

Cambria

Keyboard Series

Jack Richard Crossan

SOUNDS AND PERFUMES

Ravel • Cyril Scott • Debussy





JACK RICHARD CROSSAN

SINGLE-TAKE CONCERT PERFORMANCES

*In this album, the performances are recorded in single-takes. The interpretations are spontaneous and virtually "live" because the pieces are heard as they were performed. All of Mr. Crossan's performances in this new **Cambria Keyboard Series** are recorded in single-takes. In fact, many of the works are "first take" interpretations. No editing was performed and only minimal equalization employed. The pianist is heard just as he sounded on the day he recorded.*

Introduction

There is a fascinating correlation between the use of light and color in the paintings of Manet and Cezanne, and the delicate colors and tonal nuances in the music of the Impressionistic period. An analogy might be drawn between the varied dots and patterns in Impressionistic paintings and the shifting rhythmic patterns in music of that time.

There is an atmospheric veneer in Debussy's music, which is probably a product of his harmonic ambiguity. Tonality was becoming more obscure in his music, and in the music of other early 20th century composers. Characteristics of his music include poly-tonality, modality, pentatonics, the whole-tone scale, and a highly sophisticated rhythmic structure featuring poly-rhythms and cross-rhythms and much more.

Debussy, Ravel and many other French composers have attributes that might be termed (French), attributes that seem to ignore style differences and historical periods. These include clarity, economy and an intuitive source of inspiration, rather than an intellectualized kind. Refinement, charm, elegance and effervescence abound, and French expressivity avoids sentimentality. There is subtle humor, even a more pointed and satirical kind of humor noticeable in Ravel and later in Poulenc.

Debussy did not like to be categorized as an Impressionist. He was intent on developing his own distinct musical style, and succeeded admirably. The composer created a new musical language, in which elements of both Impressionism and Symbolism are present; a superb example is his operatic masterpiece, *Pelleas and Melisande*.

Although both 19th and 20th Century composers were inspired by literary and poetic sources, they differed in the ways they treated their subjects. Liszt in his *Legend II, St. Francis Walking on the Waves* and Berlioz in his *Symphonie Fantastique* were quite literal in their depiction of the narratives. On the other hand, Debussy and Ravel expressed their inward response to the story or poem. Natural phenomena inspired Debussy, but rather than trying to describe a storm in his music, he expressed his psychological response. A most effective example is *What the West Wind Hath Wrought*

from Preludes I. Ravel used many of the same harmonic materials as Debussy, but his style is characterized by a decided classical emphasis. There is also a strong Russian influence from when Ravel heard Rimsky-Korsakoff conduct the works of Moussorgsky, and that influence is evident in the shining brilliance and intensity of his orchestrations.

Parisian critics of that time over-dramatized the rivalry between Debussy and Ravel, which was actually tempered with real respect. After hearing Ravel's *Valse Nobles*, Debussy called Ravel's ear "*the finest in the world.*" His *Habanera*, which evolved into the *Rapsodie Espagnole* for Orchestra, unquestionably inspired Debussy's glowing piano work, *Evening in Granada*. Ravel was an ardent admirer of Debussy's *Sarabande* (from *Pour le Piano*), and he complimented Debussy by orchestrating the *Sarabande* in 1903. The original piano version is heard in this recording.

This disc has one unusual feature, a "renaissance" of Cyril Scott's piano music. Scott's music is utterly unpretentious with charm, humor, and melodic appeal. The works performed are a reflection of their time and display the composer's unusual romantic/impressionistic blend, which retains its appeal to this day.

Jack Crossan

About The CoverArtist

The son of professional musicians, Paul Gray studied at Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles. He was also a protege of renowned artist Peter Krasnow. His studies were interrupted by service in World War II where he was awarded two purple hearts. Mr. Gray's "Musical Compositions in Art Form", such as the cover on this CD, are inspired by his professional career as a contrabassist with many film studio orchestras and jazz combos. His art works are in over 70 collections including Percy Faith, Henry Mancini, Meredith Willson, the film director Henry Koster and three major film studios.

