

A GUIDE TO LEOPOLD GODOWSKY'S *JAVA SUITE*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
LIST OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES.....	vii
CHAPTER	
1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
2: GODOWSKY.....	4
3: PHONORAMA: TONAL JOURNEY.....	9
4: JAVANESE MUSIC.....	15
5: THE TWELVE PIECES.....	21
6: ON PERFORMANCE.....	43
7: CONCLUSION.....	48
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	50

TABLES

Table	Page
1. Movements of Java Suite, in order of composition.....	46

FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Map of the island of Java with the locations described in Java Suite.....	22

MUSICAL EXAMPLES

Example	Page
1. Debussy, “Pagodes” from <i>Estampes</i> , mm.1–3	18
2. Ravel, La vallée des cloches from <i>Miroirs</i> , mm. 1–3.....	18
3. Godowsky, <i>Gamelan</i> , mm. 1–2.....	23
4. Godowsky, <i>Wayang–Purwa</i> , mm. 1–8.....	25
5. Godowsky, <i>Wayang–Purwa</i> , mm. 17 –20.....	25
6. Godowsky, <i>Wayang–Purwa</i> , mm.47 –49.....	26
7a. Seelig, <i>Javanese Rhapsody</i>	27
7b. Godowsky, <i>Hari Besaar</i> , m. 14.....	27
8a. <i>Kwarita</i>	27
8b. Godowsky, <i>Hari Besaar</i> , mm. 15–16.....	27
9a. <i>Kanjut</i>	27
9b. Godowsky, <i>Hari Besaar</i> , mm. 20–21.....	27
10. Godowsky, <i>Chattering Monkeys at the Sacred Lake of Wendit</i> , mm. 1-3.....	28
11. Godowsky, <i>Chattering Monkeys at the Sacred Lake of Wendit</i> , mm. 47–50.....	29
12a. Godowsky, <i>Boro Budur in Moonlight</i> , m. 18.....	30
12 b. Debussy, <i>Et la Lune Descend sur le Temple qui Fut</i> , mm. 12–13.....	30
13. Godowsky, <i>The Bromo Volcano and the Sand Sea at Daybreak</i> , m. 15.....	32
14a. Godowsky, <i>The Bromo Volcano and the Sand Sea at Daybreak</i> , m. 56.....	32
14b. Scriabin, <i>Piano Sonata No.5</i> , mm.453-5.....	32

15.	Godowsky, <i>Three Dances</i> III. mm. 19–20.....	33
16a.	Godowsky, <i>The Gardens of Buitenzorg</i> , mm. 6–7.....	35
16b.	Godowsky, <i>The Garden of Buitenzorg</i> , mm. 13–14.....	35
17.	Godowsky, <i>In the Streets of Old Batavia</i> , m.1.....	36
18.	Godowsky, <i>In the Streets of Old Batavia</i> mm. 21–22.....	37
19.	Godowsky, <i>In the Streets of Old Batavia</i> mm. 25–6.....	37
20.	Godowsky, <i>In the Streets of Old Batavia</i> mm. 41–42.....	37
21.	Godowsky, <i>Kraton</i> , m.1.....	38
22.	Godowsky, <i>Kraton</i> , m.6.....	39
23a.	Godowsky, <i>Kraton</i> , m. 32.....	39
23b.	Rachmaninoff, <i>Prelude in C-sharp minor</i> , Op. 3-2, mm. 46–48.....	39
24a.	Godowsky, <i>Ruined Water Castle at Djokja</i> , mm. 1–3.....	40
24b.	Ravel, <i>Jeux d'eau</i> , m.1–2.....	40
25.	Godowsky, <i>A Court Pageant in Solo</i> , mm. 26–27.....	42
26.	Godowsky, <i>Gamelan</i> , mm.5–6.....	43
27.	Godowsky, <i>The Bromo Volcano and the Sand Sea at Daybreak</i> , mm. 8-9.....	45
28.	Godowsky, <i>Kraton</i> , m. 5.....	45
29a.	Godowsky, <i>Three Dances</i> , ending.....	47
29b.	Godowsky, <i>The Garden of Buitenzorg</i> , m.1.....	47

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Leopold Godowsky, a legendary pianist, composer, and pedagogue, is probably best known today as the arranger of *53 Studies on Chopin Etudes* and for his numerous transcriptions and paraphrases such as *Symphonic Metamorphosis on Strauss' Fledermaus*. Growing up in Japan in an environment obsessed with technical mastery, I was exposed early on¹ to highly virtuosic music including the compositions of Godowsky. Since I had long associated the name Godowsky with virtuosic transcriptions, I was surprised to discover the beautiful, calm piece on Stephen Hough's *The Piano Album (1993)*, entitled *Godowsky: The Gardens of Buitenzorg*. I was delighted to learn that not only had Godowsky written original pieces, but among them existed a particularly delicate jewel which was part of a larger cycle called the *Java Suite*.

The publication of *53 Studies* invited a swirl of criticisms and controversies regarding the aesthetic of “reworking” other composers’ compositions. Ernest Newman wrote that “Godowsky is not really interested in other men’s music unless he wrote it himself,”² and a fellow composer K. S. Sorabji referred to the piece’s numerous arrangements and transcriptions of original works as ‘Niagaras of abuse.’³ At the same time, however, the work was acknowledged by many, including Jorge Bolet who studied

¹ In addition to hearing Marc-André Hamelin during one of his Japan tours prior to the issue of his *53 Studies* recording from Hyperion in 2000, I was also assigned several studies from *53 Studies* to practice as part of my own lesson routine.

²Ernest Newman, "Arrangements- by Godowsky and Others," *Sunday Times* (April 1928), 7.

³Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, *Mi contra fa: the Immoralisings of a Machiavellian Musician* (London: Porcupine Press, 1947), 68.

with Godowsky and recorded many of his works, for its “highest musical worth and noblest aim.”⁴ There is little doubt that the sensational reception of the popular *53 Studies* overshadowed Godowsky’s original compositions which thus remained obscure and less known to the world. Yet the composer’s highly sophisticated stylistic traits are evident in his original works, and as Bolet points out, “works like the *Phonoramas* [*Java Suite*],⁵ the *Suite for the Left Hand Alone*, the massive *Passacaglia*, and the *Triakontameron* are all original works of great musical beauty and colossal pianistic difficulty.”⁶

Godowsky’s *Java Suite*, published in 1925, is a remarkable cycle exhibiting highly original stylistic and harmonic diversity fused with elements of Javanese music by which he was deeply captured when he encountered it during his journeys throughout Asia. Godowsky was a world traveler and plausibly one of the most widely-toured pianists to date. As Millan Sachania writes in her introductory essay to his complete original works: “Godowsky considered travel not only a way of lifting the creative intellect, but also a philosophical, spiritual enterprise, a way of advancing one’s journey of self-discovery.”⁷ Fascinated by these exotic encounters, Godowsky used his own impressions and emotional reactions to begin a tonal description, or musical travelogues, of twelve descriptive scenes in Java. In this essay, I aim to examine the significance and originality of the synthesis of Godowsky’s highly skilled Western compositional

⁴ Jeremy Nicholas, *Godowsky, The Pianists' Pianist: A Biography of Leopold Godowsky* (Hexham, Northumberland: Appian Publications & Recordings, 1989), xiii.

⁵ The *Java Suite* is also occasionally listed under the title *Phonoramas*, and was probably intended as the first part of a larger set of pieces under that title.

⁶ Nicholas, *Godowsky The Pianists' Pianist*, xiv.

⁷ Leopold Godowsky and Millan Sachania, *The Godowsky Collection*, The Masters Collection (New York: C. Fischer, 2001), ix.

technique and the indigenous Javanese music he absorbed on site. My aim is to contribute to the revival of the titled work and consequently stimulate interest in Godowsky's other original works that are less known in the piano repertoire today.

CHAPTER 2

GODOWSKY

While detailed accounts of Godowsky's life can be found in several books, in particular Jeremy Nicholas' *Godowsky: The Pianists' Pianist*, I believe it is useful to trace here some of Godowsky's paths as a pianist, composer, and pedagogue, in order to further understand his background and the aesthetics that became the foundation of his compositions.

Leopold Godowsky was born to Polish parents on February 13, 1870 in Sozly, a little town near Vilnius, Lithuania. His father died shortly thereafter and Leopold was brought up by his mother and her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Passinock in Vilnius.

