



92nd Street Y, Theresa L. Kaufmann Concert Hall  
Thursday, October 27, 2011, 8 pm

“East Meets West”

### **MAURICE RAVEL**

Born Ciboure, Basses-Pyrénées, March 7, 1875; died Paris, December 28, 1937

#### **Tzigane, rapsodie de concert for Violin and Piano**

Composed 1924; 11 minutes

The seeds for Ravel’s “Gypsy Concert Rhapsody” for violin and piano were germinated in 1922 during a memorable night of music-making in London. Mme. Robert Casadesus (Gaby) later described a private musicale at which the brilliant Hungarian violinist Jelly d’Arányi and the cellist Hans Kindler performed Ravel’s Sonata for Violin and Cello, with the composer in attendance. Ravel then asked Jelly d’Arányi, for whom Béla Bartók had just written his two sonatas for violin and piano, to perform some “gypsy” melodies. “After Mlle. D’Arányi obliged,” said Mme. Casadesus, “the composer asked for one more melody, and then another. The gypsy melodies continued until about 5 am, with everyone exhausted except the violinist and the composer.”

The “gypsy” melodies that so intrigued Ravel had their roots in the ancient cultures of Northern India. Beginning in the pre-Christian era, the music spread west with its migrating peoples, the Romani, who over many centuries created communities in the Middle East, North Africa, and Eastern Europe. In his collecting trips to those areas, Bartók gathered and recorded much of the true indigenous music of the Romani; other composers—notably Liszt and Brahms—adapted their own translations of this music into their compositions.

On March 13, 1924, Ravel wrote to Jelly d’Arányi: “Dear Mademoiselle, Would you have the time to come to Paris in 2 or 3 weeks? If so, I would like to speak to you about Tzigane, which I am writing specially for you, which will be dedicated to you...This Tzigane must be a piece of great virtuosity. Certain passages can produce brilliant effects, provided that it is possible to perform them—which I’m not always sure of.” Indeed, another of Ravel’s violinist friends and colleagues, Hélène Jourdan-Morhange, called it a “violinists’ minefield.”

One month later, April 1924, Mlle. Arányi played the premiere of Tzigane in London with the pianist Henri Gil-Marchex. During the course of the summer, Ravel revised the keyboard part to include the “luthéal,” a piano attachment that imitates the sounds of a Hungarian cembalon. In September the same year, the violinist Samuel Dushkin and pianist Beveridge Webster performed that version in Paris, with Maurice Ravel serving as page turner.

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