

## Hot Springs Music Festival Reviews of our first three recordings of music by the Créole Romantics on Naxos CDs

Made of New Orleans  
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ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE Hot Springs has made the international music map with the release of recordings of music that premiered at last summer's Hot Springs Music Festival. Hong Kong-based classical recording company Naxos has released three CDs on its Naxos America label featuring Richard Rosenberg conducting the Hot Springs Music Festival Orchestra in 19th-century New Orleans "Creole Romantic" music by American/French composers. Rosenberg, the festival's artistic director, and the orchestra made the recordings June 3-12, 1999, in Hot Springs' First Christian Church and in Horner Hall in Hot Springs Convention Center, where they also performed the pieces in concert. The works on the recordings are pieces that Rosenberg discovered in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris in 1998 by New Orleans-born composers who had transplanted to France. Much of the music had lain unseen and unheard for more than 90 years. Rosenberg reconstructed into performance editions some of the orchestral music that, he says in the CD liner notes, "existed only in poorly edited, nearly illegible sheet music." He and the festival musicians gave world and/or modern premieres for 38 orchestral, chamber, vocal and piano works during the two-week 1999 festival.

The three CDs:

Louis Moreau Gottschalk: A Night in the Tropics (Naxos 8.559036) includes the first recording of Rosenberg's 1999 arrangement/completion of Gottschalk's *Symphonie romantique*, subtitled *A Night in the Tropics*; orchestrations of *The Dying Poet* and *Le Bananier*, *Chanson Nègre*; and *Celebre Tarentelle*, which received its premiere at the festival.

An album of music by Charles Lucien Lambert Sr. and his son, Lucien-Leon Gillaume Lambert Jr. (Naxos 8.559037) includes the elder Lambert's *L'Amazone*, *Caprice-mazurka*; *Le Castillien*, *Bolero pour le piano*; and *L'Americaine*, *Grande valse brillante*; and the Rosenberg's orchestration of the younger Lambert's *Ouverture de Brocéliande*.

The third album (Naxos 8.559038) features music of Edmond Dede, including performances of *Francoise et Tortillard*, which the festival premiered last summer, and *Chicago*, *Grande Valse a l'Americaine*.

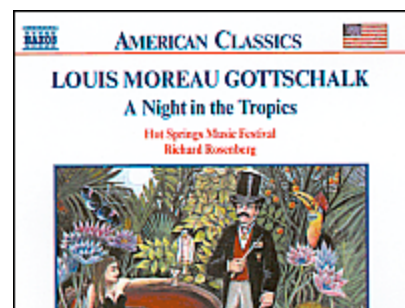
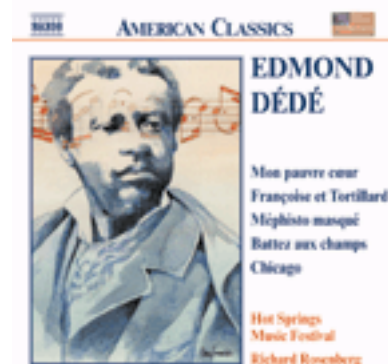
The CD covers feature artwork by Hot Springs artists -- a detail from Carole Katchen's *Creole Fantasy* on the Lambert album, Randy Groden's *Night in the Tropics* on the Gottschalk recording and Dede's *Masque* by Gary Simmons on the Dede CD. The company didn't even demand exclusive rights to the artwork, Rosenberg says: "They simply paid for the use of the art ... on the covers." The recordings are commercially available even in local stores; Naxos distributes its recordings worldwide. The Festival Orchestra -- ironically, it's the first American ensemble to record for Naxos American Classics -- consisted of about 100 musicians, about a third of them "mentors," professional musicians with lengthy reputations there to teach and guide, and the other two-thirds "apprentices," young musicians who come from all over the world -- including Arkansas -- to learn and play. "It's great publicity for the festival, and a great experience for the apprentices," Rosenberg says. Rosenberg let the recording community know he was going to program these premieres, but he didn't expect the response he got. "About two years ago -- August before last -- I got on the Internet," he says, "and sent an information letter to major record labels. I figured in about 10 years someone would write back. An hour later, he got a communique from Naxos founder Klaus Heymann expressing interest. And instead of a single CD pastiche of bits and pieces of several composers, he wanted to devote one CD to Gottschalk, one to Dede and one to the Lamberts, father and son.

