



## Maurice Ravel

Paris, rue d'Athènes



The rue d'Athènes, near the Gare St Lazare in the 9th arrondissement of Paris, was frequented by Ravel over many years, though he never formally lived there. His familiarity with it probably began in 1909 when his close friends the Godebski family moved into an apartment at 22 rue d'Athènes. Ravel was a frequent visitor there along with other sometime 'Apaches' who maintained their friendship with Cipa Godebski.

When Ravel bought his own property outside Paris at Montfort l'Amaury in 1921, he often needed a place to stay when he was attending events in the city, and for many years (until a flat was fitted out for him at his brother's home in Levallois-Perret in 1930) he would rent a room at the Hôtel d'Athènes which was directly

across the road from the Godebski's apartment. Mimie Godebska, who knew Ravel from her childhood onwards, recalled the composer's visits:



"He used to have all his meals free and generally arrived late - for dinner, often long after we had finished and the servants had gone to bed. The he used to apologize to my mother, whom he adored: 'I'm sorry, Ida, give me a little of whatever's going, I'm not at all hungry today.' Mama would give me a meaning smile and I would go and do the necessary. On those evenings we knew that was the end of the next day's cold meat.

"Ravel and my father were close friends: they admired and understood each other wholeheartedly. Even so they often argued violently and where music was concerned their great bone of contention was Mozart. To try and convince my father, Ravel would usually go to the piano and play a phrase which he thought was 'pure genius'. Papa, noisy and larger than life, would reply, 'Yes, yes, but he bores me with all that repetition, those fiddle-de-dees and fol-de-rols that go on and on.'" (Godebska Blacque-Belair [1938], translated by Nichols [1987] pp.20-21.)

The singer Madeleine Grey also described Ravel's visits to the rue d'Athènes: "À Paris, il allait dans son petit hôtel, le plus petit hôtel de la rue d'Athènes. En toute simplicité, sans le moindre chichi. La bonne femme lui disait: 'bonjour Maurice' et elle lui donnait sa chambre. C'est tardivement qu'il a pris son studio de Levallois, quand il était malade. Il restait peu à l'hôtel. Il allait voir ses amis, les Godebski, Cipa et Ida - des Russes. Il y avait quatre enfants, deux filles et deux garçons. Quand Ida voulait s'en aller, sortir, elle disait: 'écoutez, Ravel, vous allez garder les enfants', eh bien il était enchanté. Il adorait les enfants. Que faisait-il là? Je pense qu'il travaillait son piano. Il travaillait ses accompagnements. Il fallait quand même qu'il les sache pour les concerts!" (Zwang [2008] p.116.)