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## The Genre of the Minuet in the Works of Maurice Ravel

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*The article deals with the key issue of modern musicology, the issue of a certain genre that prevails in the works of a music composer, an ability of a genre to become a factor that determines stylistic specificity. In the works of Maurice Ravel this style-forming factor is dance. On the example of the minuet that occupies a special place in the works of the composer, the article explores the principles of mediation of choreographic and musical features of the dance prototype at the semantic and structural levels in the thematism and form generation of Ravel's works. The aesthetic perfection and delicate elegance of gestures, graphical precision of choreographic pattern and dialogueness typical for the minuet have been reflected in the motive-composition character of the thematism, the periodicity of the syntax, the relative stability of the meter, the active use of various methods of polyphonization of the musical texture, the exclusive role of the principle of symmetry on the compositional, melodic and textural levels of the musical form. Individual features of the minuet in various works of Ravel are related to their stylistic origins and genre fusion creating certain imagery.*

*Keywords: minuet, dance prototype, choreographic pattern of dance, genre semantics, counter rhythm, figurative polyphony, stylistic multilayers.*

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One of the most important features of the creative personality of Maurice Ravel is his strong interest in dance genres at all stages of his creative evolution. Ravel's works include three ballets and one opera-ballet. The works focused on a particular dance are widely represented in Ravel's symphonic works, concert and symphonic genres, piano, chamber-instrumental and vocal music.

Ravel's method of implementation of dance in the music is characterized by a desire for



multidimensional reflection. On the one hand, this is expressed in a wide range of the involved dance genres, which differ in terms of historical, national and social belonging. Among them, there are old courtly dances: the sarabande, the pavane, the minuet; a kind of an emblem of romanticism, the waltz; pop-jazz dance of the composer's epoch, the foxtrot, the national Spanish dance malagueña, the habanera, the bolero, the jota, the guayara and the zortsiko. On the other hand, multidimension of the reflection reveals itself in variability, multiplicity of interpretations of one and the same dance. Using certain techniques of transformation (intensification or attenuation shades of meaning) or conversion (rethinking) of original semantics of some dance prototype, Ravel "expands" its semantic borders.

The minuet occupies a special place among ancient dances, which served as an intonation prototype of the thematic invention of Ravel's works. The composer was especially attracted to this dance, which gained the title of "the king of dances and the dance of kings" in the 17<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. He composed solo piano works in the minuet genre: *Menuet antique (Ancient minuet)*, 1895) and *Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn* (1909), wrote one of the parts of the piano suite *Le tombeau de Couperin* (1917) and the second part of the *Sonatine* for the piano (1905), and a scene from the opera *L'enfant et les sortilèges (The Child and the Spells)* (1925) with involvement of fairytale characters, an old armchair and a couch.

The historians of choreography associate the origin of the minuet with the French folk dance branle. This agile and cheerful round dance played a special role in the history of dance. Its regional varieties formed the basis for a variety of ballroom dancing. For example, the branle danced in the Auvergne, gave life to the bourrée, the branle of Breton gave rise to the passepied; the gavotte, in fact, is a modified branle of Provence

[Vasil'eva-Rozhdestvenskaia, 1987]. The minuet comes from the branle of the province of Poitou in western France<sup>1</sup>. Performance of the *branle de Poitou* among peasants was graceful and elegant contributing to its rapid spread and popularity in the aristocratic society. V. Rannev considers the *amener* to be a transitional genre from the *branle de Poitou* to the minuet, when the dancers moved not in a circle but in a chain along a zigzag line [Rannev, 2004: 83, 91]. The minuet itself, according to most researchers, got its name due to its characteristic short steps, *pas menus*.

The French royal court began to dance the minuet approximately in 1650. Becoming a favorite dance of the royal court of Louis XIV, the minuet was improved by well-known choreographers Pierre Beauchamp and Louis Pécour according to the aesthetics of the court etiquette. As a result, the dance was danced more slowly, it lost its typical simplicity and directness, became elegantly majestic and ceremonial. According to S. Khudekov, the salon minuet was called "a wild flower to live through the evolution of the garden culture, completely different from its prototype from Poitou" [Khudekov, 2014: 280]. Later on, the minuet was widespread in many countries across Europe.

