

## Debussy: Orchestral Works, CD review

Stéphane Denève conducts the RSNO in a way that brings the poetic or visual pictures that inspired Debussy's music vividly and freshly to life, writes Geoffrey Norris.

★★★★★



Luminous: Stéphane Denève conducting the RSNO Photo: tom finnie



By [Geoffrey Norris](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturecritics/geoffreynorris/) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturecritics/geoffreynorris/>)

7:00AM BST 22 Jun 2012



[Comment](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/classicalcdreviews/9347455/Debussy-Orchestral-Works-CD-review.html#disqus_thread) ([http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/classicalcdreviews/9347455/Debussy-Orchestral-Works-CD-review.html#disqus\\_thread](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/classicalcdreviews/9347455/Debussy-Orchestral-Works-CD-review.html#disqus_thread))

### Royal Scottish National Orchestra, cond Stéphane Denève; Chandos CHSA 5102(2), 2 CDs, £22.99

Debussy was dismissive about his music being described as Impressionist. He regarded the works he composed as “realities”. Yes, he might be portraying in musical terms such elusive images as the sea, moonlight or a submerged cathedral, but his means for doing so were completely focused in matters of atmosphere, orchestration and impact.

This two-CD set from the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and Stéphane Denève underlines the point very well. Denève has clear ideas about the lucidity of Debussy's scoring and he conducts the orchestra in a way that brings the poetic or visual pictures that inspired the music vividly and freshly to life.

The RSNO has made French music something of a speciality during Denève's seven-year tenure as music director, which he leaves at the end of this season to be replaced by the Canadian Peter Oundjian. It is a happy coincidence that the 150th anniversary of Debussy's birth in 1862 falls this year, because it gives the RSNO/Denève collaboration a chance to go out on a particularly topical high with these discs. They present nine works here, ranging in date from the early *Printemps* (1887), through the *Nocturnes* (1897-9), *La Mer* (1903-5) and *Images* (1905-12), to Debussy's last original orchestral score, the Diaghilev ballet *Jeux* of 1913, together with the *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* that was to put Debussy firmly on the musical map in 1894. All are performed with finesse and with a combination of energy, discretion and colour that give them a luminous quality.

[Prom 69: RSNO / Deneve](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/proms/7986820/Proms-2010-Prom-69-RSNO-Stephane-Deneve-review.html) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/proms/7986820/Proms-2010-Prom-69-RSNO-Stephane-Deneve-review.html>)

[Philharmonia, Bedford Corn Exchange, review](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/classicalconcertreviews/7564138/Philharmonia-Bedford-Corn-Exchange-review.html) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/classicalconcertreviews/7564138/Philharmonia-Bedford-Corn-Exchange-review.html>)

[Swaying of Polish folk in an Eastern bazaar](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/classicalmusic/3654304/Swaying-of-Polish-folk-in-an-Eastern-bazaar.html) (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/classicalmusic/3654304/Swaying-of-Polish-folk-in-an-Eastern-bazaar.html>)

