 1.... Consistent with his preference for using the thumb, Perlemuter feels that placing the thumb on the accented main beats will produce the desired rhythmic drive.

The rolled chords should be played "comme des pincements de guitare" (like the pluckings of a guitar) and should be as "serré" or tight as possible. To achieve this on every occurrence of the rolled chords, Perlemuter suggests taking the "G-sharp" in measures 2 and 4 with the left hand. This chord, in particular, can be awkward for some pianists and redistributing will make it easier to play. Similarly, in measure 6 it is possible to take the "D" with the left hand. The chord on the fourth eighth-note in measure 12 can be played divided between the hands with the left hand taking the lower two notes. Ravel did not like these chords spread too slowly and Perlemuter prefers playing them almost together rather than too drawn out.

The last three eighth-notes in measure 12 should be equally stressed, without any accents. This figure recurs in measures 13, 16, 17, 23, and 25. Any similar recurrences of this figure, such as in measures 58-60, 63, or 65, should be played in the same manner.

In measures 22-30 Perlemuter notes that there is a tendency to get faster, but the tempo must remain fixed. He also plays measures 28-29 dryly. It is this restraint that gives the piece its excitement and, in these measures in particular, leads to the crashing low "B-flat" in measure 30 which can be played with either three fingers (i.e. 123) or with the fist.
In measures 31-32 Perlemuter suggests that the left hand be played with a very loose wrist, "tendu" (stiff) straight fingers, and played very near the keyboard. Also important here is the pedal, which should be changed with the left-hand chords rather than with the right hand to better define the cross accents between the hands. There should be a diminuendo on the second two chords in the right hand.

As in "Noctuelles," the soufflet crescendo is important and occurs in measures 33, 34, 39, 40 and throughout the coda. In measure 33, for example, Perlemuter feels that it is difficult to obtain an explosive effect and suggests that the second last chord be played "p" to lance the "f" chord. He feels that it is easier in the recapitulation (measure 170-71) because the chords are broken into an arpeggio, making the crescendo easier to gauge.

Perlemuter plays the right hand triplet sixteenth-note figure throughout this piece "rapide" and fingers it with 3-5-3-2 for clarity.

The repeated-note section is one of the most dreaded passages in all the piano literature since it depends so much on the ability of the piano to repeat as well as on the capabilities of the pianist. Perlemuter believes it is not possible to play these repeated notes in the same tempo as the opening and slows the tempo slightly. In addition to playing this passage in a more manageable tempo, Perlemuter has an easier arrangement which he claims to have invented and which today nearly every pianist has adopted. He divides the repeated notes between the hands as the following example illustrates:
Example 4: Alborada del gracioso (mm. 41-51)
Whenever it is not possible to redistribute in this way (i.e. measures 52-57), Perlemuter fingers the triplets 132-132-132, allowing the thumb to play on the main beats of the triplets. Despite the comparative ease that it takes to play this section by redistributing, Ravel wanted the overall effect to be "légèrement flûté," quiet, and not excessively clear. It should sound orchestral, like the transcription. Other helpful fingerings in this passage are in measure 44, in which the flourish can be played with 1-2-3-4-1-2-3-5-3-2-1-4-3-2-1-2-3-4-5-3-2-1-2, and in measure 53-54, in which the right hand can play 132-132-13-21-43-21--132-... Even though the thumb must play twice between measures 53 and 54, Perlemuter believes that it is the only way to make this passage clear. Pedalling throughout the repeated notes will help to create a flute-like, veiled quality, but Perlemuter notes that it is important to observe the rests in measures 52-57.

In the closing measures of this section Perlemuter adds that Ravel took the "F-sharp" in measure 58 with the left hand. He also plays this measure "pp" and "lointain" and returns to the tempo of the opening in measure 62. Measures 68 and 69 should diminuendo and should not slow down. The final chord in measure 70 can be played with Ravel's fingerling, 1-2-4-5, in the top voice of the right hand. It is interesting that Perlemuter also uses this fingering in the triplet figure of the first movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata Op. 111. Perlemuter uses a similar fingering, also Ravel's, on the final chord of "Alborada," 1-3-5.

