

THE FASCINATING WORLD OF THE PIANO

BEYOND THE
MAINSTREAM



RARITIES OF PIANO MUSIC
RARITÄTEN DER KLAVIERMUSIK
SCHLOSS VOR HUSUM

IMPRINT

Promoter Stiftung Nordfriesland
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Joinery Tischlerei Buechner, Reichenbach

Fonts Vollkorn (Friedrich Althausen, CC BY 2.0 DE) / FF Kievit

Photos Thomas Lorenzen und Tatwerk

Layout of the brochure Design Büro Berlin

Printing house Husum Druck

All clips see: www.faszination-klavierwelten.de

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Further reading:

Beyond the mainstream. The Festival "Rarities of Piano Music"

Ed.: Johanna Jürgensen and Peter Froundjian

Düsseldorf: Staccato Verlag, 2011

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INTRODUCTION



The idea for this exhibition, dedicated to the fascinating world of the piano beyond the mainstream, originated in the observation and experience of piano connoisseurs and enthusiasts that the concert repertoire of many – also young – pianists remains narrow and almost set. Due partly to a continuation of their teachers' preferences, and partly to the constraints imposed by competitions and major record labels, concert programmes tend to be dominated by a well-defined canon of works: it begins with Bach, continues via Beethoven and Schubert (though rarely including Haydn or Mozart) towards Schumann, Liszt, Chopin and Brahms, and often ends with Debussy, Ravel and Prokofiev. Much as this is an undisputed canon of masterworks, the consequences of this narrowing are worrying. For a major part of piano literature, written between the invention of the fortepiano during the early eighteenth century and the end of the so-called “Golden Years” of pianism just before the First World War, is at risk of fading into obscurity.

It is vital to revive the appreciation for the music culture which produced these riches and within which the piano rose to become a universal instrument. Who thinks about the origins of such a fascinating genre as the nineteenth century transcription? Who is aware of the fact that a major part of piano music was written by “composer-pianists” for whom writing and performing music – often including a good dose of improvisation too – represented an undividable process? And who realises the extent to which piano music is shaped by national styles which also emerged during the nineteenth century, taking effect until well into the modern era? And finally, the intensive musical transfer between Europe and the USA (later also Latin America) should also be taken into consideration, for it too left its marks both in artists' biographies and compositions.



Opening of the exhibition
in 2015

Wolfgang Rathert (left)
Peter Froundjian (right)

In twentieth century piano music it has become, due to the plurality of musical styles and idioms, as well as the many cross-overs, even within the works of individual composers, much harder to determine which works form part of the mainstream. It transpires, however, that the fate of so-called “tonality” has played an important, if paradoxical, role in this. For at the turning point towards New Music after 1918, it was the composers who continued to adhere to the traditional major/minor tonality, sometimes developing it further, who were deemed to be “outsiders” and who had to face accusations of being reactionist. Only today – following the era of so-called Postmodernism – do we appear to be able to differentiate between aesthetic and ideological considerations, and not to allow prejudice to get in the way of listening to (and enjoying) music once marked as outdated or irrelevant.

Alongside a media station offering audio samples and QR codes providing links to further information available on the internet, this touring exhibition presents a cross section of this subject in fifteen topic areas. It is dedicated to great pianistic mavericks, outsiders and legends since the nineteenth century such as Alkan, Godowsky, Medtner and Scriabin. It examines the role of national styles in Spain, France and Scandinavia; the exceptional case of North American music; the submerged history of an Austrian modernism beyond the Second Viennese School; and the long ignored tradition of Russian composers after Scriabin. Finally, this exhibition points to the significance of the transcription which – despite all valedictions – is still amazingly alive. A short summary of the history of the festival “Rarities of Piano Music at Schloss Husum” rounds off the exhibition. ■

CHARLES-VALENTIN

ALKAN

Alkan – who is Alkan? Concertgoers tend to be mystified when his name makes it as far as a concert programme. But that was not always the case: as recently as 1909, **Ferruccio Busoni** named Alkan as one of the five most important composers since Beethoven in the history of piano music. Born in Paris in 1813 into an Ashkenazic family of musicians, Alkan entered the Conservatoire at the

age of only seven, joining the class of Pierre-Joseph Zimmerman; he also studied the organ and the violin. A prizewinning graduate, Alkan was soon considered an infallible virtuoso, whose presence made even Franz Liszt nervous. On friendly terms with Chopin, Delacroix, Hugo and George Sand, Alkan seemed predestined for a glittering musical career. However, professional and personal disappointments, as well as his introverted character, led him to withdraw from public life from 1849 for more than two decades in order to dedicate himself fully to composing and translating the bible. It was not until after 1870 that he returned to the Paris music scene, presenting an encyclopaedic concert series dedicated to the history of piano music: the younger generation of musicians, led by Saint-Saëns, revered him as a musicien savant. The theory that the misanthropic Alkan was supposedly struck down and killed by a volume of the Talmud in his library is fictional.

Alkan's **Grande Sonate "Les Quatre Ages"**, op. 33 (1848), his two sets of twelve studies, the **Études dans les tons majeurs**, op. 35 (1855), and the **Études dans les tons mineurs**, op. 39 (1857), his **Sonatine**, op. 61, and the forty-nine **Esquisses**, op. 63 (1861), embody the pinnacle of his piano oeuvre.