For a long time the minuet was danced by one couple and represented, according to B. Iavorskii, "an etiquette dance scene moving along the ballroom between the 'hedgerow' of spectators <...> At the end of the dance, this couple was substituted by the following couple" [Iavorskii, 2002: 46 ]. Then, the number of couples started to increase. Moreover, the dancers moved strictly by ranks: the first couple were the king and the queen, then the dauphin with one of the ladies, then the princes, etc.

The minuet was peculiar due to the simplicity of its dance units. It did not contain neither brilliant steps, nor pretentiousness. The composition of the minuet was based mainly on

three movements: *pas de menuet*, *balancé* and *pas grave*. The basic movement of the minuet (*pas de menuet*) consisted of four short sliding steps, which together covered the distance of about one meter and were performed for two beats of musical accompaniment. *Balancé* is a dance move in which shifting from one foot to another is accompanied by inclinations of the body, moving the head and arms from side to side giving the impression of a rhythmical movement. *Pas grave* as *pas de menuet* take two beats, and includes: *plié*<sup>2</sup> (upbeat), the rise on the toes (the first and second quarters), *plié* (the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter), a sliding step with the right foot in the position II (4<sup>th</sup> quarter), pulling the left foot to the right foot and a transition back to the position IV (5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> quarters). As described by M. Vasil'eva-Rozhdestvenskaia, this movement is characterized by a peculiar way of holding out a hand. "If *pas grave* started on the right foot, the dancers joined left hands, if they began with the left foot, then they held out right hands" [Vasil'eva-Rozhdestvenskaia, 1987: 88].

These dance elements were freely combined, and were not supposed to be repeated twice, except for the basic step of the minuet, which had to be alternated with *pas grave* and *balancé*.

Special courtliness provided the minuet with delicate bows, greetings and curtsies that the dancers addressed both to each other and the surrounding audience. They accomplished almost every figure of the dance. The dancers made most respectful curtsies to the king and the queen.

Even though the movements were plain and simple, it took quite a long time to learn how to dance the minuet to achieve a delicate manner of performance. Elaborate clothes abundant in decoration obliged the dancers to move slowly. The transition from one movement to another was accomplished smoothly, without interruption, in a strict rhythm. During the dance, the dancers had to maintain a dignified posture with the body tightened, the head raised and kept straight, arms slightly bent with a beautiful bend of hands. Vasil'eva-Rozhdestvenskaia writes, "the male part was particularly complicated, while the movements with a hat played a significant role in it. He was supposed to take the hat off gracefully during the curtsy, holding it delicately in one and the other hand alternately and put it on easily" [Vasil'eva-Rozhdestvenskaia, 1987: 85].

An important feature of the minuet are typical features of a dialogue, intimate conversation. Many researchers pointed at this.







“The movements of the gentleman were gallant and respectful and expressed admiration for the lady”, writes M. Vasil’eva-Rozhdestvenskaia [Vasil’eva-Rozhdestvenskaya, 1987: 84]. According to S. Khudekov and B. Iavorskii, the minuet was interpreted as a declaration of love in the form of dancing [Khudekov, 2014: 290; Iavorskii, 2002: 46]. However, the court etiquette put its imprint on the temper of the dance dialogue. It is characterized by restraint expression of feelings. Direct demonstration of feelings in the dance was considered vulgar, a sign of “a bad taste”. Emotions and feelings were “shown” in accordance with the rules of the courtly code assuming the character of a gallant game. Therefore, it is hardly appropriate to consider psychologization of the aristocratic minuet. In this case, a visual image of the gesture, its subtle beauty and perfection come to the forefront.

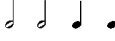
The majestic and solemn spirit of the court dance was largely determined by a strict compositional pattern. Dance movements rhyming with each other, entwined in a spectacular decorative structure like an ornament. Location of dancers was strictly regulated in accordance with a certain scheme. According to Curt Sachs, the pattern of the minuet was originally figure 8, then S (a symbol of the Sun King), later 2 and since 1700, after the reform of the Parisian dancing master Louis Pécour, it took the form of Z [Sachs, 1937: 406]. Numerous patterns of moving of the dancers in the minuet with all the differences have a common pattern: a mirror symmetry of configuration.


In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the minuet undergoes some changes. The development of the ballet, the improvement of the dance language was reflected in the ballroom choreography. Compared to the minuet of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the new minuet was characterized by a lively pace and more complicated movements. The choreographic units are enriched with new movements, in particular


*chassé* (an easy slight advancing leap when one leg seems to catch up the other).

