

CLAUDE DEBUSSY (1862 – 1918) THE ORCHESTRAL MUSIC



M2YK 45620
ADD

Disc 1

LA MER

- 1 I – De l'aube à midi sur la mer 8:49
- 2 II – Jeux de vagues 7:18
- 3 III – Dialogue de vent et de la mer 7:35

NOCTURNES

- 4 I – Nuages 7:01
- 5 II – Fêtes 6:38
- 6 III – Sirènes 10:59

JOHN ALLDIS CHOIR

PRINTEMPS

- 7 I – Très modéré 9:52
- 8 II – Modéré 6:08

9 RHAPSODY FOR CLARINET AND ORCHESTRA 8:35

GERVASE DE PEYER, Clarinet

NEW PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

PIERRE BOULEZ, Conductor

Disc 2

- 1 L'APRES-MIDI D'UN FAUNE 9:44
- 2 JEUX 17:05

NEW PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA

PIERRE BOULEZ, Conductor

„IMAGES“ POUR ORCHESTRE

- 3 GIGUES („Image“ No. 1) 7:36
- IBERIA („Image“ No. 2) 19:44

- 4 I – Par les rues et par les chemins 7:07
- 5 II – Les Parfums de la nuit 8:12
- 6 III – Le Matin d'un jour de fête 4:22

7 RONDES DE PRINTEMPS („Image“ No. 3) 8:06

8 DANSES SACREE ET PROFANE .. 10:07

ALICE CHALIFOUX, Harp

CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA

PIERRE BOULEZ, Conductor

TOTAL TIMING 146:16

COVER ART: W. A. MOZELER

CONSISTS OF PREVIOUSLY RELEASED MATERIAL

DIGITALLY MASTERED

Maestro

DEBUSSY THE ORCHESTRAL MUSIC

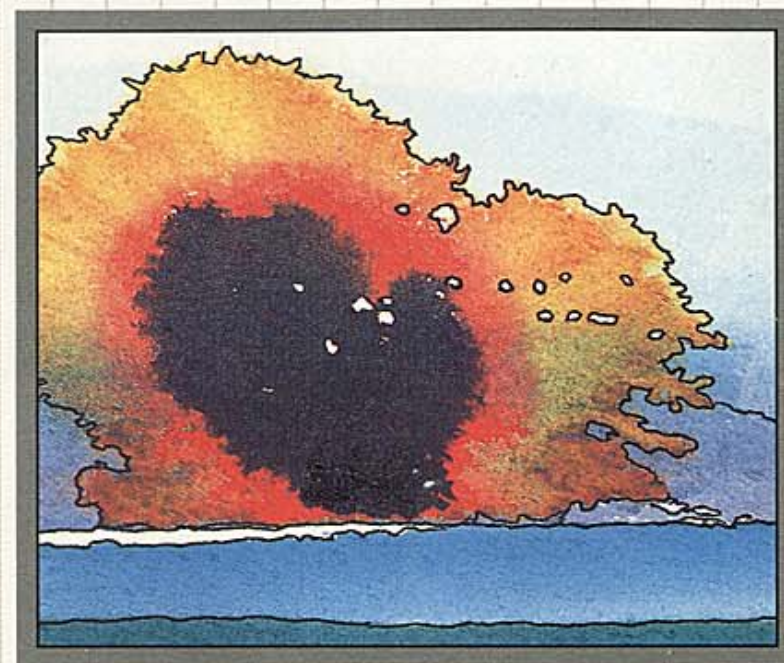
NEW PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA
CLEVELAND ORCHESTRA

PIERRE BOULEZ

2

COMPACT DISCS

OVER 2 HOURS
ÜBER 2 STUNDEN
PLUS DE 2 HEURES



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DEBUSSY:

Works for Orchestra

In a letter to his publisher, dated 1908, Debussy wrote to say that he would not tolerate the painting term "impressionism" being applied to his music. For the composer and conductor, Pierre Boulez, too, the so called impressionistic colour effects are not the most essential part of Debussy's scores, but rather the structure that emerges from a certain type of tonality. "The momentary impression of Debussy's music proves to be an arrangement of musical time, and more generally, of a musical cosmos. This arrangement of musical time reveals itself with regard to tonal order insofar as it denies the existence of harmonic hierarchies as the only tonal reality" (Boulez).