The monumental studies in minor keys, incorporating a symphony and a concerto for solo piano, have a total duration of over two hours and represent one of the most ambitious works ever written for the piano. He also composed numerous smaller and larger-scale piano works (including for the pedal piano, as well as three significant chamber works), some of which reveal an astonishing radicalism and expressiveness: the majority of these works are only known today thanks to recordings.



(back view): Daguerreotype of Alkan (c.1845)

The disappearance of Alkan's music from concert halls is largely due a devastating verdict passed by **Robert Schumann** in two reviews of 1838/39: "We protect erring talent, provided that any talent remains, and a little music as well; but where the former is doubtful and the latter is nothing but black on black, we have to turn away in discouragement." Thus Schumann reacted harshly towards an aestheticism which was contrary to his own, very German, ideal of music as a refuge of introspection and soulful contemplation. Alkan's idiom is unpredictable, ironic, realistic, revolutionary and classicist; it also demands the highest technical standards with regard to velocity, stamina and imagination. This may explain why even Vladimir Horowitz and Claudio Arrau, despite their appreciation of Alkan, never performed his music publicly. It is therefore courtesy of Busoni's student **Egon Petri** that it did not completely vanish into oblivion between the wars.

It was only around 1960 that a revival and rehabilitation of Alkan's oeuvre was begun (which continues to progress) thanks to the pioneering artistic, scholarly and journalistic work of **Raymond Lewenthal** in the USA and **Roland Smith** in the UK; in France, **Bernard Ringeissen** has contributed considerable achievements. These efforts met with great activity from members of the following generation of pianists, especially **Jack Gibbons**, **Marc-André Hamelin** and, most recently, also **Vincenzo Maltempo**. Their interpretations have demonstrated that beneath the extravagant and excessive characteristics of Alkan's music, once ambivalently described as "Talmudic complexities" by Oscar Bie, a highly sensitive and unique soundworld and intellectual sphere emerge. ■

— Audio Samples:

Barcarolle, op. 65 No 6 –
Marc-André Hamelin
(DACOCD 429, 1994)

"Cantique des cantiques" from
Préludes, op. 31 – Ronald Smith
(DACOCD 349, 1989)

Esquisses op. 63: No 32
Minuettino; No 46
Le premier billet doux; No 45
Les diabolins – Rainer M. Klaas
(DACOCD 299, 1988)

Esquisse op. 63, No 48: En
songe – Marc-André Hamelin
(DACOCD 669, 2006)



ALEXANDER SCRIABIN



Scriabin, at a concert performance in Vilnius, 1913

“He wanted to be a prophet, messiah, poet, philosopher, cleansing humanity of the woes of its time in his time forever; he saw himself as the mediator of the Revelation.” (Knut Franke)

Alexander Scriabin is perhaps the “most well-known unknown” amongst the great composer-pianists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The myth which has evolved around his person and his oeuvre is enormous: Scriabin is considered to traverse between music, philosophy and religion; a metaphysician among composers whose musical and intellectual visions looked far into the future. This includes, most notably, his speculative attempt of placing colour and sound into a synaesthetic relationship with each other. In works such as *Prométhée*, Scriabin created at once ecstatic and highly abstract soundscapes whose spiritual basis refers to the esoteric sphere of theosophy.

There is an impressive international performance tradition of Scriabin’s sonata oeuvre, stretching from Scriabin’s son-in-law, **Vladimir Sofronitzky**, alongside **Samuil Feinberg**, **Vladimir Horowitz** and **Sviatoslav Richter**, via **John Ogdon**, **Michael Ponti** (who recorded his complete works), **Vladimir Ashkenazy** and **Igor Zhukov** through to **Bernd Glemser**, **Grigory Sokolov**, **Vladimir Stoupel** and **Marc-André Hamelin**. Scriabin’s forays into other genres, such as his cycles of etudes, mazurkas, nocturnes and preludes as well as his free character pieces, are only rarely heard. But it is only through these works that the position of the sonatas becomes clear, and with it Scriabin’s achievement of transferring the great lines of the nineteenth century into the modern era. He increasingly combined Chopin’s tunefully polyphonic piano style, on which

Audio Samples:

Polonaise op. 21 –
Igor Zhukov
(DACOCD 379, 1990)

Prélude op. 67 No 2,
Prélude op. 17 No 6,
Poème op. 59 No 1,
Prélude op. 59 No 2 –
Igor Zhukov
(DACOCD 399, 1992)

24 Préludes op. 11 –
Igor Zhukov
(DACOCD 479, 1996)

Quatre Préludes, op. 22 –
Fredrick Ullén
(DACOCD 619, 2003)

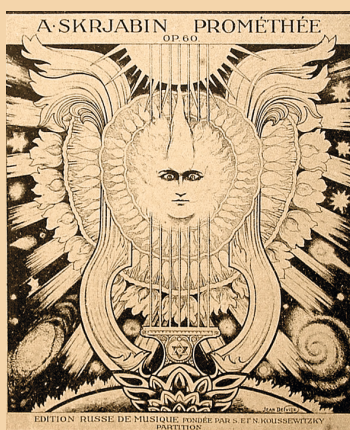
Impromptus op. 12 –
Cecile Licad
(DACOCD 669, 2006)

Nocturne in D-flat major,
op. 9 No 2 –
François-Joël Thiollier
(DACOCD 679 - 2007)

Sonata No 8, op. 66 –
Jonathan Powell
(DACOCD 679 - 2007)

he based his op. 11 Préludes, with Liszt's pioneering pianistic liberation of past conventions concerning the treatment of the keyboard, the responsibility of the hands and the use of the pedal. As a result, Scriabin developed a style imbued with the highest pianistic elegance, rigorous transgression of manual boundaries, high definition and dramatic gesture, intimacy and ecstasy. It is fascinating to observe how he increasingly internalises his sources of inspiration – which also included the fantastical piano works of Robert Schumann, who was in many ways like-minded – until they are transformed into an entirely individual expression which, in the end, touches and transgresses the boundaries of tonality.

