



**Maurice Ravel: Piano Works**

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**Audiophile Audition April 2010 (John Sunier - 2010.04.20)**



A fine selection of four great Ravel piano works, beautifully played by a young...  
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**CD Compact septiembre 2009 (Benjamín Fontvella - 2009.09.01)**

No me extrañaría que a este primer disco se le añadiera en pocos meses uno...  
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**Classica février 2010 (Jacques Bonnaure - 2010.02.01)**



À trente ans, Romain Descharmes vise haut en enregistrant la moitié de...  
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Diverdi Magazin 182/ junio 2009 (Ignacio González Pintos - 2009.06.01)

DIVERDI.COM

### Articioso por naturaleza

*Romain Descharmes se aproxima con desarmante exactitud al piano meticuloso de Maurice Ravel*

Con esta ingeniosa expresión se autodefinió Maurice Ravel, y difícilmente hallaríamos otra que ilustrara mejor el especial carácter de su obra. Al término artificial se refiere también Wolfgang Rathert en las interesantes notas de la carpetilla, pero sin la coletilla de la expresión original el adjetivo puede resultar algo equívoco. Añadiendo unas dosis de hermetismo quizá aclaremos un tanto la cuestión. Porque la música de Ravel remite a sí misma, autosuficiente en su orden racional, y renuncia a referentes externos o significados profundos. Refugiada en su delicada perfección se niega pudorosa a descubrirnos a su autor, pero en esa actitud elusiva muestra ya la fragilidad del noble ascetismo de la pluma que la inspira. Ravel opone la más refinada elegancia a un mundo en descomposición, una aristocracia del espíritu que con irresistible desdén desprecia incluso la confesión del desencanto.

Romain Descharmes encuentra la manera de dejarse poseer por ese espíritu acompañado de su SK-Ex 258001, un instrumento articioso por naturaleza, no especialmente cálido y brillante incluso en la frecuente levedad dinámica, ideal para recrear la estética raveliana -estupenda la toma sonora, por cierto, de un SACD compatible con los reproductores comunes. La delicadísima pulsación del pianista acaba por obrar el milagro: la música emerge sublime, cristalina, coloreada con timbre decadente y dicha con fina poesía. Ese meticuloso relojero que fue Ravel penaliza el más mínimo desliz, y a punto está de costarle caro a Descharmes cierto encaprichamiento en Le Gibet del Gaspard de la Nuit, que solventa con un Scarbo sostenido con seductor y exacto pulso. La atmósfera de los Valses nobles y sentimentales fluye encantadora a través del juguetón ritmo ternario, empeñado en disimular la amargura que provoca la evocación del tiempo perdido. La mirada a un pasado más remoto de la Sonatina desarma por su exquisita y frágil desnudez. Desde los rápidos cuatrillos iniciales la lectura de Descharmes se desenvuelve con una delicadeza irresistible, refinada hasta el extremo.

Llegada la madurez el ascetismo de Ravel se permite algunas licencias, levantando la voz para escribir La Valse. Descharmes toma aire y nos brinda esta transcripción en un solo impulso. Una fantástica exhibición llena de energía, salpicada por un humor trágico tremendamente raveliano, que bien podría ser el punto y seguido de una integral más que apetecible.

[Fanfare](#) Issue 33:2 (Nov/Dec 2009) (Peter Burwasser - 2009.11.01)

fanfare

First of all, the young French pianist Romain Descharmes (b. 1980) is a very fine artist, possessed of not merely great dexterity, but exceptional style and taste. But more Ravel piano music? Really? The arkivmusic Web site lists 79 versions of the Sonatine, 96 of Gaspard, 100 of the Valse nobles et sentimentales, and, wait for it, 166 spins on the dance floor for La valse, more than half of them in the solo piano configuration. I love this music as much as anyone does, but must admit to no small degree of Ravel fatigue. Descharmes acquits himself well amidst the blistering competition, but as a nit-picking critic (that's why they pay me the big bucks), I must report some minor instances of over-mannered rhythmic manipulations, mainly in Valses nobles et sentimentales. The Gaspard is on the cool side, but this is not so much a criticism as a way to distinguish Descharmes's completely effective style from the more animalistic approach of, say, Argerich. The Sonatine is especially lovely, aglow with elegance and lucid texture.