Rosenberg saw to it that the musicians had performed all of the works on the CDs in concert before taking them into the recording sessions, which were a bit of a trial. "We did all our recording from 11 p.m. to 2 a.m. over seven or eight nights," he says. Horner Hall's air conditioning unit is very close to the stage, which meant that it had to be turned off during the recording sessions -- so the sessions had to be done without air conditioning -- and the hall's lighting system introduced an annoying buzz, so separate lights had to be brought in. The orchestra, however, took the late hours in stride. Musicians generally keep late hours anyway, Rosenberg says, and many of them had a sense of humor about the situation. "Some of them showed up for the first recording session in PJs and carrying teddy bears," he says. Recording of vocal and piano works took place in First Christian Church, which has an 1856, 9-foot Chickering grand piano that Gottschalk had played. Naxos took a hands-off approach to the project -- Rosenberg says he got to use his own recording engineers and staff -- and transacted practically everything through cyberspace. "The only things that went by surface mail were the actual contract and the master recordings," Rosenberg says. Even a slight correction on one of the pieces went to the company via e-mail. Speaking of cyberspace, details on the recordings are available at [www.naxosusa.com](http://www.naxosusa.com) and [www.hnh.com](http://www.hnh.com). Information on the Hot Springs Music Festival, including its June 2000 schedule, is available at [www.hotmusic.org](http://www.hotmusic.org) Rosenberg earlier this month took over as music director and conductor of the Waterloo-Cedar Falls (Iowa) Symphony Orchestra. And he's planning for this year's festival, which will result in a Naxos recording of music by Jerome Moross that will be on a June 8 program at Horner Hall. Having to deal with just one recording will be fine with Rosenberg. "I hope never again in life that I will have to produce a festival with 23 concerts and three discs," he says.

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WHAT THE CRITICS ARE SAYING ABOUT THE Hot Springs Music Festival/Naxos CDs  
David's review Corner, September 1, 2002:

Today, Jerome Moross would be described as a 'crossover' composer, equally at home writing in popular idioms for the theatre or composing 'straight' classics. Born in Brooklyn in 1913, he originally supported his compositional activities by playing the piano in theatres. Moving to Hollywood in 1940, he was responsible for arrangements and orchestrations of film scores by



several famous composers, including Copland, Waxman, and Friedhofer. Eventually entrusted with his own film scores, he will be best remembered for *The War Lord* and the epic Western, *The Big Country*. In the field of classical music he sought to bring together many styles, including blues, rags and stomps, all of which appear in his ballet score, *The Ballad of the Scandalous Life of Frankie and Johnny*, premiered in Chicago in 1938. The music is an atmospheric recreation of the famous American story; it is happy and light-hearted until we come to the Murder and Funeral Party in the concluding sections of the ballet. *Willie the Weeper* is one of four ballet-operas composed in the 1940's, and can be seen as an early example of minimalist music. It pictures, in words and music, Willie in seven different moods after the introduction to the story. From the swaggering Rich Willie to the cautionary words of Baffled Willie, the repetitive rhythms create each desired effect. *Those Everlasting Blues* was an early score from 1932, composed for voice and small orchestra. The performances demonstrate that the Hot Springs Music Festival Symphony take the music very seriously; the challenging passages are played with considerable conviction, and the high strings in the *Frankie Tune* are enviably secure. Vocal soloists are well-versed in the style required . . . The only available version of *Willie the Weeper*; the whole disc is essential for anyone interested in American music.