Godowsky's musical talent was discovered and nurtured by Mr. Passinock, a passionate amateur violinist. Not unlike Mozart, Godowsky's talents in piano and composition were soon exposed to the public and exploited to some extent by his "Uncle" Passinock who arranged concert tours for Leopold throughout Europe. Ironically, Passinock's fascination with and passion for raising and dominating a child prodigy prevented Godowsky from receiving formal piano lessons on a regular basis, and as a result, Godowsky was largely self-taught.

Although Godowsky later claimed that he never had teachers, there were several mentors who had significant influences on him. In 1886, he sought lessons from Franz Liszt in Weimar. However, upon learning of Liszt's death while on his way to Weimar, Godowsky switched routes and instead headed to Paris to meet Saint-Saens, whom he considered to be the second best candidate after Liszt. (As it turned out, the feeling was

quite mutual; Saint-Saens' adoration for Godowsky later became such that he wanted to adopt him.⁸) Until 1890, Godowsky lived in Paris, the musical and cultural capital of Europe at the time. He was exposed to the performances of first-class musicians as well as various musical trends such as impressionism and symbolism.

For most of his career, Godowsky wrote exclusively for piano, except for a few arrangements he wrote for strings and piano. While it is often said that his encounter as a young boy with the marching band in the village triggered his initial interest in music, Godowsky writes in his autobiography (although only the first chapter is completed) that “[his] acquaintance with drums and trumpets was responsible for the fact that [he] never wrote for bands and orchestras.”⁹ Like Chopin, he loved the pure, singing quality of the piano, for its infinite possibilities of layered touches and colors. Instead of writing for bands and orchestras, he managed to replicate the sounds of them within his beloved instrument. If Liszt was the first to emulate the scope of the symphonic sound and energy on the keyboard, Godowsky was the one who translated the dynamic orchestra sound into contrapuntal piano textures while maintaining the sensitivity of pure piano sound and colors that we see in Chopin's works which Godowsky admired and often performed.

Godowsky was undoubtedly one of the most successful concert pianists of his time. He established fame in Europe before relocating to New York at the age of twenty. In 1890 he married Frieda Saxe, a daughter of his patron, and became an American citizen. He kept a busy schedule as a concert pianist (giving 107 concerts in 1891 within the US and Canada) until 1930 when his right hand was paralyzed by a stroke.

⁸ Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists' Pianist*, 23.

⁹ Leopold Godowsky, “Retrospect—An Autobiography by Leopold Godowsky,” quoted in Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists' Pianist*, 3.

Besides performing live concerts, he left numerous recordings which display an eclectic and extensive repertoire (the complete discography is available in Nicholas' *The Pianists' Pianist* Appendix B). He was also admired and well-respected by fellow musicians, including those from whom he received dedications, e.g. Felix Blumenfeld (*Etude in A flat* for the left hand), Glazunov (*Piano Concerto in F minor*), and Rachmaninoff (*W.R. Polka*).¹⁰

Godowsky also left prominent contributions as a pedagogue. As a self-didactic pianist, he was very knowledgeable about many books on piano playing, and he cultivated his own critical thinking and theories to apply in his own teaching. He developed the weight-release theory to release tension and to maximize the most efficient method of piano playing. His theory was that one can play continuously without physical fatigue as long as the arms hang down by their own weight, thus requiring no effort on the player's part to hold them up.

Godowsky first taught in 1891 in New York City and subsequently at the Chicago Conservatory in 1894. In Europe, he became the highest paid teacher at the time when he was appointed at the Vienna Imperial Conservatory after Busoni resigned in 1909. Neuhaus, one of the most significant pianists and pedagogues of twentieth century Russia (he taught Richter, Gilels and Lupu, among others), studied with Godowsky and provides a detailed account of Godowsky's teaching in his book *The Art of Piano Playing*. According to Neuhaus, despite the fact that numerous pianists flocked to Godowsky to learn the recipe for "virtuoso technique," the master rarely talked about technique per se. Apart from the weighty playing theory, his comments were aimed at music itself and he

¹⁰ Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists' Pianist*, 66.

valued accuracy over finger agility. During lessons, Neuhaus recalls, Godowsky was not a teacher of piano, but first and foremost a teacher of music.¹¹

In 1915, Godowsky returned to America where he had accepted as position as editor-in-chief of a series of progressive piano publications organized by the Art Publication Society of St. Louis, Missouri. He worked in association with Josef Hofmann and Emile von Sauer on various educational publications, including exercises and arrangements for piano as well as instructions about pedaling, phrasing and pedagogy. These publications were meant to be a kind of “musical university” by which students can learn on their own instead of attending a conservatory.¹² Godowsky’s industrious and fastidious editing, especially in regard to fingerings, is also seen in *Java Suite*.

In his private life, Godowsky was devoted to his wife and four children, and his warm, sincere and witty personality attracted many important musicians and other professionals to him. Chez Godowsky, whether it was in New York, Chicago, California, Berlin, or Vienna, regularly welcomed the important artists of the day: Hofmann, Kreisler, Paderewski, Pachmann, Rosenthal, Rachmaninoff, and Heifetz, to name a few.

Godowsky was a man of broad interests. His thorough knowledge was not limited to music but ranged from film to science, and he was constantly cultivating a curiosity toward the world. Godowsky’s younger daughter, Dagmar, became an actress in Hollywood, which brought him into close contact with film giants such as Charlie Chaplin. Albert Einstein was also a big fan of Godowsky’s, and the two maintained a close friendship until Godowsky’s death. His older son, Leopold Jr., invented color

¹¹ Heinrich Neuhaus and K. A. Leibovitch, *The Art of Piano Playing* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1973), quoted in Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists’ Pianist*, 80.

¹² Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists’ Pianist*, 82-83.

photography with Leopold Mannes and married Frances Gershwin, sister of George and Ira Gershwin.

Godowsky's global interests as well as his musical genius are clearly portrayed in his original compositions, especially in the miniatures. His miniature pieces, often inferring a particular place or event, are sketchbooks of ever-evolving ideas and moods of a traveling man. The next chapter discusses several other compositions that draw upon extra-musical elements and Godowsky's impressions of his Asia travels which provided vital inspiration for the *Java Suite*.

CHAPTER 3

PHONORAMA: TONAL JOURNEY

Nineteenth-century Romanticism was influenced by a number of inspirational forces, among them nostalgia, desire for the unattainable, and the journey into one's self in search of inner peace. The concept of solitary soul-searching through traveling was often portrayed in German Romantic literature such as in Tieck's *Der Runenberg* (1804), Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's *Wanderjahr* (1821), and Muller's *Wandererlieder – Winterreise* (1823) to which Schubert set music and which became a staple of the German Lieder repertory.¹³ Gradually, the details perceived in artists' travels came to be symbolically captured in paintings as well as in music: Mendelssohn's extensive trips between 1829 and 1831 brought germinal ideas for his *Scottish* and *Italian* Symphonies, and later Smetana depicted Bohemia in his symphonic poem, "*Ma Vlast*." It was Liszt, however, who first translated the impact of travel-related sceneries and experiences into the sound of the piano in cyclic piano compositions and the symphonic poem, a genre he coined himself. In the preface to his *Album d'un voyageur* in 1842, which was later reworked to form three sets of *Annees de pelerinage*, Liszt described his new experiment:

I have latterly travelled through many new countries, have seen many different places, and visited many a spot hallowed by history and poetry; I have felt that the varied aspects of nature, and the different incidents associated with them, did not pass before my eyes like meaningless pictures, but that they evoked profound emotions within my soul; that a vague but direct affinity was established betwixt them and myself, a real though indefinable understanding, a sure but inexplicable means of communication, and I have tried to give musical utterance to some of my strongest sensations, some of my liveliest impressions.

¹³ Charles Hopkins, "Godowsky's 'Phonoramas': A 20th-Century Wanderlust," *The Musical Times* 130, no. 1757 (July 1989): 400-03.

The spirit of Liszt's new form of musical portrayal remained a strong inspiration for later composers including Isaac Albéniz, whose *Iberia: Twelve New Impressions* (published between 1905 and 1908), was a likely source of inspiration for Godowsky's *Java Suite*. A Catalan native, Albéniz was fascinated by and identified with Andalusian people, culture, and music. *Iberia* consists of an opening movement, *Evocation*, which portrays a nostalgic resonance to Andalusia, followed by eleven movements that each depict certain locations in the region. Godowsky was very familiar with Albéniz's works and even transcribed some of his pieces (*Tango* and *Triana*), so it is not surprising to see Albéniz's influence in Godowsky's work.

