



Walter Gieseking Debussy Preludes



Book 1: A definitive version. Tackling them afresh - this is no re-issue - Gieseking brings to the wonderful collection of pieces all the qualities of poetry they require. Debussy, exacting from the piano more and more colour and effect, set his sights high, but every nuance, every shade of balance, and every inflection of tempo are fully realised on this occasion.

The Preludes are for the most part intimate and domestic, and reasonably simple as far as the plain notes are concerned. So Gieseking, very appropriately, plays them in an intimate manner. But now and again there is a flurry, and a surge of activity in the music, and here the domestic pianist is caught out; but not, of course, Gieseking, who uses his abundant technical resources not to exhibit himself, but to enable his masterly control of the shape of the music to be kept fully operative throughout the occasional whirlwind-in the middle of *Voiles*, for example, where for a few bars tonality and animation emerge from the shadows of the whole-tone scale; or in *La danse de Puck*, where the decoration points, without interrupting, the basic rhythm in a masterly way...

Book 2: Only a supremely optimistic or a very vain pianist will attempt to record these Preludes now that Gieseking has done so. Neither the playing nor the recording can be faulted; after all, he has for years been the chief exponent of Debussy's piano music outside France, and I very much doubt whether any French pianist could better these performances. Gieseking has both the understanding and the technique for conveying the half-lights and shadowy understatement in these pieces, as also the humour that *General Lavine* and *Samuel Pickwick* need. Anyone who already has the first book of Preludes recorded by the same artist in 1954 will automatically buy this set, and I hope many other people will do so too.

M.M.; R.F., The Gramophone, January 1954; November 1955 - *reviews of original LP issues, excerpts*

Transfer notes

For many, Walter Gieseking's Debussy is definitive, and perhaps nowhere more so than here, in the *Preludes*. These recordings, made for EMI LP issues towards the end of the pianist-composer's life, followed recordings for 78s made in the 1930s and for an American Columbia double-LP in 1951. Previous reissues have struggled to recreate the full tone of Gieseking's piano across the exceptionally wide dynamic range Debussy demands, and remastering these recordings requires constant attention to ensure tape hiss levels don't obscure the quietest passages, whilst preventing any damage from heavy-handed application of digital noise reduction. At times the EMI microphone has also captured the energetic breaths of the performer - these I have not attempted to excise. The use of Capstan pitch stabilisation software has ensured a particularly solid tone which, coupled with 32-bit XR remastering, has helped to give particularly realistic body and glorious life to the sound of the instrument. **A.R.**

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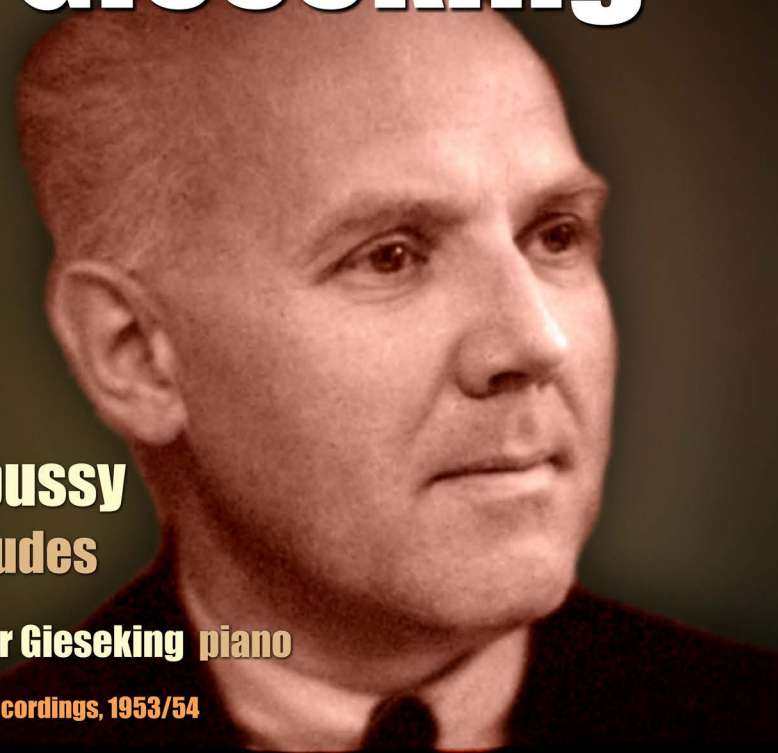
Gieseking



Debussy Preludes

Walter Gieseking piano

Studio recordings, 1953/54



Debussy Preludes

Book 1

- 1 I. Danseuses de Delphes: *Lent et grave* (3:09)
- 2 II. Voiles: *Modéré* (2:43)
- 3 III. Le vent dans la plaine: *Animé* (1:58)
- 4 IV. «Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir»: *Modéré* (3:28)
- 5 V. Les collines d'Anacapri: *Très modéré* (2:45)
- 6 VI. Des pas sur la neige: *Triste et lent* (3:28)
- 7 VII. Ce qu'a vu le vent d'ouest: *Animé et tumultueux* (2:44)
- 8 VIII. La fille aux cheveux de lin: *Très calme et doucement expressif* (2:22)
- 9 IX. La sérénade interrompue: *Modérément animé* (2:12)
- 10 X. La cathédrale engloutie: *Profondément calme* (6:29)
- 11 XI. La danse de Puck: *Capricieux et léger* (2:23)
- 12 XII. Minstrels: *Modéré* (2:13)

Book 2

- 13 I. Brouillards: *Modéré* (2:43)
- 14 II. Feuilles mortes: *Lent et mélancolique* (3:02)
- 15 III. La Puerta del Vina: *Mouvement de Habanera* (2:48)
- 16 IV. «Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses»: *Rapide et léger* (2:46)
- 17 V. Bruyères: *Calme* (2:33)
- 18 VI. Général Lavine - eccentric: *Dans le style et le mouvement d'un Cakewalk* (2:26)
- 19 VII. La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune: *Lent* (3:48)
- 20 VIII. Ondine: *Scherzando* (2:54)
- 21 IX. Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C.: *Grave* (2:08)
- 22 X. Canope: *Très calme et doucement triste* (2:45)
- 23 XI. Les tierces alternées: *Modérément animé* (2:25)
- 24 XII. Feux d'artifice: *Modérément animé* (3:22)

Walter Gieseeking piano

XR remastering by
Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of **Walter Gieseeking**

Preludes Book 1

Recorded 12-16 August 1953, Studio 3,
Abbey Road, London
Issued as Columbia LP 33CX1098

Preludes Book 2

Recorded 9-10 December 1954, Studio 3,
Abbey Road, London
Issued as Columbia LP 33CX1304

Total duration: **69:34**

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