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

Maurice Ravel was born in the Basque village of Ciboure, Spain, but soon afterwards his parents relocated to Paris. A slow starter, he began piano at 6, but did not blossom until he worked with Charles-Rene at 12, where the emphasis was on basic harmony. This stimulated Maurice to write his first piece, *Variations on a Chorale by Schumann* which already revealed hints of the mature Ravel.

At fourteen he entered the Paris Conservatoire and remained a student for the next sixteen years! No more destined to become a piano virtuoso than Debussy, he did become friends with Ricardo Vines, later a prominent French pianist, who championed his piano works for many years.

Just as Javanese and Annamite musicians had inspired Debussy, they also excited Ravel, who had a life-long fascination with the exotic. Chabrier, Satie and the painter Manet also influenced his style, and his great teacher, composer Gabriel Faure, developed a most sensitive rapport with the maturing Ravel. Faure brought out Ravel's individuality without imposing his own style on his student,-- the mark of a superb teacher.

The *Rapsodie Espagnole* and *Pavane pur une Infante difunte* were very successful, and remain favorites. *Jeux d'eau* was his first major piano work followed by the *Quartet for Strings*, which was dedicated to Faure. Faure's letter to Ravel about the work is a classic: "*In the name of the gods of music, and in mine, do not touch a single note of what you have written in your Quartet!*" Ravel did not, and the 1904 premiere was a huge success.

Ravel then composed three great works: *Introduction and Allegro for Harp and Strings*, *Sonatine* and *Miroirs* for piano. At this time the Paris critics were busy dramatizing the rivalry between Debussy and Ravel who became "l'enfant terrible" of French music in the early 1900s. Undaunted, he produced his charming *Mother Goose Suite* and the virtuosic piano work, *Gaspard de la Nuit*. The monumental *Daphnis et Chloe* was commissioned by Diaghilev, and successfully performed by the Russian Ballet in 1912.

Valses Nobles et Sentimentales (in this recording) was originally composed for piano, and later orchestrated in a ballet version. Both versions show a wide range

of Ravel's musical personality. Rollo Myers in his *Modern French Music* eulogizes this work: "Here is the quintessence of Ravel's very individual blend of sophisticated sensitivity."

La Valse followed the composer's state of depression from his World War I military experience and the sudden death of his beloved mother just a few days after his discharge. Although *La Valse* is popular now, Diaghilev turned it down as a ballet possibility when the idea was broached. However, the composer had a big success with the orchestrated version of his piano work, *Tombeau de Couperin*, and accepted an invitation to tour the United States in 1927. The tour was a triumph and the most strenuous effort of his life. He met Gershwin, who played the *Rhapsody in Blue* for Ravel. When Gershwin asked to study with him, the composer replied "You might lose your melodic spontaneity and write bad Ravel!"

He composed his most popular orchestral work, the *Bolero*, after returning to Paris. During the final period of his writing Ravel produced two magnificent works: the *G major Piano Concerto* and the *Concerto for Left Hand Alone*. His health was rapidly declining and the composer died following brain surgery in 1937.

Ravel was once asked about his place alongside Debussy. He gave a most discerning reply, saying that his place next to Debussy was like the relationship of Haydn to Mozart. No one could have said it better!

Cyril Scott (1879-1970)

Cyril Scott was called by conductor Sir Eugene Goossens "The father of British Modern Music."

However, his place in early 20th Century music is difficult to assess. His style might best be described as romantic music in impressionistic dress! Scott was known and performed throughout Western Europe, the Orient, and the United States. However, his music was never fully accepted in his native England, and in his autobiography *Bone of Contention*, (1969), he attributed his problems to England's academia of that time. They reacted negatively to Scott's break with "musical traditions," at least from their perspective.

Leading artists of that time performed Scott's works. Acclaimed violinist

Fritz Kreisler played the composer's most famous piece, *Lotus Land* on world tours, transcribing it for violin and piano. (The original piano version is heard in this recording). His friendship with Debussy and Ravel is described in his autobiography. Ravel often asked Scott for advice about his music, and played excerpts from new works in progress to get Scott's reaction. Several years before Debussy's death in 1918, Scott was encouraged by the composer to expand on the path he was then pursuing. Richard Strauss was another Scott enthusiast.

