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Intertext, dialogue, and temporality in Maurice Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin, La valse,* and *Valses nobles et Sentimentales*

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Intertext, dialogue, and temporality in Maurice Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin, La valse,* and *Valses nobles et Sentimentales*

by

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Abstract

Intertext, dialogue, and temporality in Maurice Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin, La valse,* and *Valses nobles et Sentimentales*

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Anachronistic appropriation of earlier music or musical styles creates an inherent conflict of temporalities. Ravel's compositions based on historical dance forms present a particularly rich medium for investigating these kinds of historical tensions. Whether the minuet in *Minuet antique* (1895), the waltz in *La valse* (1919-20) and *Valses nobles et sentimentales* (1911), or the forlane or rigaudon in their respective movements of *Le tombeau de Couperin* (1914-17), these forms bring with them associations regarding historical place, and ties between musical norms and expression of temporality. The temporalities expressed in these works are not straightforward linear dramas but rather tension-laden and multifaceted. This paper selects three of these works – *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, the forlane from *Le tombeau de Couperin*, and *La valse* – to show how a complex sense of time is expressed by Ravel in different ways. While these three pieces differ greatly in execution, they are similar in impulse: each of the three takes different approaches to intertextual and intratextual problematicization of temporality.

In analyzing these three works, the first framework is one of intertextuality – to what extent does the work connect itself to a specific work, composer, and style, and what structural and aesthetic expectations are brought into play via these connections. Each of the three works treats this question in differing ways – the "Forlane" of *Le tombeau de Couperin* explicitly appropriates the music of Couperin, *La valse* interacts not as much with a specific work or even composer but with the genre of the waltz as a whole, and *Valses nobles et sentimentales* creates an intentional rift between the waltzes of Ravel and those of Schubert. But while differing in the degree of influence or quotation, each of these draws in expressive and structural prototypes and creates tensions of temporality that are worked through in the context of each piece – dialects between past and present, conflicts in both structure and meaning. Through entering into dialogical relationships with the works, forms, and genres of the past, these three works gain potentials for expression.

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Introduction

Anachronistic appropriation of earlier music or musical styles creates an inherent conflict of temporalities. This, essentially, is Martha Hyde's claim – that while antiquarian imitation or pastiche may revive the superficial trappings of a past style or work, effective use of anachronism involves "translation," "accommodation," and "renewal." For Hyde, the kind of anachronism most interesting and "most relevant to a neoclassic aesthetic" is one that "dramatize[s] the itinerary, the diachronic passage out of the remote past into the emergent present."[1] But while productive, this conception of musical anachronism can at times seem to overemphasize a perspective in which history is of value mostly for how it leads to the present. In contrast, Michael Puri emphasizes the expression of memory in the works of Maurice Ravel. But while Puri's lens of memory is both historically grounded and eloquently supported, it also seems to favor one perspective rather than the tensions between them. The mere act of memory seems to be more important than what is actually being remembered.

Both views of musical anachronism – Hyde's, of history pushing forward and Puri's, of the individual looking back – seem to undervalue the full potential of temporal conflicts. The historical tensions in Ravel's music can feature multiple perspectives, containing both the act of looking back as well as the process of time's forward flow. They could be viewed through the lens of historic construction – of the subjective act of remembering and interpreting the collective and objective past. This captures both the fickleness of memory

[1] Martha Hyde, "Neoclassic and Anachronistic Impulses in Twentieth-Century Music." *Music Theory Spectrum* 18/2 (1996): 205.

and the concreteness of history – that while the past is never changing, our conceptions of it, our memories sometimes only gained second-hand, constantly are.

Ravel's compositions based on historical dance forms present a particularly rich medium for investigating these kinds of historical tensions. Whether the minuet in *Minuet antique* (1895), the waltz in *La valse* (1919-20) and *Valses nobles et sentimentales* (1911), or the forlane or rigaudon in their respective movements of *Le tombeau de Couperin* (1914-17), these forms bring with them associations regarding historical place, and ties between musical norms and expression of temporality. The temporalities expressed in these works are not straightforward linear dramas but rather tension-laden and multifaceted. This paper selects three of these works – *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, the forlane from *Le tombeau de Couperin*, and *La valse* – to show how a complex sense of time is expressed by Ravel in different ways. While these three pieces differ greatly in execution, they are similar in impulse: each of the three takes different approaches to intertextual and intratextual problematicization of temporality.

While any work using a historical dance form will feature connection to a historical type, Ravel's works vary with regards to the extent of connection to an explicit model. Scott Messing, Martha Hyde, and others have linked the "Forlane" of *Le tombeau de Couperin* to a particular work of Couperin, based on both musical features and biographical information, as will be discussed in more detail later.[2] *La valse* and *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, on the other hand, do not feature such specific connections. Sevin Yaraman argues that *La valse* is "about" Johann Strauss Jr.'s *Blue Danube*, but without plausible musical quotations or more

[2] Scott Messing, *Neoclassicism in Music From the Genesis of the Concept through the Schoenberg/Stravinsky Polemic* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988), 50-51; Hyde, 206-211.

specific and relevant biographical support, this seems to be a slight exaggeration.[3] *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, on the other hand, seems most notable for its distance from Franz Schubert's *Valses nobles*, D. 969 (ca. 1827), and *Valses sentimentales*, D. 779 (1823). Without quotation or specific imitation, the relationship between Ravel's and Schubert's waltzes is less direct than the intertextual connections of *La valse* or *Le tombeau de Couperin*, but the relationship is no less important. Ravel's quotation of Schubert's titles sets an expectation of influence that seems absent in the music itself, emphasizing the distance between their works through the lack of fulfillment of these expectations.

In analyzing these three works, the first framework is one of intertextuality – to what extent does the work connect itself to a specific work, composer, and style, and what structural and aesthetic expectations are brought into play via these connections. Each of the three works treats this question in differing ways – the "Forlane" of *Le tombeau de Couperin* explicitly appropriates the music of Couperin, *La valse* interacts not as much with a specific work or even composer but with the genre of the waltz as a whole, and *Valses nobles et sentimentales* creates an intentional rift between the waltzes of Ravel and those of Schubert. But while differing in the degree of influence or quotation, each of these draws in expressive and structural prototypes and creates tensions of temporality that are worked through in the context of each piece – dialects between past and present, conflicts in both structure and meaning. Through entering into dialogical relationships with the works, forms, and genres of the past, these three works gain potentials for expression.

[3] Sevin Yaraman, *Revolving Embrace: The Waltz as Sex, Steps, and Sound* (New York: Pendragon Press), 95.

Anachronistic appropriation, metrical ideologies, and interpretive torsion in the "Forlane"

In the works of Ravel, the uses of antiquated styles, historical dances, and quotation of the past construct complex relationships with history. Of course, not all appropriations of dance topics are created equal – even for a single composer, the same dance can seem to bring very different implications. For example, Ravel's *La valse* and *Valses nobles et sentimentales* share much in impulse while diverging greatly in structure and execution. Yet while valuing the contrasts, uses of historical dances share an interpretive potential: their appropriations point to specific times in history, cultures, forms, meters, and musical clichés. In the "Forlane" of *Le tombeau de Couperin*, Ravel's imitation of Couperin and reinterpretation of his rhythmic and melodic gestures, metrical accents, and grouping structures acts to highlight tensions between the past and present.

Even the most poignant dance appropriation does not guarantee that its rich historical and expressive connotations become interpretively salient – allusion may be used exploitatively, to borrow terminology from Hyde, treating the musical past as "an undifferentiated stockpile to be drawn on at will;"[4] with little interpretive value other than signifying the classic, the dated, or the old. But the wealth of connotations within an anachronistic dance *can* be used fruitfully to create new interpretive blends, even when it seems most "reverential" – when it seems to "[follow] the classical model with a nearly religious fidelity or fastidiousness."[5]

[4] Hyde, 211.
[5] Hyde, 206-207.

While Hyde writes that the anachronistic appropriation in Ravel's "Forlane" is reverential to the point that it "can celebrate rather than control anachronism… [and] may embalm rather than revive the past model,"[6] it is this very reverence that gives Ravel's appropriations their expressive power. Imitating Couperin's music 'reverentially' – that is, by appropriating not just Couperin's melodies and rhythms but formal and structural elements as well – creates a strong dialogical relationship with the appropriated work, its form, and its expression – it magnifies every violation of the past's norms.

In the following analysis, I focus primarily on the melodic and rhythmic gestures, metrical accent schemes, grouping structures, and formal elements of Ravel's "Forlane" and the Couperin "Forlane" that it imitates. Through analysis of the interplay between Ravel's music and the historical prototype, the complex connotations of Ravel's historical appropriations can become more apparent.

METRICAL TYPES AND THE MODEL FOR RAVEL'S "FORLANE"

Ravel's "Forlane" takes François Couperin's "Forlane" from the *Quatrieme concert* of the *Concerts royaux* as its model, most clearly appropriating the rhythmic gestures and baroque *rondeau* form.[7] Martha Hyde writes that in this appropriation "Ravel rewrites Couperin's 'Forlane' by recreating the most essential features of the theme," including melodic character and voice-leading.[8] Couperin's "Forlane" – and by imitation, Ravel's "Forlane" as well –

[6] Hyde, 211.
[7] Messing, 50-51.
[8] Hyde, 206-211.

features what William Rothstein calls 'Italian barring.'[9] This type of barring is end-accented, primarily defined through the frequent use of upbeats lasting half a bar or longer, secondarily defined through the cadence marking its strongest beat by occurring just to the right of the barline.[10] German barring, in contrast, is primarily defined through the "regular placement of cadences on relatively weak beats," and secondarily through a lack of the long upbeats that are so common in Italian barring.[11] Rothstein asserts that eighteenth-century theorists such as Johann Mattheson demanded that cadences should by rule fall on the strongest beat of a bar (excepting certain dance types), but by the nineteenth century these two different metrical designs separated as national compositional traditions. Italian and French composers generally favored 'Italian' barring, while German composers preferred 'German' barring.[12] The division manifested itself in the theoretical community as well: Hugo Riemann preferred the end-accented 'Italian' barring, while Gottfried Weber and Heinrich Schenker favored the beginning-accented 'German' barring.[13] While Couperin's "Forlane" features prototypical 'Italian' barring, Ravel's "Forlane" complicates this metrical hearing.

The refrain of Couperin's "Forlane" (Example 1) establishes regular end-accented 'Italian' barring, which continues throughout each couplet.[14] As Rothstein notes, Couperin composed in 'Italian' barring with almost religious devotion: he "was such a principled adherent of upbeat beginnings that… even Couperin's keyboard exercises start with long

[9] William Rothstein, "National metrical types," in *Communication in Eighteenth-Century* Music, ed. Danuta Mirka and Kofi Agawu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 116.
[10] Rothstein 116; Rothstein 112.
[11] Rothstein 116.
[12] Rothstein 113.
[13] Rothstein, 112.
[14] This figure and others in this paper use the notation for grouping structure and metrical stresses from Fred Lehrdahl and Ray Jackendoff's *A Generative Theory of Tonal Music* (1983) as developed further by David Temperley in "End-Accented Phrases: An Analytical Exploration," *Journal of Music Theory* 47/1 (2003).

upbeats."[15] Cadences are placed to the right of the barline, with long anacruses often building momentum toward the cadences. Two different beat divisions,[16] labeled on Example 1 as α and β, are particularly notable for their significance both in Couperin's "Forlane" as well as in Ravel's. First heard on the second beat of measure two, β consistently functions as part of an anacrusis toward stronger beats – heard once in measure 1, β acts as a half-measure anacrusis toward the accented downbeat of measure 2, while two consecutive iterations of β in measure 3 act to create a measure-and-a-half long anacrusis toward the cadence of the four-measure phrase. The use of this anacrustic rhythm on the downbeat of measure 3 weakens the regular accent pattern, supporting a reinterpretation of this downbeat as part of a higher-level anacrusis. The repetition of β causes a feeling of motivic fragmentation rushing toward the cadence, but it also attenuates the sense of one-measure units established previously: Beat 2 of measure 2 through the cadence blends together into one two-measure gesture, in contrast to the prior two one-measure units. The refrain of Couperin's "Forlane" features end accents at the measure-level, the two-bar hypermeasure-level, and the four-bar subphrase-level: each hierchical level of grouping within the eight-measure period expresses the 'weak-strong' emphasis of Couperin's 'Italian' barring.

METER AND GESTURE IN RAVEL'S "FORLANE"

The opening of Ravel's "Forlane" features several interpretive ambiguities not found in Couperin's refrain. Along with other elements from Couperin's "Forlane," rhythm β

[15] Rothstein, 133.

[16] Note that these brackets represent beat divisions rather than perceptual rhythmic units. Parsing as beat divisions ignores the anacrustic character – that as perceptual units, the eighth-note anticipates the quarter-note and not vice versa as this beat division bracketing could seem to imply.

makes an appearance, but its musical signification is far less clear. β still acts rhythmically like an anacrusis, yet if one were to assume that single iteration of β leads to a two-bar hypermeasure end-accent and double iteration of β leads to the cadential four-bar subphrase end-accent, this metrical interpretation would be out of phase with the cadence points. It would separate cadential end-accent from rhythmic end-accent: the cadential conclusion of the first four-measure phrase would conclude on the downbeat of measure 4, while the rhythmic end-accent would be on beat two of measure 4.[17]

Example 2 shows two potential metrical and grouping-structure interpretations of measures 1-9. In hearing A, the beat one β does act as an anacrusis into the dynamically and registrally accented second beat. Any expected stress on beat 2 of measure two is reinterpreted as β appears again, the second measure acting as a long anacrusis toward the downbeat of measure 3. The next interpretive ambiguity occurs on the downbeat of measure 4, as the cadential arrival is elided with the beginning of the second four-measure subphrase. It is not merely that the downbeat of measure 5 must be reinterpreted from a strong end-accented cadence to a weak, unaccented beginning as β becomes apparent – this beat must actually *be* simultaneously strong and weak, a conclusion as well as a beginning. While the melodic rebound as the melody rises again from E3 only necessitates this sort of mutual understanding after the repetition becomes clear, that exact phenomenological moment of the downbeat of measure 5 must truly belong to both the antecedent and consequent.[18] This

[17] Obviously this interpretation of β ignores the context provided by other musical parameters, yet that context also does not immediately provide an interpretive solution.

[18] For the sake of terminological simplicity, I use "antecedent" and "consequent" even though Ravel's small forms may be more "periodic" than "period." These kinds of structures in Ravel may, for various reasons, not fulfill the necessary requirements to be a period as defined by William Caplin in *Classical Form*, while applying such terminology to similar structures in Couperin could encourage ahistorical interpretations. Yet these kinds

interpretive problem is not solved at the end of the full periodic phrase either – the cadential arrival on the downbeat of measure 9 is again elided into the next phrase.

Hearing B works backwards from the cadential arrivals, assuming a retrospective reinterpretation of the metrical and grouping structure. The downbeats of measures 3 and 7 are heard as end-accentuated conclusions of two-bar hypermeasures and the downbeats of measures 5 and 9 as end-accented conclusions of four-measure subphrases. While this interpretation seems to align with harmonic and phrase structural elements, it aligns far less well with the melodic and rhythmic gestures. If the parallelism between measure 1 and measure 9 is to be recognized in the grouping structure, the first beat of measure 1 must be interpreted as a conclusion to music that has not happened. The rhythmic and melodic anacrusis leading to beat 2 is considered strong, while beat 2 acts as a structurally weak syncopation. The syncopation permits mm. 1-2 to act as a long anacrusis – very similar to the sort found leading to the ends of four-measure subphrases in Couperin's "Forlane" – after which the gestures and hypermetric groupings of mm. 3-4 act much as they did for Couperin. Yet the elision into measure 4 again causes interpretive problems. Treating the downbeats of measure 5 and measure 9 as metrically strong parts of end-accented previous material conflicts with the rhythmically and melodically anacrustic character.

One musical element that seems to be crucial in the emergence of the interpretive ambiguities is the sense that β in its entirety groups together as an anacrusis, and not instead hearing the downbeat dotted-eighth of β as belong to the previous material and the rest as

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of structures in both Ravel and Couperin exhibit parallel subphrases, the first with a weaker cadence and the second with a stronger cadence. In light of these issues, I will attempt to appropriate only what terminology and structural relationships are relevant and useful and attempt to avoid any interpretations drawn out of Classical formal theory that might be misleading.

grouping forward. This is likely, in part, a sort of primacy effect due to the character of β at the very beginning of the work. Imagine how interpretation of mm. 1-10 might change if this phrase was rewritten as in Example 3a. The altered motive, indicated as γ, might be heard as grouping forward in every iteration. By altering β, this recomposition would achieve the 'Italian' barring and accent hierarchy found in Couperin's "Forlane," the accented syncopation on the second beat of measure 1 being the only slight exception, and would avoid problematic elisions. Instead, Ravel puts this relic of Couperin into an interpretive quandary. The rhythmic gesture still acts as anacrusis, yet the motive acts at times as both a beginning and an arrival. [19]

A second recomposition, shown in Example 3b, makes a slightly more substantial change, but one that brings the opening closer to its Couperin-composed model. The second third beat of Ravel's "Forlane" is removed, shifting the opening gesture forward to the second beat of the measure. The D-sharp-5 that was perceived as an arrival in Hearing A of Example 2 is now heard on the downbeat of the first full measure, where such an end-accented arrival would be expected to be found in 'Italian' barring. This omission – and similar alterations to subsequent cadential and initiating gestures – changes the metrical character of the phrase into entirely normative 'Italian' barring. But obviously, this is not what Ravel wrote. Instead, that first hypermeasure seems to stretch – the D-sharp left suspended both metrically and melodically, the metrical character left ambiguous.