The music of the classical minuet is characterized, first of all, by a triple meter (3/4, 3/8) and a moderate tempo perceived as an indirect expression of smooth slow movements with soft rounded postures and gestures. Steady and measured temper provides the musical accompaniment with accentuation of all the beats of the measure (by means of syncopation, harmony shifts per quarter, articulation). L. Kirillina considers such accentuation to be the most indicative feature of the rhythm of the minuet, which reflected the peculiarities of its choreography: “In the minuet measure, there are usually three accents of a different degree, since per each beat <...> there is a real or imaginary step” [Kirillina 1998: 135].

The rhythm of the minuet is quite complicated and whimsical. According to V. Rannev, the specificity of the rhythmic organization of the dance is determined by a bizarre symbiosis of two types of the rhythm, the boundary falls exactly on the epoch of Baroque: timed, accentuated and qualitative, and untimed, time-measuring and quantitative. The accent-regular time meter in the minuet is based on the rhythmic formulas of a quantitative nature, preserved from the *branle de Poitou*:  (“the rhythmic formula of a dactylic step”<sup>3</sup>),  (“the rhythm of a steady step”<sup>4</sup>), as well as their variants produced by means of the melodic ornamentation, for example, a typical minuet rhythmic pattern  or . Connected into motivic and phrasal groups, they often create a counterweight to the uniform pulsation forming metrical shifts and modulation [Rannev, 2004]. Variable metric functions are also formed by individualization of rhythmic patterns of the parts of the texture leading to a dispersal of accents in the general movement.

What is most typical for the minuet, is its accentual details appearing at the level of interaction of the music and the dance movement. The steps of the dancers in *pas de menuet* form an autonomous metric pattern contradicting both the musical meter and the syntax. The rhythmic pattern of *pas de menuet* (*aabb*)  covering the beat for 3/2, forms a counter rhythm to two beats of the music for 3/4. Therefore, the minuet, as rightly noted by Oscar Bie, “coincides duple meter and triple meter in the duple beat per 3/4” [cited by: Rannev, 2004: 95].

Metric pulsation of the music: 3/4  


Metric pulsation of the choreography: 3/2  


Z-shaped pattern of the minuet usually included six *pas de menuet* and occupied 12 beats of the music [Little, 2001: 742]. Frequent non-concurrence of musical and choreographic accents in this section of musical time created the impression of asynchrony of the metric design.

Due to the complementary interrelation of rhythmic design of the musical accompaniment plans and the counter-rhythm, a whimsical rhythmic pattern appears between the groups of steps and the music on the one hand, and on the other hand, the accentual interrelations become smoothed and aligned. This enhances the feeling of smoothness, softness and grace of the movements.

In the *pas de menuet* of the fast minuet of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the conflictual relationship of the music and the dance movement gives way to their simultaneous correspondence. Parallelism of music and choreography is most evident in the rhythmic figure frequently encountered in the minuet:










Right foot step with knee bending      posing      pulling up left foot      three short steps

Elegant and noble simplicity of the minuet has reflected to a certain extent in its laconic musical texture. Quite often, the minuet was performed in three or two parts with a moderate use of melismatic decorations. The melodic lines of the parts are highlighted by steady music intonations compared with the plastic elements of the minuets. These include the so-called etiquette cadencies (according to the terminology of M. Aranovskii): a descending melodic course of I-V-I or V-V ↓ -I ↑ in the bass and the figure of retention, which reflect, respectively, the salute<sup>5</sup> and the bow of the gentleman and a gallant women curtsy. These intonation formula embodying reverence both plastique of curtsies and grace and nobility of manners, are found in other court aristocratic dances.

The specific feature of the choreography of the minuet – the features of a dance dialogue (“plastic polyphony” according to O. Astakhova [Astakhova, 1987: 197]) – is revealed in the musical texture through the use of imitating polyphonic technique, matching of different keys, tone colours, ways of articulation, contrasting dynamic sound colour.

The analysis of Ravel’s works written in the style of the minuet, showed that the implementation of the creative abilities of this genre in all cases is essentially influenced by showing the most typical features of the choreographic structure of the dance. Ravel’s minuets, though different in type<sup>6</sup>, demonstrate significant similarity. The majestically solemn *Menuet antique* and the rustic *Menuet sur le nom d’Haydn*, the elegant minuets from the suite *Le tombeau de Couperin* and the *Sonatine*, and the comic minuet of the armchair and the couch all inherit the most important features of the plastique of “the king of the dance”.

