



Dances for Piano and Orchestra

Gabriel PIERNÉ (1863-1937)

Fantaisie-ballet, Op. 6 [11:38]

Ricardo CASTRO HERRERA (1864-1907)

Vals-Capricho [8:00]

Frédéric CHOPIN (1810-1849)

Krakowiak, Grand Concert Rondo, Op. 14 [13:59]

Camille SAINT-SAËNS (1835-1931)

Caprice-Valse, Op. 76, "Wedding Cake" [6:22]

Carl Maria von WEBER (1786-1826)

Polonaise brillante, Op. 72 (orch. Liszt) [9:54]

Louis Moreau GOTTSCHALK (1829-1869)

Grand Tarantelle, Op. 67 (reconstructed by Hershy Kay) [8:12]

Charles Wakefield CADMAN (1881-1946)

Dark Dancers of the Mardi Gras [11:08]

Joel Fan (piano)

Northwest Sinfonietta/Christophe Chagnard

rec. 20-23 August, 2013, Lagerquist Hall, Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington, USA

REFERENCE RECORDINGS RR-134 [69:13]

For piano lovers, this CD is like an ice cream sundae, with hot fudge drizzle, Spanish peanuts, a ribbon of cream, and a booze-soaked cherry on top. It's pure pleasure, first note to last, with a generous heaping of sugar ... There's even a *Wedding Cake*.

Pianist Joel Fan has assembled seven short works for piano and orchestra, which you'll never hear in concert since we have an unwritten rule that only full-sized concertos are allowed. The works range from Weber and Chopin to the musical scenes of Mexico and New Orleans.

Chopin is represented by his *Krakowiak*, and Weber by a polonaise which was later orchestrated by Liszt. Camille Saint-Saëns is here, too, bringing his "Wedding Cake", which half the internet calls a *Caprice-Valse* and the other half calls a *Valse-Caprice*. The free score at IMSLP has the former. Reference Recordings uses both titles.

By now you've probably heard of Louis Moreau Gottschalk, the Creole genius who mixed up Chopin with the sounds and folk styles of North and South America ([Hyperion](#) ~ [Naxos 8.559320](#) ~ [Naxos 8.559036](#)). Some of his works evoke spirituals, banjos and wild bar-room dances. He's a clear precursor to jazz. Here he contributes a *Grand Tarantelle* for piano and orchestra, echoing back to an older tradition and form. There are tambourines, rich faux-Italian tunes and pianistic virtuosity aplenty.

Gabriel Pierné, the French conductor-composer whose concerto was recorded a few years ago by [Jean-Efflam Bavouzet](#), here contributes a short ballet for piano and orchestra. This piece was written at age 21, long before its author conducted the world premieres of *The Firebird* and *Daphnis et Chloé*, and long before he wrote his masterwork, *Cydalise*. The *Fantaisie-Ballet* starts with a cadenza, then settles into a series of dances which are a whole pastry shop of delicious morsels. The last is an Italian tarantella with pounding timpani and tambourine. You'll detect influences of Saint-Saëns, for sure — think the Third Concerto — and maybe the ballets of Fauré.

Even if you're feeling like a music history buff for knowing about Gottschalk, you might, like me, be stumped by Ricardo Castro Herrera and [Charles Wakefield Cadman](#). Here are two very obscure names. Castro was a Mexican native whose fame in his native country and beyond could have been greater if he hadn't died of pneumonia at age 43. The waltz here is a real charmer, in the French tradition, with no trace of Mexican roots.

Cadman, by contrast, is almost over-eager to get as much local colour as possible out of his evocation of New Orleans. It's noisy fun, although I must say that when this composer finds a good tune, he's all too eager to use it as much as possible.

Pianist Joel Fan, who presumably herded this programme together, plays it all with aplomb. He has the light touch, wit and fleet fingers necessary to keep these treats as sweet and bubbly as possible. He's ably backed up by the Northwest Sinfonietta, a chamber orchestra based in Seattle and Tacoma, Washington, although in bigger, more dramatic pieces, like the Pierné or Gottschalk *Tarantella*, you have to wonder what a full-sized, top-flight orchestra could do.

Throw in excellent notes from Reference Recordings and Fan's obvious enthusiasm and you have yourself a heck of a deal. This is not a profound disc but it's a great dessert. Dig in and don't count the calories.

Brian Reinhart

Support us financially by purchasing this from

