

Classical CD Reviews

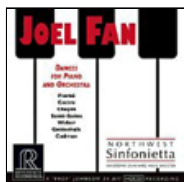
"Dances for Piano and Orchestra" = CADMAN: Dark Dances of the Mardi Gras; CASTRO: Vals Capricho; CHOPIN: KRAKOWIAK: Concert Rondo in F; GOTTSCHALK: Grand Tarantelle; LISZT: Polonaise brillante; PIERNE: Fantaisie-Ballet; SAINT-SAENS: Valse-Caprice, "Wedding Cake" – Joel Fan, p./ Northwest Sinfonietta/ Christophe Chagnard – Reference Recordings

Don't let the title throw you off—this is riveting stuff!

"If the TOKYO STRING QUARTET isn't the world's greatest chamber music ensemble, it's hard to imagine which group is." —THE WASHINGTON POST



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"Dances for Piano and Orchestra" = CADMAN: Dark Dances of the Mardi Gras; CASTRO: Vals Capricho; CHOPIN: KRAKOWIAK: Concert Rondo in F, Op. 14; GOTTSCHALK: Grand Tarantelle; LISZT: Polonaise brillante, S367; PIERNE: Fantaisie-Ballet in B flat major Op. 6; SAINT-SAENS: Valse-Caprice for piano & strings, Op. 76, "Wedding Cake" – Joel Fan, p./ Northwest Sinfonietta/ Christophe Chagnard – Reference Recordings HDCD RR134, 69:03 [Distr. by Allegro] **:**

Those accustomed to listening only to piano concertos when considering the genre of piano with orchestra might not be so inclined towards allowing for many other variances in the combination. In fact, the types of pieces found on this delightful disc are probably more prolific than the true concerto genre. Of course, during the age under consideration—from the height of the Romantic era to the early twentieth century's reactions to the beginning of the radically experimental age—the idea of virtuosity was firmly entrenched in the public mind, and this often was associated with music of a "lighter" if not "lesser" mindset that was more geared towards a simple enjoyment of the art without necessarily aspiring to the utterly profound.

Often this type of music is something that does indeed live up to its unfortunate negative connotations applied by a generation far removed from the circumstances that first called forth such efforts. But that is not the case here—whether considering Chopin's early pre-Paris *Grand Concerto Rondo* called "Krakowiak", Saint-Saens deliciously seductive *Wedding Cake Waltz*, the evocative *Vals Capricho* of not-so-known Ricardo Herrera, or the fiery temperament of America's own Charles Wakefield Cadman's *Dark Dances of the Mardi Gras*, one hears immediately the amazing stylistic spread of an almost ecumenical nature across so many periods and places.

Joel Fan seems to relish these pieces as he attacks them all as if living in another age—crisp, vitally engrossing pianism that will set your feet tapping and your vocal chords humming. The Northwest Sinfonia plays with expertise and rousing commitment in a recording of exceptional analog-ish warmth and sensitivity. This is truly fine stuff. [While the enhancement of HDCD encoding is subtle, it is noticeable if you happen to have the proper decoder, and I do...Ed.]

—Steven Ritter