



**NORTHSTAR**  
RECORDING  
by BERT VAN DER WOUF

**CLAUDE DEBUSSY | MAURICE RAVEL**

La Mer | Ma Mère l'Oye

**Het Gelders Orkest**

**Antonello Manacorda**



SUPER AUDIO CD

**CLAUDE DEBUSSY | MAURICE RAVEL**

La Mer | Ma Mère l'Oye

**Het Gelders Orkest**

**Antonello Manacorda**

**CLAUDE DEBUSSY** (1862 – 1918)

**La Mer, Trois esquisses symphoniques pour orchestre** (1903 – 1905)

- |     |                               |             |
|-----|-------------------------------|-------------|
| [1] | De l'aube à midi sur la mer   | <b>9:50</b> |
| [2] | Jeux de vagues                | <b>7:22</b> |
| [3] | Dialogue du vent et de la mer | <b>9:02</b> |

**MAURICE RAVEL** (1875 – 1937)

**Ma Mère l'Oye** (1908 – 1912)

- |      |   |             |
|------|---|-------------|
| [4]  | Prélude   | <b>3:18</b> |
| [5]  | Tableau I: Danse du Rouet et Scène                    | <b>3:40</b> |
| [6]  | Tableau II: Pavane de la Belle au Bois dormant        | <b>2:39</b> |
| [7]  | Tableau III: Les Entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête | <b>5:09</b> |
| [8]  | Tableau IV: Petit Poucet                              | <b>4:49</b> |
| [9]  | Tableau V: Laideronnette, Impératrice des Pagodes     | <b>4:53</b> |
| [10] | Apothéose: Le Jardin féérique                         | <b>4:13</b> |

total time 55:01

If any composer could be described as an impressionist, it might certainly be Claude Debussy. But if any composer were ever averse to that description, it would also be Debussy. In his own words: "I'm trying to do 'something different' – a type of reality – which imbeciles call 'impressionism'." However, consciously or otherwise, impressionism occupied him, in the sense of compositions that offered an impression rather than a clear image. This started with the reputation gained by his symphonic poem *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, which drew its inspiration from a poem by the symbolist writer Stéphane Mallarmé, a subject also used by the impressionist painter Edouard Monet for one of his paintings. In *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1902), he even succeeded in writing an entire impressionistic opera. His most famous orchestral work however was undoubtedly *La Mer*, written between 1903 and 1905.

One should bear in mind that Debussy was not himself too fond of the sea. His parents at one point had the notion of enrolling him in the navy, but this came to nothing and Debussy very rarely embarked on sea voyages during his lifetime. The bulk of *La Mer* was composed during a visit to Burgundy – a long way from the nearest sea – although the work was completed in the English seaside town of Eastbourne. The composer himself argued that his inspiration was drawn from a range of ocean view paintings and from literature in which the sea played a major part. Debussy described the work as 'Three symphonic sketches for orchestra' (*Trois esquisses symphoniques pour orchestre*), thus avoiding the term 'symphony', which would have imposed a specific musical structure, as well as the expression 'symphonic poem', which would imply that the music was descriptive in nature. 'Sketches' was a wise choice,

precisely because it neatly conveys that the music is meant to do no more than provide an impression.

Debussy required a large symphony orchestra for *La Mer*, although this is not particularly obvious in listening to the music. He employs this array of instruments to generate an unending kaleidoscope of sound, which is not merely a feature of his orchestration. He creates a palette of colour variations of which a painter would be proud, with almost atonal albeit gentle harmonies and subtle flashes of melody. This can be heard from the very opening of the first movement, depicting the sea from sunrise to midday. Debussy introduces us to the tenebrous break of day at sea. The midnight blue tints gradually give way to grey and finally orange as the first rays of sunshine appear, against a constant rocking background of the waves. Debussy opens the work with a dark orchestral palette, virtually devoid of rhythm, melody or harmony. He gradually builds this into a recognisable cadence, with repetitions of chords, ultimately giving way to the fresh melodic line of the risen sun. The play of the waves in the second movement is represented by the unending, sparkling movement of the waves, constant but ever-varying. Debussy here and there deploys the full strength of the orchestra in the storm of the final movement. But this is no Wagnerian hurricane; rather a turbulent sea, deriving endless delight from the squalls of the wind.