Ignaz Friedman's late dictum that Chopin had opened and closed the piano, and that Debussy and Scriabin had only followed him in their treatment of the instrument, should not be taken too literally. In the same way that Bartók said of Debussy that he had restored the sense of sound to musicians, one could say of Scriabin that he had developed the piano's unique expressive possibilities anew. He certainly opened up the piano again, and further than ever before, employing musical and pianistic means, proving an immense challenge to performers and listeners both intellectually and emotionally. The entirety of his piano oeuvre reveals Scriabin's aesthetic and ideological balancing act between the "no more" of the Classical-Romantic tradition and the "not yet" of a mysterious, open soundworld of the future. To fulfil the Janus-faced legacy of Scriabin's piano music is therefore one of the greatest challenges that pianists can set for themselves. ■



NIKOLAI

MEDTNER



Nikolai Medtner

It was Franz Liszt who reportedly said that certain music approaches us, but that other music asks us to approach it. If that is true, Nikolai Medtner's music largely belongs to the second category: the oeuvre of this Russian composer of German descent seems, even nowadays, like a locked cupboard whose keys are only occasionally fetched by connoisseurs and performers. Indeed, it contains **over one hundred piano works**, including

fourteen sonatas (composed between 1902 and 1937) and **38 Skazki** [fairy tales], a genre of piano miniatures inaugurated by Medtner. One of the reasons why his music is not more widely known is the often extreme level of difficulty of his piano writing, which is also studded with rhythmic subtleties and his own polyphonic devices; in addition, his oeuvre does not contain (with the exception of three piano concertos) any symphonic works.

Between 1892 and 1900, Medtner studied with Pavel Pabst, Wassily Sapellnikoff, Wassily Safonoff and Anton Arensky at the Moscow Conservatoire; later on, he took private lessons in composition with Sergei Taneyev. Due to his extraordinary pianistic prowess, he was initially predestined to pursue a career as a concert pianist. However, Medtner refused to carry out his first tour, arranged for him by Safonoff, and instead decided to focus entirely and uncompromisingly on composition. Safonoff would not forgive him for fifteen years.

After emigrating from Russia in 1921, Medtner spent periods of time in France and Germany, and was finally able to settle in England in 1935, moving into a small house in London's Golders Green (69 Westworth Road), together with his wife Anna. In 1928 he had already been made an Honorary Member of the Royal Academy of Music.

During the course of his life, he often depended on financial help from friends and supporters. Towards the end of his life, from c.1946, the enthusiasm of the young Maharaja of Mysore, Jayachamarajendra Wadiyar Bahadur (1919-1974), enabled Medtner to record a great number of his works on disc.

After his first, intensive, encounter with Rachmaninov in Berlin in 1913, Medtner maintained a lifelong friendship with the composer whose artistic outlook came closest to his own. Medtner's attitude towards the zeitgeist of musical modernism was downright hostile. He was critical of Reger and Strauss, and later also Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Schreker and Busoni. He accepted Scriabin up to his opus 48, but disapproved of his late oeuvre. Medtner's book entitled "Muza i moda" ("Muse and Fashion") of 1935 (published in Paris in the original Russian) represents an attempt at systematising his philosophy of music. Writing for the New York Evening Post on 3 February 1925, the renowned English music critic Ernest Newman reviewed a concert performance of Medtner's music, aptly outlining the problems surrounding its reception:

"[Medtner's] music does not make an immediate appeal to the man in the street, but it certainly grows on the musician. [...] The thought is rarely on the surface, but when one makes it one's own, it is the kind one likes to live with. It is sad to think of the *réclame* that has come to fifty mediocrities in the last decade or so, while a fine mind like Medtner's goes on its way almost unregarded by the crowd."



Another beautiful characterisation of Medtner's music, directly referring to one of his best known works, can be found in the essay "N K Metner (Comments about his style)" by Daniel Zitomirsky: "The simultaneous distance and sense of longing for the beautiful represent the main characteristic of Medtner's music – the elegiac tone. And that is why the refrain theme of the Sonata *Reminiscenza*, op. 38 No 1, can be called an emblematic theme. It is a musical self-portrait of the composer: dreaming and deeply serious, with an open mind and reserved. ■

Audio Samples:

Prélude (Hymne) from op. 54 –
Hamish Miln
(Festival 1999) DACOCD 389

Improvisation, op. 31 No 1 –
Ekaterina Dershavina
(Festival 2005) DACOCD 659

Sonata-Ballade, op. 27 –
Konstantin Lifschitz
(Festival 2002) DACOCD 609

website: www.medtner.org.uk

RUSSIAN COMPOSERS

SUCCEEDING Scriabin

Alexander Scriabin's genius had a continually inspiring effect on Russian composers born around 1890. Nearly all composers of that time – with the telling exception of Prokofiev – were almost addicted to the idiom of both the early and the late Scriabin. In order to classify the musical language of these composers more accurately, however, one would also need to mention the influence of **Nikolai Medtner**, which should not be underestimated.