As a boy, Cyril Scott displayed remarkable musical potential. His family was highly supportive and sent him to Frankfurt-am-Main, where over an extended period of time he studied with several prominent musicians of the day including Humperdinck and Ivan Knorr; within a few years Scott was teaching in Liverpool. Between 1900 and 1903, two of Scott's symphonies were given public performances in Germany and England along with other orchestral works. His *Symphony No. 2* was premiered in London at a Promenade Concert.

In 1920 Cyril Scott toured the United States, and among his appearances he was featured as soloist in his *Concerto No. 1 for Piano and Orchestra* with Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra.

His first opera, *The Alchemist*, was performed in Essen five years later and featured his own libretto. Scott composed three operas, all of which were successful. His complete works include three symphonies, three ballets, a symphonic poem, three violin concertos, a cello and harpsichord concerto, several overtures and suites, two piano quintets and many chamber works. He wrote hundreds of piano pieces and over 100 songs.

The composer was also a dedicated student of the Occult Sciences, a Theosophist and author of several books on diverse subjects such as Plato, Christianity, medicine and the Occult. In his autobiography, Scott showed himself to have a wonderful sense of humor, and a refreshing ability not to take himself too seriously. Since he believed in reincarnation, if things did not work out quite as well as he hoped in his present life, Scott always knew that he might do better in another!

Continuing to compose throughout his life, Scott lived beyond age 90. He would be the first to admit that he leaned on harmonic cliches a little too much.

However, his music has delightful romantic sentiment and a highly individual flair. Crossan includes four Scott piano works in this recording with the hope of renewing interest in this composer, who deserves re-examination.

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Paris-born Claude Debussy began piano lessons at 7 and displayed such exceptional musical potential that he was accepted as a student at the Paris Conservatoire in 1872 at the age of ten! He studied Solfege with Lavignac, piano with Marmontel, and four years later began harmony with Durand; that same year he composed his first songs. At fifteen he won first prize in Solfege and second in piano. Two years later, when he failed to win first prize in piano, his parents despaired of his ever becoming a virtuoso. However, at eighteen he did win first prize in score-reading, and that enabled him to enter a composition class. It was then that Debussy decided to become a composer, in spite of a dramatic confrontation with the Director of the Paris Conservatoire, composer Massenet, who threatened to expel Debussy when he rebelled against the Director's traditionalism, much in evidence in the teaching of Solfege and Harmony at that time. Debussy was intent on experimentation and finding his own style even that early in his development. Soon afterwards, the course of his life changed radically when he met Tchaikowsky's patroness, Mme Von Meck, who was so impressed that she engaged him as her domestic musician and tutor for her children in Switzerland and Italy.

After returning to Paris he was accepted by Guiraud as a composition student, and at nineteen began to prepare for the *Grand Priz de Rome*. Debussy won the first *Priz de Rome* with his lyric scene, *The Prodigal Son*. In Rome he met Liszt, Verdi, Leoncavallo and in Vienna, Brahms. The young composer heard Wagner's operas in Bayreuth, and Moussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* in Paris. He was inspired by Javanese and Annamite musicians in Paris, and their music had a great influence on his style.

After reading Maeterlinck's *Pelleas and Melisande*, the 30-year old composer was so moved that he began to compose incidental music for his later operatic masterpiece, and in 1894 completed the first version of the work. That same year his *Afternoon of a Faun* was performed, but received little attention; and in 1895 he began

his great piano suite, *Pour le Piano*.

Two momentous events occurred in Debussy's life in 1900. His superb *Nocturnes* for Orchestra were performed and he married for the first time. Then came the first performance of the final version of *Pelleas* which received a mixed reaction, and created a furor at the Opera Comique! Four years later Debussy abandoned his wife, who later attempted suicide, and began his epic choreographic poem for orchestra, *La Mer*. A few years later he conducted both *Afternoon of a Faun* and *La Mer* in London to great success. He then began his second opera, *Fall of the House of Usher*, based on Poe's famous story. The world rights were sold to the Metropolitan Opera, but the work was never completed.

In 1908, his delightful piano work, the *Children's Corner Suite* was published. The following year, Debussy was diagnosed with cancer, which coincided with the triumph of *Pelleas and Melisande* at Covent Garden. During this period Nijinsky produced for Diaghilev a ballet based on *Afternoon of a Faun*, but the project did not receive the composer's approval.