The middle section is one of great contrasts in mood and tempo. According to Perlemuter, this section must be played like a caricature of the voice. It should sound like a man who wants to cry and should be played in a very Romantic manner. It should be "expressif mais pas ampoule" (expressive but not bombastic).

The ornaments in the opening recitative must all be played on the beat. In addition, the first ornament in measure 71 should diminuendo up to the "F-sharp." The repeated chords in measures 76 and 78 and other similar passages must be played with one arm movement.
to avoid any percussive quality. Measures 97-105 must be played in strict time with absolutely no pedal or accelerando in measures 103-04. In measures 104-05 the thumb should play every note in the left hand. Upon the return of the recitativo in measure 107, the melody may be divided between the hands (also measures 137-40 and measures 144-50). There must be a big rallentando in measures 117-18 and a sudden return to tempo in measure 119 (also measures 147-50).

Perlemuter suggests the following fingering for measure 125 (also measure 155), which he feels is the only solution for playing this passage strongly without playing so many wrong notes:

RIGHT HAND: 1-5 1-1-5-1-1-5-1-1-5
LEFT HAND: 5-1 5-1-1-5-1-1-5-1-1

He also suggests staying very close and playing right to the bottoms of the keys, keeping the pedal right through from the beginning of the sixteenth-notes in the previous measure to the "très expressif" section that follows.

The passage from measures 126-36 (also measures 157-65) should be very expressive. Perlemuter described the orchestral version of this section as sounding like a scream and demanded that it should be imitated as closely as possible. There are two distinct voices as in the orchestra, the staccato eighth-notes and the legato chords. The chords should be practiced separately and should be joined as smoothly as possible by using legato fingering. Perlemuter used the word "appuyer" (to lean) to describe how it should be played. A diminuendo on each of the two slurred chords should also be made. The staccato notes can be distributed between the hands in the second statement of this section by taking the eighth-note that comes immediately after the first of the two slurred chords with the right hand. To achieve the greatest clarity, this note can be taken with the same finger that was used in the chord immediately preceding.
An interesting anecdote that Perlemuter shared about this section concerns the rhythmic values of the fast notes in the right hand. According to Marguerite Long, these thirty-second notes may be played as sixteenth-notes instead. During a lesson she did just that in front of Ravel and he did not disagree. Of course, it is easier to play that way, but Perlemuter prefers to play the thirty-second notes as written.

Another interesting fingering in this section is in measures 131-35, in which Perlemuter plays the left hand repeated notes with 1-3-2 1-3-2 1-3-2, for the same reasons as he does a similar fingering in the opening and in the repeated-note passage. The closing measures of this section (measures 162-63) must be played "expressif et large" and the following two measures must not prepare the recapitulation by slowing down.

The recapitulation includes many of the same musical ideas as the opening but there are a few new problems that Perlemuter discusses here. First, the accented eighth-note that appears in measure 166 and the following measures must be short. Next, there is a discrepancy between the orchestral version and the piano version in measure 172. In the orchestral version the "A" in the right hand appears as "A-sharp" and in measure 173 it appears as "A-natural." In the piano version both "A’s" are natural. Perlemuter has received telephone calls from overseas regarding this matter and personally believes that the piano version should be played as in the orchestral version with an"A-sharp" in measure 172.

The double-note glissandos pose the second most difficult problem for pianists in this piece, only surpassed by the repeated-note section. Perlemuter uses Ravel’s fingering of 4-2 for the ascending glissandos and 3-1 for the descending glissandos. Ravel was able to do these well, probably because of his square thumb, but he had said that he preferred a good single-note glissando over a poor double-note one. Perlemuter believes that the fingering in this passage is "absolutely personal." He also believes that the key to making the glissandos effective is to make a big crescendo on the way up and a diminuendo on the
way down as well as observing the top accent as marked. His additional advice is to avoid practicing these glissandos for too long or it will be impossible to play the piano for weeks.