Conceptually and structurally, *Java Suite* bears a striking resemblance to Albéniz's *Iberia*. Like *Iberia*, the *Java Suite* is a collection of tonal descriptions of visited places, organized into twelve pieces which are divided into four Parts, each ending with festive closing pieces. Influenced by late-romantic and impressionistic styles, both composers employed a variety of harmonic and compositional techniques in their attempts to describe the native idioms; Godowsky imitated the synthetic quality of gamelan sonorities, and Albéniz replicated the guitar sonority, a symbol of Arabic-origin Andalusian music. Considered unparalleled in the twentieth century piano repertoire for its originality, compositional artistry and pianism, *Iberia* left remarkable influences on its contemporary and later generations. *Java Suite* too, while certainly having benefited from the influence of Albéniz's success, maintains an originality that continues to shine through this century.

As means of transportation developed in the twentieth century and people traveled more often, musical portrayal of visited places became more eminent, especially in regard to “exotic” places. Darius Milhaud’s *Saudades do Brasil* is indeed a souvenir from Brazil, where he lived from 1917-1918 and worked for the French Ambassador, Paul Claudel. Impressed by the tropical forests and folklore, Milhaud wrote a suite of 12 dances for piano (each piece is named after a town or province), featuring Brazilian rhythms and melodies.

Plausibly one of the most traveled concert pianists in history, Godowsky was curious about other cultures and eager to explore wherever his concerts took him, so he spent as much time as possible outside of concert halls. In addition to numerous concert tours in North America and Europe, his engagements took him to remote, “exotic” countries in his prime years as a concert pianist. Between 1921 and 1925, Godowsky visited Central and South American countries (Mexico, Uruguay, Argentina and Brazil), East and Southeast Asia, as well as North Africa, Egypt and Palestine. He constantly sought to discover unknown places, meeting people of new races and expanding his cultural and intellectual horizons.

His fascination for traveling and for scientific innovations was so great that he took flights as early as 1920 when commercial flights were in their infancy. He even dreamed of becoming a pilot-pianist who arrived at concert halls in his own airplane. His wish did not come true, but for Godowsky, airplanes were not only a means of transport, but also a means of uniting people in remote places and transforming the world.¹⁴

In the preface to *Java Suite*, Godowsky writes:

¹⁴ Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists’ Pianist*, 125.

Having traveled extensively in many lands, some near and familiar, others remote and strange, it occurred to me that a musical portrayal of some of the interesting things I had been privileged to see, a tonal description of the impressions and emotions they had awakened, would interest those who are attracted by adventure and picturesqueness and inspired by their poetic reactions.¹⁵

We can already see Godowsky's approach to "a tonal description of the impressions" in his preceding work, *Triakontameron- Thirty Moods and Scenes in Triple Measure* (1919). While evoking Viennese flavor by employing the rhythm of the waltz (including the well-known *Alt Wien*), the set includes pieces that are inspired by America, his second home. Expressing "Americanism," these pieces are the reflections of Godowsky's experience of American people and places, similar to what George Gershwin soon thereafter (in 1924) contemplated and reflected in *Rhapsody in Blue*, i.e. "a sort of musical kaleidoscope of America—of our vast melting pot, of our unduplicated national pep, of our blues, our metropolitan madness."¹⁶ Later in 1927, Godowsky further spoke about his plan of writing an "American" Suite. Although the suite was never launched, the plan was to include "melting pot" and "skyscraper" movements that evoked the energy and power of America, as well as movements depicting Niagara Falls, Negro rhythms, cowboys and Indians, and jazz music.

After returning from his two-month tour of South America in 1922, Godowsky sailed for the Far East on a trip which lasted seven months. He left for Yokohama from Vancouver on October 13th, and until his return in May 1923, Godowsky visited various cities and countries including Japan, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Beijing, Singapore, Java,

¹⁵ Godowsky and Sachania, *The Godowsky Collection*, 276.

¹⁶ Isaac Goldberg, *George Gershwin: A Study in American Music* (New York: F. Ungar Publishing Company, 1958), 139.

Philippines, Manila, and Honolulu. During the trip, he wrote to friends and family describing his impressions upon visiting these exotic places. He was not as impressed with Japan as he had anticipated, yet he wrote that “the people here love music and are making great progress in the appreciation and understanding of good music- in a short time this country will be the Mecca for artists. Japanese are quick to grasp and understand.”¹⁷ In February, Godowsky wrote from China with his thoughts on the individual cities: “Guangzhou is the most unusual place I have seen in the Orient.....Beijing is the most interesting city in China...is a city of marvels....Hong Kong the most beautiful.”¹⁸ Yet it was the exotic atmosphere on the island of Java that fascinated him the most. During a four-week stay in Java in February and March 1923, Godowsky gave at least twenty recitals for which he was provided six pianos and an on-site piano tuner. In the midst of an intensely heavy schedule, Godowsky managed to explore and absorb local culture, music, and people, visiting the various places and landmarks which became the basis for his *Java Suite* a year later.

Interestingly, Godowsky was working on his transcriptions of Bach’s violin sonata and the cello suites during the majority of the trip, and it was not until September of that year (1923) that he wrote the first piece (*Gamelan*) in the *Java Suite* while in Berlin. His initial plan was to compose “finishing selections for piano recital programs that consist of themes and tunes of different races and parts of the world.....My plan is to make picturesque, characteristic and fanciful works based on folk tunes and dances of

¹⁷ Godowsky to Maurice Aronson, 05 December 1922, quoted in Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists’ Pianist*, 113.

¹⁸ Godowsky to Maurice Aronson, 01 February 1923, quoted in Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists’ Pianist*, 113.

exotic countries: Java, Japan, China, India, Turkey and perhaps one Jewish and one Negro piece.”¹⁹ The idea of a tonal journey through many countries was soon taken over by the beautiful descriptions of Java, the place by which he had become completely enraptured. The entire suite, which consists of twelve pieces in four volumes, was completed in May 1925 and published later that year with extensive preface, addendum, and descriptive notes (also written by the composer) for each piece. In the preface, Godowsky wrote: “This cycle of musical travelogues – tonal journeys which I have named collectively ‘Phonoramas,’ begins with a series of twelve descriptive scenes in Java....”²⁰ The idea of “phonorama,” panorama of sound, is portrayed in these twelve pieces which depict the unfolding events experiences of Godoswky’s travels. *Java Suite* was intended as the first in a series of Phonoramas and to be followed by similar sets featuring Russia, Spain and Morocco.²¹ This did not happen as Godowsky’s activities both as a pianist and composer were drastically reduced following a stroke he suffered in 1930 during a recording session.

¹⁹ Godowsky to Maurice Aronson, 20 December 1923, quoted in Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists’ Pianist*, 117.

²⁰ Godowsky and Sachania, *The Godowsky Collection*, 276.

²¹ Hopkins, “Godowsky’s ‘Phonoramas,’” 401.

CHAPTER 4

JAVANESE MUSIC

The island of Java has the largest population (138 million as of 2011) of all the islands of Indonesia. Roughly the size of North Carolina, Java is the home of the three largest urban cities (Jakarta, Bandung, and Surabaya) and has played a significant role in the political, commercial, and cultural history of Indonesia. Ever since the establishment of the colonial Dutch East Indies in 1800, the islands of Java have become the trade center for coffee and spices, drawing both population and political significance.

As in the history of Western music, initial musical activities in Southeast Asia mostly took place in the form of vocal music which requires no technology. To accompany narrative singing or a singer-storyteller, percussion instruments were introduced; the accompaniment provided ostinato, punctuating with a regular pulse to articulate singing and narration. The instruments were made from available resources such as bamboo and wood, and from metal, especially bronze.

Bronze instruments and their ensembles played an important role in the development and cultivation of Javanese music and society. For the Javanese people, bronze had a special meaning which originated in its elemental substances (metal ores) and elemental forces (fire).²² The Javanese placed a high value on bronze utensils, weapons, and musical instruments, mostly because of their utility and supernatural associations. Since the common belief was that music played on bronze instruments mimicked the cosmic order of the universe, Javanese kings considered the maintenance

²² Henry Spiller, *Focus: Gamelan music of Indonesia*, Focus on World Music, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 47.

of percussion ensembles part of their obligation in preserving cosmic order. Musical instruments were ritual objects that symbolized the power of the ruler and his heirloom; thus, so were the musical ensembles consisting mostly of metal percussion instruments, in particular the gamelan.