Symphony Magazine, September/October 2002:

"Some American Classics CDs are landmark recordings. Nowhere else, for instance, can you find Louis Moreau Gottschalk's irresistible *Night in the Tropics* (1859) in something like its original version, with Cuban percussion and supplemental brass in a restoration by Richard Rosenberg, who leads his Hot Springs Music Festival Orchestra. (There also exists another reconstruction, by Gunther Schuller.) This is mandatory American repertoire whose historical significance is, if anything, exceeded by its roof-rattling impact." - Joseph Horowitz

From Amazon.Com:

Long Overdue! The orchestral arrangements of Louis Moreau Gottschalk's piano works are long overdue. Like Moritz Moszkowski, Gottschalk's music is seldom heard. This recording should certainly help provide a higher profile to this romantic and wonderful composer. The two versions of the *Celebre Tarantelle* are refreshingly lyrical to the ear and the melancholic "O! ma charmante" provides soleful contrast with its beautiful melody and orchestration. The arrangements for orchestra are light and very pleasing. Once again, Bravo to NAXOS for bringing wonderful music to the fore at affordable prices. - Mike Shakinovsky

This CD is one of the best in the "American Classics" series I have heard. The playing is warm, playful and full of energy. These delightful compositions for orchestra and piano seem almost timeless. Again thanks to naxos for bringing this largely unknown composer's talent to a modern audience at a steal! - Victor Spicer from winnipeg, manitoba canada.

*A Delightful Romp*. This lovely collection of Gottschalk is nothing but pure fun, as well as a great introduction to this composer's music. Full of catchy rhythms and melodies, this music is undeniably American, but with a French Creole twist. Performances by Richard Rosenberg and the Hot Springs Music Festival are superb, giving Gottschalk's music a light and effortless quality that is full of charm. A circa-1850's piano lends a vintage sound to a number of the selections that is quite pleasing. A thoroughly enjoyable CD! - Sally Schlichting

*The Birth of American Music*. If all of the 11 cuts on the Naxos release of <Louis Moreau Gottschalk: *A Night in the Tropics*> (8.559036) are listed as "arr." or "orch." by thus and so, it is because Gottschalk wrote primarily for the piano. But as it is with Gershwin and Kern, the music sounds good in any arrangement; and I found this CD to be very delightful listening indeed. The Hot Springs Music Festival under Richard Rosenberg gives us an hour of such short selections as "*Celebre Tarantelle*," "*Tournament Galop*," "*Berceuse*," and the title piece "*Noche en los Tropicos*." There is endless fascination in hearing how this composer (who died in 1869) was "the first to capture the syncopated music of South Louisiana and the Caribbean in enduring works that anticipate ragtime and jazz by half a century" [liner notes]. I received a thank you phone call from a Florida reader who was sent by one of my Amazon.com reviews to a CD of Gottschalk's music in the original piano versions and who found her first exposure to this composer a revelation. Perhaps this Naxos album will have a similar effect on many of you. - Frank Behrens

From American Record Guide:

Gottschalk - Those used to hearing the more fully fleshed-out arrangement of the *Grand Tarantelle* . . . will marvel anew at this pellucid setting for piano with winds and strings--especially in Gary Hammond's delightfully ebullient reading . . . but most of the keyboard honors fall to Michael Linville, who joins the orchestra for the "*March of the Gibaros*," "*Tournament Galop*," "*Le Bananier*" and "*O! Ma Charmanter*". Linville is joined by Yi-Chun Sunny Kuo, who in turn helps out Maestro Rosenberg with "*The Dying Poet*". . . "*The Dying Poet*", remarkably upbeat and dry-eyed, would hardly be out of place in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*, while "*O! Ma Charmanter*" is an exercise in sustained poesis. The trumpet also leads off "*Le Bananier*" and steps ahead of the brass pack in the *Concert Etude 'Manchega'*. . . Those with a special fondness for Gottschalk's songs will love the "*Berceuse*", warmly caressed by baritone Paul Rowe with Barbara Richards at the keyboard. . . . In the final movement [of *A Night in the Tropics*] Rosenberg really whips up his people into a lather, and it is undeniably exhilarating . . . Certainly the *Night in the Tropics* with its brilliant percussion display will get the juices flowing, and the wonderful performances easily disarm all criticism. - Haller (May/June 2000)