As in the opening, Perlemuter takes the "F-sharp" in measure 191 with the left hand but, in addition, he takes the "D" on the fourth eighth-note of the left hand with the right hand. The final measure of this section can be fingered with 4-2 on the thirds in the right hand, and 1-2 on the slurred eighth-notes in the left hand. The final chord may be redistributed with the left hand taking the lower "G" of the right-hand part. Refingering this chord will help in arpeggiating it as fast as possible.

The coda must be full of marked contrasts in dynamics, tempo and mood. If one follows Ravel's indications accurately, the proper effect will be created. There are, however, some additional comments that Perlemuter has made on this section. First, in measures 196 and 198 it is possible to take the last chords with the left hand. The flourish in measure 218 must be fast and must be felt as one beat rather than three. Perlemuter compares this bar to measures 11 and 30. In measure 224 the three accented notes may be taken with three fingers on each note (i.e. 123) or with the left hand taking the first note and the right hand playing the second two with 3-2. Perlemuter plays the second half of measure 221 "p" and he makes an enormous crescendo to measure 224. To help with this build-up the pedal may be left down or fluttered throughout these measures. In measures 226-27 there is a tendency to rush, but Perlemuter suggests keeping the tempo fixed. The apparent feeling of holding back is particularly difficult in this exciting passage, especially while making a crescendo to measure 227. Pianists often slow up the duplet in measure 228, but Perlemuter said that Ravel wanted this measure played in time. Perlemuter suggests playing the second chord in the right hand in this measure with 5-2 to achieve the greatest amount of sound. The final chord of the piece should be played "net" or sharply.

Perlemuter's timing of "Alborada del gracioso" is 6 minutes and 30 seconds.
La Vallée des cloches

In "La Vallée des cloches," the last piece of Miroirs, Perlemuter discusses two important elements that are the key to its successful performance. The first element is the essence of the piece, that is, realizing where each of the five sets of bells is and knowing precisely how to delineate them from one another. They should each have their own character and their own unique color. To create these many layers of sounds demands great independence of voices and excellent tonal control.

The first set of bells is presented as octaves and appears initially in the first two measures of the piece. It is interesting that Perlemuter originally considered these first two measures to be an introduction. He obviously re-thought this idea, as he later crossed out the indication, "comme un introduction," that he had written to himself on his score. The piece begins with this first statement and more bells are successively sounded around it. The octaves are "pp" and should be balanced toward the thumb in the left hand. The second set of bells enters in measure 3. They are marked "très doux et sans accentuation" and Perlemuter says that this indication must be followed closely. The proper effect will create a sense of harmonics resonating as if in an echo. The third set of bells enters in measure 4 in the left hand. These are "p" and "un peu marqué." Perlemuter adds that in this entry it is important that the octave bells remain absolutely in time. The fourth bells enter in measures 6 and must be played "mf" and very clearly. The last bells enter at the end in measure 50 and, on this first entry, Ravel demanded an accent. The wallowing sonority of these reminds Perlemuter of the great bells in Boris Godunov.

The second element that Perlemuter discussed in detail is the long Romantic melody in measures 20-41, which he describes as being of "melancholic fervor." He notes that it is twenty-two measures long and is the longest melody that Ravel wrote. One is tempted to disagree when reminded of the second movement of the G-major Piano Concerto, but both
works are excellent examples of melody that Ravel believed permeated his music. Beginning with the upbeat to measure 20, Perlemuter plays in a slightly faster tempo than in the rest of the piece. He suggests playing the opening of the piece at quarter note = 50-52 and plays this middle section at quarter note = 60 (he returns to quarter note = 52 at measure 42). The melody should be sung simply, not slowly, and without agitation. He warns that in measure 24 there is a tendency to rush and advises the pianist to observe Ravel's indication of "calme" at this point. Within this melody, Perlemuter takes some time before the upbeat to measure 24 and before the upbeat to measure 26. The tied chord in measure 32-33 has confused some pianists and Perlemuter explains that it is only the chord that is tied and not the "G" octave. The repeated "E-flat" octaves in measures 34, 35, and 37 should "diminuendo" and be played "lointain."