The term “gamelan” came from the Javanese word *gamel* (“to handle”), suggesting the process of making the instrument as well as making or handling a musical idea. Bronze instruments are divided into two categories: gong instruments (*pencon*) and slab key instruments (*wilahan*). Other gamelan instruments include the bamboo flute (*suling*), a bowed string instrument (*rebab*), the zither (*celempung*) and drums (*kendang*). Although a detailed discussion on the myriad of gamelan instrument types is beyond the scope of this essay, it is essential to note that each type of instrument in the ensemble comes in a variety of shapes, sizes, pitch levels and ranges, thus resulting in a large variety of timbres.

The gamelan consists of three groups that each play distinctive roles in the music: punctuating instruments that provide a rhythmic skeleton, *balungan* instruments (mid-sized instruments that typically provide the core melody), and accompanimental instruments that serve to decorate or elaborate on the melody. One of the most striking musical elements of a gamelan is the “cycle,” an equivalent of sorts to what we define as a phrase or period in Western music. Also known as “*gongan*,” cycles and their important subdivisions are punctuated by gongs that add texture and more elaborative melodies over the cycles, resulting in layered heterophonic music punctuated by ostinato. Contrary to the goal-oriented forms and developing ideas of Western tradition, forms in gamelan music are defined by these cycles. Instead of moving forward in time, gamelan music

with its repeated cycles reflects the timelessness and endlessness of life cycling continuously into eternity.

Another distinctive element of the gamelan that attributes to its “exotic” sound is its tuning system. Gamelan music uses two primary tuning systems: *slendro* and *pelog*. *Slendro* is a five-pitch equidistant (pentatonic-like) tuning system, and *pelog* is a seven-pitch tuning system. Contrary to the western tuning system in which an octave is divided into twelve equidistant pitches (and seven equidistant whole steps), *pelog* is a non-equidistant system with varying intervals between the pitches. While there are standard tuning expectations for Western instruments (for example, one would not expect to find completely different pitch sets in an octave from one piano to the next), tuning in a gamelan does not adhere to a single standard. Each instrument has differently-sized intervals that result in a unique version of *pelog*. Instead of sounding (by Western standards) “in tune” or “out of tune,” the varied tuning of each gamelan instrument and ensemble imparts a unique character into the piece.²³

Prior to Godowsky’s *Java Suite*, a number of composers had encountered gamelan music and incorporated it into their works. Undoubtedly, the Paris Universal Exposition in 1889 marked a historical moment in which many leading European musicians were introduced to the Javanese gamelan. Debussy in particular was fascinated by gamelan music and the way its development had strayed beyond the familiar conventions of Western European music. He incorporated this aspect of the gamelan into his compositions with non-functional harmonies and unconventional phrase structures. The exotic timber and tonalities in gamelan music also provided inspiration for the

²³ Ibid., 55.

coloring and layering of Impressionism. To illuminate subtle shades of color, Debussy imitated the gamelan tuning systems; *slendro* (five notes), for example, is translated to pentatonic in *Pagodes*, the first piece of *Estampes* (see Example 1).

Example 1. Debussy: *Pagodes* from *Estampes*, mm. 1–3



Maurice Ravel was also interested in the gamelan, especially in its quality of sympathetic resonance, and he explored the piano's sympathetic sound in his works, namely in "*La vallée des cloches*," the final piece of *Miroirs*.²⁴ From bar 3 onward, the oscillating perfect fourths ostinato pattern imparts ambiguity in the resonance, hinting at an oriental flavor (see Ex. 2).

Example 2. Ravel: *La vallée des cloches* from *Miroirs*, mm. 1–3



²⁴ Mervyn Cooke, "The East in the West: Evocations of the Gamelan in Western Music," in *The Exoticism in Western Music*, ed. Jonathan Bellman (Boston: Northeastern University Press: 1998), 263.

Other composers who wrote gamelan-inspired works include Messiaen (*Preludes*), Poulenc (*Concerto for Two Pianos*, Opera “*Les mamelles de “Tiresias”*”), and Bartok (*Mikrokosmos* Vol. 4/No. 109, “From the Island of Bali”).²⁵ Encounters with gamelan music had significant impact on these composers, many of whom were trying to incorporate “orientalism” into their own musical identities, despite having had little or no first-hand contact with gamelan instruments, Javanese music, or Javanese culture. One exception, however, was Paul Seelig (1876–1945) who turned out to be an instrumental figure in Godowsky’s education on Java.

Paul Seelig, a Dutch-born and German-trained composer, spent his formative years in the Indies where his father worked as a choir director. After studying at the Leipzig Conservatory, he returned to Java and became active in the musical scene there. Seelig became the director of the orchestra in the *kraton* (palace) in Surakarta (also called Solo) in 1900, and later took a three-year position as the conductor of the King of Thailand’s orchestra. In 1910, he returned to Java again, took over his father’s music publishing store “Edition Matatani” and remained in Java until his death in a Japanese concentration camp in 1945.

As a composer, Seelig was keen on integrating Javanese native music and Western music. He collected a large number of Javanese melodies and texts, similar to what Béla Bartók (1881-1945) was attempting in Eastern Europe around the same time. Seelig’s vocal works were often based on authentic melodies and texts, translated into English or German. He also composed based on *Puntun*, or Malaysian poems which had become quite popular in Europe and North America. Some of his songs were written for

²⁵ Ibid., 258-280.

Eva Gautier (1885 – 1958), a Canadian singer who lived in Java for four years and toured often with Seelig's Javanese and Malay songs, introducing them to Western audiences. *Puntun* was incorporated into some Western compositions, namely the second movement of Ravel's piano trio, "*Pantoum*" (1914).

Though trained in European music tradition, Seelig stayed closely connected to the traditional music of the Indies. According to Henry Spiller, "his compositions, which aim to achieve a seamless blend of materials from the Indies with European sensibilities, are consistent with this dual identity."²⁶ It is possible that Seelig's mother was Javanese, and as European as he was, he still felt at home in Java. His approach to synthesizing elements of East and West differed from other Western composers who perceived oriental elements as "exotic." For Seelig, Javanese music was not exotic. Rather, it was his natural, native musical "tongue."

During his visit to Java in 1923, Godowsky came into close contact with Paul Seelig. Godowsky acknowledges a great debt to Seelig who shared valuable information on Javanese music which provided prominent inspiration for the *Java Suite*. In fact, the extent of Seelig's contribution in this regard was such that it is certainly possible that without this opportune encounter between the two composers, the *Java Suite* may not have come into existence at all.

²⁶ Henry Spiller, "Tunes That Bind: Paul J. Seelig, Eva Gauthier, Charles T. Griffes, and the Javanese Other," *Journal of the Society for American Music*, 3, no. 02 (New York, Cambridge University Press: 2009), 135.

CHAPTER 5
THE TWELVE PIECES

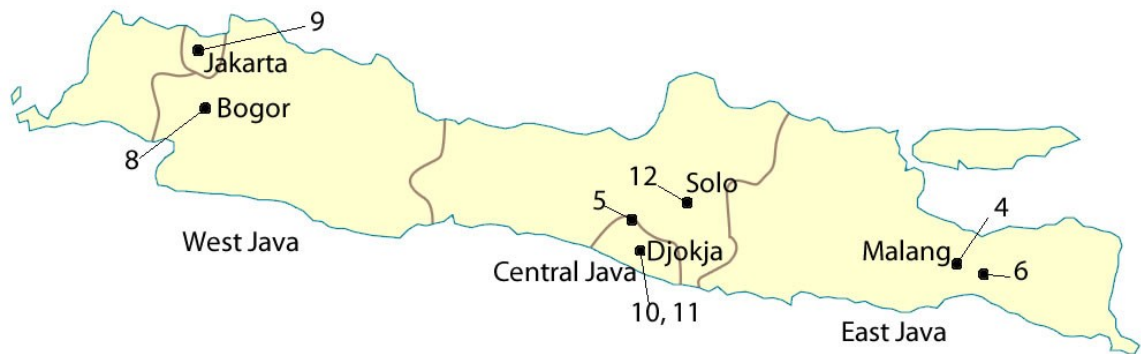
Published in 1925, the *Java Suite* contains twelve pieces (four Parts of three pieces each) accompanied by a preface and addendum written by the composer. Additionally, Godowsky also offers his personal impressions and descriptions in introductory material for each individual piece. In the preface, he describes his inspiration for the Suite:

The Island of Java, called “The Garden of the East,” with a population of close to forty million, is the most densely inhabited island in the world. It has a tropical, luxuriant vegetation; marvelous scenery and picturesque inhabitants; huge volcanoes, active and extinct; majestic ruins and imposing monuments of many centuries past...It was, however, the native music of the Javanese, in the heart of Java, at Djokja and Solo that made the most profound impression on me.²⁷

Of the twelve pieces, eight are associated with a specific city, place, monument or landmark while the other four (*Gamelan*, *Wayng Purwa*, *Hari Bessar* and *Three Dances*) relate to a more general art form or event. The map of Java below shows the major cities and locations that are depicted in the Suite (the numbers correspond to the order in which each movement appears in the Suite).