[19] The accentuation of mm. 1-10 is complicated even further if one assumes a perceptual preference for beginning-accented groupings, as proposed by Lehrdahl and Jackendoff as one of their "Metrical Preference Rules" (1983, 75-56). David Temperley notes that while other factors could support an end-accented hearing, the idea that there is a perceptual preference for the strongest beat in a phrase to be near the beginning "accords well with intuition" (2003, 129).

The second phrase of Ravel's opening refrain, shown in Example 4, plays even more explicitly with metrical perception. After beginning similarly to the movement's opening, with the anacrustic of the downbeats of measures 11 and 12. But as the melodic gesture of measure 12 continues from gesture rising toward the dynamically accented D-sharp 5, β seems to emphasize the metrical accentuation the first beat through the rest of the measure, it sets up a reversal of β's role as established in the previous several measures. If the metrical floatation of m. 12 is perceived as simply a temporary suppression of the prevailing 'Italian' barring and metrical accentuation, then β acts in mm. 13-14 as anacruses to syncopations. However, if m. 12 is instead perceived as terminating the previous metric tendency and requiring the metric perception to be 'reset,' then the accented second beats of m. 13 and m. 14 may seem instead to be the 'real' metrical downbeats, offset from the barring. While the former would be my preference, the potential for different hearings points to the ambiguity coded within these measures. The ambiguity created by mm. 9-14 is resolved as the phrase winds to a close, with the repetition of β in mm. 15-16 propelling the phrase towards its resolution in mm. 17-18.

The tensions between gestures, metric accents, and grouping structures seem to be defining elements of Ravel's appropriation of Couperin's "Forlane" refrain and the defining elements of this "Forlane" as a movement. Curiously, the tensions are most obviously manifested in the refrains. Unlike Classical period rondos which often featured a 'tightly-knit' refrain and more 'loosely' organized couplets, Ravel's couplets seem – at least from a

metrical perspective – to be much more regular than the refrain found in mm. 1-29.[20] For example, contrast the metrical and gestural character of the first couplet. This three-part section in mm. 29-55 emphasizes 'Italian' barring throughout. Within the first phrase of this couplet (Example 5), the clear separation of the prior material from the entrance on the second beat of m. 29, combined with the recurring rhythmic motive β, creates a long anacrusis fulfilled on the downbeat of measure 32, a conclusion reemphasized in measure 33. The consequent of this period-like phrase acts in the same way, as does each subsequent part of the couplet. Repetition of β is used exclusively within long anacruses, which only emphasizes further the curious role played by β in the refrain. The following phrases of this couplet behave metrically in the same way (Example 6). As the conclusion of the first couplet elides into the second refrain at measure 55, β returns to its earlier ambiguous role.

The second couplet contains both some of the most 'reverential' imitations as well as some of the most explicit tension between metrical types. Beginning in measure 63, this 32-measure couplet is constructed as a small ternary (8+16+8) built out of four eight-measure phrases. The exposition (shown in Example 7) and recapitulation are straightforward 'Italian' barring are rhythmically very similar to Couperin's refrain. They are saturated with beat division α, using β only as an anacrusis for the end of two-bar hypermeasure.[21] The use of β as an anacrusis of the accented downbeat of measure 69 seems to take the opening gesture of Ravel's "Forlane" and normalize it to Couperin's 'Italian' barring – the gesture now acts

[20] While there are some contrasts between the phrases found in mm. 1-9, 9-18, and 19-29, these three phrases seem to group together into one three-part theme. This interpretation is supported by the return of this three-part construction in full in mm. 96-124 as well as the use of ternary construction of the couplets found in mm. 29-55 and mm. 63-96.

[21] The division of the second beat of measure 66 is labeled as α + β', interpreting the three eighth note division in the top line as functionally and rhythmically similar enough to β as to consider the two related. α is found in the alto.

as the downbeat conclusion of a two-bar hypermeasure, rather than an ambiguous, syncopated beginning. In measure 69, β is through the tie transformed into γ as was seen earlier in the recomposition of the beginning of the "Forlane." Through this transformation, one of the causes of its functional ambiguity has been temporarily removed. The rhythm γ unambiguously rushes forward, acting as part of a long anacrusis toward the cadence in measure 71.

The first eight-measure phrase of the couplet's middle section, mm. 73-80, continues the established 'Italian' barring. Like the earlier part of this couplet, this phrase uses α and β in a similar fashion to Couperin's refrain. However, the couplet's second phrase (the second beat of m. 80 through the downbeat of m. 88, shown in Example 8) begins to complicate the established metrical hearing. The dynamic accents on the second beat of each measure and the melodic descent of each four-measure subphrase cause the established groupings to seem dynamically and registrally beginning-accented, hinting at 'German' barring. Given the established rhythmic and metrical character of this couplet's previous sixteen measures, it is likely that this is only felt as an implication – tension between metrical types, not as a clean break and complete change in way of hearing.

Rothstein argues that 'German barring' and 'Italian barring' represent not just notational norms but "*two different ways of listening*. Which way a listener chooses to hear is surely a matter of acculturation, but there is much to be gained by being able to listen in either way."[22] The question of which way to listen is one of the key questions at play within Ravel's "Forlane," and a question which Ravel refuses to conclusively answer. The whimsical

[22] Rothstein 150, emphasis his.

pianissimo ending (shown below in Example 9) echoes the opening gesture, but uses this gesture to again call into question its normative metric identity. In mm. 156-157, β acts as an anacrusis to the downbeat – the rhythmic and functional identity established for β by Couperin. In measure 158, β now emphasizes the syncopated upbeat. The $\hat{5}$-$\hat{1}$ motion in the bass in mm. 157-158 echoes the end-accented, downbeat cadential ending of the previous couplet in m. 156 while continuing the previously established two-bar hypermeasure and 'Italian' barring. In mm. 156-162 the bass motion, repeating the $\hat{5}$-$\hat{1}$ cadential gesture, is constantly at odds with the melodic and rhythmic anacrusis β. As the bass concludes its motion on the downbeat of m. 158, the melodic anacrusis accents the offbeat. As the bass echoes $\hat{5}$-$\hat{1}$ again, this time concluding on beat two of m. 159 as if to agree with the melodic emphasis on beat two, the anacrustic gesture returns again – a triple β concluding on the downbeat of m. 161. The final flourish in the right hand in m. 161 misses the final cadential bass gesture by a beat, refusing to wait for the final $\hat{5}$-$\hat{1}$ emphasis of the downbeat of measure 162. Even hearing this postlude instead as 9/8 creates a tension – that would interpret this as a break from the regular dance meter found at all other moments of this movement. If "which way to hear" is the question, then Ravel leaves it unanswered.

The ambiguity in metrical accent is not simply an act of twentieth-century coloristic whimsy but a meaningful twisting of the utterances of Couperin. Ravel seems to thematize the conflict between nineteenth-century national styles. But this raises further questions. If the preference for end-accented or beginning-accented meter is a way of hearing partially determined by one's musical experiences and culture, as is suggested by Rothstein, rather than simply the result of structural musical elements or inconsequential compositional

barring preferences, then Ravel's play with metrical hearing raises again the oft-repeated criticism of historical listening: there is no way to truly hear with the ears of the past.

While the reverence with which Ravel treats the model for his imitation may seem at first to limit the anachronism to enshrining or entombing the past, this reverence magnifies the tensions between past and present and enhances their interpretive potential. Ravel's incorporation of Couperin's gestures brings with it implications of function and metrical hearing as well, implications which Ravel subtly but effectively plays with throughout the "Forlane." Hyde's claims that Ravel's reverence for the past model creates unresolved (and perhaps unresolvable) tensions between the historical model and anachronistic violations of Ravel's time, but perhaps an unresolvable tension is the very point of Ravel's "Forlane." Ravel seems to control the anachronism exactly by foregrounding unresolved tensions between the past and present. More than an homage, a lament, or a mere musical tip-of-the-hat, Ravel's "Forlane" is a blending of old and new that intentionally blurs the boundaries. In one sense, it reanimates the voice of something gone. Yet in another sense, it points to the very impossibility of a true resurrection. The past is able to exist only as part of memory – and as the events of the past pass beyond the horizon of living memory, even that is constructed and artificial. While the past may not be 'dead,' any life it still has is constructed and illusory.

Timelessness, nostalgia, and functional disassociations in *La valse*

Unlike Ravel's "Forlane," which appropriates and reconfigures its model with subtlety, *La valse* subverts the defining traits of the waltz. The work is saturated with recognizable waltz rhythms, gestures and the occasional melody that sounds as if it could be straight out of mid-nineteenth-century Vienna. Yet to focus on these things alone is to ignore the formal and structural elements that are necessary to transform "waltz-like" into the proper "waltz." In *La valse,* the effortless elegance and formal regularity that the waltz prototype seems to have always already had is replaced with a struggle for continuity and well-formedness – a developmental struggle to *become* formed. The historical waltz springs forth already in "full bloom," as described by Eric McKee[23] – it floats in the temporal stasis of "lyrical time" in the words of Raymond Monelle.[24] But in *La valse,* this is replaced with a cataclysmic drama. Formal functions are frustrated and twisted, and the movement's larger-scale developmental impulse overshoots its goal and leads *La valse* to its frantic end. However, *La valse* is more than a stylization of the waltz or an artful abuse of the waltz topic: it creates the waltz from an alternate perspective, creating homomorphisms which translate structures of both the prototypical waltz's dance as well as music in much the same way that, according to Eric McKee, the waltzes of Johann Strauss Sr. and Joseph Lanner translated the aesthetic experience of the waltz's dancers into "appropriate musical corollaries" nearly a century earlier.[25]

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[23] Eric McKee, *Decorum of the Minuet, Delirium of the Waltz: a Study of Dance-Music Relations in 3/4 Time* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 115.
[24] Raymond Monelle, *The Sense of Music* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 90-114.
[25] McKee, 106.

The relationship between *La valse* and its history involves its play with the waltz as a genre but also, according to some scholars, a more specific connection. As noted earlier, Yaraman writes that *La valse* is "about" Johann Strauss Jr.'s *Blue Danube*, which, without plausible specific musical connections or stronger biographical ties, seems somewhat speculative. [26] However, her more cautious claim that "even if the *Blue Danube* is not the specific piece that *La Valse* depicts, it is absolutely representative of Strauss' style" is significantly more plausible.[27] Whether or not specific musical quotations or connections can be argued, a connection between *La valse* and at the least Strauss's general style seems valid – Ravel's opening epigram for the work, placing it in "an imperial court ball, circa 1855," his original title, *Wien*, and the intention as an homage to Strauss all encourage the perception of a dialogue between Ravel and Strauss.[28]

The metamorphosis of "the waltz" into *La valse* has provoked highly varied interpretations. Serge Diaghilev described *La valse* as "not a ballet [but] a picture of a ballet… a portrait of a ballet;"[29] Vladimir Jankélévitch saw it as "a great and tragic *Valse*" indicative of the "new Europe" of post-World War I;[30] Carl Schorske heard in *La valse* a "violent death of the nineteenth-century world."[31] Analytically, George Benjamin interpreted *La valse* as a progression from "birth" to "life" to "decay" and finally "destruction,"[32] while Volker

[26] Yaraman, 95.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Stephen Zank, *Maurice Ravel: A Guide to Research*, 13.
[29] Francis Poulenc, *Moi et mes amis* (Paris, Seghers, 1963), 177-9.
[30] Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Ravel* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1956), 61-62.
[31] Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-siécle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1979), 3.
[32] George Benjamin, "Last Dance," *Musical Times* 135 (1994): 433.

Helbing describes the work as a self-destructive spiral.[33] It is a waltz that tries its best to reject the traits that a waltz is supposed to feature,[34] while simultaneously creating some of the same effects that these traits projected. *La valse* features recursive structures of whirling, just like the dance: it twirls both in its arc from fragmented murkiness to elegant waltz and back again and in its winding melodic motives. Unlike the prototypical waltz, it does not create "lyrical time" through a continuous string of non-developmental, tight-knit string of unconnected themes: *La valse* creates a sense of timelessness through its undercutting of cadential functions and non-syntactic sequencing of motives. Through its small- and large-scale cycles, functional disassociation, and cadential evasions, *La valse* projects this same sense of timelessness all while creating a striking dramatic narrative. These formal elements and functional interactions work to express a vision of the waltz that contorts the "lyrical time" while depicting the waltz's spiraling musical and danced gestures.

The narrative of *La valse* is similarly expressed through the subversion of the grammar of the dance, in particular through the thematization of phrase structural deformation. It is this gradual play with the prototypical waltz phrase that brings about the larger narrative trajectory of *La valse*. While the waltz is typically exemplified formally by the procession of regular, periodic phrases and tight-knit thematic types without large-scale goal-directed dramatic trajectories, *La valse* is exemplified by a goal-oriented motion from irregular, non-periodic phrases toward regular, periodic structures and then away from these again. This deformational impulse is manifested primarily at the phrase-level and secondarily

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[33] Volker Helbing, "Spiral and Self-Destruction in Ravel's *La valse."* In *Unmasking Ravel*, ed. Peter Kaminsky (New York: Rochester University Press, 2011).

[34] As will be described in more depth, *La valse* often avoids or even works against features of the waltz as described by Eric McKee, such as repetitive continuity, self-containment, "feminine beauty," and variety (McKee, 108-119).

at the work-level, as the phrases (and by connection, the work as a whole) are set into dialogue with the generic options that are taken socially to be waltz-defining.[35] As in the definition of "deformation" by James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy in *Elements of Sonata Theory*, deformation does not impart a pejorative or negative connotation – it is precisely these deformations of the waltz genre and phrase structure that permits the rich and colorful metaphors and narratives discussed earlier.

As depicted in Example 10, the *valse a trois temps* contains both small counterclockwise spinning of the dancers, reaching a full rotation over the two-bar hypermeasure, as well as a large-scale clockwise rotation of the dancers.[36] *La valse* also achieves this recursive structure of twirling: many of the waltz motives contain their own small-scale cyclical nature through arching accompanimental contours, spinning chromatics, and lurching acceleration and deceleration created by hemiola. The piece as a whole features its own circular nature: instead of progressing linearly as would the prototypical waltz, *La valse* constantly breaks away from waltz conventions through its self-references and through the departure and return of the fragmentation in the murky depths of the opening and closing frames. Volker Helbing describes *La valse* as a "destructive spiral," leading to "centrifugal sequences" which twirl the waltz into destruction through the closing frame.[37] Imagined as a spiral, *La valse* can display spinning on multiple levels: at the largest sense, the complete-work departure and return to fragmentation and oblivion; at a middle-ground

[35] This follows closely from James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy's claim that "a sonata is a musical utterance that is set into dialogue with generic options that are themselves taken socially to be sonata-defining," James Hepokoski and Warren Darcy, *Elements of Sonata Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2006), 616.
[36] McKee, 93-94. Figure from McKee, 93.
[37] Helbing, 202-205.

level, the accelerating spinning of theme groups which reaches a fever-pitch in the final third of *La valse*; and the local level, where individual motives often feature a sense of twirling.

As a first step in looking at the structural features of *La valse*, I follow Michael Puri's division of the work into three large-scale sections: the *opening frame* (mm. 1-146), in which the inchoate fragments of a waltz are transformed into a waltz; the *waltz suite* (mm. 147-440), in which the developmental process achieves nearly-prototypical waltzes, only to eventually overshoot equilibrium; and the *closing frame* (mm. 441-755) in which the developmental impulse of the opening frame, after being obscured during the *waltz suite* destroys the well-formedness of the *waltz suite* and brings the work back into the murky depths of fragmentation. The opening frame is divided into two phases: *Phase 1* from mm. 1-65 and *Phase 2* from mm. 66-146; as is the closing frame, with its *Phase 1* from mm. 441-578 and *Phase 2* from mm. 579-755.[38] Puri additionally labels the constituent motives of *La valse*, a labeling system which I shall likewise adopt, as seen in the table in Example 11.[39]

THE OPENING FRAME AND THE DEVELOPMENTAL IMPULSE

The first motivic material of *La valse* enters in measure 12, rising out of rumbling low-registers (Example 12).[40] Through both phrase expansion as well as gestural

[38] Michael Puri, *Ravel the Decadent* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 171.

[39] This chart is adapted from Puri, 175, with some changes: my measure numbers reflect formal spans rather than their associated melodic grouping in an attempt to more accurately reflect the phrase structure. Therefore, it omits anacruses from the count, starting the span with the structural beginning of a phrase, and ending the span either when either the phrase ends (including extensions) or it is interrupted via another phrase or rhetorical gesture. As such, the beginning of a motive may occur before the phrase begins.

[40] Unless otherwise indicated, references to specific musical features apply to both Ravel's solo piano and two-piano arrangements. Occasional mentions will be made to specific orchestrational decisions that highlight formal or gestural features, but this paper focuses on musical features which are not specific to either a particular piano arrangement or to the orchestral version.

interruptions, this entrance is marked by discontinuity. After the entrance of Motive 1[41] in measures 12 and 13, a splash of tremolos reaching two octaves above the previous high point separates this first melodic utterance from its answer in measures 16 through 19.[42] Instead of the uninterrupted melodic flow so common in a prototypical waltz phrase, this phrase is highlighted by the interruptions – similar to the gestural interruption of mm. 14-15, this antecedent-like construction is separated from the succeeding melodic material by a return to the melody-free rumbling of mm. 21-23. After the consequent-like subphrase sounds in mm. 24-33, the resulting form is an asymmetrical but periodic 22-measure phrase that retains the waltz's characteristic melodic gestures and normative two-measure unit but little else. The interruptions of the melodic line and lack of conformance with normative formal grouping size place this opening at the extremes of the analogous relationship with the waltz – similar enough to be recognizable, but with a noticeable divergence from the waltz's phrase structure expectations.