The other main divisions in this piece are the "très calme" sections in measures 12-19 and measures 42-54. The chords must be played very legato and Perlemuter suggests using finger substitution. Whenever this is not possible, Perlemuter advises "ramper dans le clavier" (to glide in the keyboard) and to stay very close to the keys. There is a tendency to rush this section, especially the inner voices and last beats of each measure, and Perlemuter believes it is because of the sheer simplicity of its theme. He explained that the theme should be filled with the poetry that is within it. If it is hurried, the effect will be ruined. The opening tempo should be maintained in these sections and the overall feeling should be as expansive and calm as possible.

Effective pedalling in this piece will create the sonorities of bells resonating. In the opening, the pedal should be down before beginning to play. From this point to measure 11 it is possible to leave the pedal down, changing for the first time at the "très calme" section. It is also possible to keep the pedal down from measure 49-54. It is essential to keep the pedal through the pauses or rests in measures 11, 41, 48, and at the end, and to make these pauses as long as possible to let the harmonics resonate. The final indication
Perlemuter has written to himself on his score is "laissez vibrer." Also interesting is his indication, "glisser mains sur le bout" (slide the hands on the edge--off the piano).

Perlemuter expressed his view that the pedal is especially important in "La Vallée des cloches" and mentioned a book that was written specifically about it by Walter Gieseking.\textsuperscript{16} Perlemuter feels that the explanations are so complicated that it is difficult to understand what the end result should be. Perlemuter is reluctant to indicate many fixed pedallings. He believes that it is not possible to do the same pedallings in every hall and, ultimately, it is the ear that must judge what effect will work for the moment.

Perlemuter's timing of "La Vallée des cloches" is 5 minutes.

\textsuperscript{16} Although there does not appear to be a book written specifically about "La Vallée des cloches," the author believes that Perlemuter was making a reference to Rhythms, Dynamics, Pedal and Other Problems of Piano Playing by Karl Leimer and Walter Gieseking (translated by Frederick C. Rauser. Bryn Mawr: Theodore Presser Co., 1938.) This book appears as Part 2 in Piano Technique, also by Karl Leimer and Walter Gieseking (New York: Dover Publications, Inc. 1972.)
CONCLUSIONS

By studying Vlado Perlemuter's interpretation of Miroirs it has been possible to trace the many influences of his diverse background of training. The importance he consistently gives to effective fingering is perhaps the greatest contribution he has made to this piece and can be attributed to his studies with Moszkowski more than any other teacher he has had. This aspect of piano playing has been lost today, replaced by pianists searching for fingering that will create the greatest facility. In a world of thousands of pianists to compare oneself to and thousands of recordings to compare performances to, the greatest facility with the least wrong notes has become an essential quality to win any success in this competitive world. Perlemuter has discovered fingerings that bring out orchestral sonorities and colors rarely heard from pianos in the concert hall today. His sound can also be attributed to his concept of sonority and his creative imagination. The idea of creating diverse colors is one of the main attributes of pianists from the Golden Age, and Perlemuter is truly one of the last pianists from this school. His early training with Cortot forced him to listen and to recreate the sounds that were demonstrated to him in his lessons. Coming from an era when it made little difference whether a work was played on a piano or by an orchestra also increased his awareness of the numerous possibilities of sounds that could be made.

Perlemuter's encounters with Ravel were a major contribution to his general musicianship. It was from Ravel that Perlemuter widened his range of tonal color through the new types of writing that were presented to him. In addition, of all the composers, Ravel was one of the most creative orchestrators, and the experience of having studied with someone with an ear so open to new sounds could not have gone by without effect. The
historical significance should also be noted, as Perlemuter's studies were to place him in the position of Ravel's authentic interpreter.

