

**Reviews of the Hot Springs Music Festival's  
Naxos compact disc recording, NAXOS 8.559320 of the  
Gottschalk Orchestral Works**

*Naxos American Classics dedicate a CD to the most beautiful native New Orleans composer:*

Born in 1829 in New Orleans, Louis Moreau Gottschalk earned it the nickname of "The Créole Chopin" for the piano virtuosity he demonstrated during his many tours, which touched not only the Americas, but also Europe. As a composer he is much less familiar because, in addition to having died at just 39 years of age, his incessant concertising and providing essential financial support to his mother and four sisters, he had little time to create many new [orchestral] scores.

If one wishes to tackle his repertoire, you must come to terms illegible manuscript copies, which become a strong deterrent and also explains the limited quantity of recordings devoted to his music. For this reason is attributed enormous value to the recent Naxos American Classics Series CD, a collection of the complete Gottschalk orchestral works.

The scores are the fruit of work carried out by Richard Rosenberg, who has reassembled all these compositions, integrating and adding when necessary, the instrumental parts, while still respecting the spirit of this American composer. The result is a concise masterpiece, where these diverse pieces, which are world premiere recordings, take on a particularly brilliant light.

The CD begins with the Symphony No. 2, "À Montevideo", where an initial brief movement demonstrates the value of Gottschalk as orchestrator. Then on to the famous "Tarantella" for piano and orchestra, which represents one of the war-horses played at every one of the composer's piano recitals. The virtuosity of this piece was such that very many editions were created, and only recently was the original manuscript rediscovered, which is the basis of this edition. Third up in this program, a "tonadilla escénica" (a sort of Spanish operetta) entitled "Escenas Campestres Cubanas." A little-known work designed for his Havana concerts, it not only testifies to Gottschalk's love of the lyrical genre, but shows the huge presence of a direct lineage towards ragtime. Next we find "Concert Variations on a Portuguese Theme by King Louis I", which takes its cue from a march written by the grandfather of the sovereign Brazilian Emperor, Pedro I, where once again the piano has a predominant role; whilst the religious side of this musician is highlighted, next, by his "Ave Maria." And then we turn to a Grande Overture entitled "La caccia del giovane Enrico," an elaborate fantasy on the same motif by the French, Mehul, with the presence of no less than five pianos, which dates back to Gottschalk's Parisian period, during which time he worked with Chopin and Berlioz.

The disc ends with the Symphony No. 1, also known as "A Night to Tropics," a pleasant work full of melodies of African-Cuban origin. From a stylistic vantage point, the vast and varied cultural acquaintance acquired by Gottschalk during his long journeys led him to write tunes where we can find well-blended European and Afro-American rhythms. Other characteristics included a presence of the wide ranging dynamics and snappy tempi, supported by a dense orchestration, especially in the winds which often resemble folk instruments.

Overall we are dealing with complex scores, that can be performed only by a company as extremely versatile as the Hot Spring Festival Symphony Orchestra, directed by aforementioned Richard Rosenberg, who provides extraordinary precision and vitality. Bravo also to Michael Gurt (soloist in the "Tarantella" and "Variations"), John Contiguglia, Richard Contiguglia, Angela Draghicescu, Chin-Ming Lin and Joshua Pepper, who participate in the in the Grand Overture. And one final meritorious bravo to soprano Melissa Barrick who gives voice to the "Ave Maria," and Anna Noggle (soprano), Darryl Taylor (tenor) and Richard Ziebarth (bass-baritone), the brilliant interpreters in the "tonadilla."

In conclusion, here is **a CD of the highest rank** in which the orchestra and every soloist contributes to cook up a very clear picture of a great, misunderstood composer such as Louis Moreau Gottschalk.



'The Chopin of the Creoles' was his soubriquet, at least among his friends in New Orleans. S. Frederick Starr, leading authority on Louis Moreau Gottschalk, also dubs him 'the Crescent City's Schubert', due to his double capacity of writing superbly well for both the piano and the human voice. Whichever predecessor one chooses – he actually studied with Chopin – the comparison could be brought a step further in that he never reached similar heights as a composer for orchestra. There are a handful of Schubert symphonies that are among the most played in the whole symphonic repertoire, but not until the great C-major symphony did he produce a really great orchestral work. This is a strictly personal point of view, I love the 'Unfinished' and the fifth and the C minor and ... - so don't start writing complaints to our Bulletin Board.