The introductory 65 measures of *La valse* are marked by this sort of discontinuity. More than just lack of conformance to normative waltz grouping structures and phrase lengths, it is a lack of conformance to functional norms – if mm. 12-33 are analogous to a normative 16-measure phrase within a 32-measure section, they lack that parallel second phrase that provides the sense of balanced completion. The lack of this balanced structure undermines the first phrase's sense of identity – without something to act as a sort of consequent, it is not really functionally *ante* anything. It is functionally disassociated from its

[41] I adopt Michael Puri's motive labeling, using upper-case 'M' to refer to a Puri motive number, and lower-case 'm.' to refer to measures. E.g., M1 begins in m. 12.

[42] This separation is made especially apparent in the orchestral version, in which the thematic motive is played by two bassoons, while the first and second violins punctuate the bassoon melody with soaring tremolos.

surroundings, left floating within the flow of musical time. This sense marks the end of the introductory 65 measures as well – rather than ending conclusively, the final measures of this section trail off in a sort of written-out ritardando combined with a lack of harmonic or rhythmic cadential gesture. Rather than the clear, cadential ending that is the norm for a waltz phrase ending, the section just seems to run out of momentum.

This second phase of the waltz's opening frame is more tight-knit than the opening phase and features phrase structures much closer to the prototypical waltz's sixteen-measure phrases and 32-measure sections, but the momentum of transforming the opening motive into a well-formed waltz has not has not been fully achieved. The structure begun by Motive 1' in measure 69 is a 20-measure period, comprised of two sections of 8-measure phrases each with two-measure extensions. This 8+2 structure creates a phrase structure that is not problematic from a 2-measure hypermeasure standpoint, the important base unit of the waltz, yet still is slightly removed from the waltz prototype. What appears to be a typical twofold repetition of this 20-measure period with the potential for a symmetrical, 40-measure section begins in measure 89; in mm. 98-105, this parallel is interrupted through the substitution of a seemingly unrelated consequent. It contrasts in rhythmic character, featuring a "terse" cadential formula[43] and modulates as well as ends the phrase one measure early. The integrity of this waltz is sabotaged through this modulating substitution: while the expected cadential function is supplied, the thematic and tonally closed characteristics of the prototypical Viennese waltz have not been obtained.[44] This cadential section – labeled by

[43] As described by Volker Helbing, 187.

[44] While McKee notes that traditional Viennese waltzes were "thematically and tonally closed" (McKee, 115), Zbikowski writes that the juxtaposition of different key centers was commonly found in the waltzes of Franz

Puri as Motive 7 – is another syntactic non-sequitur, functioning as a grammatical closure but unable to thematically close a beginning to which it shares no strong connection.

INFLECTIONS OF STABILITY IN THE "WALTZ SUITE"

The second large-scale section of *La valse*, the waltz suite, begins in measure 147 with a 16-measure period that features syntactic troping of functions and gestures (Example 13). It begins with six measures of hemiola, which, as noted by Eric McKee, was not uncommon in presentational sections of waltz melodies even in the music of Lanner and Strauss Sr., arguably still adds the sense of acceleration which made hemiola a common element of preparing cadences in earlier waltzes.[45] Such a hemiola creates shorter beat groupings without disrupting the two-bar hypermeasure. This hemiola is broken off in measure 152 as this metrical dissonance is reined in through a similar terse cadential formula to that found in mm. 104-105. This interior cadence proves to be stronger than that found in the consequent: the hemiola of mm. 155-158 persists through the end of the phrase. Instead of closing more forcefully, this consequent tapers off almost into nothing, yet still cadencing weakly in F# minor on beat 2 of measure 162. The cadence is undercut, yet it is still syntactically functional. This is a key distinction: unlike the earlier failures to reach syntactically functional cadences, attempts which in a sense *reached* for the waltz prototype yet could not obtain it, this ending pulls back. The second 16-measure phrase of this 32-measure group mirrors this pattern of stronger interior cadence and weaker final cadence. With the waltz prototype (or

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Schubert (Zbikowski, 308). Here, using the Viennese waltz as model seems more apt, but Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales* would likely require a different conception of prototypical waltz features.

[45] McKee, 191.

at least something close enough to it) obtained, this undercutting seems a deceleration – a tentative attempt to check the forward momentum gained thus far.

The waltz begun in measure 291 is labeled by Puri as Motive 14, a rhythmic descendent of the cadential gesture of mm. 143-146, right before the entrance of the waltz suite. This formerly cadential gesture has been functionally inverted – it now acts as a beginning rather than a closing. Instead this gesture repeats in measures 295, 299, and 303 before being transformed again into measure 307. It converses with a piano dynamic winding response in mm. 308-310 before returning again in measure 311, still no closer to closure. The eight-measure phrase of mm. 307-314 seems to begin in repetition in measure 315, but the four-measure consequent does not go as expected: the cadential gesture is repeated in measures 319, 321, 323, 325, and 327 descending by an octave every time after measure 321 as the phrase fragments into two-measure units. All the while a chromatic accompaniment descends into the depths of the piano by the end of measure 328 as this section fades to an unsatisfying end, before turning upward again to lead into the new section which is to begin in measure 331. Unlike the previous five sections of the waltz suite, this section does not feature anything resembling closure, passively dying away instead – a manner of ending that had previously been limited to the opening frame. Unlike the undercut cadences of earlier sections in the waltz suite, this ending is not an agential attempt to inhibit the cadence, an attempt to hold onto what is fleeting, but an inability to cause a cadence to realize. These previous 40 measures are the first sign of the eventual return to fragmentation and collapse: phrase extension, lack of cadential closure, and asymmetrical grouping structures, elements which had seemingly been left behind in the opening frame of

La valse, have returned. The work of unifying musical elements and purging the waltz of its non-prototypical elements is already at risk of being undermined.

The following 16-measure phrase gives hope of keeping the conflict at bay, providing moments of relaxation and relative stasis in measure 371 before accelerating into a sort of bouncing motion in mm. 373-74. The stasis is accompanied with sweeping, spinning arpeggios, a suffusion of texture that provides a topical inflection of *plenitude*. Robert Hatten describes plenitude as providing a sense of "timelessness" through the overriding of formal articulations, "varied repetition of a marked motivic/textural idea as if for pure enjoyment" – features which have been present to varying degrees throughout this movement but here come to the fore.[46] The sweeping textures and timeless associations of the waltz combine as the agent attempts to hold onto this bliss. These 16 measures end tentatively, with hemiola followed by a weak cadence. The repetition abruptly modulates from B-flat major to D-flat major, transforming the sweeping arpeggios into shimmering pianissimo glissandi[47] in measure 387– an even stronger inflection of plenitude. The dynamic level is subdued, giving hope that the repression of the inner conflict can last. This is not to be: the expected eight-measure consequent spirals out of control, expanding to nine measures, and fragmenting to a one-measure unit in measure 401 before continuational hemiola fills mm. 402-403 and this section fails to approach cadential closure.

The next section is unsettled from the start: now in A major, an E-F trill is an almost constant feature throughout the next 37 measures, continuing even through the key change

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[46] Robert S. Hatten, *Interpreting Musical Gestures, Topics, and Tropes* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 44.

[47] This is somewhat visible in the *ossia* above the main piano score in the solo piano version, but is much more visible in the two-piano and orchestral versions.

at measure 423 (Example 14). Puri labels this as Motive 17 but also parenthetically as 7' – a transformation of the nonfunctional cadential gesture found in mm. 98-105. The cadential gesture found in the hemiola and closure of 409-411 is somewhat weakened through liquidation but is still recognizable, marking the formal end of the first eight-measure phrase only to have its structural integrity weakened through a two-measure extension. A ten-measure repetition follows, ending what has expanded into a 20-measure section. This motive begins a third repetition, but is fragmented: four-measure units in mm. 425-28 and 429-32 are shortened to one measure units in mm. 433-436, half-measure units in mm. 437-38, and two-beat hemiola in mm. 439-440. The waltz has begun to spin itself apart just in time for the return of material from the murky beginnings of *La valse*.

FRAGMENTATION, QUOTATION, AND DESTRUCTION IN THE CLOSING FRAME

As *La valse* returns to the musical material of its opening, it becomes clear that the trajectory of this waltz is circular, not linear. The development from the fragmented, amorphous beginnings, irregular phrase structures, and frustrated cadential closure of the opening frame into closer-to-prototypical waltzes suite was problematized even within the waltz suite, but this momentum seems to have carried the music past the point of stability. Instead of finding stability in the comfortable, controlled spinning of the prototypical waltz, the spinning continues to accelerate through the remaining music of *La valse* as the waltz spins itself apart. The closing frame is defined through interruption of original motive ordering as well as of implied formal functions. Motive 1 returns effectively unaltered in mm. 442-448, followed by the continuational Motive 5 in mm. 449-457. Motive 3 returns in measure 458, and after an eight-measure phrase seems inclined to repeat again but after one

more measure is interrupted by Motive 4. Counting the one-measure anacrusis of measure 467, this motive only lasts five measures before it is in turn interrupted by Motive 5. In mm. 472-479, the continuational hemiola again leads to nothing, only to be replaced by new material in mm. 480-491.

Motive 8 – the motive which first functioned as the closing for the opening frame in mm. 130-146– enters in measure 664 (Example 15), and it is this motive that is to dominate this second phase of the closing frame as shown in the Puri's motive number chart. After only four measures, its continuity is suddenly broken with forte parallel octaves, ascending from the lowest registers of the piano. It is a rhetorical gesture, now expanded into six measures and changing from sparse octaves into dense textures and simultaneous ascent and descent in measures 670-673. This expression of force is replaced by Motive 8 again in mm. 674-677, only to return in mm. 678-683, this time with increased dynamic level as well as spanning a greater range at its close. As Motive 8 returns in measure 684, it is quickly reduced into only its hypermetric anacrusis in mm. 687-692. Like a skipping record, it incessantly prepares for the arrival which is not to come. Instead, the shift is sudden and unearned: not an arrival, but simply another beginning. Motive 8 reverts to a more recognizable form again in measure 693 and provides a mostly unmarked flow for 8 measures.

There is a sudden shift in mm. 711-712 to what Puri calls the "backward glance" (Example 16).[48] The raucous texture suddenly dissipates and the tempo is momentarily restrained as octaves in parallel return briefly to Motive 9, the first motive of the waltz suite.

[48] Puri, 183.

This quotation acts in two ways. As a rhetorical gesture, shifting the level of discourse, it references the stability of the tight-knit waltz and the moment in time when it seemed that this stability could last. It suddenly rips the trajectory back to what was once had, and like a sigh, is quickly gone. It also points to the source of the conflict: the force required to wrench the waltz out of the nebulous opening frame ends up causing its own destruction. As the third frame of *La valse* has transpired, it has not been a recapitulation, a simple recounting what has happened but with newfound insight. The motives have been developed, fragmented, and mixed – all foreign ideas in the normally non-developmental waltz. *La valse* continues to accelerate and fragment until it comes to a sudden end. In the final cadential gesture, the waltz closes with bare parallel octaves, suddenly forcing an end to the ever-accelerating waltz as if slamming a door on the waltz's delirium. It is a willful rejection, forcing a close to a waltz that had long been out of control.

ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVES

La valse provides two perspectives: the first, of the attempt to shape the hazy beginnings into the prototypical waltz, only to fail as this momentum continues to build and cannot be contained; and also that of the picture of the waltz provided by its recursive levels of structure. Frustration of functional fusion has been at play through most of *La valse*: the opening frame is marked with presentation and continuation that cannot find closure and cadential motion which fails due to lack of connection with presentation and continuation. Even the relatively tight-knit themes of the waltz suite often taper away rather than truly closing. At a larger scale, the presentational character of the opening frame and relative stability of the waltz suite are followed by an almost constant fragmentary and continuational

impulse through the closing frame, accelerating further and further but never truly *reaching* a cadence, simply being suddenly interrupted by a cadence in the last two measures. This similarity and structures between small form and large form projects another perspective from which to view *La valse* as something observed.

The sense of time constructed in *La valse* is similar in affect to that of the traditional waltz, despite the drastic changes to the waltz's structural norms. McKee argues that due to the "tonally closed… self-sufficient melodies that do not point outside of themselves" and lack of developmental impulse in the traditional waltz, Viennese waltz melodies project a suspended temporal state.[49] The lack of connection between waltz themes creates a form that is linear in trajectory, yet lacks any dramatic sense of motion or development through time. The Viennese waltz projects a sense of timelessness – "lyrical time."[50] Ravel's developmental impulse and strongly referential attributes of *La valse* shatters any expectation for this sense of "lyrical time," yet its cyclical nature creates a similar sense of trajectory without temporal progress. The destructive, fragmented mixing of motives from disparate areas of *La valse* through the closing frame frustrates any previous sense of linear trajectory, wrapping the waltz back into itself. The work exerted by the developmental impulse of the opening frame is for naught as things end as fragmented as they began.

Unlike the traditional waltz, energy is required to shape *La valse* into being. Only through force is *La valse* shaped into being out of the fragmented murkiness from which it begins, creating waltz through developing variation. Thus Puri describes the work as an act of memory: of attempting to piece together fragmented memories, followed by an attempt to

[49] McKee, 114-115.
[50] Monelle, 90-114, 200.

hold onto them and the eventual misremembering cued by the fragmentation, jumbling, and dissolution found through the closing frame.[51] However, what this interpretation does not foreground is that the point of conflict lies within the boundaries between the waltz suite and its surrounding frames. While the conflict of attempting to precariously stabilize fragments into a prototypical waltz is present even through the waltz suite, it is at the point where it begins to end and cites a transformed element of the opening frame that things begin to become unglued. This crack begins to spread as material from the opening frame and the waltz suite begin to mix further, becoming more and more destructive as this process accelerates.

Rather than simply the act of attempting to remember and stave off forgetfulness, this seems to represent a constructed reality. The fragmented nature of the waltz is put together through force, and the immanent resurgence of the fragmentation is only suppressed through the waltz suite, not eliminated. Cadences taper off rather than end conclusively, giving hint to the lack of stability that will eventually lead *La valse* back into dissolution. The fantasy of the waltz is overcome by the fragmentary identity as this romanticized state falls away. Instead of memory, perhaps *La valse* represents a vicarious nostalgia: a sentimental yearning for what one never actually experienced. This is an impulse present even in Ravel's act of composition: while he finished the work in 1920, his choreographic epigram sets the scene in the elegant Viennese ballrooms of 1855 – 20 years before Ravel's birth. *La valse* needs no allegorical connection to the destruction of the First World War or the decline of European civilization to become tragic, it is tragic by its very

[51] Puri, 168-184.

nature – doomed to the same failure which awaits every act of romantic, vicarious nostalgia for what one never had. *La valse* is constructed, not born fully-formed, because its reality is constructed.

What was previously ascribed to the 'agential force' or 'developmental impulse' can now be interpreted as the construction of the idealized nostalgic past. Without having experienced this past, it must be created from fragments – the imagination must take the images and shape them into a world that, while resembling reality, never truly was. This nostalgic past is that of a wistful daydream – it is the construction of an experience that the agent never had, sights he never saw. Like a daydream, the agent is not limited to a single viewpoint. It is not simply a portrait of a waltz, but a waltz constructed from a portrait of a waltz: the construction of a false memory created from the images of the past.

The tragedy of *La valse* lies not in history or in memory but in fantasy. It is a longing not for what one once had but for what one never had: for the romantic idealization of what once was. This is why after hundreds of measures spent developing the fantasy from the fragments, the waltz suite still cannot expel the garish grotesqueness and obtain the transcendent bliss of the ideal – the ideal does not and never did exist. The imagination's power of being able to create this fantasy is overcome by the imagination's innate fleetingness, its inability to create in the mind anything real or tangible, and the developmental impulse which created the fantasy brings about its demise, back into the depths of consciousness from which it began. Like the disembodied continuation functions, this vicarious nostalgia is a longing which yearns strongly yet reaches for something that

cannot be reached. It seeks what can never be found. The nostalgic fantasy must, like a dream, come to an end.

Intertextuality and temporality in *Valses nobles et Sentimentales*

Of the three works, Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales* features perhaps the most ambivalent relationship with its historical model. While the title explicitly references Franz Schubert's *Valses nobles* and *Valses sentimentales* and Ravel himself described the work as "Schubertian waltzes" (CITE: Autobiographical sketch), the connection between the music of Ravel and Schubert seems to exist mostly in sentiment and affect rather than through the borrowing of musical substance. As David Neumeyer writes, "Ravel never actually quotes a Schubert waltz; he borrows only the title, which in itself suggests nostalgia removed to the point of losing contact with concrete memories."[52] Michael Stegemann intuits the connection between the works as the sharing of a similar melancholy: "As so often in Schubert (and later in Ravel's own *La valse*)," he writes, "one feels [in Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales*] the melancholy, if not the morbidity, of an end at hand beneath the 'waltz bliss.'"[53]

While Ravel's "Forlane" forges a clear link with the music of Couperin and *La valse* thematizes the structure of the Viennese waltz phrase, the imitation in *Valses nobles et sentimentales* seems intended to emphasize absence and distance. Ravel's quotation of Schubert's titles along with the early 19th-century scene sets an expectation for influence, an expectation left unfulfilled due to the absence of explicit reference in the music itself. The intentional distance is in this way made conspicuous, and the intertextual connection

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[52] David Neumeyer, "Recomposition after Ravel, *Valses nobles et sentimentales*," *Hearing Schubert D779n13*, December 9, 2009, http://hearingschubert.blogspot.com/2009/12/recomposition-after-ravel-valses-nobles.html.

