



RAVEL *Gaspard de la Nuit. Daphnis et Chloé: 3 Excerpts* (arr. Larderet). *Jeux d'eau. La Valse. Pavane pour une infante défunte* • Vincent Larderet (pn) • ARS PRODUCTION 38146 (70:06)

At first glance this is an album of Ravel's greatest hits for piano, but it was born from special dedication by the accomplished French pianist Vincent Larderet. He approaches these familiar works with the orchestra in mind. It's a unique perspective, for although Ravel moved fluidly between piano and orchestra, giving us two versions of almost everything here, few pianists take anything away from this. Larderet wants us to hear the orchestra in the piano. For the 3 Excerpts from *Daphnis et Chloé*, he has added revisions to Ravel's 1912 original version for solo piano to make it sound even more orchestral. In the piano score the composer provided a third staff marked "optional" that Larderet, who has virtuoso technique, does his best to incorporate, to the limits of playability.

The result is a huge sonority that's miles away from Gieseking and Michelangeli—Larderet counts the latter as an inspiration for this recording of *Gaspard de la nuit*. He reminds us that Ravel set out deliberately in *Scarbo*, the final movement of the work, to write the most difficult piano work possible, outdoing Balakirev's *Islamey*. (It used to be that hearing either work in concert was an event, although today they seem to be standard graduation exercises for a new generation of flying fingers.) The second inspiration for Larderet's *Gaspard* is the Lithuanian-born French pianist Vlado Perlemuter (1904-2002), who studied Ravel's piano music with the aging composer. Perlemuter made extensive notations in his performing scores, which Larderet has followed in this recording.

Ravel was meticulous about how he wanted his piano music played, insisting, for example, that the tempo should be unvarying in *Le gibet*, leading to a mood of cold monotony suitable for the ghastly specter of a gibbet. Larderet consulted Ravel's piano roll of *Pavane for a Dead Princess* and adopts the same tempo, which is brisk by conventional standards. Yet laudable as his adherence to Ravel's intentions may be, what stands out is really the beauty and fullness of the piano sound on this CD. It's sensational. Insofar as the piano can sound like a Ravel orchestration, it does here. I'd recommend this disc to anyone who wants to hear Larderet's unique take on these works. You won't hear Ravel with a rolling Lisztian bass line anywhere else.

Huntley Dent, *Fanfare* (USA) – Jan-Feb 2015