Returning to Gottschalk I have been fond of his piano music ever since I stumbled over an LP with Leonard Pennario ages ago in a record sale. Fresh, rhythmic and melodically appealing I felt that here was someone who pointed forward two or three generations. Ernesto Lecuona, to pick another composer I like, owes a lot to Gottschalk. Later I bought a double CD with Eugene List, which included a couple of orchestral pieces, the *Tarantelle* and *A Night in the Tropics*. I found the latter attractive: the first movement growing from a mysterious nightly atmosphere to a climax of colours and then back to the gossamer light nocturnal mood. The second movement's samba rhythms are stirring. The *Tarantelle* I have always found rather monotonous. There is no real development, just a long ostinato.

On the present disc Gottschalk's manuscripts have been painstakingly reconstructed by Richard Rosenberg. The liner notes by Mr Starr as well as Rosenberg's own commentaries to the individual pieces make for fascinating reading and I do admire the devotion and the stamina to carry through such work.

About the compositions I am less convinced. Gottschalk might have become a great composer, had he only been able to settle down and work under orderly conditions. However, his life was spent in hectically travelling and giving concerts. It is a marvel that he found the time to write music down at all. It may be that his life style is also mirrored in his music. It is hectic, pompous, not to say bombastic and there is that repetitiveness that begins to jar after a while. Was Gottschalk an early minimalist?

Of the music here, besides the two works I have already mentioned, the *Symphony No. 2* is among the best with a majestic second half of the second movement – but maybe it's really too much of a good thing.

He wrote several operas but they seem to have been lost, apart from *Escenas Campestres Cubanas*, which consists of four numbers, of which the opening dance is repeated at the end. In between there is a fairly long scene for three soloists – again with that minimalist repetition. The soloists are good and the soprano needs the range and virtuoso of a Queen of the Night. She also has a short, catchy aria all by herself, where she displays some edginess. The texts are printed in the booklet as well as English translations.

The *Variations de concert* sandwiches pompous orchestra and virtuoso piano, but there is a lyric-romantic section in the middle of the piece, which redeems some of the emptiness.

*Ave Maria*, arranged for voice and orchestra by Richard Rosenberg, is a beautiful song that I wish other singers would add to their repertoire. It is sung here with disarming simplicity and a vibrato-less tone that made me wonder if it was a boy treble. But the singer is Melissa Berrick, an artist at home in baroque as well as contemporary music.

*La Casa del Joven Enrique* (Young Henry's Hunt) is based on Méhul's overture. It was recast from an older composition for a 'monster concert' in Havana. It was never completed and never performed – due to the abnormal forces required, no doubt: Gottschalk wanted forty pianists plus a gigantic orchestra. In practice though there are only five separate piano parts. When it was first performed – the manuscript was not found until 2003 – the orchestra numbered 'only' 112 players – as on this recording which was made just days later. The hunt of the title is clearly depicted and there are repeated brass signals, lending a martial atmosphere to the piece.

My reception of the disc may seem lukewarm, but I and hopefully the rest of the musical world have reasons to be immensely grateful to Richard Rosenberg and his enthusiastic musicians for bringing into the sunshine something as close as possible to what Gottschalk had in mind when he wrote the music.

– *MusicWeb International*, Göran Forsling



### *Great Galloping Gottschalk!*

"The Chopin of the Creoles" produced five operas and a number of massed orchestral works, for example, a symphony for 41 pianos in ten parts with soloist. Such musical ginormities, however, have mostly disappeared or survived only in the form of sketchy, barely legible manuscripts rather roughly handled by past editors seeking to create "practical" performing editions of Gottschalk's stubbornly impractical creations. Naxos' Louis Moreau Gottschalk: Complete Works for Orchestra puts together, for the first time, a comprehensive and textually accurate program of Gottschalk's surviving orchestral scores, including a couple of pieces discovered early in the twenty-first century and one that was never even performed in Gottschalk's own lifetime.

The Hot Springs Music Festival is held every summer in Arkansas' Hot Springs National Park, and its music director, Richard Rosenberg, is the guiding force behind these reconstructions of Gottschalk's orchestral music. This endeavor began with his deciphering of the original orchestral score, including its elusive and never truly investigated percussion battery, of Gottschalk's symphony "A Night in the Tropics" in 1999. This was issued on the Naxos disc of that name in 2000 along with a number of orchestral transcriptions of Gottschalk's familiar piano works, and that same performance is included here, though this should not deter Gottschalk fans who acquired the earlier disc.