[53] Michael Stegemann, *Maurice Ravel* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1996): 81. Translated and quoted in Puri, 229.

between the respective works of Schubert and Ravel is through this conspicuous absence made meaningful.

THE SCHUBERTIAN MODEL

While Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales* do not feature quotation or obvious imitation of a specific Schubertian waltz, they do imitate the features and affect of the general family of Schubertian waltzes, both *nobles* and *sentimentales* – a connection to the general type, rather than to a token of that type. Schubert's *Valses nobles*, D. 969, and *Valses sentimentales*, D. 779, exhibit waltz syntax, expressive character, lyrical temporality, and tend toward extreme brevity, tight-knit construction, typical waltz self-containment, and de-emphasis of harmonic function. Of Schubert's twelve *Valses nobles*, nine are comprised entirely of regular, eight-measure phrases: six feature 16- or 32-measure binary or ternary construction with symmetrical phrase structure (waltzes 1, 2, 5, 6, 10, and 11); three feature 24-measure ternary forms (waltzes 4, 7, 8). Only waltzes 3, 9, and 12 feature looser constructions and extend beyond 24 measures. The brevity, tight-knit constructions, and lack of motivic relationships between these waltzes contribute to the sense of non-progressive, non-goal-oriented lyrical time.

Many of these waltzes understate common-practice harmonic function through incomplete cadential progressions and extensive prolongation, particularly in their opening phrases. In D. 969 no. 1 (Example 17), root-position tonic is prolonged through the first three measures before arriving on the root-position dominant harmony that concludes the antecedent, a harmony which is in turn prolonged until the final tonic of the phrase in m. 8. While m. 5 rhetorically seems to initiate a new consequent phrase, harmonically it merely

prolongs the dominant goal harmony of the antecedent until resolution to the tonic in m. 8. Strictly speaking, there is no authentic cadential closure; the entire eight-measure phrase is better interpreted as tonic prolongation. While most of the *Valses nobles* do not feature disruption of harmonic and cadential function to this extent, most of these waltzes feature opening phrases that are emphatically prolongational, and only waltzes 9, 10, and 11 feature complete cadential progressions in the home key.[54]

The third noble waltz (Example 18) provides several curious deviations from the norms of both this set as well as the waltz genre in general. At 58 measures long, this waltz is almost double the size of the next largest in the collection. While lacking the binary symmetry and regular 8-measure phrases common in the rest of the collection, this waltz does attain a non-progressive, lyrical temporality despite its much looser construction. The opening twenty measures feature a tonic pedal in all but mm. 6-8, creating a sense of harmonic stasis. After standing on the dominant through mm. 21-28, the music initially seems to begin a ternary recapitulation in m. 29 before suddenly veering off into A major, chromatic VI in relation to the home key C major, for mm. 32-42, only to return to C major even more suddenly in m. 43 for the final sixteen measures. While causing the work to be looser and less symmetrical in structure, the lack of clear functional relations between the interpolation of mm. 29-42 and its surroundings allows this waltz to retain its sense of stasis.

Sudden tonicizations of chromatic mediant key areas are found in D. 979 no. 3 and 7 and D. 779 no. 2, 13, and 16. In some examples, these breaks from tonal harmonic grammar bring additional expressive connotations. All but D. 779 no. 2 feature root motion by major

[54] Each of the other *Valses nobles* omits a functional predominant, instead oscillating between tonic and dominant functions.

third between major triads: in D. 969 no. 3, the return to the home key of C major from the tonicized A major is mediated through the home key subdominant F major triad; the E major tonic in m. 8 proceeds to C major in m. 9 in D. 969 no. 7; A major moves to C-sharp major in D. 779 no. 13; A-flat major is briefly tonicized in mm. 9-12 after a PAC in C major in D. 779 no. 16. These chromatic progressions by major third are associated in the music of Schubert and others with the sublime, supernatural, the uncanny, the boundary between reality and illusion, and "evanescent dreams."[55] Schubert's *Valses nobles* and *Valses sentimentales* intermingle these characteristics with the temporal stasis and suppression or absence of goal-directed drive of the waltz genre, creating a rich expressive field. Schubert's *Valses nobles* and *Valses sentimentales* may be more memorable for their affect than for their actual melodic content – and it is the general affect, rather than characteristic motives, that Ravel incorporates into his waltzes.

RAVEL'S EPILOGUE AND THE PROCESS OF REMEMBERING

While Schubert's waltzes hint at timeless, melancholic dreamlike states, Ravel's waltzes takes this affect several steps further. Michael Puri argues in *Ravel the Decadent* for the importance of memory in the epilogue of Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales.* In this epilogue, Puri writes, "thematic recollection is not simply the transposition of musical material from a past to a present context but rather a means to substantiate and shape a larger process of remembering."[56] Henri Bergson's reflective *mémoire pure* and Marcel Proust's conception of involuntary memory provide the primary historical lenses with which Puri analyzes memory

[55] Richard Cohn, *Audacious Euphony: Chromaticism and the Consonant Triad's Second Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 20-24.
[56] Puri, 140.

in the epilogue. The registral locations on the keyboard and the pianist's hands' sense of touch are interpreted as the triggers for the involuntary memory – "unconscious faculty that brings the past suddenly and vividly to life but cannot be summoned at will" – as expressed via the thematic returns.[57] Memory creates a dialectical process, linking the past and present. As Puri notes,

> Though it is only natural for us to feel the predomination of the past in this transaction between temporalities, the role played by the present itself is at least equally important: It is, after all, the only time in which we are able to remember… the unidirectionality of time ensures not only the impossibility of making the past present but also the certainty of a future in which both past and present can be recalled.[58]

For the epilogue, the importance of memory is easily argued. Its melancholic state is constantly interrupted by quotations from the earlier waltzes – it is no stretch to say that the epilogue's function is primarily to provide these quotations. As a postlude that exists formally 'after the end' of the seven waltz movements, the epilogue produces a shift in level of discourse. It comments on the music that has come before it in a manner that seems well explained by Puri's description of an agential viewing of the past through the present. However, the initial seven movements of Ravel's *Valses* are not unproblematic waltzes functioning as source material for a more expressively complex epilogue – these waltzes themselves create multiple levels of temporal conflict. Both the suspended lyric temporality

[57] Puri, 145.
[58] Puri 163-64.

signified in the waltzes as well as the syntactic forward flow of the waltzes' functional grammar are at times fractured. The epilogue gives the clearest examples of expressed temporality through analepsis – the flashback effect – but this work plays with time in more than this way in more than this movement, as well as at multiple hierarchical levels. To better understand the epilogue's acts of remembering, it is necessary to investigate what is being remembered.

CONFLICTING TEMPORALITIES WITHIN *VALSES NOBLES ET SENTIMENTALES*

As in *La valse*, *Valses nobles et sentimentales* create dialogues with the historical waltz genre, and much of their expression lies in how the formal and expressive characteristics of the waltz genre are incorporated or subjected to deformation. Unlike *La valse*, which features a lyrical waltz suite within a larger processual trajectory of construction and deconstruction, making the more prototypical waltz characteristics of the suite marked, in *Valses nobles et sentimentales* the lyrical mode of the waltz is the norm – at least, until the epilogue. Through the use of more traditional, tight-knit formal types (albeit infused with Ravel's characteristic harmonic language), regular phrase structures, lyrical melodies, and perhaps most importantly a general lack of developmental impulse – the features found in the historical waltz genre – the *Valses nobles et sentimentales* emulate not just the superficial characteristics of the waltz but also assume its suspended temporal state of "lyrical time."

Raymond Monelle, describing lyrical time, writes that music in this mode "can subsist in time without taking time; the temporal signified may be a seamless present, even though the musical expression is full of events… music for dance occupies a single moment

that is infinitely extensible."[59] Eric McKee connects this lyrical temporality to two particular qualities of the waltz, which he terms *self-containment* and *variety*. Waltz themes are self-contained in that thematic development is rare, and thematic repetition (excepting repeat bars and the repetition found in certain theme types) rarer still – "[u]nless it is restated in the coda, once a theme is heard, it is forever gone."[60] Variety comes in part due to the lack of development and thematic repetition – without either of those two things, the waltz can only continue through succession to new theme after new theme.[61] As a result, McKee writes that "waltz melodies exist full bloom in the present… a complete Viennese waltz may be heard as a succession of suspended temporal units or images that in and of themselves do not suggest any conventional Classical narrative order of cause and effect."[62]

In the normative waltz, phrase-level formal functions create clear senses of syntactic beginnings, middles, and ends, but the aesthetic effect is one of expressed stasis. However, the disruption of the normative waltz syntax can also disrupt the signified lyric temporality. David Neumeyer posits an association between tight-knit and loose-knit construction and, respectively, music for dancing versus music for listening in classical period music. This suggests a temporal implication as well – tight-knit structures, associated with the dance, will tend to be associated with lyrical time, while formal loosening expresses a move into progressive time.[63] Passagework, conventional (rather than characteristic) melodies, and the formal loosening techniques traditionally associated with continuational, developmental, or

[59] Monelle, 88, 91.
[60] McKee, 114.
[61] McKee, 119-120.
[62] McKee, 114-115.
[63] David Neumeyer, "The Contredanse, Classical Finales, and Caplin's Formal Functions," *Music Theory Online* 12.4 (2006):29, http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.06.12.4/mto.06.12.4.neumeyer.html.

transitional functions wrench music out of the present-oriented lyrical mode and permit the expression of progressive time.[64]

While the majority of the *Valses nobles et sentimentales* expresses the lyrical temporal stasis typical to the waltz, it features disjunctions and discontinuities at multiple structural levels – most notably but not solely through the epilogue. Through investigating the deformations of waltz norms, the complexities of the relationships between past and present, between the memories and the remembering, can become more apparent. The second of Ravel's *Valses nobles et sentimentales* (Example 19) – a 64-measure movement, clearly segmenting into two 32-measure sections and regular 8-measure phrases – seems at first glance to generally resemble the historical waltz's syntactic prototype. But within the symmetrical organization, temporal function is often obscured. Within the opening sentence, the repeated basic idea oscillates between hexatonic collections from measure to measure, emphasizing augmented triads and creating an unstable, dreamlike haze that dies away, sinking both dynamically and registrally, toward the end of the 8-measure phrase. As the root descends by fifth into m. 9, the return to regular tempo and change to a more harmonically stable, more rhythmically active, and more lyrical melodic character give a sense that the waltz proper is now underway and the opening eight measures were introductory in function. Measures 9-16 seem presentational, with a repeated 4-measure basic idea implying a following continuation phrase. Interpretation of mm. 9-16 as initiating function is also supported by expansion of the grouping structure. However, at the point of the expected

[64] Monelle, 100-110. See also Hatten (1997), 627, which in discussion of A. B. Marx's writings on form, describes the *Satz* as "present-directed" while transitional or developmental sections are "future-oriented."

continuation in m. 17, mm. 1-8 surprisingly reappear, transposed up a minor third.[65] Another 8-measure sentence brings the 32-measure section to a close.

This creates ambiguity of formal function. In the initial interpretation, mm. 1-8 functions as an introduction, before the structural beginning, anticipatory in its instability. After the implication of an 8-measure presentation, considering mm. 17-24 to act as a continuation requires reinterpreting it to express a medial formal function, despite only subtle changes to the actual musical structure – a change from anticipation to continuation.[66] Additionally, this reading interprets mm. 17-24 as a violation of the waltz's self-containment norms, not only reintroducing past melodic-motivic material but allowing music from before the structural beginning to infiltrate the thematic structure. Alternatively, mm. 1-8 and 17-24 could possibly be heard as both initiating 16-measure phrase groups, creating a sort of 32-measure period. But this interpretation creates conflicts within the temporal syntax as well – mm. 9-16 and 25-28 are both clearly presentational: this interpretation would conclude mm. 1-16 with eight measures of a stable, initiating function, expressing syntactic beginning while acting as a syntactic end.

While the former would be my preferred interpretation of this passage, either of these two interpretations must grapple with functional ambiguity and non-normative stylistic return. Interpreting mm. 1-8 as introductory and mm. 17-24 as continuational seems best explained by considering mm. 1-8 to act as a proleptic foreshadowing of the tension to come, but mm. 17-24 could be almost as easily heard as an analeptic flashback to before.

[65] Other than the enharmonic respelling of D-flat to C-sharp, it is an exact transposition.

[66] There is a change in right-hand slurring, outlining one-measure segments in mm. 17-18, whereas two-measure groupings were slurred in mm. 1-2. Additionally, dynamic accents emphasize the downbeats in mm. 17-18, whereas no accents were present in mm. 1-2. While these changes might contribute to a sense of medial function rather than initiating function, any contribution would be quite subtle.

The interpretive quandary here is not simply that things seem to be out of order with regards to their absolute temporal function – it is that it is not entirely clear what those absolute temporal functions are in the first place.

Temporal conflict in the second waltz is in part caused by interthematic motivic return, but the third waltz (Example 20) features intrathematic motivic return. This movement, like the one preceding, begins with an 8-measure sentence which is then repeated with slight variation to create a 16-measure section. The repetition of the 8-measure phrase is not of expressive value in itself – despite the minor changes made, this repetition is functionally equivalent to the repeat bars bracketing most of Schubert's waltz sections. But within the 8-measure sentences, the transformation of the basic idea is somewhat curious.

After an exact repetition of the basic idea found in mm. 1-2, it is fragmented into a two-beat unit as the continuation begins. This liquidation and acceleration of small-scale grouping (breaking the two-bar hypermeasure into three parts instead of two) is quite normative. However, the cadential gesture brings back the basic idea, only slightly modified, while restoring the initial small-scale grouping. This motivic return is subtle, but nonetheless worth noting. The same melodic gesture, with the same harmonic support, acts rhetorically as the beginning and end of this phrase. The functional torsion is attenuated somewhat by the E4 pedal, sounded on each downbeat of mm. 1-8, but it still creates a sense of circularity about the syntactic temporality of the opening phrase.

The end of the third waltz (Example 21) also features violation of the waltz's self-containment norms. Measures 57-64 provide the recapitulation of this movement's ternary form, which continues past its structural end in m. 64. Repetitions of the two-measure

closing cadential gesture fill mm. 65-68, fragmenting into one-measure units in mm. 68-70 before breaking down further into hemiola division of the standard two-bar hypermeasure into three in mm. 71-72. These final eight measures seem to end the movement with the medial function of continuation before the musical idea of mm. 71-72 becomes the initiating motivic material of waltz 4. This creates several temporal tensions as well: the fragmentary hemiola features a medial formal function, despite its contextual temporal function as the end of waltz 3 and the beginning of waltz 4.

In providing this motivic link across the boundaries of these two waltzes, the self-containment norm of the waltz is violated. But the self-containment violation goes beyond the hemiola motive simply appearing in waltz 3 as well as waltz 4 – it shows a derivation of the central motive of waltz 4 out of the basic idea of waltz 3. Heard in this way, the entire fourth waltz is a self-containment violation, a progressive developmental motion.

The most jarring break of the waltz's self-containment prior to the epilogue occurs in the seventh waltz, the final structural movement before the postlude (Example 22). While Ravel himself called this the "most characteristic" of the set (whether he means characteristic of Ravel or characteristic of the waltz genre is unclear), it includes some of the most salient digressions from prototypical waltz norms.[67] After an 18-measure introduction, an extensive, loose-knit section begins. The 12-measure sentence in mm. 19-30 begins anew, up a step, in m. 31, creating an implication of a sprawling 24-measure period. However, this in turn is undermined as instead of ending with a sense of closing, mm. 31-38 remain open. As two-measure ideas repeat in mm. 39-54, the momentum and dynamic level both grow gradually

[67] Maurice Ravel, "Une Esquisse autobiographique de Maurice Ravel," in *A Ravel Reader: Correspondence, Articles, Interviews*, trans. and ed. Arbie Orenstein (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 17-23.

in a massive continuation. The rhythmic gesture begun in mm. 39-40 continues, altered slightly but always recognizable, through mm. 62 – reaching fortissimo and holding back momentarily in m. 59 before starting along again, as if unable to pull back on its own momentum. The continuational momentum built by twelve consecutive repetitions of this two-measure idea is only suddenly brought to a stop through the sudden reintroduction of the declamatory motive from the very beginning of the entire work, which announces the beginning of the cadential function found in mm. 63-66.

This sprawling section expands the normative eight- or sixteen-measure sentence to 48. The lyrical waltz time, at this point, is at an end – if a shift to progressive time was not expressed clearly by the 24 measures of continuation from mm. 39-62, a break from lyrical time is surely announced by the thematic return to the characteristic beginning of the first waltz. The work's initiating motive bears some of its original function – it does still clearly initiate, at the phrase level, but its sudden interruption announces the beginning of theme- and section-level ending. In the final iteration of the initiating motive in m. 155 of the seventh waltz, it acts within higher-level closing functions at the movement- and work-level as well.[68]

While the self-containment violations and twists of syntactic temporality in the earlier movements created tensions against the prevailing lyrical time, this movement seems to shatter it altogether. The seventh waltz brings the *Valses nobles et sentimentales* out of lyrical time and into a fully progressive time, forward-moving and goal-oriented instead of floating in continual stasis. Yet despite the departure from lyrical time, the temporality of the seventh

[68] By 'work,' I mean the movements that are part of the work proper, excluding the epilogue, which acts as a postlude after the end, shifting the rhetorical level of discourse and commenting on the previous seven movements through the lens of memory.

waltz is not entirely straightforward – its formal closures are brought about only via the analeptic return of the work's beginning, creating a sense of circularity. The extensive repetition of the motive introduced in mm. 39-40 extends what would be a brief moment within a more normative waltz through restating a two-measure idea for 24 measures, creating a non-progressive stasis at the level of the motive. However, as shown earlier, it is this repetition itself that causes the transition into progressive time and momentum growth toward a cadential goal. This seems to anticipate the rhetorical break and the narrative agency which Puri locates in the epilogue – the attempt to hold on to this moment, ironically, is what creates the drive away from it and irrevocably disrupts the stasis of lyrical time.