Ravel’s minuets preserved the following features from the genre prototype: triple meter and moderate tempo. Steady and strictly ordered

movements of the ceremonial dance are indirectly reflected in the uniform metric pulsation supported by the complementary rhythm of the parts of the musical texture, sometimes by a change of harmony for each beat; the pattern of the melodic line characterized by a balance of ups and downs, jumps and smooth movement; periodicity of caesurae and square constructions (in the sections the expositional texture of the themes). The rhythmic intonations have a special role in the rhythmic pattern going back to the classical minuet: the different variants of the “dactylic step” – , ;  (*Le tombeau de Couperin*); motor-metric figure of the “steady step” –  (*Sonatine*),  (*Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn*); dotted rhythmic formulas –  (*Menuet antique*),  (The scene the armchair and the small Louis XV couch).

Particular attention to the beauty and elegance of movements, the geometric accuracy of the composition pattern in the minuet defined the motive-composition types of the thematic invention in Ravel's works, the frequency of syntactic division, the exceptional role of the principle of symmetry at different levels of the musical form of all the works: compositional, melodic and textural.

Discrete, “composite” character of the thematism creates analogy with the plastic pattern of the dance as a specific combination of postures and movements. Some elements of the thematism give rise to more concrete ideas of the exquisite plastique of the gallant aristocratic dance.

For example, the development of the outer movements in the theme of the *Menuet antique* characterized by beautiful colourful sound is based on four thematic elements that are associated with graceful dancing *pas*. It should be mentioned that it is not the isomorphism of the musical motif and choreographic movement we are talking about. There cannot be complete

similarity of gestures and the musical intonation. Nevertheless, the general outlines of the dance and melodic movements coincide.

The opening chordal motif (**a**) repeated twice with reharmonization (diminished VII<sub>43-3</sub> t<sub>6</sub> and II<sub>7</sub> t) is linked to the curtsey in the perception, due to the trochaic accent<sup>7</sup>, rising minor second intonation VII-I clearly audible in the middle part: they help to simulate bending of the body and putting it back to the starting position. Moreover, it is not so much an exquisitely courteous curtsey, but a majestically solemn bow. Such temper is provided by the chordal pattern and a set of accents: rhythmic, harmonic (the brightly sounding and functionally intense harmony of the diminished four-three chord), dynamic (**f**) and articulatory (*marcato*).



As noted previously, bows and curtseys were obligatory elements of the minuet. This can probably explain the particular importance of the motif **a** in form generation. It opens each section of the music piece (except for the trio), organizes the syntactic structure of the minuet (divides the texture into equal sections, just as a vertical line separates the interlacing motifs of the horizontal ornament in the visual arts). The special significance of the element **a** becomes obvious due to the culmination areas of the developing section of the first part, where it comes to the

fore: it sounds mainly in the high range and is almost always outlined dynamically (*sf*, *f*, *ff*) and articulatively. It penetrates also in the trio of *Menuet antique* appearing on the border of its developing and repeating sections.

In three other thematic elements, the contours of dance movements can be guessed mainly in the melodic pattern. The cascading melody of the motif *b* from the top-source seems to reproduce the plastic outlines of *pas de chasse* (easy short leap to the promotion of, the performance of which one leg as it catches up to the other). The undulating melodic contour of the motif *c* may be compared with the *balancé* (a dance move in which shifting from one foot to another is accompanied by inclinations of the body, moving the head and arms from side to side giving the impression of a rhythmical movement). The spiral upward melodic line of the motif *d* can be compared with the advanced diagonal movement with turns, a version of *pas de bourrée* (the movement of the melody up provides the effect of receding, and permanent returns remind such turns).

It is significant that the motives are short and laconic, which is obviously due to the nature of the minuet dance movements: the steps are short and light, the gestures are delicate and soft. The motives follow each other without interruption, one naturally flowing into another, resulting in a feeling of smooth transitions from one movement to another, which is typical for the choreography of the court minuet [Vasil'eva-Rozhdestvenskaia, 1987: 85].