You'd be missing out on a lot, for here is the world premiere recording of Gottschalk's "concerto" on Méhul's overture "La Chasse de jeune Henri," *La Caza del Joven Enrique por Méhul* (1861), scored for five pianos and an orchestra of 112 players, a work unknown to Robert Offergeld and only discovered in 2003. The brass parts in this piece are particularly effective and demonstrate Gottschalk's affinity for the music of Hector Berlioz to the same degree that his solo piano music shows his affinity with Chopin. The other works here have appeared before, but in versions that compromised both Gottschalk's vision and his orchestral language. This is felt no more dramatically than in the performance of Gottschalk's only surviving operatic music, *Escenas Campestres Cubanas*, an operetta first heard in Havana in 1860. The singing here of Gottschalk's perilously difficult vocal music is spirited and enthusiastic, and it represents an enormous improvement over the disastrous, heavily cut "party record" of this work made by Vox in the 1960s – they're not even in the same league. In general, all of the music is performed with a spark and freshness that one will not find in the old Eugene List recordings that long stood as the benchmark for Gottschalk's orchestral works, and that is largely because this time Gottschalk's voice as an orchestrator is not straight-jacketed into tidy, weak "pop" sounding arrangements.

Featured pianist Michael Gurt turns in a dedicated and admirably virtuosic reading of the piano parts in the concertante works; his reading of the "Célèbre Tarantelle" is positively dazzling, and with Gottschalk's orchestration restored, one can hear that the soloist and orchestra are treated as a far more integrated entity than in the reduced, simplified version that has become familiar. An unexpected treat is Rosenberg's wonderful arrangement of Gottschalk's "Ave Maria," sung by early music specialist Melissa Barrick, who treats the piece as though sung by an expert boy soprano rather than in a standard operatic voice. This "Ave Maria" is so immediately appealing that it seems to have "coming to an NPR station near you" stamped all over it. However, Gottschalk has been wrongly forgotten by his own people – Americans – and needs precisely this kind of exposure. Additionally, this moving arrangement appropriately sets Gottschalk squarely in one of the camps where he truly belongs – in French vocal tradition, along with Gounod and Delibes. It is hard to imagine a time when Gottschalk was considered nothing more than a hack composer of junk sheet music for use in the parlor, but that was the prevailing attitude for most of the twentieth century.

The work of Rosenberg and the Hot Springs Music Festival brings into sharp focus the irrevocable fact that Gottschalk was most important, forward looking and consequential American composer of the nineteenth century. Everyone who knows and loves the music of Scott Joplin or Ernesto Lecuona should know Gottschalk also; Naxos' Louis Moreau Gottschalk: Complete Works for Orchestra is a grand place to start, **and established fans of the composer should be turning cartwheels over its arrival.**

~ By Uncle Dave Lewis, Assistant Classical Editor, *All Music Guide* © 2007

### *Gottschalk Ascending*

**Simply put, this is one of the most beautiful albums of American classical music you will ever listen to.** Louis Moreau Gottschalk and his music have for too long been brushed aside by snobs and the more or less intellectual as a 19th century relic, a prodigy ruined by his own popularity with audiences and women. But Richard Rosenberg has researched and reconstructed Gottschalk's complete works for orchestra for this album, revealing a gifted composer who was very aware of the musical currents around him, particularly those of the Afro-Cuban regions.

"Celebre Tarentelle" has appeared on several albums including the Naxos/Rosenberg "A Night in the Tropics," but this latest recording, from Gottschalk's original manuscript, is the best, alive with intricate and beguiling rhythms. "Escenas Campestres Cubanas" is a glowing fragment of a Gottschalk opera, revealing the composer's sensitivity to the vocal element, brilliantly layering voice with orchestration. The other orchestral numbers on this album are equally interesting and listenable. "La nuit des tropiques" is repeated from the previous Naxos/Gottschalk album, but it's a fitting companion to the other selections.

The disk is accompanied by scholarly but readable (and concise) liner notes. Sound quality is terrific, and only gets better when the disk is played on sophisticated playback systems. But plenty of Gottschalk's musical coloring comes through perfectly on a car's CD system. . . But what's here will suffice till more Gottschalk manuscripts are recovered and restored, hopefully by musicians as sensitive as Richard Rosenberg. - November 15, 2007, By Brent R. Swanson (Crooper, Illinois) - in *Amazon.com*

**"A perfect delight of a disc,** of music from that grand pioneer Louis Gottschalk, who charmed the crowds here and abroad up through Civil War days with flamboyant, virtuosic display pieces. From last year's Hot Springs (Arkansas) Festival comes a whole disc of Gottschalk's orchestral works, and it's a hoot. It includes the hilariously lovable Célèbre Tarantelle and Night in the Tropics, guaranteed to lift you off your seat on first hearing, and Gottschalk's own arrangement for five pianos, nine horns and 112-piece orchestra of The Young King Henry's Hunt (don't ask). There's even an opera, 13 minutes long, something Cuban... ."