Even accepting in full Puri's analysis of retrospection of the epilogue, questions still linger – what is the sort of thing being remembered, and from when? But as a concert work outside of this context, the role of memory and temporality is less clear. As Neumeyer noted, there is a distance between Ravel's waltzes and those of Schubert, suggestive of "nostalgia removed to the point of losing contact with concrete memories."[69] If the Schubertian waltz is what is being remembered, an act of remembrance depicted through the retrospection in the epilogue of the previous seven movements, then there is something to be gained through the realization of this chasm.

Despite the motivic connections in *Valses nobles et sentimentales* between the first seven movements and the epilogue, there is a similar rift. The circularities and deformations within the seven waltzes create tensions with the underlying temporal stasis, perhaps in the end

[69] Neumeyer (2009).

shattering lyrical time entirely, yet they do not create a trajectory toward the epilogue – the epilogue is not the goal of the prior movements, only the recollection of those movements. The violations of the waltz norms enable motion from a static present to a processual present, enabling a shift from lyrical mode into narrative mode.[70] But this narrative mode is not straightforward – the mingling of beginnings and ends and the thematic returns which permit the departure from the lyrical mode also create ambiguities about the relations in time of the music. It is rarely clear whether a theme's return is a flashback or rather its initial appearance was a flashforward. The ambiguities put the work in dialogue with anti-narrative: the discontinuities needed to enable the shift from a lyrical to a progressive, narrative mode simultaneously cause a musical discourse that is itself fragmentary and disjunct. In the progression into the epilogue, there is a divorce of the result from the process: while the seven waltzes combine temporal stasis with time passing – a static present and a processual present, respectively – the epilogue's sense is only that time has passed.

But in a sense, these disjunctions may be less problematic than they at first appear. If the epilogue is an act of remembering, as Puri argues, then the ambiguities only enhance the appeal of Puri's reading. The melancholy of the epilogue reflects the combination of nostalgia and detachment caused by the distance between the rememberer from the remembered. The ambiguities could be read as a representation of memory's habit of altering, creating, and destroying rather than simply reproducing the past. Or, if one wishes to transfer the agential persona that Puri finds in the epilogue into the prior seven waltzes, perhaps the discontinuities and deformations of the waltz are signs of agential intention – of

[70] Byron Almén and Robert S. Hatten, "Narrative Engagement with Twentieth-Century Music: Possibilities and Limits," in Music and Narrative since 1900, ed. Michael Leslie Klein and Nicholas W. Reyland (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013): 60-63. See also Reyland, 32, in the same volume.

memory not as the result of passive observation, but rather directed attention toward experienced events. But whatever the metaphor of choice, it is clear that the relationship between past and present in the *Valses nobles et sentimentales* is not simple or transparent – like in the relationship between the waltzes of Ravel and those of Schubert, memory brings out not only a connection to the past but also its distance.

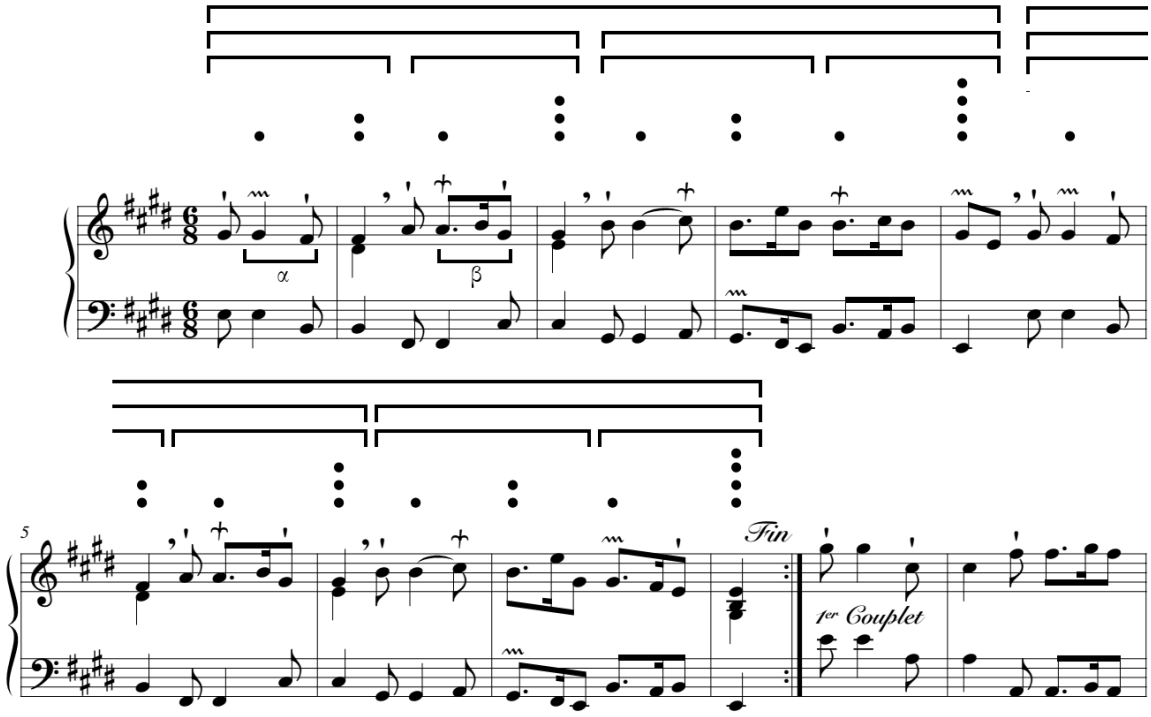
Conclusion

The "Forlane" of *Le tombeau de Couperin*, the *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, and *La valse* all explore the relationship with the past through their varying degrees of interaction with historical sources. In each case the specific connections are of great expressive importance, despite the ambiguities and ambivalences often found in these links. In the "Forlane" of *Le tombeau de Couperin*, the appropriation of the music of Couperin is marked by gestural and phrase structural ambiguities, emphasizing that even the most 'reverential' appropriation still features latent and perhaps unresolvable tensions between past and present. *La valse*, set in dialogue with the waltz styles of Johann Strauss Jr., creates a trajectory of construction and destruction of an imagined history, driven by a vicarious nostalgia – a longing for not an experienced past, but instead the events beyond the horizon of living memory. *Valses nobles et sentimentales* emphasize the distance of the past through memory – just as Schubert's *Valses nobles*, D. 969, and *Valses sentimentales*, D. 779, are never quoted, only kept at a historical distance, the act of remembering within the epilogue is distanced from the seven prior waltzes from which it quotes.

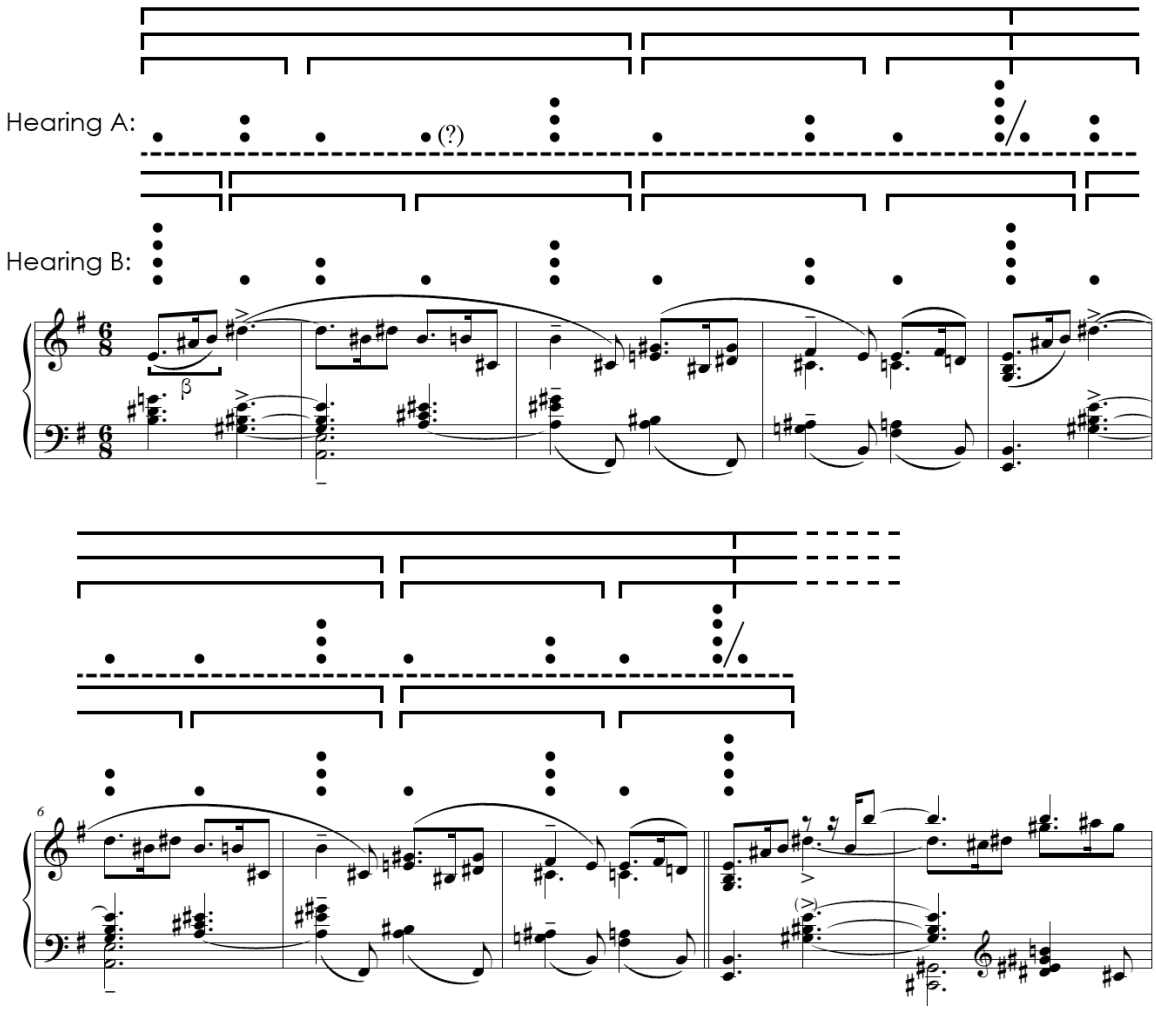
General tensions between the past and present could be subsumed into an agential reading that focuses primarily on a personal, subjective past via memory. Music of the non-contemporary past would be taken merely as a signifier of past-ness, without respect to their own identities as from specific moments, cultures, and styles. But in Ravel's "Forlane," *La valse*, and *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, perspectives of both the subjective past and non-contemporary past are valuable – it is necessary not just to investigate the act of remembering, but to also see what is being remembered, misremembered, or constructed.

The "Forlane" places the respective times of Ravel and Couperin into conflict, drawing out tensions between the two via metrical ambiguity and play with gestural anacrusis. *La valse*'s dramatic trajectory constructs then deconstructs the waltz, a process which can be read as the vicarious nostalgia of romanticizing the past. *Valses nobles et sentimentales* creates a rift between the past and present, both in the division of the epilogue from the earlier waltzes and in the depiction of the past's dual nature as forever gone yet always present. Common to all three works is tensions of temporalities – through Ravel's dialogues with the musical styles and works of the past, his music is able to explore the more generalized dialogues between past and present – both the personal and historical pasts – that affect us all.

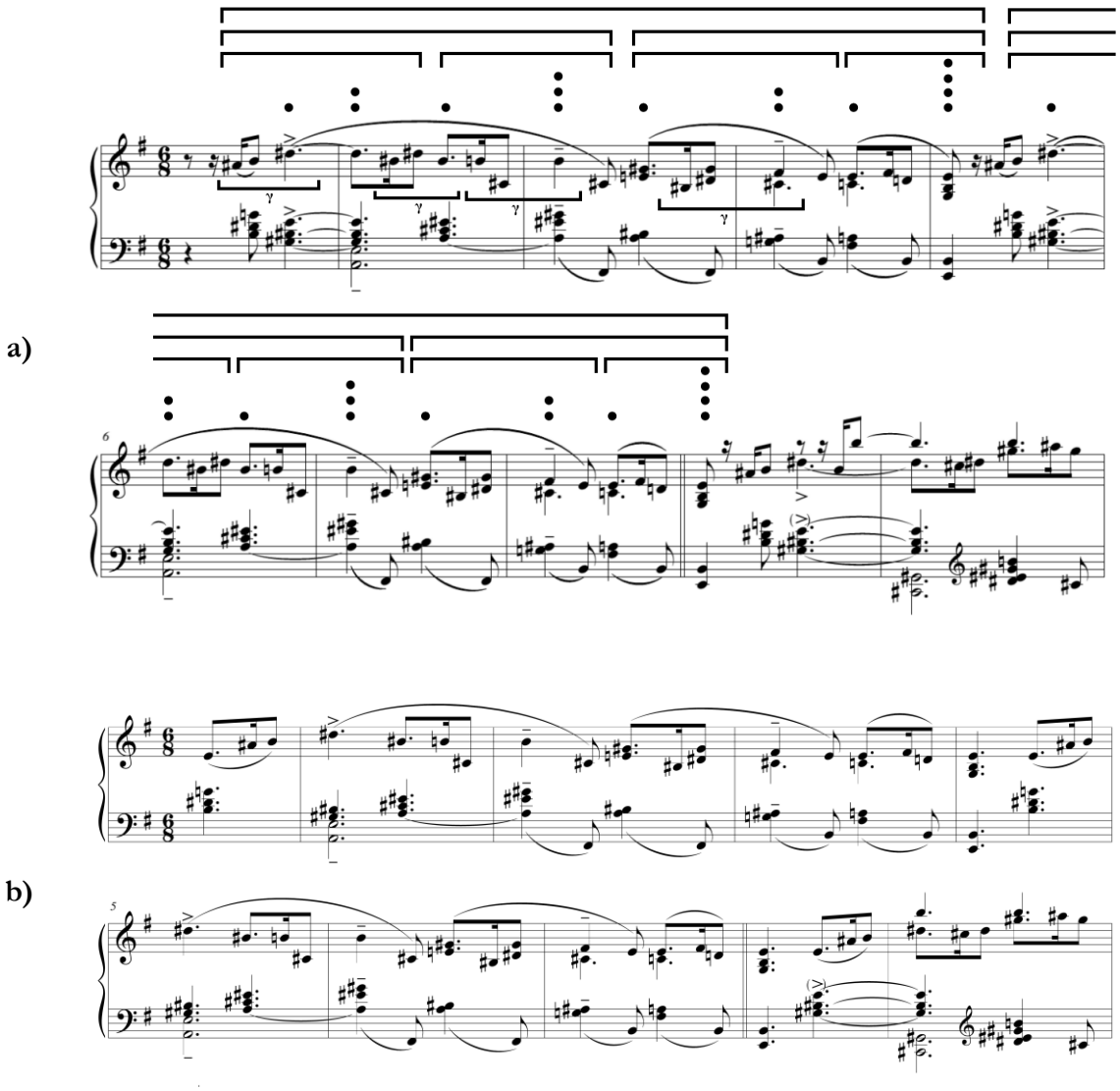
Examples



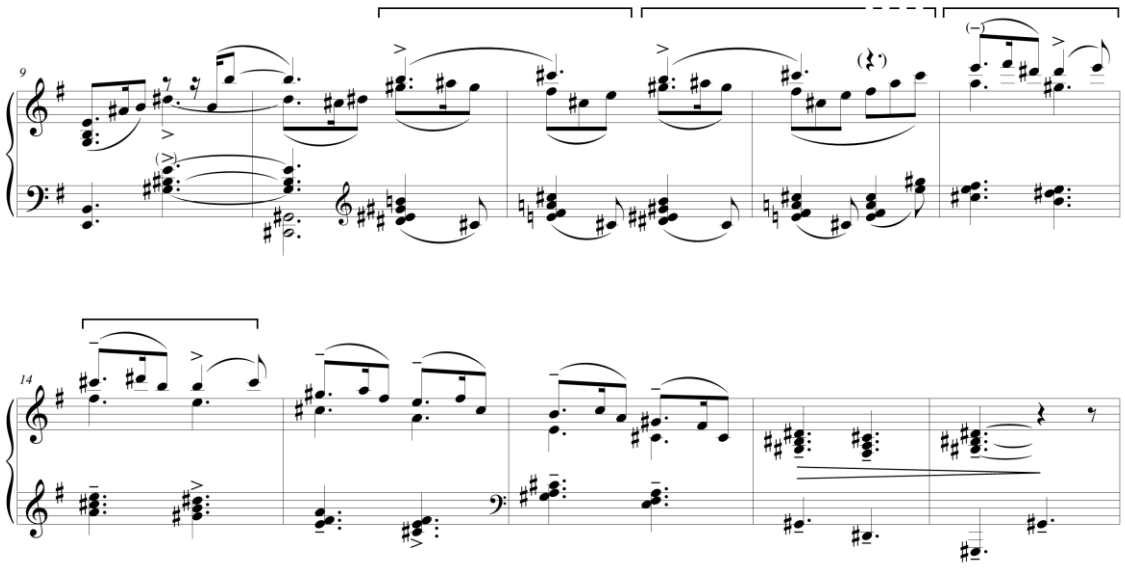
Example 1. François Couperin, *Quatrieme Concert* from *Concerts Royaux* (1722), "Forlane," mm. 1-8