By 1915 a series of monumental piano works were completed including the *24 Preludes* for Piano, *En Blanc et Noir*, the *12 Etudes*, and two *Sonatas*. Debussy underwent a serious operation for cancer that same year, and remained ill for the rest of his life. He completed his final work, the *Sonata for Violin and Piano*, just before his death in Paris in 1918.

The influence of Claude Debussy on 20th Century music has been far-reaching. His influence on such French composers as Ravel, Poulenc, Ibert and others is obvious. The composer's influence on pianists and especially on the piano's technical and tonal development is monumental. Debussy revolutionized the piano as much in the 20th Century as Liszt did in the 19th.

THE MUSIC MAURICE RAVEL

Valses Nobles et Sentimentales (Eight Waltzes)

[1] This is a real "curtain-raiser" with great vigor, virtuosic excitement, fascinating syncopations, and much dissonance for its time. The mood is biting and sardonic.

[2] A deeply expressive waltz, glowing with the most lovely harmonic coloring. There is a feeling of restraint, which points up the emotional intensity.

[3] Waltz three is a gleaming and tinkling waltz imbued with the childlike spirit Ravel expressed in his *Mother Goose Suite*. He evokes a fairyland atmosphere and creates a kind of sophisticated naivete.

[4] Waltz four reflects a nostalgic recall of the Viennese Waltz, perhaps a little reminiscent of the composer's *La Valse*. There is the most subtle use of chromatic harmony. It is utterly charming and truly a two-page masterpiece!

[5] Ravel asks for "intimacy and sentiment" from the pianist, and these words describe the mood perfectly.

[6] The sixth waltz has great rhythmic charm, created by the most effective use of cross-accents. There are lovely colorings throughout and a kind of breezy mood. Its extreme brevity leaves the listener wishing for more.

[7] This was the finale of the ballet version of the waltzes, which Ravel orchestrated. The A section has great verve and intensely sensuous beauty--plus a grand climax. The B section is rather bittersweet in mood with several passionate outbursts. There are lacy rhythmic figures and slightly dissonant harmonic coloring, and this section makes a striking contrast to the A section.

[8] The closing waltz is entitled Epilogue. Ravel weaves themes from the other waltzes into a most intriguing and atmospheric movement, and creates great nostalgia.

CYRIL SCOTT

[9] **LOTUS LAND:** This is Scott's best-known piece. Originally for piano, it is euphoric and atmospheric and highly improvisatory, suggesting the dream-world of the opium smoker. The composer had traveled to the Orient where he became fascinated with Eastern mysticism. **Lotus Land** remains a work of great tonal beauty and melodic appeal.

[10] **COURANTE:** From the *Pastoral Suite*, this movement is another example of early 20th Century composers writing in archaic dance forms. It is cloaked in harmonies influenced by Debussy and Ravel, although the music is highly individual in style. Sentimental, fragile, and lovely to listen to.

[11] **ETUDE No. 1:** This Etude is witty, light-hearted and delightful. The A section is ebullient and whimsical by turns. The B Section is lyrical and ad lib, and provides an effective transition to the recap. The Codetta is a romp.

[12] **ETUDE No. 2:** "Jaunty" might be an apt description of the mood of this piece. It is full of humor, syncopation and jazzy fun. The B section reaches a dynamic and colorful climax, and there is a wild accelerando near the end that creates a breathless and impish conclusion.

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

In selecting his Debussy repertoire, the pianist makes a special point of including music from three of the composer's greatest works for piano: The suite Pour Le Piano, the Preludes and the Children's Corner Suite. Some of these selections are identified with Crossan's tours and live performances on PBS.

[13] **ARABESQUE No. 1:** Both Arabesques are from 1888 when Debussy was in his mid-twenties. This arabesque is a lovely, melodic piece and has retained its appeal to this day. Unabashedly romantic, it has a masterfully-designed improvisation in the middle section. A slight tinge of later Debussy is heard in some imaginative tonal

colorings here and there.