~ © 2007, Alan Rich, 27 June 2007, *LA Weekly*

**"Yet another Naxos winner** is their CD devoted to music of Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869). Gottschalk, called "the Chopin of the Creoles," was a sensation during his era both as a pianist and as a composer. This disk supposedly contains his complete works for orchestra, although most of them had to be reconstructed. In addition to the familiar "Night in the Tropics" symphony and "Grand Tarantelle" for piano and orchestra we have another showpiece for piano and orchestra, "Variations on a Portuguese hymn of Roi Louis I," Ave Maria arranged for soprano and orchestra, the 11-minute Symphony No. 2, a charming 13-minute "opera," and Gottschalk's spectacular "grand overture" on themes from Méhul's Young King Henry's Hunt, wildly exuberant music scored for five pianos, nine horns and an orchestra of 112 players, making rousing sounds on this splendid recording. **This is a totally delightful disk, superb in performance and sound.** . . . this is an important release in the overview of American music.

- R.E.B. © *Classical CD Review*, September 2007

This very appealing release in Naxos' outstanding American Classics series also carries the title, "Complete Works for Orchestra". That statement implied by the title is rather surprising particularly in light of comments made in the very interesting liner notes by S. Frederick Starr. Starr is Author of *Louis Moreau Gottschalk*, University of Illinois Press 2000. Some background is necessary here. His father passed away early in life and Gottschalk had the responsibility for supporting his mother and four sisters. From the age of 23 until his early death at 39 in Rio de Janeiro he was almost constantly traveling and performing. As a virtuoso pianist always on the go all around the world, he seldom had time to complete or really tweak the hundreds of compositions he so dearly loved. He did manage to pretty much finish scores for piano works, a few operas and orchestral compositions. Trunkloads of his never completed and completed works vanished in Brazil where he died shortly after performing there.

Over a hundred years later some of his manuscripts turned up in Philadelphia. Many people are hoping more will turn up in the future. Unfortunately, far more scores were only started and rough sketches or drafts penned with good intentions to finish later. His early demise put an end to that goal. It should be mentioned that he was known to be particularly oriented towards opera and vocal music. It is hoped that he had completed, or nearly so, a number of yet to be discovered opera scores. The particularly well-written liner notes create a fascinating mental image of Gottschalk, extremely so I must add. I remember being introduced to Gottschalk's music by a recording of his *A Night in the Tropics* performed by Andre Kostalantez and his orchestra decades ago. I since, lost track of Gottschalk, and so as I often do, I did a bit of research, going beyond the liner notes. All I can say is that I do not know, but other descriptions of his compositional abilities are not as glowing as the descriptive painting by S. Frederick Starr. Personally, I am a bit of a pushover for immediately appealing melodic music as atmospheric as heard here in this recording. There is more music on this disc than listed in the title heading totaling almost seventy-seven minutes.

The variety of appealing melodic music is quite extensive and wide ranging. I would usually say that a recording such as this, serves as a great introduction to a relatively unknown American classic composer. However, in this instance there is currently little more available in the way of recordings. Here the wide-ranging selections are seemingly of the romantic period and very melodic. There are bits and pieces of jazz and ragtime a long time before they existed! A fair amount of emphasis on a well recorded piano accompaniment is heard as well as attractive vocals. In the "Symphony No. 2", actually as with "No. 1" (both are really symphonic poems) the orchestra is heavily supplemented and almost doubles in personnel size. The young group is surprisingly polished. The very clean and clear full range recording lets the entire brass section, not just the trumpets, to be plainly revealed to great advantage. Another particularly enjoyable addition to Naxos American Classics' Series of recordings enjoying consistently good recording perspective. That again **rates a top recommendation**.

