

Maurice Ravel (1875 -1937)

Ravel was born in the Basque region of France and much of his work shows a Spanish influence (this, together with his interest in jazz has produced some exceptional guitar transcriptions). He was a pupil of Faure and at first fell, like many contemporary composers, under Debussy's spell. However, his ascetic and intellectual bent produced from the start a refinement of composition and orchestration, and development of melody, all his own. Later music shows a fondness for the rhythmic features of jazz, and thoughtful incorporation of the innovations of modern music – strong dissonance, atonality etc.

The charming Menuet antique was written for piano in 1895 and orchestrated by Ravel in 1929. This guitar arrangement is of moderate difficulty but I think well worth learning. The music is very expressive, and I have varied tempo and dynamics to enhance that, starting in slow triple time. To my ear the the second part concludes the piece well, so the arrangement does not return to the first ('minuet') part.