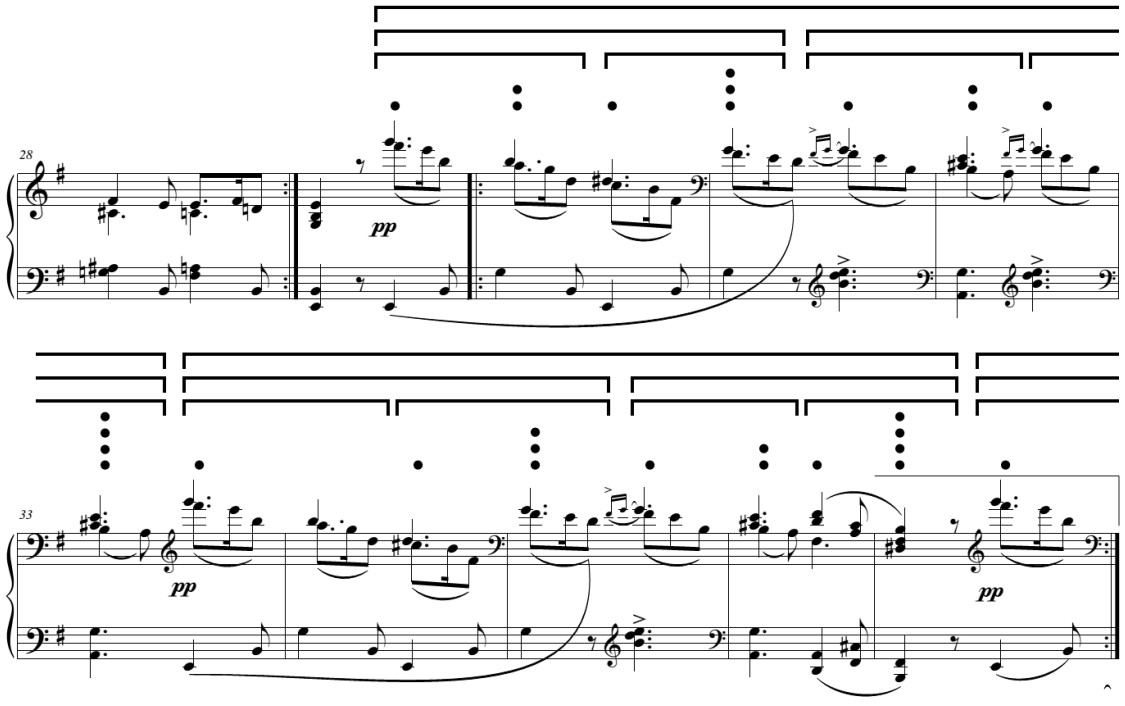
Example 2. Maurice Ravel, *Le tombeau de Couperin* (1917), "Forlane," mm. 1-10



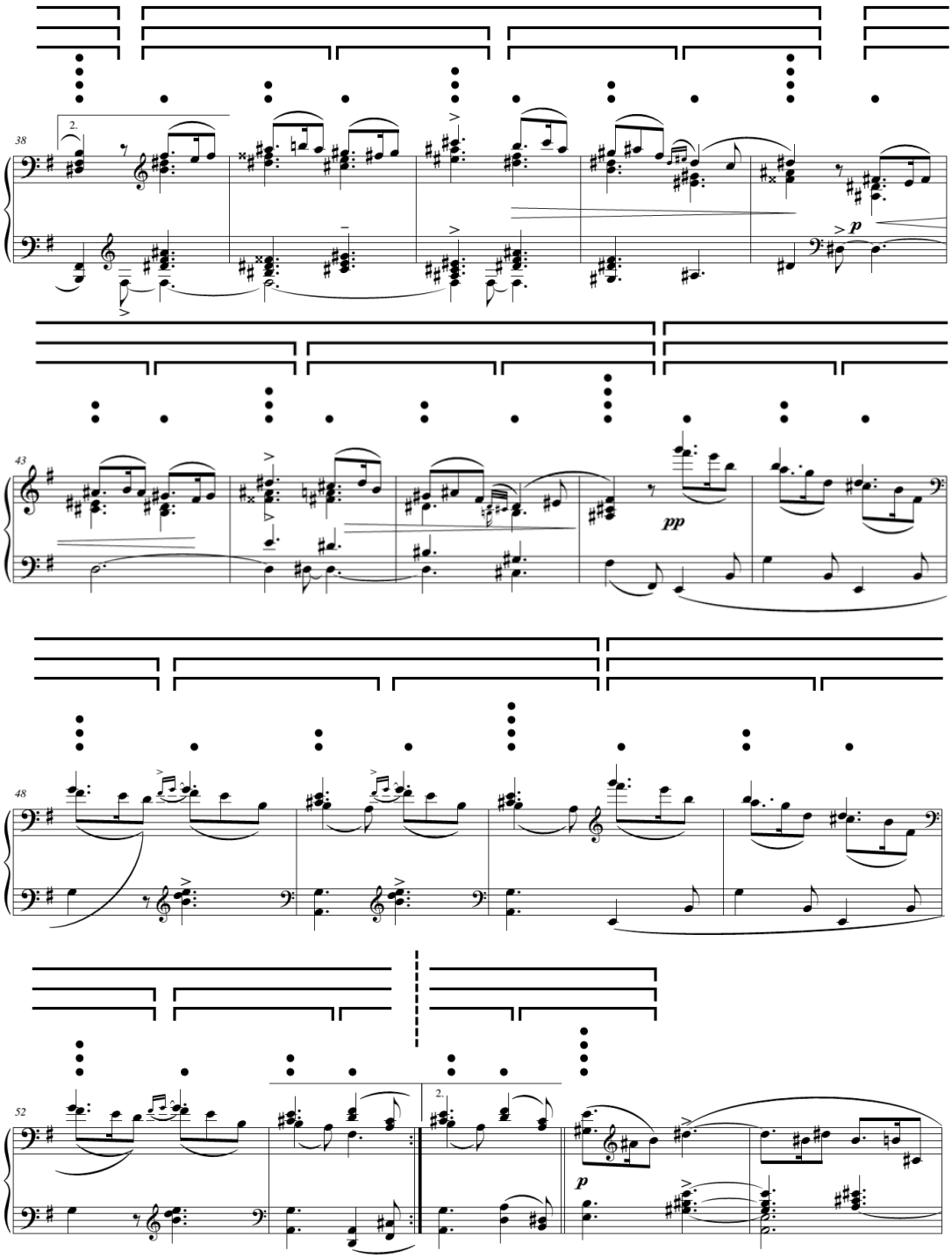
Example 3. Two recompositions of Ravel, *Le tombeau de Couperin,* "Forlane," mm. 1-10



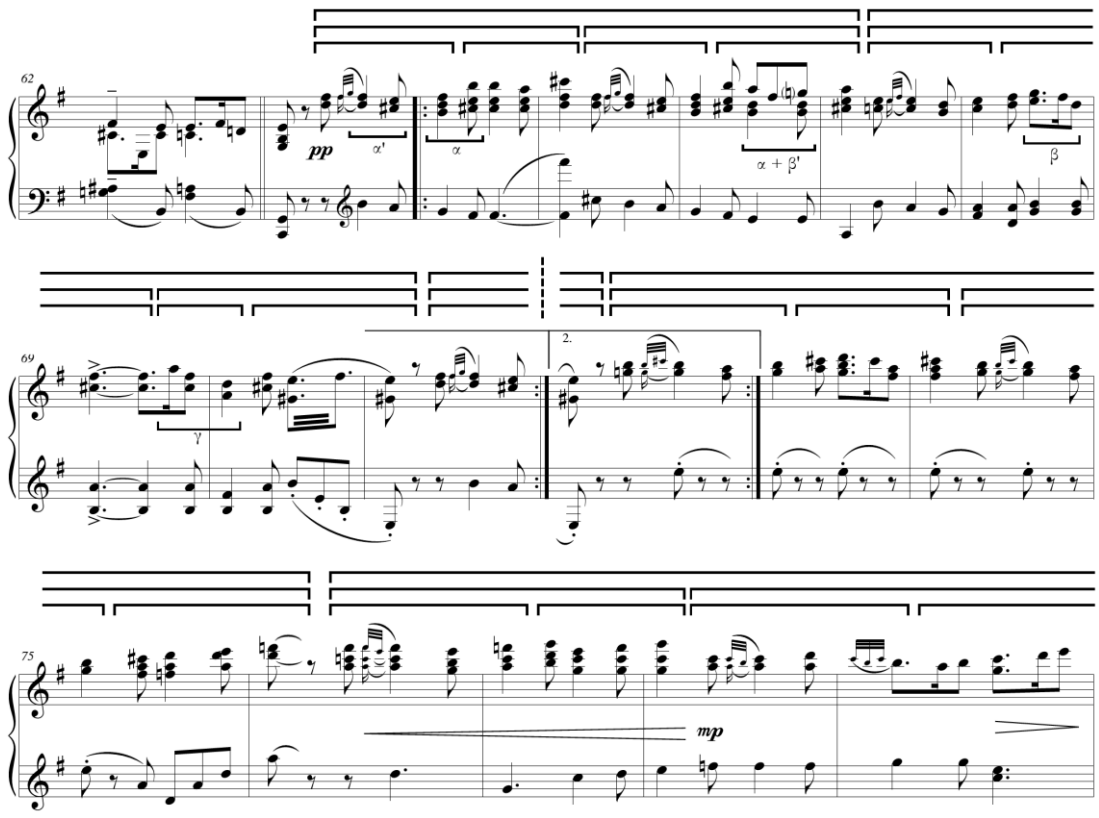
Example 4. Ravel, *Le tombeau de Couperin,* "Forlane," mm. 9-18



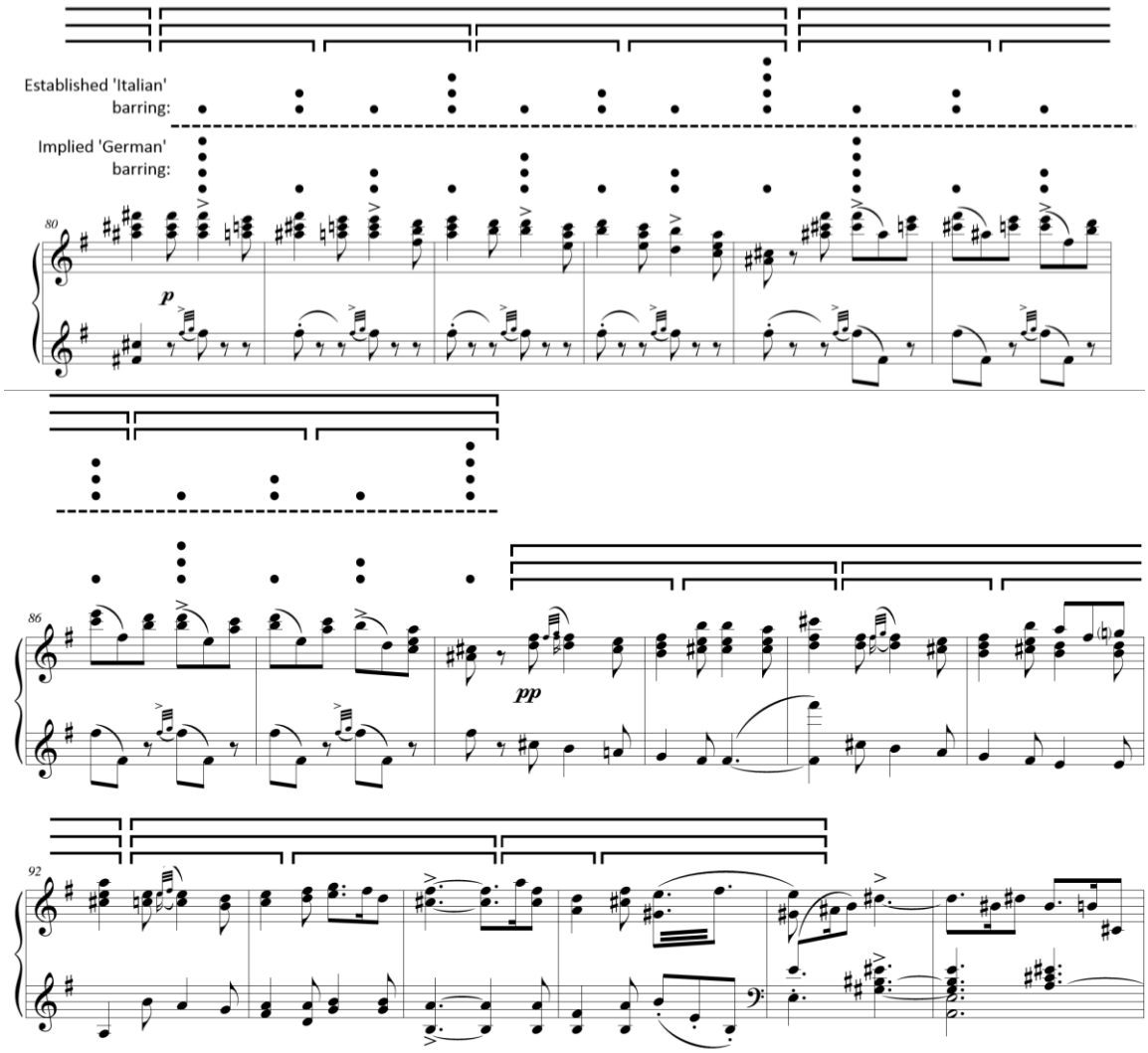
Example 5. Ravel, *Le tombeau de Couperin,* "Forlane," mm. 28-37



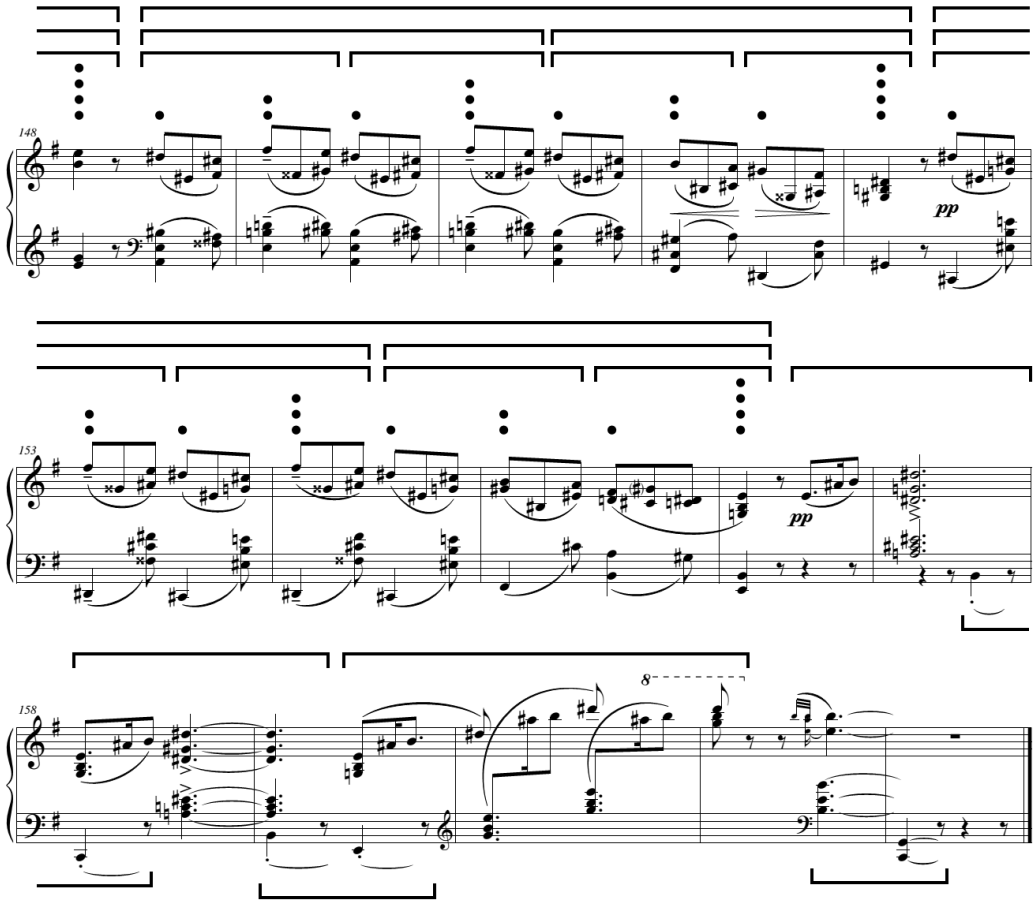
Example 6. Ravel, *Le tombeau de Couperin,* "Forlane," mm. 38-56



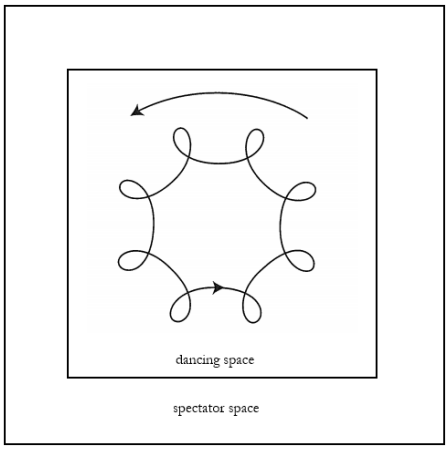
Example 7. Ravel, *Le tombeau de Couperin,* "Forlane," mm. 62-79