~ Naxos American Classics, by Karl Lozier, *Positive-Feedback* © 2007

Richard Rosenberg: GOTTSCHALK Symphony No. 1, "Nuit des tropiques"... on NAXOS  
*Fanfare Magazine*, Classical Reviews - Composers & Works  
Written by Peter J. Rabinowitz  
Monday, 28 January 2008

Seven years ago, Naxos released Richard Rosenberg's recording of Gottschalk's First Symphony, "Nuit des tropiques," based on the conductor's painstaking restoration of Gottschalk's extravagant original score. It was an ear-opening recording, its impact only slightly cushioned by the decision to fill out the CD not only with three historically illuminating 19th-century adaptations of Gottschalk's music (including two orchestrations of the Tarantella), but also with six tacky arrangements made by Jack Elliot in 1982. Now, that same recording of *Nuit* returns with more suitable companions on a disc claiming to cover Gottschalk's "Complete Works for Orchestra." The Tarantella is back, this time with the recently discovered orchestration by the composer himself. In addition, we have what's advertised as the very first recording of Gottschalk's orchestral version of *La chasse du jeune Henri* (also only recently rediscovered), as well as what Naxos claims as the first recordings of "the composer's original version(s)" of "À Montevideo", *Escenas campestres cubanas*, and the *Variations on the Portuguese National Hymn*.

There are at least three questions concerning Naxos's claims here. First, there's the editorial issue: all of these manuscripts survive in more or less tattered condition—so while we may be getting "original" Gottschalk, it's original Gottschalk filtered through various degrees of editorial intervention by Rosenberg and (in the *Variations*) by pianist Michael Gurt as well. Thus, for instance, Rosenberg points out in his notes that the timpani part for "À Montevideo" had to be "reconstructed according to the stylistic pattern Gottschalk used . . . in other works of the same period"—and, more radically, most of the piano part of the *Variations* had to be derived from the single-piano arrangement that Arthur Napoleão made after the composer's death.

Second, there seems to be some debate about what *La chasse* actually "is." It's a slightly expanded version of an early piano piece, recast for vast orchestra (112 players and five pianists on this recording). Robert Offergeld calls the piano piece a transcription of the overture to Méhul's opera; S.

Frederic Starr, in an essay included with this CD, insists that it is “in many respects an entirely original composition, a fantasy based loosely on Méhul.” To my ears, Offergeld’s description is closer to the mark, especially as applied to the orchestral adaptation. This gives us a rather strange compositional loop: what we have here is Gottschalk’s (very elaborate) orchestration of a piano reduction of another composer’s orchestral work.

Third, and most important, there are questions about what is covered by the phrase “Complete Works for Orchestra.” Apparently, the title was supposed to have been “Complete *Known* Works for Orchestra”—but even if we ignore the many lost manuscripts, Gottschalkians may be surprised by the absence of the *Marche solennelle* (RO 154) and the *Marcha triunfal y final de opera* (RO 157), both included on Vox’s “Gottschalk Festival.” The manuscript of the *March solennelle* is something of a mess, and one can argue about whether or not it should have been included; but the New York Public Library has a fairly complete and legible manuscript of the *Marcha triunfal y final de opera*. Rosenberg is in the process of editing it with hopes for a future recording.

Whatever questions lurk behind the release, however, these are all pieces well worth knowing—and for those works that have been previously recorded in earlier editions, **these new, editorially up-to-date performances are probably the ones to have.** The recordings were made during three different summers (the album provides erroneous information on this), and the “Hot Spring Festival Symphony Orchestra” had different personnel each year. Still, all three groups—composed of professional players and young pre-professionals—have a similar commitment and rhythmic zest; and while they don’t have the polish of the Chicago Symphony or the Philadelphia Orchestra, Gottschalk’s orchestral scores (in contrast, say, to Mendelssohn’s or even Berlioz’s) were written with the expectation of a certain scrappiness. Granted, Gurt’s dashing account of the Tarantella can’t disguise the fact that Gottschalk’s uncharacteristically tame orchestration is less imaginative than the Espadero orchestration released on Rosenberg’s earlier CD. Granted, too, some listeners may prefer Eugene List’s Vox performance of his own edition of the *Variations*—faster, less generous with repeats, and arguably more brilliant than Gurt’s performance here. But taken as a whole, **this CD catches Gottschalk’s spirit far more infectiously than the competition does.**

