

Play Highlights Possible PPA Link Between “Bolero” Composer and Painter

February 19, 2021



UnRavelled, a new play written by Jake Broder, tells the uniquely connected story of two artists, French composer Maurice Ravel and Canadian painter Anne Adams, who may have created their most famous works while living with primary progressive aphasia (PPA).

The play, set to [premiere online Feb. 25](#), examines the connection between Ravel's orchestral piece *Boléro* and Adams' signature painting *Unravelling Boléro*.

There is evidence suggesting that Ravel was in early PPA when *Boléro* was composed in 1928, [the *San Francisco Classical Voice* reported in a Feb. 16 article](#). Although there is no certainty of Ravel's diagnosis, Broder noted that "we have contemporaneous accounts of his behavior, which describe in extraordinary detail the behavior of someone with primary progressive aphasia. He would lose words in a particular way."

Similarly, Adams herself was in early PPA when she painted *Unravelling Boléro* in 1994, but was unaware of her diagnosis at the time. She was 53 when she created her piece, the same age as Ravel when he began showing signs of the disease; she died in 2007.

Broder said in the article that the painting was a "measure-by-measure recounting of *Boléro*" that happened to be "an accidental experiment" that provided insight on the "neurology of creativity." When writing his play, he connected with Dr. Bruce Miller, co-director of the Global Brain Health Institute at the University of California, San Francisco, to understand the science behind the neurological and creative connectedness between the two artists.

"The disease apparently altered circuits in their brains, changing the connections between the front and back parts, and resulting in a torrent of creativity," Miller said in the article.

Miller, who is also a member of AFTD's Medical Advisory Council, will take part in [live seminars](#) following screenings of the play on Feb. 25 and Mar. 3 alongside Broder and other experts in neurology and brain health.