Lambert, Dédé - All of the pieces by Lucien Lambert are for piano and are played expertly by members of the Hot Springs Music Festival, who take turns at the bat. There's a lilting waltz, *Bresiliana*, to these ears sometimes suggesting Mendelssohn's *Fair melusine*; a caprice-mazurka, *L'Amazone*, seemingly rather closer to Poland than Brazil; a bolero, *Le Castillan*--you can almost hear the castanets!--a waltz, *Americaine*, not especially "American" but quite attractive; *Le Calabrais*, described as a galop brilliant (it sure is!), and the work that put Lucien on the map, *The Claire de Lune Variations*--no relation to Debussy's familiar melody, but you may recognize it from the 'Fossils' section of *Saint-Saens' Carnival of the Animals*--which is filled with roudades and chordal passages definitely not for beginners. This is all marvelous stuff and heartily recommended to pianists looking for something new and challenging to play. . . . If anything, the music of Edmond Dédé surpasses in inventiveness even the Lamberts, much of it having a devil-may-care, take-it-or-leave-it quality I find quite refreshing. . . . Highlights include the orchestral arrangement of *Chicago*, a waltz that could easily have been written by Johann Strauss--though he probably wouldn't have given such lavish parts to the piccolo and trombones--and the rather curious polka *Mephisto Masqué*, this

last combining a chorus of kazoos (mirlitons) and a lyrical turn for the ophicleide, here played surpassingly well by Kabin Thomas. The kazoos are also heard in the Mirliton Fin de Siècle, a rousing march quite unlike anything to come from Sousa's pen. . . it's easy to see why Edmond Dédé was so popular with the French, and we hope that recordings like this will restore him to favor in this country as well. . . . If you bought the Gottschalk praised last issue you'll want these two discs as well. I hope there will be more like this to come from Maestro Rosenberg and his excellent Hot Springs company. - Haller (July/August 2000)

From Jack Elliott (arranger): Thanks very much. It was a kick listening to a superb performance. It's been a long time since I heard the pieces. My congratulations to all. It's a very special project. Please thank Gary Hammond & Michael Linville for me. That is very personal piano music and they really had a good grasp of the idiom. All the best, - Jack Elliott

From Classics Today: Louis Moreau Gottschalk was one of the musical wonders of his era, a time that also produced the Civil War. He was the first American soloist to be highly regarded as a virtuoso performer. Perhaps most important, he was one of the first composers to use the rhythms of Caribbean folk music in his compositions--rhythms that, as conductor Richard Rosenberg points out in his astute program notes, paved the way to ragtime and jazz. This festival recording presents several of the composer's most buoyant pieces, the lion's share of them in arrangements. This would not have bothered the composer at all: he was used to performing his music with whatever musicians were at hand, or by himself on solo piano. There are charming small scale arrangements here of the Célèbre Tarantelle and Berceuse, made by 18th century friends and devotees, and there are recent large scale orchestrations made by Jack Elliott for the American Ballet Theater. And finally there is, in what purports to be a version that adheres to Gottschalk's original score, a lean and well articulated performance of the well-known Symphonie romantique, "A Night in the Tropics". Its second movement, "Festa Criolla", gives the percussion section a good workout. . . This Naxos CD celebration collection makes it evident that Gottschalk was one of music's supreme melodists. Had he not died at age 40 his rank in music history might have been quite different. But this disc also is evidence that his music need not be so obscure. The recorded sound is bright and well balanced; the various pianists who perform solo and in ensemble are captured very realistically. All in all this is a thoroughly enjoyable and highly recommendable CD. -Rad Bennett



From Barnes & Noble.com:

Naxos launched its American Classics series from overseas, but they have begun to dig deeper into the forgotten byways of American music than most American labels have dared. In the case of Creole composers Charles Lucien Lambert Sr. and his son Lucien-Léon Guillaume Lambert Jr., this seems especially appropriate, for like the most famous New Orleans-born Creole composer, Louis Moreau Gottschalk, the Lamberts earned their contemporary fame abroad (primarily in France but also in South America and Portugal). Anyone who enjoys Gottschalk's confections will find the Lamberts' music a delight. Charles Lucien's waltzes, galops, and caprices are very much in the Gottschalk/Chopin tradition, while his son, who studied with Massenet in Paris, branches off into more delicate harmonic waters. In addition to piano works, performed by a variety of participants from the Hot Springs Music Festival, there are two songs by Lambert Jr., as well as an overture from his full-blown grand opera on the King Arthur legend, "Brocéliande," that's imbued with an undertow of Wagner, like Ernest Chausson's Arthurian works of the same era. A companion disc devoted to music by another Creole composer, Edmond Dédé, provides similar pleasures.

Undervalued by historians and more likely to be forgotten when popular tastes change, much of the light music of earlier times has utterly faded away. All the more welcome, then, is Naxos' American Classics series, which has unearthed some thoroughly enjoyable rarities by the New Orleans-born Creole composer Edmond Dédé. Like his most famous counterpart, Louis Moreau Gottschalk, Dédé spent much of his career in France, and with connections both to French masters such as Gounod and Halévy and to the forerunners of ragtime, he is a real missing link to 20th-century popular music. His witty and sentimental songs, salon pieces for piano, and sparkling orchestral bonbons will charm anyone with a taste for the lighter side of classical music. Various performers from the Hot Springs Music Festival are heard here, with the Festival Orchestra augmented by an ensemble of buzzing kazoos for the "Méphisto masqué." Other highlights include the touching song "Mon pauvre coeur," sung by Emily Eagen, and the miniature romantic screwball comedy of "Françoise et Tortillard." Dédé's music is a delight that has gone too long unheard. -Scott Paulin

Le Discophile: Un des membres de la dynastie "romantique créole" originaire de la Nouvelle Orléans, compositeur et pianiste virtuose, Lucien Lambert Sr. fut un ami de Louis Moreau Gottschalk qu'il accompagna en France dans ses études musicales. Ces compositeurs Afro-Américains aidèrent à développer le langage musical qui sert de lien entre la musique de concert européenne, le ragtime et le jazz. Le disque offre principalement de la musique pour piano solo de Lucien Sr. Tous les pianistes amateurs se sont battus un jour ou l'autre avec les Variations sur "Au clair de la Lune", qui exploitent tous les trucs du virtuose-pianiste d'une manière inventive. La musique de Lucien Jr., plus ambitieuse, peut rappeler les oeuvres d'un Busoni ou d'un Hindemith; on notera particulièrement l'Ouverture, richement mélodique, de son opéra Brocéliande. -François Juteau

From Classic CD:

"...the large force gambols through these symphonic arrangements with great spirit..." -Jeremy Nicholas

From the Edmonton Journal:

Gottschalk lived only 40 years, and was at least that far ahead of his time. He was perhaps the first American composer and performer to learn the classical discipline, make it his own, and take it back to the Europeans from whom it began - and be darn successful at it. And this affectionate CD, part of the Naxos American Classics series does a good job at showcasing some of this disarming music" - D.T.Baker

From International Record Review:

"If you know Gottschalk's unorthodox two-movement symphony *A Night in the Tropics*...hearing Richard Rosenberg's scrupulous new restoration will be akin to hearing Mussorgsky's *Boris* after living with Rimsky-Korsakov. Most obviously, the new edition respects Gottschalk's profligate timbral imagination, giving us a renewed appreciation not only of the impudent contagion of climaxes (40 separate wind and brass parts), but also of the score's subtler uses of instrumental resources. But Rosenberg has also taken seriously the details of Gottschalk's notation bringing his rhythmic daring into sharper focus--a special benefit in the exuberant dance of the second movement....For now...this is the most infectious account of this music to be had..."