*La Mer* did not enjoy a favourable reception when it was first performed. This was partly due to the technically unaccomplished performance by the Orchestre Lamoureux conducted by Camille Chevillard. In addition,

Debussy had fallen seriously foul of public opinion by abandoning his wife for the singer Emma Bardac. One of the reviewers had this sarcastic comment to make about the first movement: "The section between 9.15 and 9.30 was particularly captivating." Audiences were soon won over, however, and this became Debussy's most performed composition, which it has remained to this very day.

Maurice Ravel is always mentioned in the same breath as Debussy as being the most important representative of impressionism. His thoughts on this were much more subtle. Like Debussy, he also objected to the term 'impressionism'. He felt that Debussy was a true impressionist, while arguing that he by contrast had moved in an entirely different direction. There is an element of truth in this. Whereas Debussy occupied himself spontaneously and intuitively with looking for new sounds, Ravel placed much more emphasis on the effect that the sounds could have in the context of a musical story.

One of these dazzling impressionist tales was the suite *Mother Goose (Ma Mère l'Oye)*. Ravel was fond of children, although he never married and had no children himself. He never forgot that he had been a child himself, cherishing these memories. When he encountered children he was always able to set his maturity to one side, re-entering the world of childhood. This may partly explain his dedication as a collector of mechanical toys. Between 1908 and 1910, he wrote a simple suite of piano pieces for four hands for the children of some friends, inspired by a few fairy tales that he took in part from the *Tales of Mother Goose* by Charles Perrault. Albeit the music was not

technically difficult, the subtlety of the sound and melodies imbued the work with extreme refinement. This became clearly evident when he subsequently arranged to work for orchestra, refining the music even further with the larger orchestral sound palette. Ravel used this orchestral version in 1912 for a ballet. This involved rearranging the individual movements into a narrative context. Ravel set the work around the tale of Sleeping Beauty, who fell asleep for 100 years after pricking her finger on the fatal spinning-wheel. Some of her dreams are retold in the other movements of the suite. He extended this music by adding a prelude and introductory scene, as well as writing transitions between the various movements. Ravel sets these fairy tales to music with a great sense of detail. We actually hear Sleeping Beauty pricking herself and slowly descending into sleep along with everyone else in the castle. The contrabassoon solo, expressing the loving but timid monster from Beauty and the Beast, and the warbling of the birds in Tom Thumb are highly expressive. Finally, the closing scene, in which the Prince embraces Sleeping Beauty in his arms, is truly and movingly beautiful.

Kees Wisse

*Translation: Bruce Gordon / Muse Translations*



## **Antonello Manacorda**

Antonello Manacorda is currently Artistic Director of Kammerakademie Potsdam, a position he has held since 2010, and Principal Conductor of Het Gelders Orkest in The Netherlands since 2011.

A prolific opera and symphonic conductor, Manacorda has worked with many of the leading ensembles and opera houses. The 2016-17 season saw his acclaimed debuts with the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Camerata Salzburg and the SWR Sinfonieorchester, plus titles at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Frankfurt Opera, La Monnaie and the Komische Oper.

Manacorda recently completed a celebrated Schubert Symphony cycle for Sony Classical with the Kammerakademie Potsdam, which was met with high praise, including one being listed in *Die Welt's* top ten CDs of 2013 and the recordings were awarded an ECHO Klassik in 2015 for Ensemble/Orchestra of the year. He has also recorded a CD of Mahler's 4th Symphony with Het Gelders Orkest and soprano Lisa Larsson, which was released in November 2014 by Challenge Records. His current recording project for Sony Classical is a Mendelssohn symphony cycle with the Kammerakademie Potsdam, with the first two releases already achieving much praise from the international press.

The 2015-16 season included debuts at the Theater an der Wien conducting Rossini's *Otello* with the Wiener Symphoniker and in August 2016 he conducted Berlioz' *Béatrice et Benedict* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra for his

Glyndebourne Festival debut. He will return to the Theater an der Wien during the 17-18 season to conduct Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and will make his subscription debut with the Wiener Symphoniker. Other highlights of the current season include a return to La Monnaie and Frankfurt Opera and his debut with the Dresden Philharmonic.