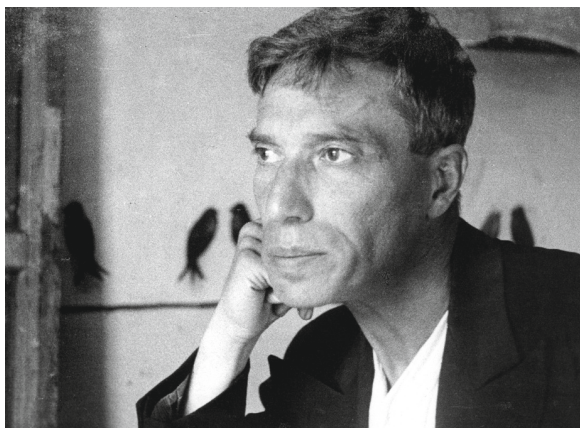
Composers such as **Anatoly Alexandrov** (1888-1982), **Samuil Feinberg** (1890-1962) and **Issai Dobrowén** (1891-1953) as well as **Konstantin Eiges** (1875-1950), Boris Pasternak (1890-1960), **Georgy Catoire** (1861-1926) and **Nikolai Myaskovsky** (1881-1950) created a rich body of piano works which has to represent a true eldorado for all Scriabin fans who value his specific musical language, characterised by extreme lyrical refinement and ecstatic expressive spectrums.

Unfortunately it is to be feared that this repertoire is “in danger of disappearing even before it has become known”, as the musicologist Christoph Flamm once put it. One of the reasons for this surely is the fact that some of these works are at the outer limits of tonality, pushed towards chromaticism, and also that they often sound out the darkest and most depressed of moods.

The oeuvre of **Anatoly Alexandrov**, a student of Taneyev, Igumnov and Vasilenko who taught composition at the Moscow Conservatoire from 1926, encompasses **fourteen sonatas** as well as numerous other piano compositions. **Samuil Feinberg**, a student of Zhilyayev and Goldenweiser, wrote **twelve sonatas**, several **fantasies** and piano transcriptions of **Bach Choral Preludes**.



Anatol Alexandrov



Boris Pasternak

The writer **Boris Pasternak** (of “Doctor Zhivago” fame; his parents already knew Scriabin) composed **Two Preludes** (1906) and a **Sonata** (1909). **Issai Dobrowén**, a student of Taneyev and Godowsky who later became well known as a conductor in Sweden and Norway, left a consistently high quality piano oeuvre from which his youthful **Sonata**, op. 5b, and his **Second Sonata**, op. 10 (“In memory of A N Scriabin”; composed after his dedicatee’s death in spring 1915), stand out. They would stand a chance of establishing themselves in the concert hall – as well as his **Second Ballad**, op. 9, which Robert Teichmüller and Kurt Herrmann described in their 1927 anthology “Internationale moderne Klaviermusik” as “one of the most precious contributions to our ballad repertoire”.

One can only hope that the best music of this rich post-Scriabin generation, whose piano writing is as polished as that of a Rachmaninov or a Medtner, will gradually find due recognition, and that pianists will engage with it, despite its interpretational and technical complexities.

Audio Samples:

Anatol Alexandrov –
Sonate No.2 (1918) /
Yuri Martinov
(Festival 1997) DACOCD 489

Anatol Alexandrov –
Nocturne op. 3 No 1 /
Jonathan Powell
(Festival 2011) DACOCD 719

Issai Dobrowén –
Prélude Mazurka-Caprice
(aus op. 13) / Kolja Lessing
(Festival 1991) DACOCD 389

Leonid Sabaneyev –
Prélude op. 10 No 5 /
Marc-André Hamelin
(Festival 2011) DACOCD 719

Konstantin Eiges –
Skazka op. 12 No 2 /
Jonathan Powell
(Festival 2011) DACOCD 719

Samuel Feinberg –
Sonate No 2, op.2 (1916) /
Nina Tichman
(Festival 2009) DACOCD 699

Georges Catoire –
Nocturne op. 12 No 3
Etude fantastique op. 12 No 4 /
Marc-André Hamelin
(Festival 1998) DACOCD 519

Boris Pasternak –
Zwei Préludes (1906) /
Eldar Nebolsin
(Festival 2010) DACOCD 709

Sonate (1909) /
Hiroaki Takenouchi
(Festival 2010) DACOCD 709



SPANISH PIANO MUSIC

Albéniz at the piano (1888).
Drawing by Darío de Regoyos



Spanish piano music takes a special position within the European music family: after its flowering in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which produced Scarlatti's and Padre Soler's keyboard sonatas it seems, by and large, to have fallen silent during the Classical and Romantic eras until it re-emerged towards the late nineteenth century under the spell of developing national musical styles. The roster of pianists who – apart from the composers themselves – have performed or continue to perform Spanish piano works is illustrious, including piano legends such as **Artur Rubinstein**, **Alicia de Larrocha** and **Nikita Magaloff** as well as, in the younger generation, **Marc-André Hamelin**, **Jean-François Heisser**, **Garrick Ohlsson** and **Arcadi Volodos**.