His best known orchestral work, the three-part cycle "La Mer" (1905) the composer himself construed as "symphonic sketches". And, in actual fact, one could indentify his "De l'aube à midi sur la mer" (from dawn to midday on the sea) as a dramatic sonata allegro and his "Jeux de vagues" (play of waves) is easily indentifiable as a scherzo. But the music has nothing more in common with traditional musical themes, which are, in fact, the characterization of emotion, nor indeed with its traditional formal parts. The developmental tendencies of the themes are suspended by a tight, multifarious network of complex rhythms, and from the acoustic relationship between the separate instrumental groups, fanned

out, as it were, across a tonal spectrum, there emerges a universe of sound, whose versatility and chromatic values fascinated or alienated his contemporaries. It was also Debussy's aim in this work, not so much to illustrate natural events (sunrise over the sea, the play of waves and seaspray in the mist, or under a glisteningly clear sun); he was more concerned with using harp glissandos, trills, powerful chords and dance rhythms to give musical expression to the atmospheric, the unutterable, the infinite, and simultaneously to appeal to various senses, to the face and to the ear.

Some years before he started work on "La Mer", Debussy had created another symphonic triptych in the "Nocturnes" (1897-1899). It is an eloquent testimonial to an intimate spiritual affinity between painting and music, enriching, in its finale, the sounds of the orchestra through the use of female voices and proving how important the synaesthesia of colour and music was to Debussy: "The title "Nocturne" needs to be understood in a more general, and, above all, in a more decorative sense. The form in question here is not the customary form of the "Nocturne", but everything captured by this word in the way of specific impressions and illumination. 'Nuages' – this is the motionless picture of the sky with its slow and melancholic procession of clouds fading away into a gentle, white-toned grey. 'Fêtes' – this is movement, the dancing rhythm of the atmosphere with its bright, flaring lights; it is also the episode containing the procession (a dazzling, spectral vision), that passes through the feast and is lost in it, whilst the background remains constant; the feast is omnipresent and the music and dancing lights surge this way and that in all-embracing rhythm. 'Sirènes' – this is the sea and its eternal rhythms; from the waves,

shining silver in the moonlight, the mysterious song of the sirens rises, erupts into laughter and fades away" (Debussy's own commentary). The symphonic suite "Printemps" is the charming work of his youth, which Debussy, in Italy after having won the Rome Prize, sent to Paris from the Italian capital. Inspired by Botticelli's "Primavera" and originally conceived for a humming choir and orchestra, it was only later rearranged for orchestra. It already betrays Debussy's need, however, to find a title borrowed from the natural elements, which excites the composer's imagination, but does not determine the way in which the music progresses. The "Rhapsody for clarinet and orchestra" (1909/10) arose by chance, being commissioned by the Paris Conservatory – the original version for clarinet and piano was meant to serve as a test piece for candidates studying the clarinet; a year later it was orchestrated by Henri Ducas.

On the occasion of the first performance, in 1894, of his "prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune", Debussy wrote: "The music is a very free illustration of the beautiful poem by Mallarmé. It in no way aims to be a résumé of it. Rather it contains a series of pictorial backdrops, within which the wishes and dreams of the faun wander in the heat of the afternoon. Too tired to pursue the bashful nymphs and naiads, he falls into a drunken slumber full of dreams finally realized, of total possession in the midst of all-embracing nature. The preliminary flute passage shows us a world created from natural experience and eroticism, soft arpeggios give the impression of gentle breezes, vibrant reflections of the dreams of the faun. A highly sophisticated orchestration suggests love's raptures and the

pleasurable rest after love's desires have been fulfilled, and makes the scorching midday heat of a southern landscape almost physically perceptible. Yet beneath the surface of refined passion there lie hidden structures, to which Jean Barraque has drawn attention. The Lied (in the first, third and fifth sections), the sonata (in the second and fifth parts) and variation overlap and interpenetrate to form an "improvisation on a basic theme".