²⁷ Godowsky and Sachania, *The Godowsky Collection*, ii.

Figure 1. Map of the island of Java with the locations described in *Java Suite*



All twelve pieces are written in either duple or quadruple meter (triple meter does not exist in Javanese music). The continuity of pulsation characterized by the sameness of the beat projects a hypnotizing effect which is strikingly foreign to Western ears. Godowsky captured the unique element of gamelan music and incorporated it into the suite employing syncopations, polyrhythms, and layered passages. In fact, the intense contrapuntal compositional style that he had mastered provided a perfect base upon which the polyphonic and heterophonic layers of gamelan-inspired texture could be built. Godowsky also pays tribute to the gamelan tuning system by using a varied mixture of pentatonic, diatonic, and chromatic scales. In addition to the aforementioned general traits of the Suite as a whole, I would also like to offer here a brief description of each individual movement.

PART I

1. *Gamelan*

Godowsky describes his impression upon encountering the gamelan as follows:

“The sonority of the Gamelan is so weird, spectral, fantastic and bewitching, the native

music so elusive, vague, shimmering and singular, that on listening to this new world of sound I lost my sense of reality, imagining myself in a realm of enchantment.”²⁸

Not only was Godowsky impressed by the music but he seems to have learned about the gamelan quite thoroughly (no doubt with significant help from Seelig), as he was aware of different types of instruments, their names and functions, and where on the island major orchestras were located. Godowsky’s inner journey embarked with this intimate opening piece,²⁹ evoking a Javanese-like atmosphere by recreating the gamelan sonority. The soft *Moderato, languido* opening appears as if inviting the listener to another world, a world of timelessness (see Ex. 3).

Example 3. *Gamelan*: mm. 1 – 2

The image shows the first two measures of the piano piece 'Gamelan' by Joseph Godowsky. The score is written for piano and consists of two staves. The tempo and mood are indicated as 'Moderato, languido' with a quarter note equal to 92-108 beats per minute. The dynamics are 'pp' (pianissimo) and the character is 'dolcissimo e tranquillo'. The right hand plays a melody with a pentatonic-like quality, using a scale of notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The left hand plays a simple accompaniment of quarter notes: G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3. The piece is in the key of A minor and is marked 'una corda' (una corda). The score includes fingering numbers (1, 2, 4, 1, 5, 2, 1, 4) and breath marks (v) above the notes.

Casting in the key of A minor, *Gamelan* is almost entirely diatonic and largely pentatonic with an oriental-sounding flair. Godowsky imitates not only the sonority of the gamelan but also the procedure and form of a typical gamelan piece which commonly

²⁸ Godowsky and Sachania, *The Godowsky collection*, 278.

²⁹ It seems likely that Godowsky had in mind the opening movement (*Evocation*) of Albeniz’s *Iberia* here, as the two movements share similarities in their nostalgic character and mood-setting function.

begins softly and slowly, eventually becomes faster and louder toward the bombastic climax, and finally calms down toward the soothing end.

2. *Wayang-Purwa* (Puppet Shadow Plays)

Wayang Purwa, or *Wayang Kulit* is a traditional theatre show of shadow puppets (*wayang* means “shadow” or “imagination”). The performances are accompanied by the gamelan and symbolize the historical significance and art of Java. Stories are often derived from historical tales, myths, and Eastern Indian legends, and the crew of the shows includes the puppet master (*Dalang*) and the gamelan musicians (*nayaga*).

The piece opens in a *parlando*, “once upon a time” narrative manner, drawing listeners in to an imaginary world. A sense of story-telling is achieved by the simplicity of the melody (diatonic ascending and descending scales) and with frequent punctuations of the phrases articulated by cadences (see Ex. 4). The black-and-white simplicity of the texture seems to match the visual effect one might expect to perceive from a show created entirely from shadows.³⁰

³⁰ Additionally, when envisioning Godowsky sitting at the piano, this writer finds the black and white “color” scheme of the piano keys themselves to be yet another interesting facet to consider when examining this movement.

Example 4. *Wayang-Purwa*: opening

Cast in ABA form, the B section increases in complexity, introducing conversational elements in each hand and illustrating the puppets' interaction (see Ex. 5).

Example 5. *Wayang-Purwa*: mm.17-20

However, the section never diverges from its intimate overall atmosphere; the dynamic range remains *pp* to *p*, with the exception of the gamelan-supported *forte* climax

of the story which lasts for less than two full bars before being overtaken by subito *pp* again (see Ex. 6).

Example 6. *Wayang-Purwa*: mm. 47–49

The image shows a musical score for piano, measures 47-49. The score is written for both hands. The right hand has a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The left hand has a simpler rhythmic pattern. The score includes dynamic markings such as *sf*, *pp*, and *sf pp*. There is a performance instruction *pp subito e tranquillo* in the right hand. The bottom of the score is marked *2da. (una corda)*.

3. *Hari Besaar* (“The Great Day”)

Godowsky adored the festival of the holiday Hari Besaar for its bright, joyous ambience and picturesque scenery: “From plantations and hamlets natives flock to the town... They throw themselves eagerly into the whirl of festivities, enjoying the excitement and animation.”³¹

Pentatonic and ostinato usage mimicks the sonority of the gamelan punctuated by gongs. The beginning sets up the cyclic rhythm, as if calling people in from far away. The opening melody is taken from Seelig’s *Javanese Rhapsody* for orchestra (see Ex. 7a, b) and two authentic Javanese tunes, *Krawita* and *Kanjut*, are used as main themes (see Ex. 8, 9). In Example 9, *Kanjut* appears in the right hand while the left hand outlines *Krawita*.

³¹ Godowsky and Sachania, *The Godowsky Collection*, 294.

Example 7a. Seelig: Javanese Rhapsody

Allegro moderato

Example 7b. Use of Javanese Rhapsody in Hari Bessar, m. 14.

Example 8a . Krawita

Example 8b. Use of Krawita in Hari Bessar, mm.15–16

Example 9a. Kanjut

Example 9b. Use of Kanjut in Hari Bessar: mm.20–21

These two Javanese tunes continue to reappear in various accompanying settings, resulting in a “festival” of sorts for both the performer and the listener. The texture becomes thicker and more contrapuntal as the piece progresses, and the repetitive motions build up tension until they finally burst into the grandiose closing of the first book of the Suite.

PART II

4. *Chattering Monkeys at the Sacred Lake of Wendit*

The Wendit Lake is located in the village of Mangliawan, east of Malang in East Java. According to the local folk tale, the lake was said to possess mystical powers and give everlasting youth to those who bathe in it. A multitude of monkeys often provide entertainment here for tourists, and Godowsky was one such observer. He wrote: “On every side are jabbering monkeys, hundreds of them, jumping from tree to tree, running up and down the trunks and branches... The scene is full of humor, fun and animation.”³² The quick, alternating repeated chords depict the lively monkeys in motion (see Ex. 10).

Example 10. *Chattering Monkeys at the Sacred Lake of Wendit*: mm. 1–3

Allegro scherzando ♩ = 132 - 144

p *leggiere e vivace*
senzù pedale

³² Ibid., 305.