Isaac Albéniz (1860-1909), the son of a Catalan mother and a Basque father, gave his first piano recital before the age of eight and toured throughout Spain, Puerto Rico and Cuba as early as 1871. Thereafter he studied in Brussels (including with Franz Rummel) and also made his debut as a composer of zarzuelas, the Spanish counterpart of the operetta, which were his true love. Albéniz' piano cycle *Iberia* was written during the last four years of his life – a period which was already overshadowed by an incurable kidney disease. *Iberia* is a rush of colours and rhythms, its programme stretching from landscapes to religious feast days. Musically, Albéniz creates a unique fusion of a sublimated folk style with advanced Lisztian devices.

Alongside Albéniz' *Iberia*, the 1912 cycle of *Goyescas* by **Enrique Granados** (1867-1916) represents the axis of modern Spanish piano music. Granados subsequently reworked the piano cycle into an opera which was successfully premiered in New York in 1916. During their return journey, Granados and his wife drowned when their ship was torpedoed by a German submarine. As a result, the European music world lost one of its most original members who not only left behind twelve

Granados at the piano
(undated, around 1910)



Manuel de Falla during a rehearsal
of his Concerto for harpsichord and
chamber ensemble (around 1930)



Federico Mompou
(undated, around 1930)



operas, but also a considerable number of piano works featuring a fascinating spectrum of subjects, motifs and genres. The fact that they are hardly ever performed may be due to the high demands made on the pianist's technique, rhythmic precision and sense of colour. But those who let themselves into this music – be they performers or listeners – are amply rewarded!

Manuel de Falla (1876-1946) became world-famous as the creator of the ballets *El Amor en brujo* and *El sombrero de tres picos*, as well as *Noches en los jardines de España* for piano and orchestra. His magnificent concerto for harpsichord and chamber ensemble, written for and premiered by Wanda Landowska, and his ten works for solo piano, however, live in the shadow; even the prominent dedicatees of the *Cuatro piezas españolas* (Albéniz) and *Fantasia Bética* (Rubinstein) could not change their fate. It was the 1921 transcription of the “Ritual fire dance” from *El Amor en brujo* which would become his most famous piano work – given the subject and its musical realisation, this is hardly surprising.



Granados recommended that **Federico Mompou i Dancausse** (1893-1987), born in Barcelona into a Franco-Catalan family, study at the Paris Conservatoire: he duly entered the establishment in 1911, additionally taking lessons with Isidor Philippe. Mompou had to travel home during the war, returning to Paris in 1921 where he made a name for himself as an ambassador for Catalan music. As a composer, he followed both Satie's advice to achieve maximal effect with minimal means, and Poulenc's quest for a higher, non-ironic spirituality. In combination with a simplified pianistic style and an affinity to Catalan folksong, Mompou developed a distinctive language, both gentle and powerful, whose magic increasingly charms pianists and listeners. ■

Audio Samples:

Albéniz: Navarra (op. posth.) –
Enrique Perez de Guzman
(DANACORD 419, 1993)

Granados: Villanesca –
Roberto Cappello
(DANACORD 419, 1993)

de Falla: Ritual Fire Dance –
Enrique Perez de Guzman
(DANACORD 429, 1994)

Mompou: Young Girls in the
Garden – Stephen Hough
(DANACORD 419, 1993)

SCANDINAVIAN PIANO MUSIC

Even today the Piano Concerto op. 16 by **Edvard Grieg** appears to be the only piece representing Scandinavian piano music in concert halls across the globe. And considering solo piano works from Scandinavia, it is again only those of Edvard Grieg – for instance his “Lyric Pieces” – which have acquired a certain degree of fame and general acceptance.

However, looking at this branch of the repertoire more closely, a number of works should emerge which are fascinating exactly because they are clearly independent of Central European idioms.

Regarding assessment criteria, the renowned music critic Hanspeter Krellmann pointed out in his “Plädoyer für Sibelius” [Case for Sibelius] of 1970:

“The musicological establishment does not concede the possibility for the objects of their occupation to be considered in any other way than with strict objectivity. As a result, many a composer has negligently been excluded from the scholars’ observations as their oeuvre seemed not to promise much for formal analysis and would therefore needed to have been measured in different dimensions. This does not exclude objective considerations, but it does reduce them in certain respects. In the case of Sibelius – and indeed also with composers such as Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov, Nielsen, de Falla, Chabrier and others – there are also aspects which elude rational definition: aspects such as the experience of life in geographic isolation, or the omnipresent sensation of solitude within nature.”



If one is prepared to seek out the unique premises on which the works of a **Jean Sibelius** or a Carl Nielsen are based, an unprejudiced approach is likely to enable an enriching access to this music. One will also be able to concur with the Canadian pianist Glenn Gould who, amongst **c.120 piano pieces** by Sibelius, found works which captivated him, including the **Sonatinas op. 67**, the **Rondinos op. 68**, the **Sonata op. 12** and **Kyllikki op. 41**. And with his statement that “Sibelius

never wrote against the grain of the keyboard. [...] Sibelius was able to make a significant addition to the far too limited piano repertoire of late Romanticism”, Gould gave the lie to the composer himself who reportedly said: “I do not love the piano. It is an unrewarding instrument for which only one composer managed to write perfectly: Chopin. And only two further composers, Schumann and Debussy, had an intimate relationship with it.” A form of self-incrimination by Sibelius which proved to be a considerable, negative, influence on the reception of his own piano music.