Thematism of the outer movements of *Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn* composed by Ravel for the centenary of the death of Joseph Haydn is featured by a combination of the features of lyrical intonation and “heavy” accent plastique

of the rustic minuet. Here there is a much larger proportion of melodic turns with wide passages containing the fourth and the sixth (special importance of the fourth's intonation is predetermined by the monogram's structure). Consequently, there is reason to talk about the importance of jumping movements (*chassé*) in the choreographic dance pattern, which usually end with *balancé*. Moreover, they are not always graceful. On the contrary, sometimes they are heavy and clumsy. This feeling is due to the “weighting” of the leap through the strengthening of the volume, accentuation and compression of the texture: the descending minor second following the leap with the major sixth “acquires” the major seventh chords with duplication of all parts in the octave (motif *b*), or by accentuating the downbeat and the subsequent syncopation (the motif of *a*). Using these ingenious techniques, Ravel reminds the listener of the nature of the “rustic” minuets of Haydn.

The second part of the Sonatine for the piano written by Ravel in *Tempo di Menuetto*, combines the lyric tone of elegy and the delicate grace of the court dance. The synthesis of the dance and vocal genre elements is determined by the functional ambiguousness of this part. It fulfills the function of the slow part and the function of the minuet of the sonata-symphonic cycle at the same time<sup>8</sup>. Maybe that is why the dance prototype herewith is not so texturized as in the works that Ravel called minuets. Nevertheless, the melodic pattern

of the group of the head motives, which further become the leading motives, demonstrates the features of the movements that are typical for the minuet. Short uprising motives with the leap for the perfect fifth (bars 1, 2): two delicate *pas de chasse* from the right and the left feet; in the motif with the undulating contour (bars 3-4): graceful *balancé*. “Etiquette cadencies” of the exposition period (bars 11-12) and the repeat (bars 63-64) with the movement of the bass V-V↓-I↓ and the *gruppetto* figure in the melody are comparable with the curtsies.



The melodic and rhythmic formula that opens each section of the outer movements of the sadly mournful minuet from *Le tombeau de Couperin* seems to represent soft gliding steps of the main *pas* of the minuet (step with knee bending, posing, pulling up legs). Its melodic texture is formed by *gruppetto* culminating in anticipation and the rhythm is a diminished version of the dactylic step (♩ ♪ ♪ ♩). Cadence formulas with the movement of V-I↓ in the bass and the singing figure in the are perceived as music and visual equivalents of the curtsies (bars 3-4, 31-32).

Exceptional spatial-temporal ordering typical for the minuet, is reflected in the principle of symmetry, which has great importance in the composition and texture of Ravel's works.

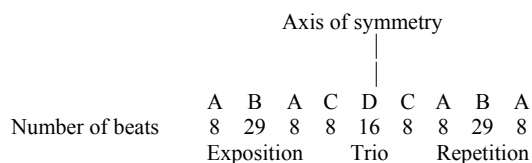
Thus, developing section of the first part *Menuet antique* (bars 9-37) is subject to the principle of rotational symmetry, in which the figure (*rapport*) is repeatedly transferred along a straight line (axis of transfer) forming

a series of identical figures. Initially the given sequence alternatively changed motives (*a*, *b*, *b*<sub>1</sub>, *c*) is developed on the basis of sequencing. Then the new combination of motives (*a*, *b*<sub>2</sub>, *a*, *d*) is sequenced, and then the motives *a* and *d* sound simultaneously in different parts. Complex interweaving of figures-motives, and their various combinations, the division of continuously flowing musical texture by recurring cadences (the motif *a*) into equal sections: all this suggests an analogy with an ornament. Associations with the compositional rearrangement of dancers,

combination of dance figures are possible. At the same time, relying on motivic combinatorics in the development of the material can be considered as one of the features of the baroque style.

Symmetry is also observed at the level of composition. The three-part structure with the exact repetition and the trio middle is a closed musical unit built on the principle of mirror symmetry, and proportional in scale.

Compositional pattern of *Menuet antique*:



The principle of mirror symmetry reveals itself also in the features of the textured design of the material. The musical texture of the minuet includes two types of mirror symmetry: horizontal, which is evident in the structure of the melodic line, and is the embodiment of beauty and elegance of gesture (see melody in bars 2-5, 30-33, 46-47); and vertical observed in the ratio of different parts of the texture and associated with the clear precise choreographic pattern (see bars 1, 6-7, 38-39, 43-44).



