

"A third pianist who has been more and more active on the recording scene is the Czech-born Rudolf Firkušný, whose latest Capitol disk is devoted to popular pieces by Debussy.

The word that comes to mind to describe Firkušný's playing here is "fresh." He is poised, rhythmically alert and completely to the point. Never does he over-pedal, and never does he hold back or resort to a dubious emotional effect. There is something absolutely dewy about these clean-sounding performances and the ultra-efficient, tasteful manner in which Firkušný makes his points. The quality of recorded sound, too, is extraordinarily lifelike.

It might be well to point out that Firkušný's Debussy is quite different from that of a great exponent like Gieseking. Gieseking was the impressionist par excellence, and he probably knew more about pedal technique than any living pianist. Firkušný eschews pedal effects and relies more upon finger work and a sparer texture. He does not achieve the color effects that Gieseking obtained, but what he does achieve adds up to some of the most natural-sounding and pianistic Debussy playing that this listener has heard in a long time."

Harold C. Schonberg, *The New York Times*, 26 October, 1958

"Gieseking has cornered the market in Debussy recordings. Firkušný, a versatile and often subtle pianist, plays the *Estampes* very attractively, with an excellent grasp of their diverse rhythms and motions, using a subdued, delicate but not dull palette. But his readings are not fired by the genius that informs Gieseking's performance (on Columbia 33CX1137), which is compound of beauties in pedalling, touch, and inflection, and sounds far more evocative. Firkušný's *Children's Corner Suite* is slightly lacking in imaginative flair (lasting only 15½ minutes, it takes one whole side, which is pretty poor value for a 12-inch LP), Gieseking's superlative account of the *Suite Bergamasque*, issued on 78s and then withdrawn, still awaits microgroove publication. Impatient people, who already have the *Children's Corner* and *Estampes*, will probably be tempted by the Decca MP, LW5278, on which Friedrich Gulda plays the Suite in a shapely way. Firkušný, like Gulda, makes the elements of claveciniste pastiche the starting-point of his interpretation, but he comes nearer than the Austrian pianist to finding the sudden romantic flecks and gleams which Gieseking realised so perfectly. He plays *Clair de lune* very well. Admirable recording."

Andrew Porter, *The Gramophone*, November 1957

Rudolf Firkušný made two LP sets of music by Debussy in the 1950s for Capitol. Alas despite making these recordings in 1956 and 1958, both were mono, and to modern ears sound somewhat flat and dull as a result both of this and of the microphone used at the time. These Ambient Stereo XR remasters offer significant sonic improvements to both sets of recordings, as well as correcting some wavering pitch issues which affected both releases.

Andrew Rose



firkušný plays debussy

PRISTINE
AUDIO

PAKM 095

DEBUSSY CHILDREN'S CORNER - ESTAMPES - DEUX ARABESQUES - SUITE BERGAMASQUE
RUDOLF FIRKUŠNÝ

PAKM 095

PRISTINE
AUDIO

DEBUSSY Suite Bergamasque

1. Prélude (3:48)
2. Menuet (3:39)
3. Clair de lune (4:37)
4. Passepied (3:37)

DEBUSSY Estampes

5. Pagodes (4:49)
6. La soirée dans Grenade (5:12)
7. Jardins sous la pluie (3:50)

DEBUSSY Children's Corner

8. Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum (2:16)
9. Jimbo's Lullaby (3:31)
10. Serenade for the Doll (2:46)
11. The Snow Is Dancing (2:11)
12. The Little Shepherd (2:16)
13. Golliwog's Cake-walk (2:46)
14. DEBUSSY Images, livre 1 - 1. Reflets dans l'eau (4:28)

DEBUSSY Deux arabesques

15. 1. Andantino con moto (3:45)
16. 2. Allegretto scherzando (3:14)

DEBUSSY Préludes, livre 1

17. 10. La cathédrale engloutie (6:38)
18. 12. Minstrels (1:58)

Rudolf Firkušný, piano

XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a photograph of Rudolf Firkušný

Recorded Studio A,
Capitol 46th St. Studios
New York City

Tracks 1-13:
10, 11, 22 May 1956

Tracks 14-18:
23, 24, 27 January 1958

Total duration: 65:21

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