Like Sibelius, the Danish composer **Carl Nielsen** had also trained as a violinist; however, his three main works for piano written between 1916 and 1919 – the **Chaconne op. 32**, the **Theme with Variations op. 40** and the **Suite op. 45** – were important additions to the repertoire.

Further composers from the North European hemisphere should be mentioned in this context: the

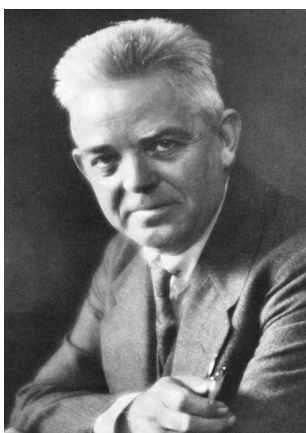
Danes **JPE Hartmann** and **Rued Langgaard**; the Norwegians **Christian Sinding** and **Agathe Backer-Grøndahl**; the Swedes **Wilhelm Stenhammar** and **Adolf Wiklund**; and the Finns **Selim Palmgren**, **Erkki Melartin** and **Ilmari Hannikainen**, whose oeuvre contains many a gratifying piece with its own colour and unique expression that one wished them to be more – if at all – present in the concert hall. ■



Edvard Grieg



Jean Sibelius



Carl Nielsen

— Hörbeispiele:

Ilmari Hannikainen – Ilta (Evening) / Jonathan Plowright (Festival 2006) DACOCD 669

Jean Sibelius – Forest Lake, op. 114 No 3 / Jonathan Powell (Festival 2007) DACOCD 679

Jean Sibelius – Nocturne, op. 51 No 3 / Henri Sigfridsson (Festival 2013) DACOCD739

Geir Tveitt – Arvesylv / Håvard Gimse (Festival 2013) DACOCD739

Edvard Grieg – Dance from Jølster, op. 17 No 5 / Håvard Gimse (Festival 2013) DACOCD739

Sverre Bergh – Norwegian Dance No 2 / Håvard Gimse (Festival 2013) DACOCD739

Wilhelm Stenhammar – Sensommarnätter, op. 33 No 5 / Fredrik Ullén (Festival 2003) DACOCD619

Christian Sinding – Impromptu, op. 31 No 4 / Håvard Gimse (Festival 2013) DACOCD 739

Jean Sibelius – Impromptu, op. 5 No 5 / Håvard Gimse (Festival 2011) DACOCD 719

Jean Sibelius – Sonata, op. 12 / Jean-Frédéric Neuburger (Festival 2013) DACOCD 739

LEOPOLD GODOWSKY

“Never forget what you heard tonight; never lose the memory of that sound. There is nothing like it in the world. It is tragic that the world has never heard Popsy as only he can play.” Thus commented the great pianist **Josef Hofmann** to his American student Abram Chasins following a private concert in the home of Leopold (“Popsy”) Godowsky. This emphatic prompt to remember the sound forever does not seem exaggerated. For Leopold Godowsky was an exceptional phenomenon in

the history of piano music. Born near Vilnius in 1870, he began composing and learning the piano and the violin at the age of five. After a short and not particularly fruitful study period in Berlin with Ernst Rudorff, Godowsky made his American debut as early as 1884. During the following years, Godowsky commuted between France (where **Camille Saint-Saëns** became his mentor) and the USA, earning a reputation as an extraordinary pianist and musician whose transcriptions and arrangements – particularly of the Chopin studies – opened up a new dimension of playing the piano.

Godowsky achieved his European breakthrough at a concert which was to become legendary, given at the Berlin Beethoven-Saal on 6 December 1900. The 30-year-old who now settled in Berlin – the new capital of piano music – became an authority. In 1909 he succeeded **Ferruccio Busoni** at the Vienna Academy of Music, taking over his masterclasses; numerous piano roll recordings document his playing. After the outbreak of the war, Godowsky fled to the USA, leaving behind his precious private library. Composing, performing and teaching continually complemented each other, and Godowsky’s fame reached such an elevated level that he could demand the highest fees, and he insured his hands for one million US Dollars; amongst his circle of friends were **Jascha Heifetz** and **Charlie Chaplin**.

In the 1920s, Godowsky went on extended tours to East Asia which inspired his Java Suite whose movements he called “Phonoramas” (by analogy to panoramas). In 1928 he embarked on an extensive recording series in London, encompassing



X-ray of Godowsky's hands

works by Beethoven, Schumann, Chopin and Grieg. In 1930, Godowsky's career came to a sudden end when he suffered a stroke, leaving him paralysed; the final years of his life were also overshadowed by family tragedies and financial worries. Leopold Godowsky died in New York in November 1938.



Leopold Godowsky in the 1920s

Godowsky was one of the great exponents of the “Golden Years of Pianism”. This may explain why he faded into obscurity after the Second World War: his musical language was deeply rooted in the tonal sphere of Late Romanticism, whilst he was unsympathetic towards musical modernism. Another reason was the pianistic perfection of his playing which is reflected in his works. Artur Schnabel once remarked that even after 500 years of practice he would not achieve the seemingly magical independence of Godowsky's fingers and hands. This was essential for the dense polyphonic textures of his piano writing which is raised to even higher levels in his transcriptions.