The role of different types of symmetry in *Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn* is critical. Rotational symmetry is fulfilled by means of repetition (repeating the motif in sequences similar to repetition of the rapport in the ornament, repeated expositional period of the minuet). Mirror symmetry reveals itself in the principle of repetition at the compositional level, the balance of ups and downs in the melodic line, the use of special methods of polyphonic art in the second part of the work. Thus, the retrograde is a mirror image of the primary type in relation to the vertical axis, and the inversion retrograde is a mirror image of the retrograde in relation to the horizontal axis.

However, in this work (in contrast to *Menuet antique*) it is appropriate to mention the embodiment of the so-called “negative” symmetry or “dissymmetry” in music. For example, the repetition of the minuet is not the complete reflection of the exposition, but partial. The symmetry of the melody structure is also not perfect giving it special charm and naturalness: ***h a d d g d d (c h g a) a h***.

In the minuet from *Le tombeau de Couperin*, the principle of symmetry is particularly important. The laws of mirror symmetry (dissymmetry, to be exact) can be traced in the tonal ratio of cadencies of exposition and repetition of the simple ternary form ( $G (h | a) G$ ), with the identical cadencies in the main key, and the cadencies similar in melodic contour in secondary keys. Due to the

rearrangement of the rhythmic motives and inversion of the pitch pattern, the initial two-beat phrases of the expositional period are perceived as mirror-symmetric.

The principle of ornamental symmetry comes to action in the middle section based on the motive-variation development. Here there are two phrases with variant repetitions (bars 9-11 – ***a***, bars 12-14 – ***a<sub>1</sub>***, bars 17-18 – ***b***, bars 19-20 – ***b<sub>1</sub>***) associated with the figures of the ornament.

The principle of symmetry is most generally represented at the level of composition. Composition of the outer movements of the minuet differs by harmony and proportional scale. Ravel follows the logic of the baroque three-part repetition form coming from the two-part (such a form is common in the dance compositions of the harpsichord *ordres* of F. Couperin, insertable dances of J.S. Bach's suites. The ratio of the sections is perfectly balanced:

$$\begin{array}{c} ||: a :||: b \quad a :|| \\ 8 \quad 16 \quad 8 \end{array}$$

The features of the dance dialogue typical for the choreography of the minuet, in Ravel's are represented by the active use of the imitative polyphony techniques enriching the dominant homophonic harmony (the role of the polyphony in the minuet from *Le tombeau de Couperin* is the least significant); in tone-register correlations and dynamic contrasts.

Thus, in the outer movements of *Menuet antique*, the melody is imitated in the two



formations of the music texture, and the developing sections are based on the polyphonic work of individual elements of the theme dispersed in space: they come in different part, registers and keys (*a* – *dis-moll*, *b* – *Fis-dur*, *c*<sub>1</sub> – *b-moll*, *a* – *f-moll*). This principle of distribution of the texture components results in associations with the successive performance of the dance figures by the dancers and their movement in space in accordance with the choreographic pattern.

The trio of *Menuet antique* also contains “plastic polyphony”. There is polyphonization of the homophonic texture in its exposition section due to various phrasal inhale in the outer parts (the size of the phrase in the upper part is six beats, and in the bottom part it is five beats). In the middle section there are several clearly distinguished independent formations: relief is the line of the upper voice (the motif *f*); background is the harmonic hierarchy including monophonic *ostinato* (two-beat structures separated in time) and the chord formation, which is independent due to hemiola, autonomous rhythm of harmonic shifts and author’s phrasing with leagues (motif *g*). The development is based on the principle of switching the functions of the parts: when the leading part is “switched off”, the vertical chords come to the fore creating the effect that one part of the dancers moves away to another sector of the space in the ballroom. Register rearrangements of the parts (middle bars 54, 55 and 62, 63) remind the solo of the lady (the melody in the upper part) and the solo of the gentleman (the melody the middle part).

The dialogueness typical for the minuet is revealed in *Menuet sur le nom d’Haydn* by means of polyphonization and layering of the texture in the second section. Here Ravel uses more complex

polyphonic techniques than in *Menuet antique*: the monogram theme sounds in the main version (bars 16-18), in the retrograde performance (bars 19, 20), retrograde of inversion (bars 24, 25) in the transposition of the retrograde (bars 27-34). The counterpoint part is based on the development of the motives *d*, *e* and *f*. Herewith, simultaneously the theme is heard in the middle part and the countertheme appears in the upper part. One can imagine that the dancers divided into two groups are in different part of the ballroom and perform various movements.