If, by some chance, you need this material in your CD collection, you will not go wrong with this choice. As I have commented before, the Audite label produces some of the best piano sound in the industry, exquisitely balanced and with a natural (not too close) ambience. As for me, I look forward to hearing this promising new talent again soon, in more adventurous material.

**Fono Forum 9/2009 (Ingo Harden - 2009.09.01)**



**Hoch sensibel**

Audite stellt in einer Neuproduktion aus der Jesus-Christus-Kirche in Berlin-Dahlem, traditionsreichem Studioterrain also, den französischen Pianisten Romain Descharmes vor. Descharmes, Jahrgang 1980, war 2006 Erster Preisträger in Dublin und ist inzwischen in eine vielversprechende internationale Karriere gestartet, die ihn aber offenbar erst selten nach Deutschland geführt hat.

Sich mit Ravel vorzustellen ist für einen jungen französischen Conservatoire- Absolventen heute Ehrensache, erfordert allerdings angesichts der von Jahr zu Jahr unerbittlich wachsenden Diskuskonkurrenz zunehmend auch Mut. Doch Descharmes hat nichts zu fürchten, er kann eine perfekt geschmeidige, besonders im Leisen feiner Abstufungen fähige Pianistik ins Feld führen. Sie erlaubt es ihm, in jedem der vier Werke seiner „Best of Ravel“-Auswahl – Berezowski hatte vor fünfzehn Jahren dasselbe Programm eingespielt – „Technik“ nicht als Selbstzweck auszuspielen, sondern voll in den Dienst intelligenter und expressiver Gestaltung zu stellen. Gleich die eröffnende Schubert- Hommage der „Valses nobles et sentimentales“ gestaltet er mit einem Optimum an Sensibilität und Formsinn. Ähnlich gelungen dann auch seine Wiedergabe des „Gaspard“ und der Sonatine, und die Schlusssteigerung von „La valse“ habe ich noch nie so wenig klavierauszugmäßig und bei aller Transparenz so rauschend „orchestral“ gehört wie von Descharmes.

Einzigster Schwachpunkt der Aufnahme ist der Klang. So lobenswert es ist, von den Mikros nicht quasi in das Instrument hineingezogen zu werden – hört man es wie aus einer der hinteren Saalreihen, klingt zumindest der gewählte (Kawai-)Flügel weder sonderlich substanzreich noch brillant.

**Gramophone August 2009 (Bryce Morrison - 2009.08.01)**



**A major young talent impresses with a first disc of Ravel's solo piano music**

Romain Descharmes is a 29-year-old French pianist admirably attuned to the more subtle and elusive sides of Ravel's genius. A prize-winner in many competitions, his expertise is nonchalantly and stylishly deployed. And if he lacks the razor-sharp articulacy, drama and imaginative daring of, say, Pogorelich and Thibaudet in Gaspard (not to mention Argerich's "live" EMI Classics performance where she becomes virtually engulfed in her own virtuosity), his occasional lack of "edge" is hardly a failing in the Sonatine, which he plays with an enviable grace and fluency.

Descharmes is also admirable in the Valses nobles et sentimentales' alternating piquancy and introspection, with an epilogue that winds down to a near halt, among many individual touches. And here in particular there is never a question of "play the notes and the rest will look after itself", a literalism once common to certain celebrated French pianists. In Gaspard Ondine's watery entreaty spurts and bubbles

seductively and in “Le gibet” the bell tolls disconsolately throughout, penetrating but never obscuring the surrounding multi-layered texture. Ravel's skeletal outline in La valse is suitably filled in or “orchestrated”, and if Descharmes's dalliance occasionally weakens the music's drive as it whirls inexorably towards its cataclysmic climax, his musicianship and overall command are again striking. A more daemonic view of a waltz that outpaces Liszt at his own Mephistophelian game comes from Louis Lortie and, of course, from Argerich and Freire in the two-piano version. But Descharmes is clearly a major talent, finely recorded, and makes you look forward to what will surely be a second disc of Ravel.