Sandwiched between vigorous scherzando sections in C major, the middle section in E major features a horizontal, legato texture with brief “pleading” motives, as if coy, charming monkeys might be trying to snatch bananas from the visitors (see Ex. 11).

Example 11. *Chattering Monkeys at the Sacred Lake of Wendit*, mm. 47–50

The musical score for Example 11 consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and E major, showing a melodic line with various fingerings (3, 5, 3, 5, 4, 5, 2, 3, 5, 2, 5, 2) and dynamics including *p dolce* and *grazioso più p*. The lower staff is in bass clef and E major, showing a piano accompaniment with a 4/4 time signature and dynamics including *piano* and *p*.

5. *Boro Budur in Moonlight*

Boro Budur, decorated with over 500 Buddha statues, is the largest Buddhist temple in the world. Built during the eighth to ninth century over a period of some seventy-five years, Boro Budur is located in an elevated area between two volcanoes, about twenty-five miles northwest of Djokja in Central Java. For centuries, this spectacular monument has drawn pilgrims and travelers, including Godowsky, who was thrilled by the immense dimensions of the gigantic ruins. He was especially fascinated by the monument’s appearance in the evening:

In moonlight, Boro Budur is most fantastic. An uncanny, eerie, melancholy mood permeates the whole atmosphere. Deep silence and a sense of strangeness and out-of-the-worldness contribute to the impression of utter desolation and to the feeling of inevitable decay and dissolution of all things earthly, the hopeless struggle of human endeavor against eternity.³³

³³ Ibid., 313.

This atmosphere is fully translated into the music by the opening murmuring figures in the middle – low register, marked *Molto tranquillo, misterioso*. A bell-like sonority is created by broken octaves, a technique similar to what Debussy employed in *Et la Lune Descend sur le Temple qui Fut* (see Ex. 12a,b). Indeed, as Hopkins points out, the two pieces shown below share a very similar overall character.³⁴

Example 12 a. *Boro Budur in Moonlight*, m. 18

The musical score for Example 12 a shows a piano piece in G major. The right hand features a melodic line with a large slur over the first six measures. The left hand plays a rhythmic pattern of broken octaves, with notes marked with fingerings (1, 2, 3, 5) and dynamic markings like *pp* and *Red.* (likely *Red.* for *Red.* or *Red.* for *Red.*).

Example 12 b. Debussy, *Et la Lune Descend sur le Temple qui Fut*, mm. 12–13

The musical score for Example 12 b shows Debussy's *Et la Lune Descend sur le Temple qui Fut*. The right hand has a melodic line with a slur, and the left hand has a bass line with a slur. The dynamic marking *pp* is present in the right hand, and *m. g.* is present in the left hand.

³⁴ Hopkins, "Godowsky's 'Phonoramas,'" 403.

6. *The Bromo Volcano and the Sand Sea at Daybreak*

At this point in the Suite, Godowsky's panorama shifts from the temple at night to the mountain in the dawn. Located in East Java, Mount Bromo is an active volcano and houses the most famous mountain resort. Reaching 7600 feet high, the mountain is surrounded by a vast sea of sand. A 1912 travelogue by N. Maisondeau was recently reprinted, providing insightful facts and impressions of the many places cited in the *Java Suite*. Having visited the island a decade earlier than Godowsky, Maisondeau describes the marvel of the daybreak at Mount Bromo:

.....all sharply outlined in what at one moment was the bright silvery glow of moonlight, and the next instant were the delicate pale tints of dawn – and then, it was already daylight. This sudden transformation of night into day is one of the most surprising phenomena of the tropics.....³⁵

Godowsky was deeply moved by “the boiling, roaring, rumbling subterranean forces, seething and spouting up from abysmal depths, the sulphurous vapors and dense clouds, spreading steadily and menacingly over the horizon...”³⁶ The opening *grandioso* projects the scenery of the majestic volcano. One of the most technically demanding pieces of the Suite, the triplet sweeping figures divided into two hands are carried over throughout the piece, interlacing with the core melody and thickening the texture (see Ex. 13). Unlike the final pieces of Parts II, III, and IV in which the climax is saved until the end, the highest point of this piece occurs in the middle, calming down toward the end, much like a volcano might cool down after erupting.

³⁵ N. Maisondeau [pseudonym of Nellie Waterhouse], *Down Under: A Year in Netherlands India, the Commonwealth, the Dominion* (Colombo, Sri Lanka: Ceylon Observer Press, 1912), 112.

³⁶ Godowsky and Sachania, *The Godowsky collection*, 321.

Example 13. *The Bromo Volcano and the Sand Sea at Daybreak*, m. 15

The upward sweeping motion at the penultimate measure (see Ex. 14a) not only triggers the final outburst, but may suggest spiritual levitation as it strikingly resembles the opening gesture of the *Piano Sonata No. 5* (1907) by Scriabin (see Ex. 14b). It is uncertain whether or not Godowsky was familiar with Scriabin's sonata, but it is nonetheless a curious coincidence.

Example 14a. *The Bromo Volcano and the Sand Sea at Daybreak*, m. 56

Example 14b. Scriabin, *Piano Sonata No. 5*, mm. 453-5

PART III

7. *Three Dances*

In their origin, Javanese dances were closely connected to religion; it was not until later that secular dances developed. Godowsky observes that “innermost feelings are so wholly revealed” in these dances.³⁷ Some common types of Javanese dances include melancholic dances, masked dances, and battle dances. In this movement, though gamelan sonorities are certainly evoked, Godowsky offers less of a description of the native dances themselves and more a reflection of the atmosphere he captured from them.

According to Godowsky; “The first of the Three Dances expresses the languor and melancholy of the Far East; the second, the grace and charm of the Oriental dancers; the third, their poetry and tenderness, translated into an Occidental idiom.”³⁸

The first and second dances are written in diatonic tonality, while the third contains intense chromaticism in the middle section (see Ex. 15).

Example 15. *Three Dances* III. mm. 19–20

The musical score for Example 15, *Three Dances* III, mm. 19–20, is presented in two staves. The right-hand staff (treble clef) contains a melodic line with a 'molto crescendo' marking. The left-hand staff (bass clef) contains a bass line with 'ped.' markings and a 'tre corde' marking. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and fingerings (1-5) above or below notes. The key signature is G minor (two flats) and the time signature is 3/4.

³⁷ Godowsky and Sachania, *The Godowsky Collection*, 335.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 367.

While creating contrasting characters, Godowsky maintains a unity between the three dances through key schemes and tempo relationships. The first is in G-sharp minor, the second is in B major (relative major of the former), and the last is in A-flat major (parallel enharmonic major of the first). The tempo of the first dance (marked *Moderato*) is kept through the second dance (*L'istesso tempo*), which is doubled in the third dance (*Doppio movimento*). The intended continuity between the three is also clear from the absence of double bar-lines between the dances.

8. *The Gardens of Buitenzorg*

The famous botanical gardens are located in the city of Buitenzorg (renamed to Bogor in 1942), about 35 miles south of Jakarta, West Java. Consisting of about 200 acres and over 15,000 species of flowers, plants and trees, the gardens surround the palace where the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies lived, and it is the largest botanical garden in Southeast Asia. Godowsky liked to immerse himself in the tropical plants and trees where he was intrigued by their sensuous scents. He describes his internal reaction to this new experience:

The heavily perfumed air awakens an inexpressibly deep and painful yearning for unknown worlds, for inaccessible ideals, for past happenings irrevocably gone- these memories which the ocean of time gradually submerges and finally buries in oblivion... Why do certain scents produce unutterable regrets, insatiable longings, indefinable desires?³⁹

³⁹ Ibid., 347.

While Godowsky focuses most of his attention on depicting sounds and images in the suite, this particular movement stands out because of his attempt to communicate the sense of smell. He uses intense chromaticism to express intoxicating fragrances and subtle harmonic shifts to reflect the way in which our sense of smell is constantly being altered by the variety of stimuli around us (see Ex. 16a, b).

Example 16a. *The Gardens of Buitenzorg*, mm. 6-7

a tempo

Ped. *Ped.*

Example 16b *The Garden of Buitenzorg*, mm. 13-14

a tempo

p *Ped.* *Ped.*

9. *In the Streets of Old Batavia*

Described by Masiondeau as “a sort of tropical Amsterdam,” Batavia (later re-named Jakarta), is a vibrant, multicultural city that is interspersed with many canals and serves as the administrative center of the Dutch East Indies. Also called Kota, Old Batavia is a small area in Jakarta where the narrow streets are busy with bazaars and

filled with people of different origins, mostly Chinese, Arabs, natives and Europeans.