The most vivid expression of the “plastic polyphony” is observed in the scene of the old armchair and the small Louis XV couch (measures 17-21), in which Ravel recreated the individual features of the gallant minuet of the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century adding a variety of brilliant details, which make the dance quite grotesque. Nevertheless, the attributes of the minuet close to the exquisite Rococo style dances are given in a pointed, exaggerated form. Thus, the polyphonic texture of the middle part (measure 18) of a common ternary forms a counterpoint of contrasting thematic elements. One of them comes from textured formula of fanfares (octave-unison sound, dotted rhythm, repetition of one tone), and is completed by two oppositely directed leaps to the seventh. First it is sequently given in the part of the piano, and then alternately the imitations of the horn, bass clarinet and contrabassoon sound. Active, energetic nature of this thematic element

involves the proper *plastique*: dashing, rough movement inappropriate for the gallant minuet movement. It may be rightly associated with the impulsive dance of the old armchair annoyed and angry with the “wicked” boy. The second element performed by the woodwind and string instruments is based on the conjunct rhythmically aligned movement allowing to correlate it with the basic step of the minuet – *pas menu*. However, speeded rhythmic pulsation with the quavers, sharp *staccato*, appoggiaturas that adorn every sound, reflect the fussy manner of performance and the “fluttering” bouncing steps of another member of the dance dialogue – the couch. The parody effect is reinforced by glissando of cellos and trombones. The inaccuracy of imitations and changes in the time interval of introduction of individual parts make the dance duo seem unharmonized with a distorted choreographic pattern.

In the repetition (measure 19), the orderly deployment of the theme by the piano part and the soloists’ part is “broken” spontaneously by the replicas of the horns: a rapid descending passage of the clarinet, an abrupt rise and tremolos of the flute, nervous repetitions of the piccolo flute, piccolo clarinet and French horn, glissandos of the trombone. These motives remind amusing situations that occur during the dance: running, trampling, awkward turns and sliding<sup>9</sup>.

Along with the similar features of the rhythmic-syntactic and melodic-textured organization associated with the generalized reflection of plastic and musical components of the dance prototype, all Ravel’s minuets are united due to their neoclassicist trend. Moreover, in three works – *Menuet antique*, minuets from the *Sonatine* and *Le tombeau de Couperin* – the style prototype is multi-layered. We can assume that thus the idea of the timeless, universal character of the minuet is revealed, which in

Ravel’s opinion is a certain ideal, a perfect example of the dance.

Specific features of the genre prototype in Ravel’s works are associated with their content and stylistic origins. For example, in Part II of the *Sonatine* he uses the techniques that appeal to the style of the 17<sup>th</sup> century minuets. The rhythmic formula  and its version  are particularly important in the rhythmic pattern of the music as reminding the quantitative formulas of the *branle de Poitou* preserved in the minuet. The counter rhythm occurring at the level of interaction between the music and the dance movement minuet in the 17<sup>th</sup> century minuet is indirectly reflected in Ravel’s work by constant metric shifts, which are formed by syncopation and articulation of accents, “failure” of the harmonic pulse. Quite often the emphasis falls on the fifth beat of two-measure phrases (bars 2, 4, 14, 16, 24, and the like). Curt Sachs considered this accent on the fifth beat to be the most significant for the “good old-style minuets” [Sachs, 1937: 406].

Transparent harpsichord texture, exquisite melodic ornamentation, unsteady illusive sound, which recreates not so much the dance itself, but the perfect illusion of dancing are the features of the Rococo style in the minuets from the suite *Le tombeau de Couperin*, *Sonatine* and the opera *L’enfant et les sortilèges* (*The Child and the Spells*).

Variability of the figurative-conceptual aspect of Ravel’s minuets determines the mobility of the material elements of the genre prototype: interaction with other genres, “deformation” of some structural features of the genre model.