Example 8. Ravel, *Le tombeau de Couperin,* "Forlane," mm. 80-97



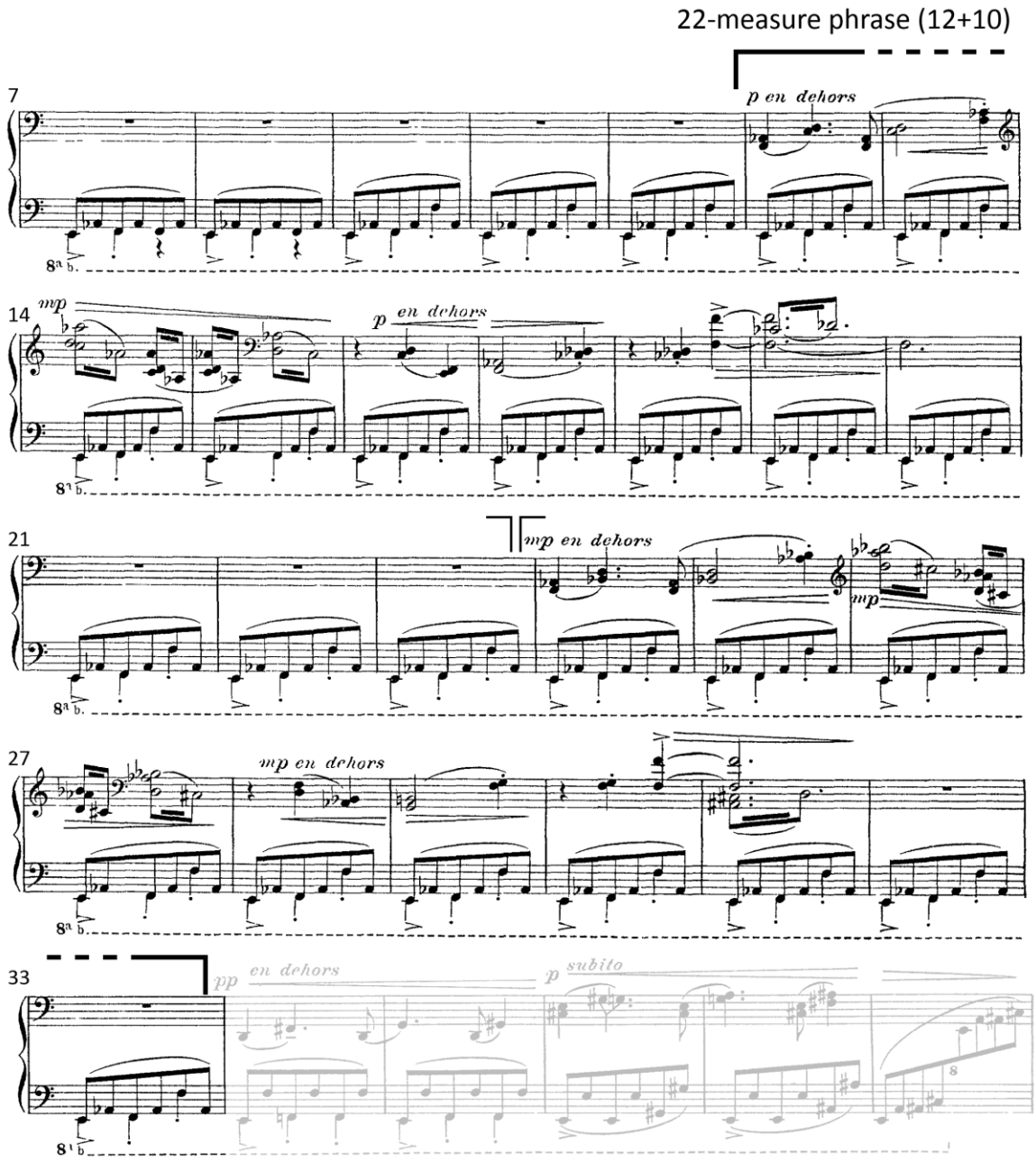
Example 9. Ravel, *Le tombeau de Couperin,* "Forlane," mm. 148-162



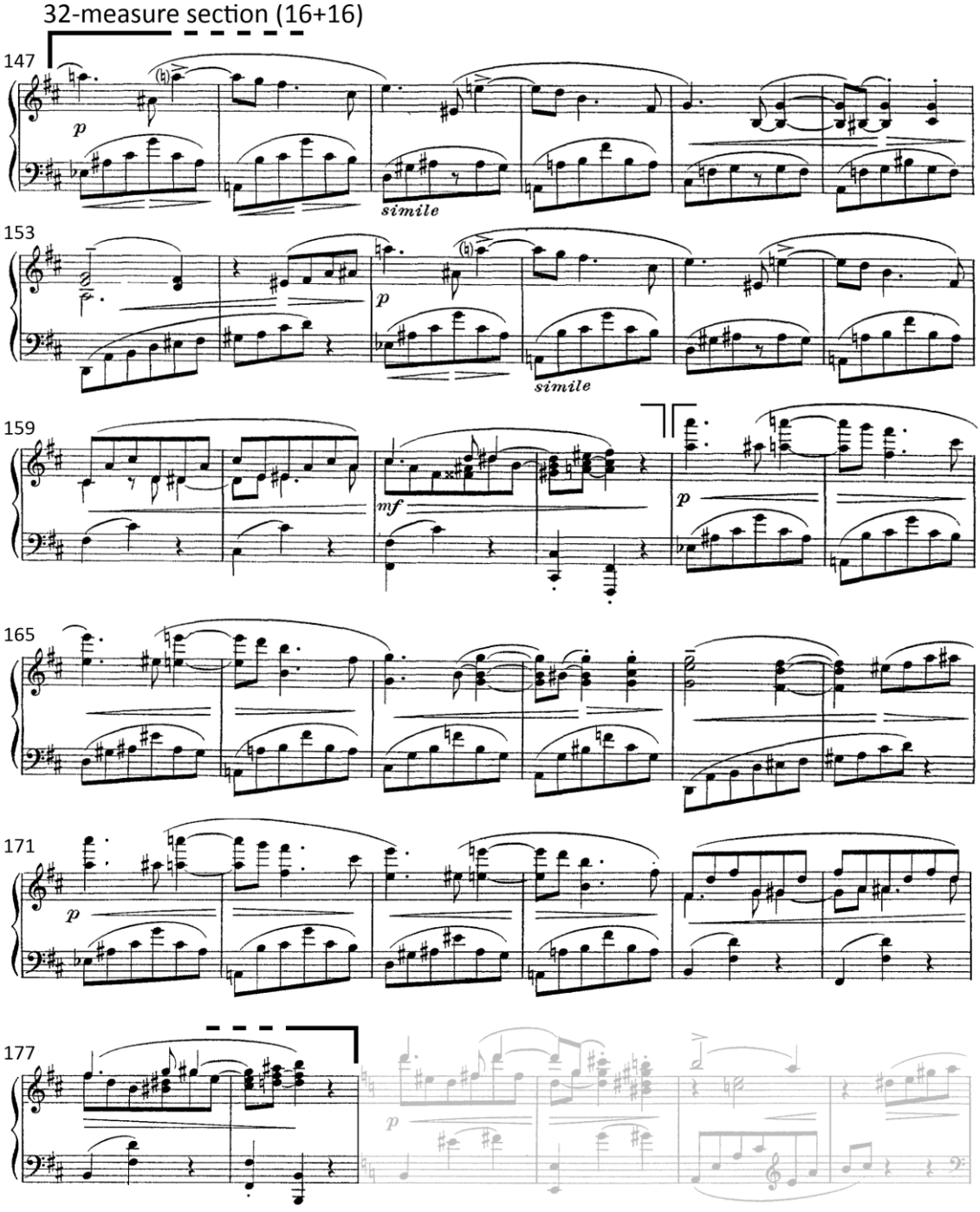
Example 10. The dance motion of a *valse a trois temps*

Frame:	Phase	Rehearsal number:	Measures	Motive #
Opening Frame	**Phase 1**	R1	12-23 (12 mm.)	1
		R3	24-33 (10 mm.)	1
		R4	34-38 (5 mm.)	2
		R5	39-43 (5 mm.)	3
		R6	44-49 (6 mm.)	4
		R7	50-56 (7 mm.)	5
		R8	57-65 (9 mm.)	6
	Phase 2	R9	69-98 (30 mm.)	1’
		R12	99-106 (8 mm.)	7
		R13	107-129 (23 mm.)	4 (+6’)
		R16	131-146 (16 mm.)	8 (5’)
Waltz Suite		R18	147-178 (32 mm.)	9
		R22	179-210 (32 mm.)	10
		R26	211-242 (32 mm.)	11
		R30	243-274 (32 mm.)	12
		R34	275-290 (16 mm.)	13
		R36	291-330 (40 mm.)	14
		R41	331-370 (40 mm.)	15
		R46	371-403 (32 mm.)	16
		R50	404-440 (36 mm.)	17 (7’)
Closing Frame	**Phase 1 (Motive 5-centric)**	R54	442-448 (7 mm.)	1
		R55	450-457 (8 mm.)	5
		R57	458-466 (9 mm.)	3
		R58	468-472 (5 mm.)	4
		R59	473-479 (7 mm.)	5
		R60	480-491 (12 mm.)	18
		R62	493-500 (8 mm.)	5
		R63	501-520 (20 mm.)	14
		R66	522-525 (4 mm.)	5
		R67	527-530 (4 mm.)	13
		R68	532-538 (7 mm.)	5
		R69	539-556 (18 mm.)	5 + 13
		R73	557-578 (22 mm.)	12
	Phase 2 (Motive 8-centric)	R76	579-644 (66 mm.)	15
		R85	645-663 (19 mm.)	16
		R88	665-667 (3 mm.)	8
		R 89	668-673 (6 mm.)	E1
		R90	675-677 (3 mm.)	8
		R91	678-683 (6 mm.)	E1
		R93	685-686 (2 mm.)	8
		R93^{+4}	687-692 (6 mm.)	E2
		R94	694-710 (17 mm.)	8
		R96	711-712 (2 mm.)	9
		R97	714-719 (6 mm.)	8
		R97^{+8}	720-737 (18 mm.)	E3
		R100	738-741 (4 mm.)	8
		R100^{+4}	741-752 (12 mm.)	E4
		R101^{+8}	753-754	(8)

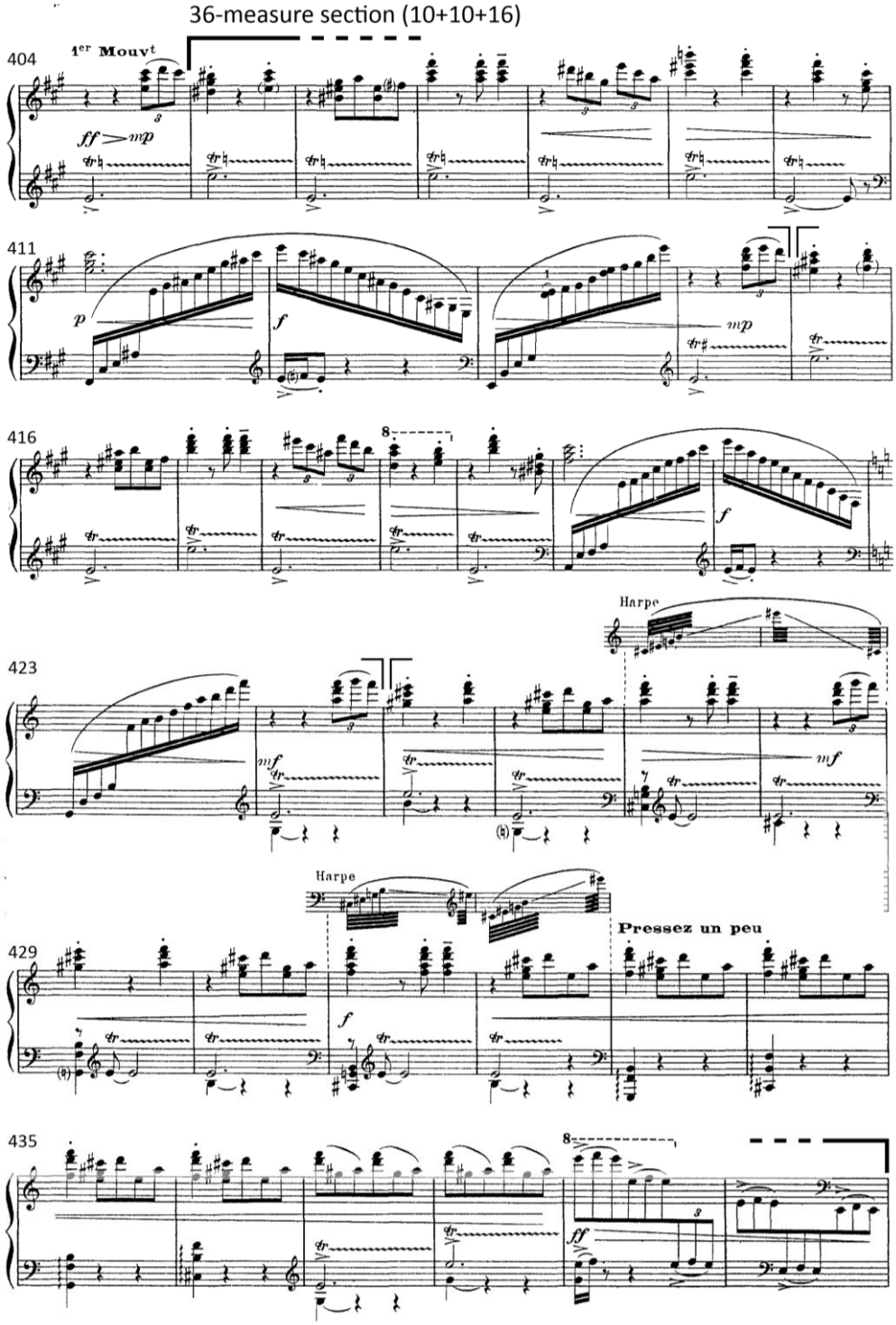
Example 11. Motivic-thematic design in *La valse*



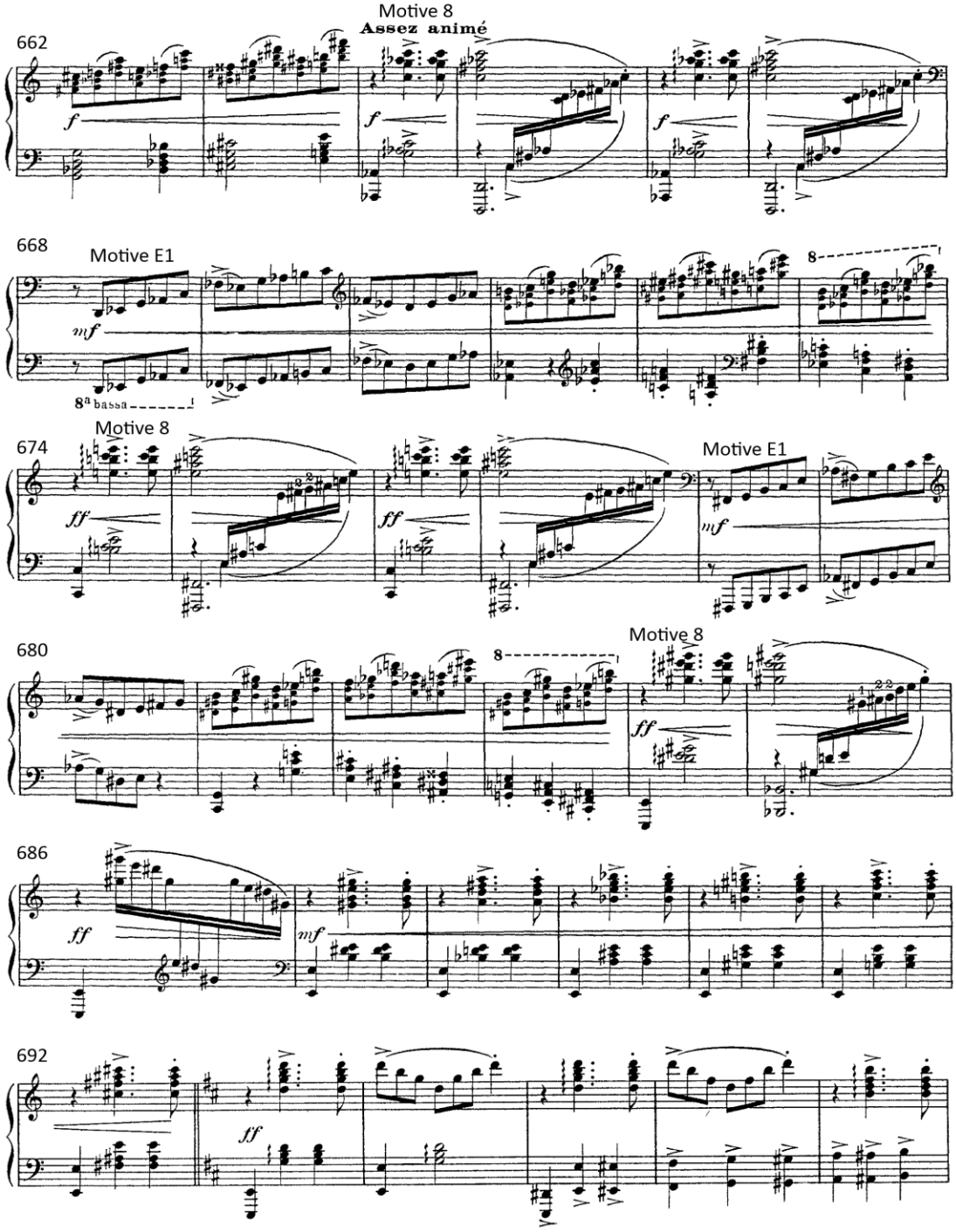
Example 12. Ravel, *La valse*, mm. 7-33



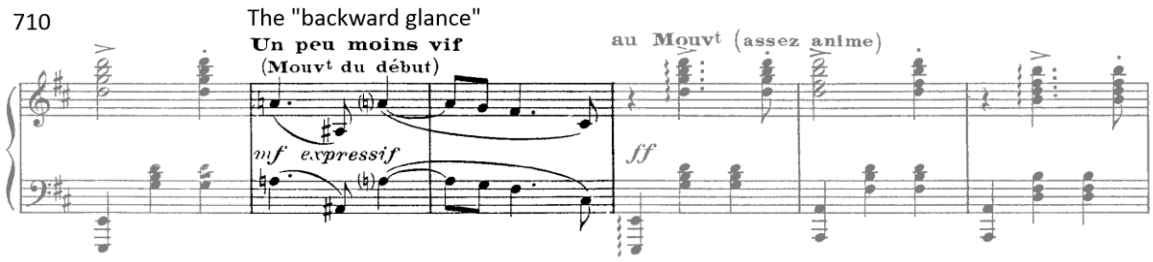
Example 13. Ravel, *La valse*, mm. 147-178