Masiondeau's insightful description of the people is worth quoting:

Old Batavia is the business portion of the city and comprises also the immense quarter of Chinatown...one cannot distinguish between the Soendanese or West Javans and the Malays, for they look much alike, dress alike...the Chinese colony is distinctively Chinese...The women – whether Chinese, Javanese or Malay, one can scarcely tell, but all with a flower in the glossy black hair-wear the tropical cloth...The Dutch women have copied this easy but none too graceful (for them) native costume...⁴⁰

The vibrant ambience of the Chinese is achieved by quick sixteenth notes as the piece opens in a pentatonic *Presto con brio* (see Ex. 17). The linear section starting at measure 17 is full of whole tone scales, as if one is wandering around, lost in an alley (see Ex. 18).

Example 17. *In the Streets of Old Batavia*, m.1

Presto, con brio about $\text{♩} = 69 - 76$



f articolato

⁴⁰ Maisondeau, "Down Under," 11-12.

Example 18. *In the Streets of Old Batavia*, mm. 21–22

The “Arab quarter”⁴¹ section features melismatic melodies in the Dorian mode, and a lyrical pentatonic tune at m. 41 marks the entrance to the native quarter (see Ex. 19, 20). Part III ends in a bombastic climax, implicating the frenzy of crowded street bazaars.

Example 19. *In the Streets of Old Batavia* mm. 25–6

Example 20. *In the Streets of Old Batavia*, mm. 41–42

⁴¹ In the introduction to the Suite, Godowsky describes each section as a “quarter” or “settlement,” e.g. China town, Arab town, etc.

PART IV

10. *In the Kraton*

Located in the heart of Solo and Djokja, Kraton is a palace where Sultans lived. Kraton was home to about fifteen-thousand inhabitants which included the Sultans' families, numerous mistresses, servants, musicians, dancers, artisans, native bodyguards and European cavaliers. For this piece, Godowsky most likely had in mind Djokja's Kraton. (Not far from the Kraton palace stands the Ruined Water Castle in Djokja, the model for the following movement.) As in *Boro Budur in Moonlight*, Godowsky portrays the mysterious atmosphere of Kraton in the evening:

Quaint scenes charm our vision. Faint sounds of the entrancing Gamelan fill the fragrant air. The seemingly unreal reality casts a hypnotic spell over our consciousness. There is poetry in every ebbing moment. It is evening in the Orient... Various sonorities of gamelan are explored throughout: the ethereal soft sound is evoked at the opening as in a gamelan piece, adding layers and forming complex polyrhythmic texture (see Ex. 21, 22)⁴²

Example 21. *Kraton*, m. 1

Moderato ♩ = 52 - 60

pp molto tranquillo e legato

una corda
sempre *marcato*

⁴² Godowsky and Sachania, *The Godowsky Collection*, 367.

Example 22. *Kraton*, m.6

Godowsky builds tension with various rhythmic and contrapuntal tools, exploring the soul-shaking sounds of gongs and bells, as did Rachmaninoff (see Ex. 23a, b).

Example 23a. *Kraton*, m. 32

Example 23b. Rachmaninoff, *Prelude in C-sharp minor*, Op. 3-2, mm. 46–48

11. Ruined Water Castle at Djokja

The Water Castle was built in the mid-eighteenth century as the Sultan's summer palace near the Kraton in Djokja, and it is surrounded by tiny canals and waterfalls that cascade over the walls. From the beginning here we notice the water-like gestures as well as their resemblance to the arpeggiated figurations in Ravel's *Jeux d'eau* (see Ex. 24a, b).⁴³

Example 24a. Ruined Water Castle at Djokja, m. 1–3

pp egualmente
espressivo
una corda
Ped. (Ped.) Ped.

Example 24b. Ravel, *Jeux d'eau*, mm. 1–2

pp
una corda
Ped.

This deserted remain is locally called “Tamar Sari,” *tamar* meaning “park” or “garden” and *sari* meaning flower or beautiful. Maisondeau describes Tamar Sari in the early 1910s: “It is now only a picturesque collection of ruins and verdure-covered piles of

⁴³ Hopkins, “Godowsky's 'Phonoramas,’” 403.

stones, bordering tanks either green with slime and mosses, or partly filled with earth and planted with flowers, tobacco and pisang-trees.”⁴⁴

Godowsky’s reflection reveals a glimpse of his philosophy, perhaps deepened by his immersion into East Asian culture which draws parallels between the flow of water and the path of life:

Where once was merriment, there is now the mystery and romance of vanished days, the sadness of evanescent pleasure.

The fountains and cascades murmur memories of yesteryears-yearning for past joys, mourning for departed love....⁴⁵

This reflection shares a similar view with ancient Eastern philosophies:

...it is just like a mountain river, flowing far and swift, taking everything along with it; there is no moment, no instant, no second when it stops flowing, but it goes on flowing and continuing. So Brahmana, is human life, like a mountain river.... (Buddha)

From the beginning to the end of this movement, there is no single moment of silence. Rather, all moments are fused together by seamless sixteenth notes, symbolizing the continuous stream of water.

12. *A Court Pageant in Solo*

This movement is a portrayal of royal processions that the Sultans hosted. These were spectacular events, featuring gamelan music, colorful costumes, vibrant dances and joyous festivities. Technically one the most demanding in the suite, this movement epitomizes the elements that Godowsky has explored throughout the suite: various

⁴⁴ Maisondeau, *Down Under*, 83.

⁴⁵ Godowsky and Sachania, *The Godowsky collection*, 383.

imitations of gamelan sonorities, extreme dynamic range, ostinato, and excessive contrapuntal layers. All of the above are laid out in a diatonic scheme and cast in ABA form. Godowsky gives further description of the composition:

The clanging and clashing march opens the event. Strongly emphasized in the middle section (F-sharp minor) of this closing composition is that strain of sadness ever present in the music of the Orient. The hilarious mood is resumed with the *Fugato*, which leads back to an intensified version of the barbaric march. And here these tonal journeys come to an end.⁴⁶

The “sadness in the music of the Orient” is characterized by “sobbing,” multi-layered pentatonic figures which are supported by the gloomy ostinato and juxtaposed with the imitation of the somber gamelan resonance (see Ex. 25).

Example 25. *A Court Pageant in Solo*, mm. 26–27

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The top staff is marked with a tempo of *più tranquillo* and a metronome marking of $J = 76-88$, along with the instruction *espressivo*. The bottom staff is marked *D subito e dolce*. The music consists of a series of chords and melodic lines, with some notes circled. Below the bottom staff, there are several instances of the word "Tea" written in a stylized font, likely representing a gamelan resonance or a specific rhythmic pattern.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 393.

CHAPTER 6
ON PERFORMANCE

Looking over the score of *Java Suite*, one notices not only the density and complexity of the writing but also the abundance of expression markings, including dynamic, articulation and pedal markings. Godowsky considered these markings to be integral parts of his music that offer important interpretive directions. From his viewpoint, "...to disregard or alter such indication – in the broader sense – would seem to me as much of a license as a change of any melodic line, harmonic texture, or rhythmic design."⁴⁷ In *Wayang-Purwa*, for example, the multiple lines are given distinctive articulation for purposes of subtle nuance. Tenuti on the soprano line enrich the intoned, narrative quality of the puppet master (see Ex. 4, mm. 5–6, on page 25).

Precise markings also bring out the distinctive sonorities of different gamelan instruments within a contrapuntal texture (see Ex. 26).

Example 26. *Gamelan*, mm.5–6

The image shows a musical score for piano, consisting of two staves. The upper staff is marked "sempre pp" and contains dense, multi-measure rests with notes above them, representing a gamelan instrument. The lower staff is marked "marcato, ma poco" and contains a more rhythmic accompaniment. The score is divided into two systems by a vertical bar line.

⁴⁷ Godowsky and Sachania, *The Godowsky Collection*, 277.