One cannot ignore Vlado Perlemuter's individual personality as it affects his interpretation of music and the way he plays. Besides his French background, which is evident in his clear and precise style of playing and in his inclination toward playing works by his countrymen, Perlemuter's unique personality must also be taken into account. The fact that he was so eager to learn Ravel's entire œuvre when he did is very revealing. When put into perspective, one must realize that, in 1925, Perlemuter was discovering a whole new world of contemporary music. This project may be compared to a pianist today learning all of the piano works of Karlheinz Stockhausen or of John Cage. This fact displays a real curiosity and a drive to learn. It shows a perseverance in learning an entire œuvre, and it shows his desire to share all that he has learned with all who will listen. Perlemuter's audiences and students alike are fortunate in being able to carry a tradition of the past with them as well as a piece of Vlado Perlemuter himself. They will have taken a piece of his passion, outgoing character, sensitivity, and humor.

It is certain that the link to the world of Ravel and to the Golden Age of Piano Playing will be retained because of Vlado Perlemuter. Perhaps one day Perlemuter's own words, when recalling his studies with Ravel, will be repeated to a new generation of pianists by one of his own students: "It seems as though it were just yesterday..."
APPENDIX A

Sample Programs of Vlado Perlemuter

Paris - December, 1920

BEETHOVEN: Sonata Op. 81a
LISZT: Rhapsody No. 2
CHOPIN: Ballade, Polonaise
FAURE: Nocturne, Impromptu
DUKAS: Variations sur un Thème de Rameau

Basel - February, 1958

BACH: Partita No. 2 in C minor
SCHUMANN: Kreisleriana
FAURE: Thème et Variations, Op. 73
RAVEL: Gaspard de la nuit

London - February, 1971

DEBUSSY: Pour le piano
SCHUMANN: Kreisleriana
RAVEL: Valses nobles et sentimentales
CHOPIN: Sonata in B flat minor

Houston - April, 1987

RAVEL: Sonatine
DEBUSSY: Pour le piano
CHOPIN: Ballade in F minor, Op.52
Etudes, Op. 25 (complete)
APPENDIX B

List of piano works for students wishing to play at Master Classes of
VLADO PERLEMUTER

J.S. Bach
English Suites in G minor and A minor
Italian Concerto
Partita No. 2 in C minor

Mozart
Sonatas K. 331, K. 457, K. 576
Concertos K. 271, K. 467

Beethoven
Sonatas Op. 53, 57, 81a, 109, 110, 111
Eroica Variations
32 Variations in C minor
Concertos Nos. 3, 4, 5

Mendelssohn
Variations Sérieuses

Schumann
Etudes Symphoniques
Kreisleriana
Fantasy Op.17
Concerto in A minor

Liszt
Sonata in B minor
Mephisto Waltz
Dans les Bois
Ronde des Lutins
Feux Follets
Mazeppa
Concerto in E flat

Chopin
Complete works

Brahms
Variations on a Theme by Handel
Variations on a Theme by Paganini
(Books 1 and 2)

Franck
Prélude, Chorale, and Fugue
Prélude, Aria, and Finale
Variations Symphoniques

Ravel
Complete works
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composers</th>
<th>Works</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Debussy   | L'isle joyeuse  
|          | Images Bk. 1  
|          | Pour le piano  
|          | Etudes       |
| Fauré     | Thème et Variations  
|          | Nocturnes Nos. 1, 6, 7, 12, 13  
|          | Barcarolle No. 5  
|          | Impromptus Nos. 2 and 5  
|          | Ballade for piano and orchestra |
| Dukas     | Variation, Interlude, and Finale on a  
|          | Theme of Jean Philippe Rameau |
APPENDIX C

Complete Bibliography on Vlado Perlemuter

* indicates materials that were used in this document.


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