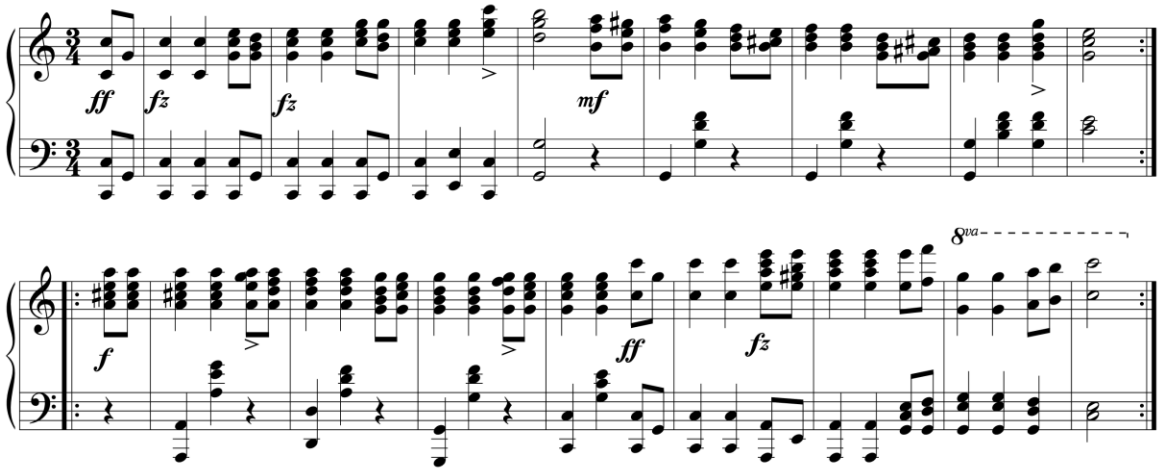
Example 14. Ravel, *La valse*, mm. 404-440



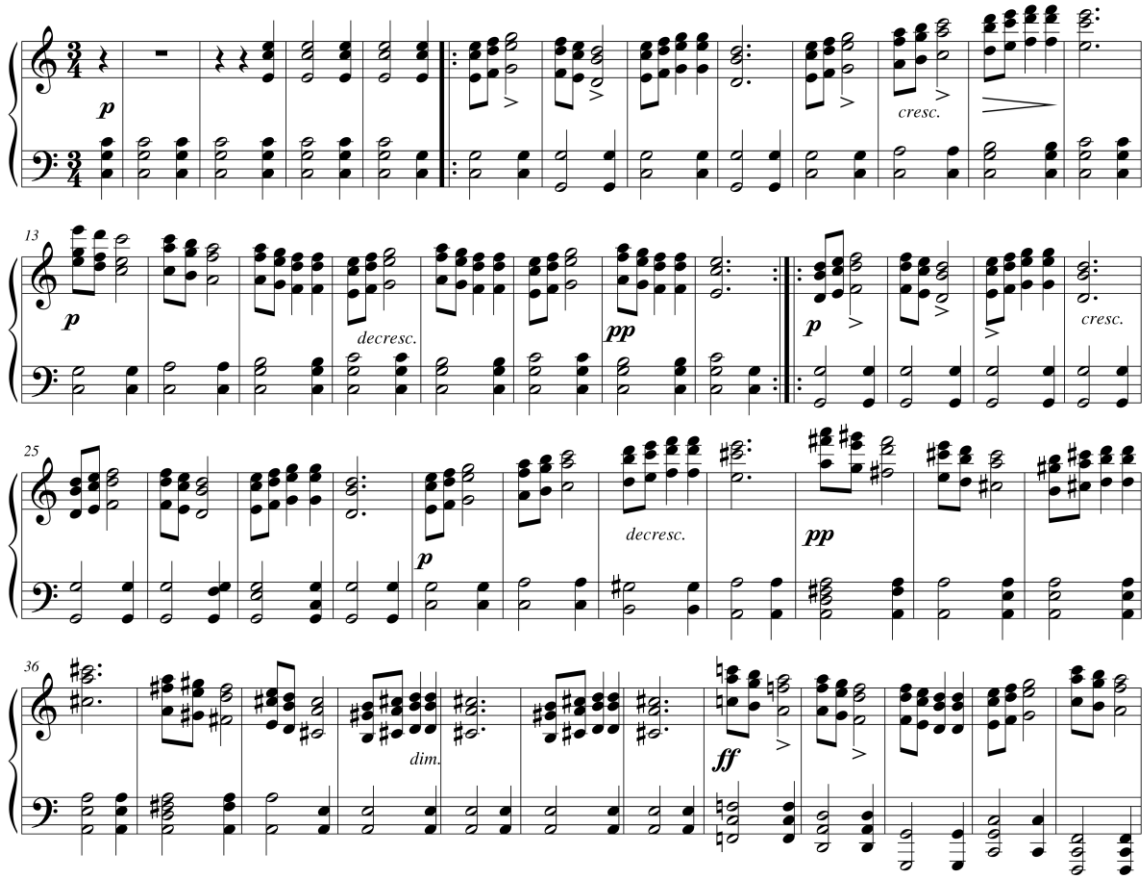
Example 15. Ravel, *La valse*, mm. 662-697



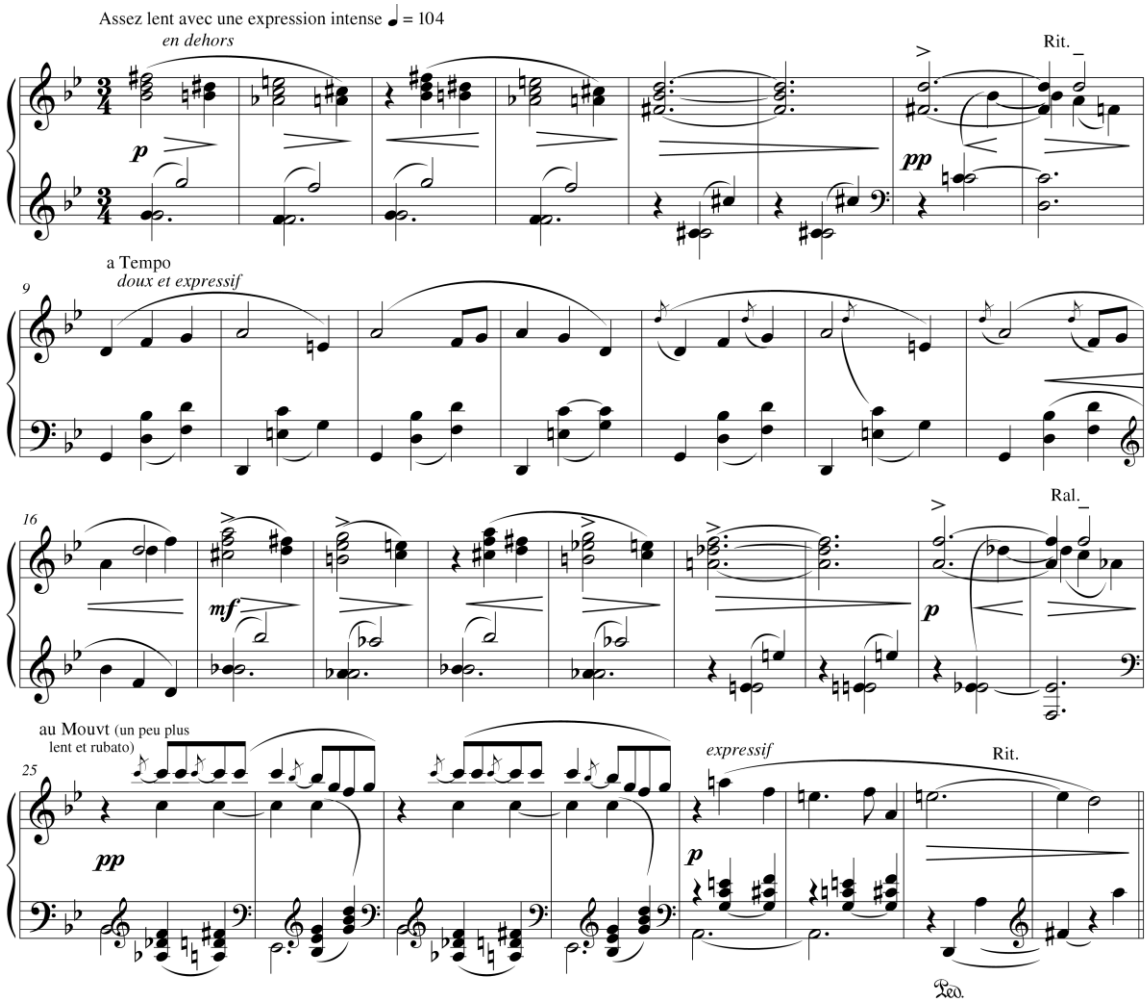
Example 16. Ravel, *La valse*, mm. 711-712



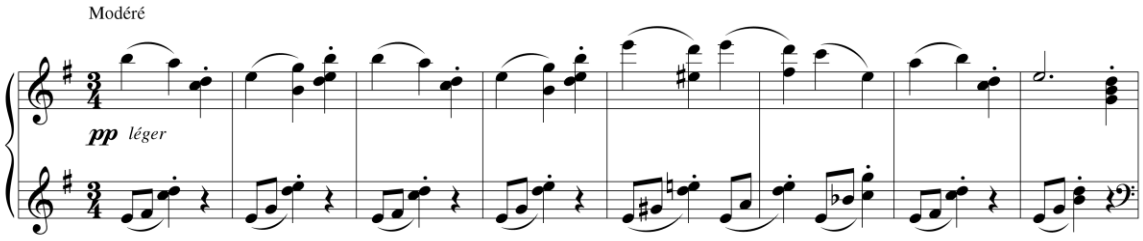
Example 17. Franz Schubert, *Valses nobles*, D. 969, i, mm. 1-16



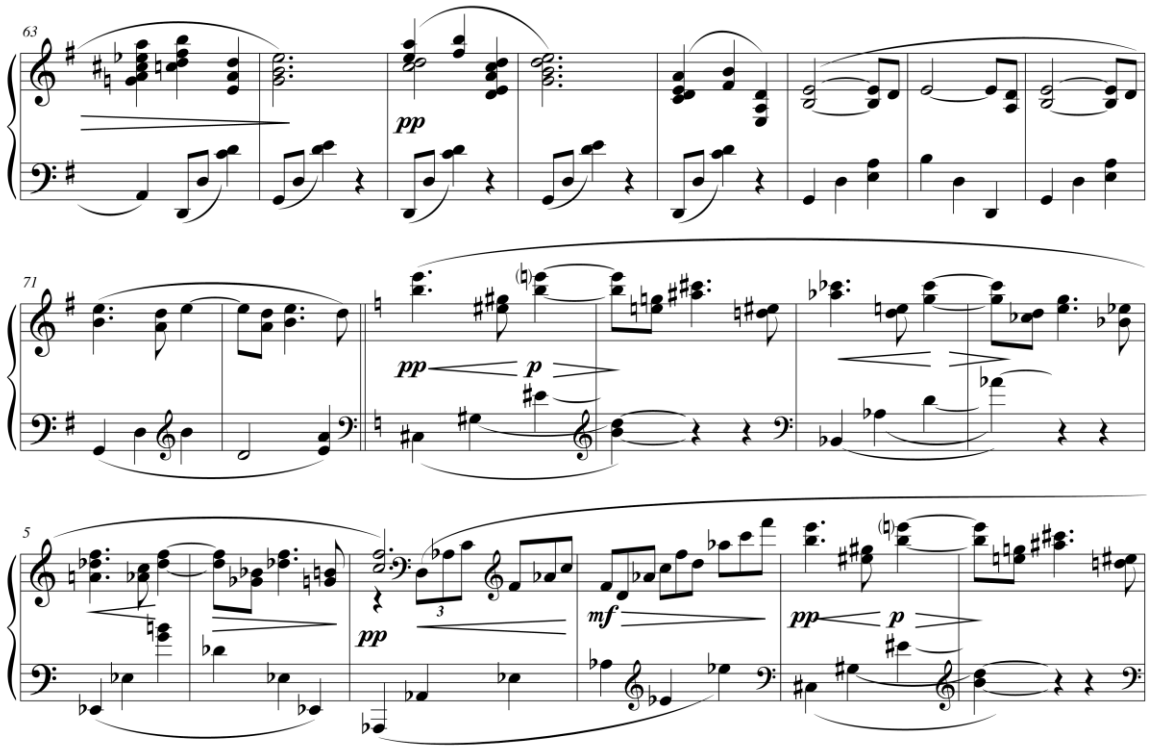
Example 18. Schubert, *Valses nobles*, D. 969, iii, mm. 1-47



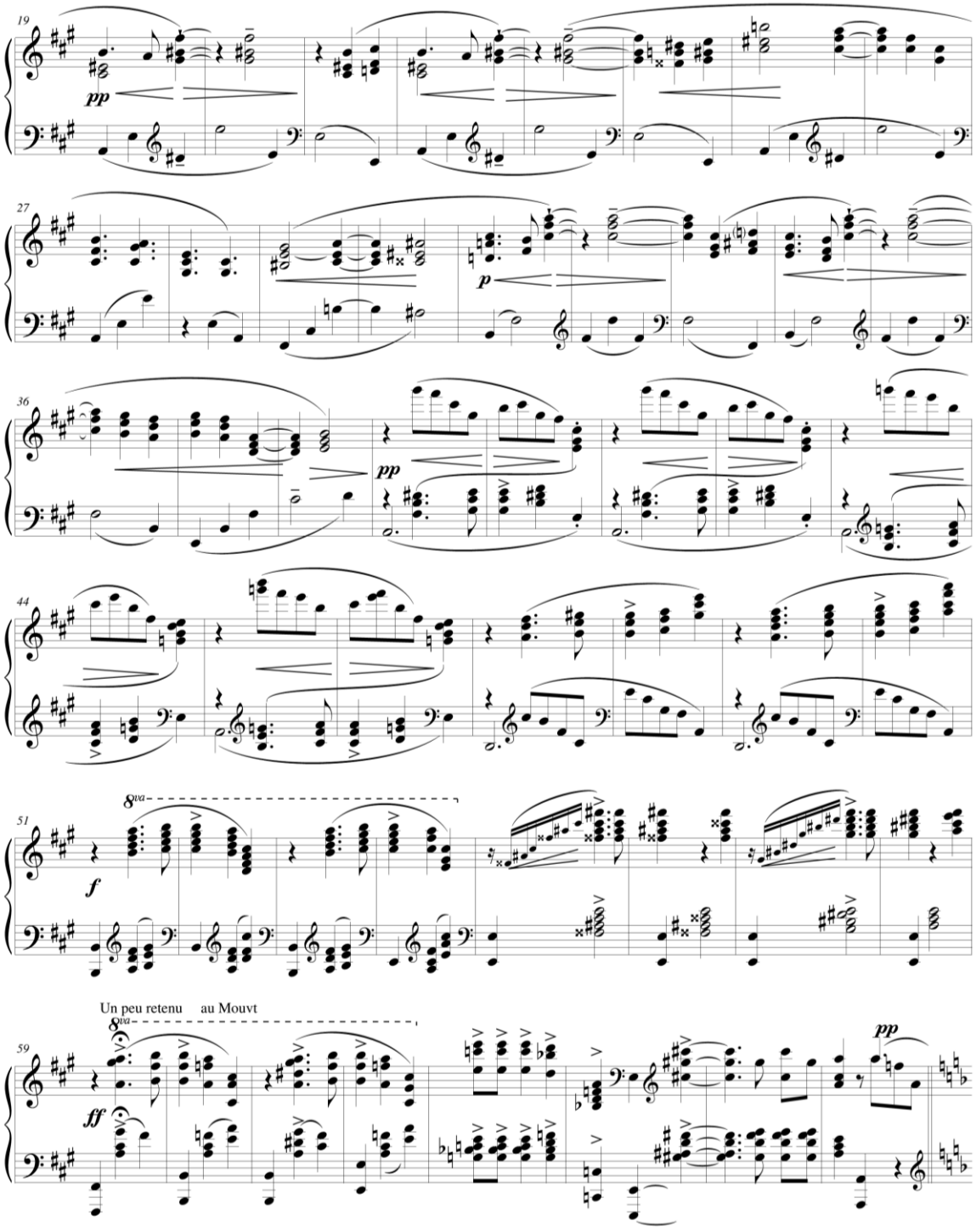
Example 19. Ravel, *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, ii, mm. 1-32



Example 20. Ravel, *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, iii, mm. 1-8



Example 21. Ravel, *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, iii-iv, mm. 63-10



Example 22. Ravel, *Valses nobles et sentimentales*, vii, mm. 19-66

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