Pedal markings need be observed attentively as well to best achieve the musical intention. Lazy pedaling would result in obscuring many of the delicate, complex details. Godowsky's detailed instructions about pedaling in his preface to *53 Studies on Chopin Etudes* offer some helpful general guidelines:

The player should bear in mind, that different parts of the instrument require a different treatment of the pedal. The higher the pitch the more freely the pedal may be used. A crescendo often allows a more prolonged use of the pedal than a diminuendo. A descending scale or passage generally allows more pedal than an ascending one.⁴⁸

In the preface to *Java Suite*, he also stresses the importance of the extreme softness of *pp* which plays a vital role in the suite, highlighting the contrast of gamelan sonorities as well as sensitive and reflective qualities.

Godowsky paid close attention to fingerings as well, to the extent that almost every note is assigned a fingering. He believed that the mechanics of piano playing directly affect the performed music, and thus deliberate fingerings were essential to any well-informed music making. As a general rule, performers tend to consider fingerings that come notated in the score as mere "suggestions," or one of multiple possibilities. Godowsky's fingerings, however, are most likely the only reasonable choice, therefore one must have a significant reason not to follow the composer's indications. If there happens to be a second reasonable choice, he offers that option as well (see Ex. 27).

⁴⁸ Leopold Godowsky and Frédéric Chopin, *Studien über die Etüden von Chopin = Studies on Chopin's Etudes*, 5 vols. (Berlin: Schlesinger, 1914).

Example 27. *The Bromo Volcano and the Sand Sea at Daybreak*, mm. 8-9

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with several slurs and accents. Fingering numbers (1-5) are written above the notes. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with slurs and fingering numbers. A 'cresc.' marking is placed between the two staves. At the bottom of each staff, there are two small diagrams labeled 'v' and 'leg.' with arrows pointing to specific notes.

Like his expression markings, Godowsky's fingerings are well thought-out and masterfully constructed to best deliver the musical intention. In Example 28, his fingerings imply that the alto should be detached while the soprano be played legato.

Example 28. *Kraton*, m. 5

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a melodic line with slurs and fingering numbers. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a bass line with slurs and fingering numbers. An 'espr.' marking is placed above the upper staff.

Many pianists (including Godowsky himself) often performed a single movement or selection of movements taken from the *Java Suite*. Unlike a continuous cyclic piece which is expected to be performed in its entirety (such as Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*), the *Java Suite* is a collection of individual works. As mentioned earlier,

Godowsky's initial intention was to write finishing selections for a recital program, and any one of the four parts of the suite would be complimentary to a recital program as each set presents three contrasting pieces: moderately fast, slow, and fast. The twelve pieces were written between September 1924 and May 1925, but the original order of their completion was different from the published order. After writing the original three pieces (*Gamelan, Hari Besaar, Boro Budur*), he added three more (*Wayang-Purwa, Chattering Monkeys, Bromo Volcano*) and performed these six in Chicago on January 24, 1925. They were received so enthusiastically that he wrote another piece (*Ruined Water*) the next day and added five more pieces to complete the Suite.⁴⁹

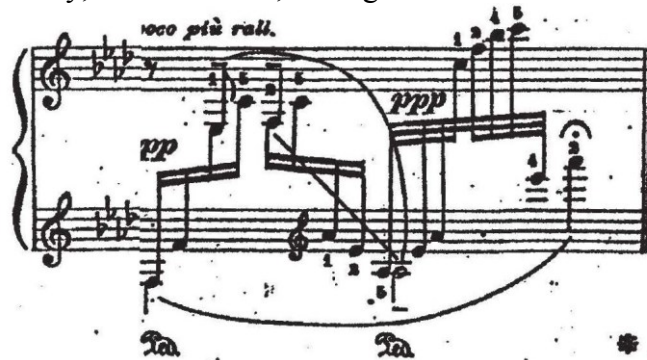
Table 1. Movements of the *Java Suite*, in order of composition

Title	Date of completion	Location	Published order	Key
Gamelan	September 24, 1924	New York	1	A minor
Hari Besaar	October 27, 1924	New York	3	C major
Boro Budur	November 5, 1924	New York	5	E minor
Wayang Purwa	November 28, 1924	New York	2	A minor
Chattering Monkeys at the Sacred Lake of Wendit	December 3, 1924	New York	4	C major
Bromo Volcano and the Sand Sea at Daybreak	December 10, 1924	New York	6	E major
Ruined Water Castle at Djokja	January 25, 1925	Chicago	11	A major
Kraton	February 18, 1925	Chicago	10	C-sharp minor
A Court Pageant in Solo	February, 24 1925	Chicago	12	A major
The Gardens of Buitenzorg	March 3, 1925	Chicago	8	A-flat major
Three Dances	April 4, 1925	New York	7	I.G-sharp minor II.B-major III.A-flat major
In the Streets of Old Batavia	May 21, 1925	Evanston, IL	9	D-flat major

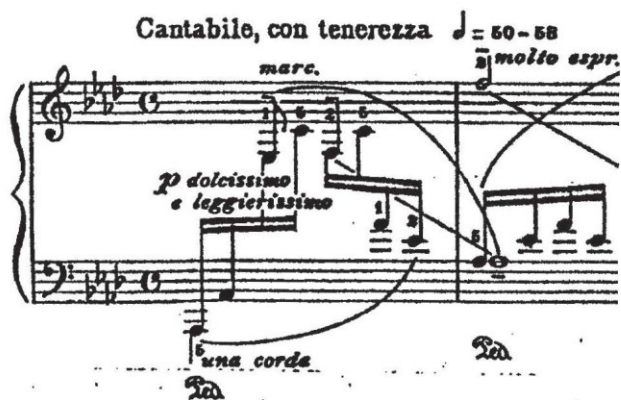
⁴⁹ Hopkins, "Godowsky's 'Phonoramas': A 20th-Century 'Wanderlust,'" *Musical Times* Vol. 130, No. 1757 (July 1989), 402.

Godowsky's reorganization of the pieces into four Parts seems to have been rooted in key schemes. Part I consists of two pieces in A minor and one piece in C major, while Part II contains pieces based around E major (*Chattering Monkeys* is in C major but the middle section is in E major). Although *Three Dances* (the first movement of Part III), opens in G-sharp minor, it ends in A-flat major, followed by two more flat key pieces. The closing set features three sharp key pieces (C-sharp minor and A major). The A major ending, a parallel major of the opening piece, adds a sense of unity to the whole piece. Although Godowsky does not use recurring themes in multiple movements, he does imply the opening measure of *The Gardens of Buitenzorg* in the final bar of the previous piece, hinting at a cyclic feel (see Ex. 29a, b).

Example 29a. Godowsky, *Three Dances*, ending



Example 29b. *The Gardens of Buitenzorg*, opening



CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

While many composers in the early twentieth century were influenced by the sound of gamelan music, Godowsky was one who actually experienced gamelan music himself. Even if for a short time, the fact that he spent time in Java, absorbing the world of that exotic island and musing on his various encounters therein, puts the *Java Suite* on a more realistic, tangible level than many pieces that simply set out to experiment with the gamelan sound alone.

With exception of *Hari Besaar*, Godowsky did not use authentic Javanese melodies but instead incorporated the native idioms as he understood them. He integrated the Javanese elements into Western compositional procedure, fusing them with highly elaborative techniques that are idiosyncratic of Godowsky. The result of this is an extraordinary and unique masterpiece, the performance of which requires the highest level of piano technique and artistry.

Godowsky was a man who loved traveling and discovering unknown worlds that helped to broaden his intellectual sphere. His intention of creating a Phonorama, i.e. a tonal journey that introduces us to and guides us through remote places, became a reality with the launching of *Java Suite*. His Phonorama is a synthesis of his inner self, the sound he experienced, and the new sceneries that his travels brought him. It is a personal, introspective, and intimate sound travelogue that Godowsky wished to share with the rest of the world.

It is my desire that this essay will draw attention to the *Java Suite* as well as to many other pieces by Godowsky that have thus far been overlooked in music history. It is regrettable that Godowsky's works, especially original compositions, are rarely performed today. I encourage fellow pianists to open his scores and unveil the world of Godowsky, a man who saw in the piano unlimited possibilities and an entire universe of its own. It seems appropriate to close with an excerpt from a letter in which Godowsky articulates this very sentiment: "I love the piano and those who love the piano. The piano as a medium for expression is a whole world by itself. No other instrument can fill or replace its own say in the world of emotion, sentiment, poetry, imagery and fancy."⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Godowsky to Maurice Aronson, 10 July 1931, quoted in Nicholas, *Godowsky: The Pianists' Pianist*, xxvii.

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