It is mostly thanks to Godowsky's son-in-law, **David Saperton** – who taught at the renowned Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia – that the particular qualifications required to master Godowsky's music were passed on to the next generation – including no less a pianist than **Jorge Bolet**. He and a number of pianists of our time have demonstrated that this music is not about an ostentatious display of high-level virtuoso performance, but about creating richly coloured, differentiated and atmospheric soundscapes. ■

— Audio Samples:

Chopin Studies Nos 7-9 (after op. 10,5) – Marc-André Hamelin
(DACOCD 519, 1998)

Java-Suite: The Gardens of Buitenzorg –
Marc-André Hamelin
(DACOCD 519, 1998)

Elegy for the left hand –
Rainer M. Klaas
(DACOCD 299, 1987)

Chopin Study No 42
in A minor (after op. 25,11) –
Marc-André Hamelin
(DACOCD 349, 1989)

Chopin Study No 34,
“Mazurka” (after op. 25,5) –
Marc-André Hamelin
(DACOCD 379, 1990)

Triakontameron:
The musical clock –
Geoffrey Douglas Madge
(DACOCD 379, 1990)

TRANSCRIPTIONS AND PARAPHRASES

It was **Franz Liszt** who introduced the term “transcription” in the 1830s to denote piano adaptations. It implied piano arrangements, more or less faithful to the original, through to free fantasies on themes from operas or symphonic works which were called “paraphrases”.

The fact that even **JS Bach** was one of the greatest arrangers in musical history, adapting, for instance, a whole bundle of concertos by Vivaldi, Marcello and others for keyboard instruments, has not been able to prevent the bad image that has been attached to the genre of “transcription” almost to the present day. Even **Brahms’** advice, to study Liszt’s operatic paraphrases in order to understand what piano technique really is, seems to have gone largely unnoticed. **Busoni** pointed out the artistic superiority of Liszt’s operatic fantasies – in the face of the “plebeian potpourri” – featuring a careful arrangement of forms and contrasts whilst developing the original motifs.

Liszt wrote more than fifty operatic paraphrases for the piano. His **Réminiscences de Norma** (1841) after **Bellini** is one of the best and most elaborately wrought examples. In this piece of c.17 minutes, Liszt managed to encapsulate the opera’s sense of passion, dignity and nobility. Of the middle section in B major (after Norma’s aria from the finale, “Qual cor tradisti”), Busoni commented: “Anyone who has heard or played this section without

being moved has not yet found their way to Liszt.” For this section is a kaleidoscope of pianistic sonorities which is further elevated by a new piano technique of the time, credited to **Sigismund Thalberg**. He had developed the so-called “three-hand technique”, covering all registers of the keyboard with the aid of continuous pedal use: Thalberg had employed this device as early as 1837 in his **Fantasia on Rossini’s “Moses”**, op. 33.



Franz Liszt



Ferruccio Busoni

Busoni believed that prejudices against transcriptions and paraphrases were based on unsatisfactory performances by virtuosos who only focused on superficial brilliance. His own so-called **Fantasia da Camera super Carmen** of 1920 ends with a pianissimo.

Although transcriptions largely disappeared from concert programmes in the 1930s, there have always been advocates of the genre amid renowned pianists, such as Horowitz, Cherkassky, Bolet and Earl Wild.

Milestones amongst piano transcriptions, beside Liszt's works, include **Busoni's and Walter Rummel's Bach Transcriptions; Adolf Schulz-Evler's Arabesques on "An der schönen blauen Donau"; Leopold Godowsky's Symphonic Metamorphoses on Themes by Johann Strauss** as well as his **Studies on Chopin's Études**. Godowsky marked several of his transcription studies "metamorphoses", describing them thus:

"Studies which alter the character, draft and rhythm of the original whilst preserving the form, although the melodic and harmonic contours often vary considerably."

In his legendary collection of essays, "Mi Contra Fa" (1947), **Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji** called Godowsky a "creative transcriber" – his definition holds true for any creative composer active in this genre: "The great transcriber expounds, enlarges and amplifies matter and thought that it has been left to him to discover and reveal [...] and makes the original a point de départ for a great new creation." ■



Audio Samples:

Vivaldi-Bach – Concerto in D major, BWV 972 / Boris Bloch (Festival 2004) DACOCD 649

Bach-Rummel – Aria: „Die Seele ruht in Jesu Händen“ / Jonathan Plowright (Festival 2006) DACOCD 669

Rameau-Godowsky – Elégie / Daniel Berman (Festival 1988) DACOCD 299

Lully-Godowsky – Sarabande / Daniel Berman (Festival 2008) DACOCD 689

Gluck-Chasins – Melodie (from „Orpheus“) / Daniel Berman (Festival 1989) DACOCD 349

Chopin-Godowsky – „Mazurka“, Study No 34 (after op. 25 No 5) / Marc-André Hamelin (Festival 1990) DACOCD 379

Albéniz-Godowsky – Triana / Abbey Simon (Festival 1990) DACOCD 379

Tchaikovsky-Pletnev – „Andante maestoso“ (from „The Nutcracker“) / Boris Bloch (Festival 1989) DACOCD 349

Tchaikovsky-Fowke – „Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy“ (from „The Nutcracker“) / Philip Fowke (Festival 1995) DACOCD 449

Thalberg – Fantasia on Rossini's „Moses“, op. 33 / Roberto Cappello (Festival 1993) DACOCD 419

Grainger – Ramble on R. Strauss' „Der Rosenkavalier“ / Igor Kamenz (Festival 2004) DACOCD 649

Sibelius – Belshazzar's Feast, op. 51 (Suite from the incidental music) / Henri Sigfridsson (Festival 2013) DACOCD 789

SONG

TRANSCRIPTIONS



Franz Liszt

Even during **JS Bach's** time it was considered a challenge to produce a cantabile on an instrument that does not naturally "sing", such as a keyboard instrument. In the accompanying notes to his "Inventions and Sinfonias" of 1723, Bach explains that his intention with these pieces had been to produce an "honest manual" to teach "enthusiasts and especially those keen to learn" the correct way of playing in two and three parts, and particularly to impart "the cantabile style of playing".