I especially enjoyed the symphonies: this recording of “Nuit” has been my favorite for years, and the new recording of “A Montevideo” is every bit its equal. It’s even less a “symphony” than “Nuit” is—more a potpourri of melodramatic gestures (including some delightfully tawdry storm music) and nationalistic (or, more accurately, internationalistic) fervor. And while I’d never been impressed with the music as heard via Buketoff’s Vox recording, this new reading has such bright colors and such rhythmic lift that you hardly notice the creaks. *Escenas campestre cubanas* comes across splendidly, too. It’s billed as an “opera” but it’s really just a plotless series of exchanges between a young woman and two suitors, much of the music filched from Gottschalk’s earlier piano work *Danza*. But whatever you call it, its rhythmic vitality will seduce you—as will the singing of Anna Noggle, who dances through her coloratura with exuberance. I’m not sure why Rosenberg wanted to throw his own orchestration of *Ave Maria* into this otherwise “authentic” collection—but its treacly demeanor suits the sentimental music well. Rosenberg is hoping to track down scores of Gottschalk’s lost operas. Now *those* will be discoveries of a different order of magnitude. Until then, though, there’s plenty to discover here. **Highly recommended.**

This release, containing all of the Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869) orchestral works discovered to date, will be a **CLOFO "Best Find" of the year.** Anyone who can’t find something to like about it must be on their way to curmudgeondom! There are five -- count them -- five world premiere recordings here. These include Young Henry’s Hunt, which was just unearthed in 2003, and the original versions of Grand Tarentelle, Cuban Country Scenes, A Montevideo Symphony and Concert Variations on the Portuguese National Anthem. These pieces prove beyond a doubt that Louis Moreau was a fabulous melodist who drew heavily from the wealth of Creole as well as other North and South American folk material he encountered in his mind-boggling travels (see his fascinating book *Notes of a Pianist*). He was also a first-class orchestrator, which is not surprising when you consider he studied privately in Paris with the great Hector Berlioz.

This once in a lifetime concert opens with A Montevideo Symphony (No. 2, 1868-69), and from the very beginning anyone familiar with the old treasured Vox recording of it will find themselves in new

territory. At only eleven minutes long, this lovable, disarmingly naive work must be the shortest romantic symphony ever written. It's full of aria-like as well as Camptown Races-sounding passages, and ends with a pastiche of beautifully interwoven patriotic airs from Uruguay and the United States. With references to Hail Columbia and Yankee Doodle, it anticipates what was to come from Charles Ives. The Grand Tarentelle (1868) scored for piano and orchestra will be familiar to all Gottschalk fans, but the version here, like everything else on this disc, comes across with such clarity, lightness of touch and energy that many will find it preferable to all other recorded versions. Cuban Country Scenes (1859-60) is for all intents and purposes a tiny zarzuela. It's absolutely terrific with infectious rhythms and vocal lines which would have turned Gaetano Donizetti green with envy! It'll make you hope and pray that some day those lost operas Gottschalk allegedly wrote will surface. In Concert Variations on the Portuguese National Anthem (1869) the composer takes the theme in question, which is a run-of-the-mill rather Italianate sounding march tune, and turns it into a rousing romp for piano and orchestra. Just listen to all those intricate finger work embellishments -- Chico Marx sure would have had fun with this! You probably never even knew Gottschalk wrote an Ave Maria (1864), but that's next in a lovely arrangement for voice and chamber orchestra. Then comes a real treat, Young Henry's Hunt (1861), which is a stunning rearrangement Louis Moreau did of the overture to Etienne Mehul's opera La chasse de jeune Henri. Berlioz would have loved his student's creation, realized here with five pianists and an orchestra of 112, which includes what sounds like a chorus of French Horns. Hold on to your hairpiece when they all cut loose! The concert closes with a Gottschalk great, A Night in the Tropics Symphony (No. 1, 1859). The original version as reconstructed from the autograph manuscript is presented here. It should also be pointed out that this particular recording first appeared on a disc released in 2000 (Naxos-8.559036).

You'll notice a big difference between it and the old Vox and Vanguard recordings. In fact the grand finale includes some exotic percussion that makes it the most colorful version to have ever hit the streets. Conductor Richard Rosenberg was the guiding light behind all of the reconstructions and arrangements heard here. Along with his youthful Hot Springs Festival Orchestra he brings a delicate touch, crisp tempos and unbridled enthusiasm to all of these selections, making this release some of **the best musical Americana to have appeared in a long time**. Overall the sound is superb and will certainly please audiophiles. It should be noted though, that A Night... was recorded in a drier (less reverberant) acoustic than that for the other selections. A couple of thoughts for those thrifty newsletter readers who have the earlier CD and may be wondering whether it's worth getting the new one: first, A Night... represents only sixteen out of a total seventy-seven minutes of playing time; second, except for the redundant selection, all of the other Gottschalk goodies on both discs are mutually exclusive (all three versions of the Grand Tarentelle are different), and nowhere else to be found; and last, but not least, don't forget to take into consideration the low Naxos bill of fare.

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