Manacorda has also conducted the Frankfurt Radio Symphony, Gothenburg Symphony, Helsinki Philharmonic, BBC Philharmonic, Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana, Teatro la Fenice, Swedish Chamber Orchestra and conducted the Mozarteumorchester in a performance of Schubert's *Alfonso und Estrella* in Salzburg as part of the Mozartwoche. In February 2014 he conducted a Beethoven Cycle over four consecutive days in Potsdam with Kammerakademie Potsdam, and is also a regular guest every year at the Concertgebouw with Het Gelders Orkest. He also has a long-standing relationship with Teatro La Fenice, and the director Damiano Michieletto, and returned to La Fenice in November 2015 to conduct *The Magic Flute*.

A founder-member of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra Antonello Manacorda was its vice-president and concertmaster for eight years. A scholarship from De Sono in his home town of Turin allowed him to pursue his goal of becoming a conductor by enabling him to study with Jorma Panula for two years in Helsinki. From 2003-06 he was Artistic Director for chamber music at the Académie Européenne de Musique du Festival d'Aix en Provence.



### **Het Gelders Orkest**

Driven by musical ambition, inspired by the public and attached to their environment. That is Het Gelders Orkest. They share their passion for classical music with people of all ages in Gelderland and beyond. They perform famous and lesser-known works, and appear with world-renowned soloists, young stars and great guest conductors. Their musicians grow and shine under the direction of chief conductor Antonello Manacorda. As a youthful 'old soul', his ability to fuse the emotions of the audience and the orchestra is second to none.

Het Gelders Orkest strives to touch as many people as possible. That is why they organise not only symphonic concerts but also a surprising array of alternative musical encounters and adventurous crossovers, in the form of children's concerts, educational and amateur projects, films and workshops.

This High Definition Surround Recording was Produced, Engineered and Edited by Bert van der Wolf of NorthStar Recording Services, using the 'High Quality Musical Surround Mastering' principle. The basis of this recording principle is a realistic and holographic 3 dimensional representation of the musical instruments, voices and recording venue, according to traditional concert practice. For most older music this means a frontal representation of the musical performance, but such that width and depth of the ensemble and acoustic characteristics of the hall do resemble 'real life' as much as possible. Some older compositions, and many contemporary works do specifically ask for placement of musical instruments and voices over the full 360 degrees sound scape, and in these cases the recording is as realistic as possible, within the limits of the 5.1 Surround Sound standard. This requires a very innovative use of all 6 loudspeakers and the use of completely matched, full frequency range loudspeakers for all 5 discrete channels. A complementary sub-woofer, for the ultra low frequencies under 40Hz, is highly recommended to maximally benefit from the sound quality of this recording.

This recording was produced with the use of Sonodore microphones, Avalon Acoustic monitoring, Siltech Mono-Crystal cabling and dCS - & Merging Technologies converters.



[www.northstarconsult.nl](http://www.northstarconsult.nl)

## Het Gelders Orkest *neemt je mee*

Executive producer: Anne de Jong

Recording: Northstar Recording Services BV

Recorded at: Muzenzaal Musis (Ravel) & Parkzaal Musis (Debussy), Arnhem (the Netherlands)

Recording dates: 27 & 29 August 2013 (Ravel), 27-29 June 2017 (Debussy)

Producer, balance engineer, editing & mastering: Bert van der Wolf

Recording assistants: Brendon Heinst (Ravel), Martijn van der Wolf (Debussy)

A&R Challenge Classics: Anne de Jong

Liner notes: Kees Wisse

Translation: Bruce Gordon / Muse Translations

Booklet editing: Boudewijn Hagemans

Cover photo & photo Antonello Manacorda: Nikolaj Lund

Photo Het Gelders Orkest: René Knoop

Product coordination: Boudewijn Hagemans

Graphic Design: Natasja Wallenburg & Juan Carlos Villarroel, [newartsint.com](http://newartsint.com)

[www.challengerecords.com](http://www.challengerecords.com) / [www.hetgeldersorkest.nl](http://www.hetgeldersorkest.nl)