### International Piano July/August 2009 (Guy Dammann - 2009.07.01)



When Romain Descharmes gave his Wigmore Hall debut in January 2007, soon after winning the Dublin competition, levels of anticipation and excitement were high. The hall was packed to the gunnels with support, but the results, for me at any rate, were underwhelming, with soggy Brahms and undistinguished Ravel. The highpoint was an unexpectedly high octane dose of Frederick Rzewski's Winnsboro Cotton Mill.

Both the Brahms and the Rzewski have made it on to disc. Now it is the turn of the Ravel, marking the pianist's recording debut with Audite performing on a Kawai piano. The exceptionally bright tone of the instrument works brilliantly – literally – for the first item on the disc, Valses nobles et sentimentales. Ravel's almost casual dissonances glisten and gleam like rough-cut jewels against the warm darkness of the acoustic of Berlin's Jesus-Christus-Kirche. To the pacing and balance of these deceptive dances Descharmes brings both intelligence and independence of mind, setting down an interpretation of these exciting and sometimes underappreciated pieces that deserves attention.

Whether the same can be said of the rest of the disc is less clear. Gaspard de la nuit, on the edge of ragged in the Wigmore Hall recital, is technically much more proficient, especially where the more restrained and confident pedalling is concerned. But there is little really dazzling about 'Ondine' and 'Le Gibet'. 'Scarbo', unusually in recordings of this work, is the most convincing.

With the Sonatine, full of delights though it is, you get the slightly tired sense that Descharmes has been playing it since shortly after coming out of nappies and hasn't really thought a great deal about his approach to it since. More interesting is the pianist's own transcription of La valse. Although the composer's own two-piano version may be familiar, his solo version of the work leaves much to be desired. Descharmes's arrangement works better and his warm-blooded and somewhat flirtatious performance brings a stimulating if not totally satisfying conclusion to this somewhat frustrating disc.

### International Record Review July/August 2009 (Julian Haylock - 2009.07.01)



#### Ravel

*Gaspard de la nuit. Sonatine. Valse nobles et sentimentales. La valse.*

Ravel's music is so all-encompassing in its absolute integrity (every note has its exact place in an overall scheme) that it possesses an almost Bach-like indestructibility. Some players emphasize the leading line, others the music's rhythmic profiles, others its textural allure, others its rich harmonic palette, yet it invariably emerges sounding utterly convincing.

Romain Descharmes, winner of the Dublin International Competition in 2006, remarkably combines all these qualities in interpretations that can withstand comparison with the finest of the past. His French accent is as acute and Galois-scented as Monique Haas's, his captivating spontaneity as compelling as Samson François, his harmonic pungency and weighting as telling as that of Werner Haas, and his exhilaration in the piano mechanism's colossal bass power in La valse curiously reminiscent of Horowitz.

The Ravel who emerges here is less an effeminate aesthete with a soft centre than an indomitable, macho personality of exquisitely refined taste. In tackling Valses nobles et sentimentales, most pianists attempt to impart a sense of stylistic unity to Ravel's coruscating inspirations, whereas Descharmes gives each waltz its own unique character, ensuring that the music's startling changes of mood register with full impact. One of the greatest challenges in this above all of Ravel's piano works is to characterize the music's dancing lilt and affectionate phrasing without sounding calculating and arch, a test which Descharmes passes with flying colours as he enters into each miniature's distinctive sound-world. This is compelling playing that takes the listener on a vital emotional journey, never generalizing the specific.

It is rare indeed that one encounters a performance of Gaspard de la nuit that has one totally forgetting the supreme technical accomplishment involved. Yet here Descharmes charms his Kawai grand into producing magical, glistening sonorities throughout 'Ondine' that, despite the pungent clarity of his playing elsewhere (not least in 'Scarbo'), suggests that he has somehow dispensed with the use of a hammer mechanism altogether. His 'Scarbo' may not be the last word in Grand Guignol, smouldering incandescence, yet its intoxicating textural allure and commendable lack of self-conscious virtuoso wizardry focuses the music's swirling changeability to a remarkable degree.

The enchanting Sonatine suits Descharmes's quicksilver tonal reactions to a tee. The central minuet is a particular triumph, its surface nostalgia and contentment subtly spiked on occasion by Ravel's gently clashing harmonies. I can't wait to hear what Descharmes makes of Miroirs and Le tombeau de Couperin.