[14] **ARABESQUE No. 2:** This Arabesque was probably inspired by Schumann. It is bright, capricious and charming, and features flitting triplet figures. Some interesting parallelisms in fourths appear in the middle section, and the structure is motivic throughout. Beneath its naivete there is superb craftsmanship, already apparent at this stage in the composer's development.

[15] **SARABANDE (*Pour le Piano Suite*):** This dignified, refined movement actually began as a sexy, enticing dance in Spain. It later evolved into its present form, and was included in suites by leading Baroque composers. At the time that Debussy composed this work, many other early 20th Century composers were writing in archaic dance forms, and dressing them up in the then "modern" mode. This *Sarabande* has grace, symmetry and a sublime nobility. The composer's maturity of style is enhanced by the most ravishing harmonic beauty.

[16] **LA PLUS QUE LENTE:** Floating and evocative, this piece creates a dream-like atmosphere. Only in the forte section and a few later reminders does the listener feel the "lift" of the waltz and a lilt that brightens the mood. Mostly this work is cloaked in dark hues and creates a nebulous mood much of the time. Crossan's interpretation is marked by a refinement so often associated with Debussy's style.

[17] **MAID WITH THE FLAXEN HAIR:** This enchanting Prelude is from Book One of the *Preludes*; it expresses a young girl's charm and sweetness. The famed violinist Jascha Heifetz featured his own transcription of this piece.

[18] **DR. GRADUS AD PARNASSUM:** This humorous little sketch begins the *Children's Corner Suite*. All six pieces from this miniature masterpiece were inspired by Debussy's daughter, nick-named "Chou-Chou." At six she loved to play the piano but hated to practice exercises. The music illustrates her tantrums over Clementi exercises. In the middle she becomes bored and entertains herself by "ad-libbing."

Reluctantly she resumes the exercises, but her impatience shows as she plays faster and faster, angrily ending her ordeal with a loud bang in the low bass.

JACK RICHARD CROSSAN

When an artist loves music as deeply as this pianist does, it pervades all aspects of his life. In fact, music-making is a way of life for Crossan. Although he has been tempted to specialize in a particular style or composer, he has resisted the urge. However, he will be the first to admit that he has a special affinity for Bach, Schumann, Chopin and Debussy. Book One (complete) of Debussy's **Preludes** has been featured by him on his tours and on PBS. Critics have commented on Crossan's "power and passion" and "sheer poetry" when he plays Schumann's epic **Fantasia**, Op. 17. One of his Cambria CDs, an anthology of Chopin and Liszt works, features his interpretation of seven Chopin **Nocturnes** and Liszt's **St. Francis Walking on the Waves** and **Ballade II** among others.

The pianist's perspective on his earliest public playing (from 7 on) is very thoughtful. The California-born artist is thankful that he was not exploited, but was given the opportunity to develop more gradually. By his early teens he was playing complete solo recitals on regional tours and he knew the standard concerto repertoire. At 18 his performance of Franck's **Symphonic Variations** was co-sponsored by the Hollywood Bowl and NBC, and immediately he was asked to record his first series of solo releases, broadcast to millions over the AFRS Networks.

He made his formal West Coast recital debut as an Undergraduate at the University of Southern California. Crossan's Bach, Schubert, Chopin, Scriabin and Debussy repertoire earned critical praise of his "big, round tone" and "digital facility of one born to play the piano." Conductor/composer Ingolf Dahl selected him from 24 pianists to play Mozart's **Concerto No. 22** and Dahl conducted the USC Symphony Orchestra. A great compliment was paid to the pianist when the famed baritone John Charles Thomas took him (without audition) across the country to play for the singer's final professional appearances in the East, followed by engagements in Las Vegas. Crossan was incredulous about being hired only on professional recommendation from

Thomas' colleagues, so in the midst of the performances he finally asked the singer what he would have done if he had not liked his playing. The singer answered: "Well, Boy, I would have just sent you right back on the plane!" Great baritone Igor Gorin was so impressed with Crossan's appearances with Thomas (who Gorin idolized), that Gorin engaged him to play his tour.

Upon graduation, the pianist won special recognition from the USC School of Music for the highest honors in performance and academic achievements. While completing his Master's, he was asked by the delightful opera and recital soprano Dorothy Warenskjold to play for her U. S. tours. She was so impressed with his playing that she arranged for him to audition for her manager at Columbia Artists Management in New York. The success of that audition launched Crossan on solo tours throughout Western United States, which later extended across the country.

