

 CD REVIEW**Dances for Piano & Orchestra**

**Gabriel Pierné:** Fantaisie-Ballet, Op. 6

**Ricardo Castro Herrera:** *Vals Capricho*, Op. 1

**Frédéric Chopin:** *Krakowiak* in F Major, Op. 14

**Camille Saint-Saëns:** Valse-Caprice in A Flat Major "Wedding Cake", Op. 76

**Carl Maria von Weber:** Polonaise Brillante, Op. 72 (S. 367)

**Louis Moreau Gottschalk:** *Grand Tarantelle*, Op. 67

**Charles Wakefield Cadman:** *Dark Dancers of the Mardi Gras*

**Joel Fan, piano**

**Northwest Sinfonietta/Christophe Chagnard**

**Reference Recordings RR-134 69:03**

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This diverse and engaging program of works for piano and orchestra reflects Joel Fan's ongoing commitment to international music. His previous releases for Reference Recordings featured similarly unusual solo recitals with curious pieces from all over the world. There is some fluff on this disc, to be sure, but also a real sense of intelligence and enjoyment. Captured in excellent sound, this program has a wide potential audience, from piano students and teachers to the adventurous listener.



The seven works here are not necessarily of equal quality. None of these pieces are known as the most famous or influential works from any of these composers, though the Gottschalk comes close. Impressively, pianist Joel Fan is able to give each work a distinct personality and emotional range. His thoughtfulness and care elevates these "dances" to a higher level without ever compromising the sense of playfulness and fun that we often find in this genre. Fan is a serious artist, and he takes great care to give each piece a unique feel. Christophe Chagnard originally failed to impress me, but his well-shaped and often elegant accompaniments are polished. I could imagine a little more intensity or some sharper edges in places, but all is beautifully done.

While not as important as the label's stunning projects in Kansas City or Pittsburgh, I can't imagine any piano fan not wanting this for the range and quality of the performances. Fan's piano sounds terrific, and from a label that does so few concerto collaborations, the high standards of the house are upheld. This is a joyous and intriguing album that truly sparkles.

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