**Piano News Juli/August 4/2009 (Isabel Fedrizzi - 2009.07.01)**



Die Lust an der Schwelgerei, am Schweben und Schwärmen durchzieht das Werk...

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**RBB Kulturradio 7. Juli 2009 (Ulrike Klobes - 2009.07.07)**



Von weitem sehe er zwar aus wie ein Schulmeister, aber eigentlich sei er ein kleiner, selbstgefälliger Dandy – so beschrieb Erik Satie einmal Maurice Ravel. Als dieser 1927 zu seiner Amerika-Tournee startete, hatte er 60 Hemden, 20 Paar Schuhe, 75 Krawatten und 25 Seidenpyjamas im Gepäck. Genauso anspruchsvoll wie mit seinem Aussehen war der als Griesgram verschriene Ravel auch mit seiner Musik. Seine Klavierwerke beispielsweise gelten als überaus anspruchsvoll und virtuos. An diese hat sich jetzt ein junger französischer Pianist gewagt:

Romain Descharmes, Jahrgang 1980, hat in Paris Klavier, Kammermusik und Klavierbegleitung studiert und ist neben seiner erfolgreichen Pianistentätigkeit ein aktiver Kammermusiker. Diese Einspielung ist Descharmes dritte Solo-CD, auf seiner ersten hat er Werke von Debussy, Skrjabin, Schönberg und Boulez aufgenommen, auf

seinem zweiten Album gibt es ausschließlich Brahms-Werke zu hören, jetzt also Ravel.

## Die Werke

Descharmes Auswahl trifft quasi den Kern von Ravels Klavierwerken: Als "Einleitung" des Albums dienen die kleinen, raffinierten Walzer aus der Sammlung Valses nobles et sentimentales, es folgt der sehr fantastisch anmutende Dreiteiler Gaspard de la Nuit, auch die eher klassizistische Sonatine ist dabei, den Höhepunkt bildet aber zweifelsfrei die Klavierbearbeitung von La Valse.

## Die Interpretation

Romain Descharmes spielt sehr klar und überhaupt nicht emotional aufgeladen, an einigen Stellen für manche Geschmäcker vielleicht sogar ein wenig zu unpräzise. Er überschlägt sich nicht in den Tempi, was eine schöne Transparenz zur Folge hat. Nicht nur die schnellen Läufe bleiben so vom Verschwimmen verschont, auch die oft donnernden Akkordfolgen kommen sehr präsent zum Ausdruck, ohne einen Störfaktor zu bilden.

Alles in allem eine überaus gelungene Einspielung von höchster Virtuosität.

**Scherzo octobre 2009 (Santiago Martín Bermúdez - 2009.10.01)**

**sch**erzo

**Ravel: El encanto y el juego**

Ravel: El encanto y el juego

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**Stereo 9/2009 (Ingo Harden - 2009.08.10)**

**STEREO**

Audite stellt in einer Neuproduktion aus der Jesus-Christus-Kirche in...

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**The Irish Times Friday, August 28, 2009 (Michael Dervan - 2009.08.28)**

THE IRISH TIMES  
YOU ARE WHAT YOU READ

French pianist Romain Descharmes, first prizewinner of the 2006 Dublin...

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[www.allmusic.com](http://www.allmusic.com) 01.05.2010 ( - 2010.05.01)

allmusic

In the middle years of the 20th century, the "go-to" conductor for Stravinsky's...

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[www.ClassicsToday.com](http://www.ClassicsToday.com) July 2009 (Jed Distler - 2009.07.01)



Pianist Romain Descharmes came to my attention as first-prize winner of the AXA...

*Full review text restrained for copyright reasons.*

[www.parutions.com](http://www.parutions.com) 24/12/2009 (Jean-Jacques Millo - 2009.12.24)



**Super Audio CD hybride stéréo/multicanal**

Super Audio CD hybride stéréo/multicanal

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[www.SA-CD.net](http://www.SA-CD.net) June 22, 2009 (Polly Nomial - 2009.06.22)



**A début that augers much promise but fails to deliver in entirety**

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