Gershwin's own conductor, 80-year-old Dr. Charles Previn was at one of these recitals, and asked the pianist to learn Gershwin's **Concerto in F**. He did, and Previn conducted the performance. That performance was in a line of tradition extending 40 years earlier from Gershwin himself, then Oscar Levant, Andre Previn and finally to Jack Richard Crossan, again with the now veteran conductor at the podium. A flock of all-Gershwin concerts with many conductors and orchestras quickly developed, and the pianist added the **Rhapsody in Blue**, learned in three weeks while playing his usual 80 concerts a season. Even with all of his solo appearances, Crossan found time to play concerts with "first-chairs" of major symphony orchestras such as the Pittsburgh and Los Angeles Philharmonic, and many recitals on tour with Italian violinist Salvatore Accardo.

The Artist's discography now includes a best-selling series of LPs on the Westminster Gold label, a Grand Prix album, 12 international releases for AFRS and ten Janus Cassettes. His TV performances were nationally syndicated, and his interviews and performances on American Cablevision and PBS have increased the artist's scope and reputation. Worldwide classical airplay of Crossan's recordings was very extensive in the 80s, and his international status as a recording artist was secured. Crossan's extensive live credits include four appearances at California's Redlands Bowl. His final recital broke Bowl solo recital attendance records for 25 years.

This Debussy/Ravel/Scott CD joins his Chopin/Liszt release in Cambria's Keyboard Series. Piano aficionados can now enjoy his performances of a cross-section of great piano repertoire, representing some of his most penetrating interpretations.

Producer: Lance Bowling

Recorded at the Jack Taylor Studio (Jack's Place), Sierra Madre, California
September 21, 1994

Piano: Steingraeber & Söhne Concert Grand Model 205, Bayreuth, Germany

Piano Tuner: Allan Cate

Recording Engineer: John Strother, Penguin Recording

Assistant Engineer: Rose Landauer

Cover Painting: Paul Gray

Inside Photo of Mr. Crossan: Dean Schonfeld

Special Thanks: Claudie Perrière, Rosemary Pollard, Jack
Taylor, David Simpson, and George Horton

Program Notes by Mr. Crossan

*This recording is dedicated with special appreciation
to Claudie and Michel Perrière*

ABOUT THE PIANO

For this recording session, Mr. Crossan had the privilege to play a *Steingraeber & Söhne Chamber Concert Grand 205*. Since 1852, *Steingraeber & Söhne* instruments have been manufactured in Bayreuth, Bavaria and have continued to garner numerous international awards and prizes. Mr. Crossan especially appreciated the piano's response to the expressive nuance and tonal refinement of the impressionistic repertoire he performed.

SOUNDS AND PERFUMES

Jack Richard Crossan, piano

Cambria

CD-1086

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MAURICE RAVEL

Valses Nobles et Sentimentales

[1]	Modéré-très franc	1:19
[2]	Assez Lent-avec une expression intense	2:43
[3]	Moderé	1:25
[4]	Assez Animé	1:12
[5]	Presque lent-dans un sentiment intime	1:45
[6]	Vif	:43
[7]	Moins vif	2:53
[8]	Épilogue - Lent	3:54

CYRIL SCOTT

[9]	Lotus Land	4:50
[10]	Courante (<i>Pastoral Suite</i>)	2:13
[11]	Etude No. 1	2:38
[12]	Etude No. 2	2:23

CLAUDE DEBUSSY

[13]	Arabesque No. 1	4:04
[14]	Arabesque No. 2	3:27
[15]	Sarabande	5:44
[16]	La Plus que lente	4:41
[17]	The Maid with the Flaxen Hair (<i>Preludes I</i>)	2:14
[18]	Dr. Gradus ad Parnassum (<i>Children's Corner Suite</i>)	2:28

TOTAL TIME 51:27

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SOUNDS AND PERFUMES

Jack Richard Crossan

CAMBRIA CD-1086

Sounds and Perfumes

Jack Richard Crossan, piano
MAURICE RAVEL


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Valses Nobles et Sentimentales

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