



Piano Music of
Claude Debussy
& Jorge Martín

steps

JEANNE GOLAN
PIANO



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AN ISOLATED STEP IS A FUNCTIONAL MOTION THAT CAN BE EXPRESSIVE IN AND OF ITSELF. A SERIES OF SUCH MOTIONS BECOMES A PASSAGEWAY TO SOMEWHERE ELSE, WHETHER EXPECTED OR SURPRISING.

Parisian society at the turn of the 20th century reveled in the doing and viewing of this process in the most literal sense, as illustrated by its love of ballet. With ballet influencing all realms of the arts, it is only natural that composer **CLAUDE DEBUSSY** would draw inspiration from dance.

Among Debussy's early compositions were the *Deux Arabesques*, published in 1888. An arabesque is a specific dance step that requires both strength and suppleness to create a feeling of sweep. It hints at exoticism, as the body fleetingly captures the spirit of the fanciful designs of mythic Arabia, which is the word's other connotation.

Translating this gesture into pure music, Debussy's *Arabesques* have all the elements that would become the core of his compositional expression. In its combination of strength and suppleness, the strength comes from an economy of motive, as each *Arabesque* has a single musical idea that is developed throughout the piece, and a simple ternary structure. The suppleness stems from the way with which he integrates the various musical elements in a fresh way that came to epitomize the impressionist style. Debussy uses pedal and rhythmic intricacy as only a pianist can to create grace and sparkle in these salon pieces.

Where the *Arabesques* pertain to a single step, *Jeux* (*Games*) encompasses an entire ballet. The last of his orchestral works, Debussy subtitled the work *Poème dansé*. *Jeux* was written for the Ballet Russes in 1913. Diaghilev choreographed the premiere which starred Nijinsky, putting Debussy in the hub of the avant-garde artists of the day. The premise of *Jeux* is an adolescent romp in the guise of a tennis game that leads to youthful follies once the ball goes out of bounds, so to speak. The plot is spelled out in the piano reduction that Debussy created for rehearsal purposes. There is no question that the initial sport of tennis is instrumental in revealing the real sport of mating between a fellow and two inquisitive teens, with all the inherent nuances that such a game among such a threesome can imply.

It is this suggestiveness that Debussy embraces. *Jeux* is a fully mature work that realizes the potential of the *Arabesques*. In composing it, Debussy found that "Elevations, turns, certain unforeseen, capricious steps of the dancers- everything calculated to bring alive rhythm in music is here." In musical terms, he created a few short motives or 'sound-bites,' based not only in melody, but also in harmony, rhythm and timbre. With these motives as its basis, Debussy develops fleeting moments into strings of waltzes, another implied threesome, that are broken off unexpectedly as one musical component detaches from the others.

The orchestration of *Jeux* is scintillating. Yet Debussy's piano reduction offers a differently evocative and enticing piece that, with adjustments, works wonderfully at the keyboard and provides an opportunity to hear the core of the composition.

JEANNE GOLAN

With *STEPS*, pianist Jeanne Golan continues her active involvement in the fostering of works by new composers and discovering relatively unknown musical treasures. She has an impressive collection of pieces written for her and that she has premiered and recorded. Her solo CDs include *Time Tracks* (TROY211), *American Tonal* (TROY324) and *Schumann Piano Music: The Poet Speaks*, (Arsis CD135). Collaborative recordings appear under the Albany, Capstone and Newport Classic labels.

Ms. Golan has performed extensively throughout the United States and Europe. Known for her innovation in combining standard and contemporary repertoire, she has been featured by such organizations as The Fleisher Collection, North River Music, Steinert & Sons, Theodore Wiprud Productions, Cantori New York, MATA and the Friends & Enemies of New Music. Her ensemble experiences range from the Philip Glass Ensemble to the Lark, Cavani and Flux Quartets. Her extensive work with singers includes the CD, *Songs of Henry Cowell* (TROY240) which was hailed by Michael Tilson Thomas in the *New York Times*. She has appeared with the American Symphony Chamber Orchestra under Leon Botstein, the Greenwich Symphony Orchestra and the Hunter Symphony.

Ms. Golan earned her Masters and Doctorate from the Eastman School of Music and her BA from Yale University, graduating with Distinction in Music. She is a professor at SUNY/Nassau, where she has received the Distinguished Faculty and the SUNY Chancellor's Awards, and has a studio in Manhattan.

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