Thus, the sad sublime colour of the image is due to the synthesis of the minuet (in the trio – musette) with the genres of the sarabande and the choral in the suite in *Le tombeau de Couperin*, the nostalgic tone in Part II of the *Sonatine* is associated with the finest sound of its theme and

significant influence of vocal genres. Thematism of the outer movements of *Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn* is distinguished by energetic melodic leaps “weighted” by dynamic, articulatory, harmonic and textural accents reminiscent of the rough plastique of the rustic minuet. The majestic nature of the *Menuet antique* is correlated with the features of the main thematic element of the work: the density of the texture, the tension of the harmony, loud dynamics. Sharp grotesque colours of the minuet of the old armchair and the couch are an exaggerated emphasis on the periodicity of syntactic division and regularity of the rhythm, monotonous ostinato of a single rhythmic cell, broken melodic contour of the vocal

parts, disordered replica of the horns violating the steady pace of the dance are related to the comic decision of the opera.

In conclusion, let us emphasize that in the minuet included into the system of court etiquette, the utmost importance belonged to the visual aspect of the dance: the aesthetic perfection and filigree delicacy of gestures, graphical precision and accuracy of the choreographic pattern. This is reflected in thematism of all Ravel’s works based on the genre of the minuet. The plastique of the dance became visible and tangible in them. The choreographic units of the minuet are represented in most detail in *Menuet antique* and *Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn*

<sup>1</sup> It was first mentioned that the Minuet comes from the *Branle de Poitou* in the music manuscript of Michael Praetorius “Terpsichore” (1612). Later this point of view became generally accepted. Nevertheless, some modern researchers (for example, M.E. Little) consider it a mistake [Little, 2001].

<sup>2</sup> In the historical folk dance, the *plié* means slight bending of knees, i.e. doing knee bends twice as less than *demi-plié* (slight knee bending) in the classical dance [Ivanovskii, 2004: 56].

<sup>3</sup> The term “dactylic step” was used by Fabritio Caroso in his *Nobiltà di Dame* to determine the plastique of the step with knee bending. The name was given by the analogy with the rhythm in the ancient versification. This information is given by A. Maksimova [Maksimova, 1999: 58-69].

<sup>4</sup> L. Shaimykhametova refers these rhythmic patterns to the type of intonation formulas assimilating the plastique of the ancient dances [Shaimykhametova, 1999: 39].

<sup>5</sup> N.P. Ivanovskii gives the following definition of this movement: “Salute is the introductory part of the bow, i.e. a welcome which includes taking the hat off and then bowing” [Ivanovskii, 2004: 21].

<sup>6</sup> These differences don’t go beyond the semantic borders of the styled minuet, which according to Kirillina possessed “unique generality and softness” [Kirillina, 1998: 134].

<sup>7</sup> It is noteworthy, that outwardly the motif is set as iambic, while it starts with the downbeat. But accentuation of the first sound and reducing the second sound by two transforms it into the trochaic.

<sup>8</sup> As V. Smirnov notes, in the Sonatine Ravel turned to the traditions of pre-Beethoven sonata, mostly three-part sonata by Mozart [Smirnov, 1981: 47].

<sup>9</sup> The techniques of recreation of the amusing dance image in the music of this scene are described in the previously published article of the author [Bass, 2014: 36-38].

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## **Жанр менуэта в творчестве Мориса Равеля**

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*Содержание статьи находится в русле одной из ключевых проблем современного музыковедения – проблемы функционирования определенного жанра в творчестве композитора, способности жанра выступать фактором, определяющим стилистическую специфику. Для Мориса Равеля таким стилистическим фактором служит танец. На примере менуэта, занимающего особое место в музыке композитора, в статье исследуются принципы опосредования в тематизме и формообразовании сочинений Равеля хореографических и музыкальных свойств танцевального прообраза на семантическом и структурном уровнях. Эстетическое совершенство и филигранная отточенность жестов, графическая точность хореографического рисунка, диалогичность, свойственные менуэту, нашли отражение в мотивно-составном характере тематизма, периодичности синтаксиса, относительной устойчивости метра, активном использовании разнообразных способов полифонизации музыкальной ткани, исключительной роли принципа симметрии на композиционном, мелодическом, фактурном уровнях музыкальной формы. Индивидуальные особенности воплощения менуэта в различных сочинениях Равеля связаны с их стилистическими истоками и жанровым синтезом, создающими определенный образный строй.*

*Ключевые слова: менуэт, танцевальный прообраз, хореографическая структура танца, жанровая семантика, встречный ритм, пластическая полифония, стилистическая многослойность.*

*Научная специальность: 24.00.00 – культурология.*

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