"Jeux" was written in 1912/13 after a design by Nijinsky for the Russian Ballet and reworked into concerto form in 1914. In a commentary, Debussy pointed out the individual scenes to which the music formed a background: a young man dressed for tennis appears on stage and then disappears again; two young girls arrive, begin to dance and are just about to run off again when they become aware that the young man has been watching them from his hiding-place behind a bush. He dances with each of them in turn until the three of them join into one ecstatic dance, which comes to an abrupt end when a stray tennis ball comes bouncing onto the scene. The chords of the prelude are taken up once again, then one or two furtive tonal glides – and that's all" (Debussy).

The "Danses", commissioned in 1904 by the House of Pleyel (for a competition held by the Conservatory of Brussels) and written for harp and orchestra, are considered as examples of a sublime form of light music that does without any external effects. Likewise, the three "Images", composed between 1905 and 1912, are among Debussy's most significant works and can be seen as a hymn to various nationalities. "Gigues" begins and ends with a muted, yet tinkling and vibrant sound and its fragmentary

use of the Scottish folk song, "The keel row" evokes a feeling of melancholy and isolation. The timbre of the three-part "Iberia" score is enriched through the use of percussion instruments such as castanets, tambourine, xylophone, celesta and three bells. And although there is no evidence of any of these themes in Iberian folklore, the tonal nuances create the perfect illusion of the hustle and bustle of Spanish life. The wood- and brass-wind instruments perform the main parts; surprising highlights are added by the strings, their guitar-like pizzicati, vibrant tremolos and exquisite glissandos often artistically at odds with one another, and accenting the stirringly springy rhythm, interrupted at dynamic peaks by the "heavy" brass-wind. The spirited allegro of the first movement ("On road and path") suggests the changing scenes of the Spanish countryside. "Fragrances of the night", with its hazy contours and unreal sounds, is a tender nocturne that breathes the sweetness of warm, Mediterranean nights in flower-filled gardens. And "On the morning of the festival" reveals the more garish, louder aspect of Spanish life. Crowds of people come streaming together, march-like rhythms combine with the solemn strains of the trombone and the chimes of bells to create an overwhelming impression of faith and devotion. The thematic and rhythmic integrity of the "Rondes de Printemps" is achieved through the use of the French folk tune "Nous n'irons plus au bois"; the melody of the rondo from the wind section, paraphrased in tonal layers by harp and violin, glides on with epic calm and poise; the sensitive use of triangle, tambourine and cymbal invests the work with that bright, incorporeal sound that is in deliberate and sharp contrast to "Ibéria".

Uwe Kraemer

Translation: David Smith

DEBUSSY: Orchesterwerke

Debussy hat es sich 1908 in einem Brief an seinen Verleger verboten, daß der aus der Malerei stammende Begriff des „Impressionismus“ auf seine Musik angewendet wurde. Auch für den Komponisten und Dirigenten Pierre Boulez stellen die sog. impressionistischen Farbeffekte nicht das Wesentliche der Debussyschen Partituren dar, sondern die aus einer bestimmten Klanglichkeit erwachsende Struktur. „Der Momentaneindruck der Musik Debussys erweist sich als Konstruktion musikalischer Zeit und, allgemeiner, eines musikalischen Kosmos. Diese Konstruktion musikalischer Zeit offenbart sich bezüglich der klanglichen Ordnung insofern, als sie die Existenz harmonischer Hierarchien als der einzigen klanglichen Gegebenheit leugnet“ (Boulez).

Sein bekanntestes Orchesterwerk, den dreiteiligen Zyklus „La Mer“ (1905), faßte der Komponist noch selbst als „symphonische Skizzen“ auf. Und tatsächlich wäre „De l'aube à midi sur la mer“ (Vom Morgengrauen bis zum Mittag auf dem Meer) als dramatisches Sonatenallegro oder „Jeux de vagues“ (Spiel der Wellen) ohne Schwierigkeiten als Scherzo zu identifizieren. Doch die Musik hat mit der herkömmlichen musikalischen Thematik, die ja auch Charakterisierung einer Emotion ist, und mit den traditionellen Formteilen nichts mehr gemein. Die Entwicklungstendenzen der Themen werden durch ein dichtes und vielfältiges Netz einer