A good century later – now moving on to the piano proper with pedals – the title of "Songs without words", inaugurated by **Felix Mendelssohn** and used for several of his sets of piano pieces, conceded to the piano the ability to "sing" without the presence of a singer, to perform songs independently. The pianist **Sigismund Thalberg** (1812-1871) made it his task to perfect this skill: in 1853 he published his instructive "L'art du chant appliqué au piano" [The art of singing on the piano], op. 70, containing twenty-four transcriptions of arias and songs by composers such as Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Rossini and Bellini. During the course of the twentieth century, however, this ideal of striving for vocal qualities on the piano faded from the spotlight, prompting Vladimir Horowitz – who did not hold the performance culture and general musicianship of younger pianists, whom he heard later in life, in particularly high esteem – to summarise his disapproval with the words "They are not singing".

For **Franz Liszt**, who explored all directions of sound production on the piano, it seemed natural to accept the creative challenge of arranging songs for the piano: he produced over fifty transcriptions of Schubert songs alone. In these, he not only sought to integrate the vocal line into the original accompaniment, but also to emphasise the poetic image with musical means.



Sigismund Thalberg

Some piano transcriptions of songs improved the originals to such an extent that they have become much better known than the songs (as is the case with “The Lark” by Glinka-Balakirev). The remarkable acceptance of this genre by composers themselves is underlined by their own song transcriptions – as is illustrated by the example of **Edvard Grieg**. On the other hand, **Max Reger’s** arrangements of twelve selected Richard Strauss songs for solo piano (1899) are virtually unknown: the original songs are too firmly rooted in concert life and in the repertoire of singers. However, hearing them (for instance “Ich trage meine Minne”) in the expert hands of a pianist such as Frédéric Meinders can be as deeply touching as hearing the original version for voice. Reger did not include Richard Strauss’ famous “Ständchen” – which is pianistically striking as the accompaniment features rousing semiquavers – in his collection: **Leopold Godowsky, Walter Giesecking** and **Wilhelm Backhaus** later

Audio Samples:

Schubert-Liszt – Der Müller und der Bach / Serge Babayan (Festival 1992) DACOCD 399

Beethoven-Liszt – Adelaide / Joseph Moog (Festival 2012) DACOCD 729

Chopin-Liszt – Meine Freuden / Marc-André Hamelin (Festival 2004) DACOCD 649

v. Bülow-Liszt – Dante’s Sonett „Tanto gentile...” / Nadejda Vlaeva (Festival 2011) DACOCD 719

Glinka-Balakirev – The Lark / Philip Fowke (Festival 1988) DACOCD 299

Schubert-Godowsky – Morgengruß / Janice Weber (Festival 1990) DACOCD 379

R. Strauss-Godowsky – Ständchen / Daniel Berman (Festival 1987) DACOCD 299

R. Strauss-Reger – Ich trage meine Minne / Frédéric Meinders (Festival 2006) DACOCD 669

R. Quilter-Hough – Now sleeps the crimson petal / Frédéric Meinders (Festival 2006) DACOCD 669

R. Hahn-Steele – La Barcheta / Stephen Hough (Festival 1993) DACOCD 419

Edvard Grieg – Modersorg, op. 52 No 1 / Håvard Gimse (Festival 2011) DACOCD 719

Edvard Grieg – Ich liebe Dich, op. 52 No 5 / Evgeny Soifertis (Festival 2007) DACOCD 679

Edvard Grieg – Des Dichters Herz op. 52 No 3 / Evgeny Soifertis (Festival 2007) DACOCD 679

Continued on page 24



Max Reger

Continued from page 23

Fauré-Grainger –
Nell / Peter Froundjian
(Festival 1989) DACOCD 349

Fauré-Attwood –
Les Berceaux / Koji Attwood
(Festival 2008) DACOCD 689

Rachmaninov-Wild –
O, Cease Thy Singing /
Daniel Berman
(Festival 2011) DACOCD 719

Gershwin-Wild –
Summertime / Daniel Berman
(Festival 1987) DACOCD 299

Schubert-Meinders –
Suleika / Frédéric Meinders
(Festival 1999) DACOCD 539

Schubert-Meinders – Trockne
Blumen / Frédéric Meinders
(Festival 1999) DACOCD 539

Saint-Saëns/Meinders –
Mon coeur s'ouvre à ta voix /
Frédéric Meinders
(Festival 2002) DACOCD 609

Gershwin-Meinders –
The Man I love /
Frédéric Meinders
(Festival 1999) DACOCD 539

Gershwin-Meinders –
Embraceable you /
Frédéric Meinders
(Festival 1999) DACOCD 539

H. Arlen-Meinders – Over the
Rainbow / Frédéric Meinders
(Festival 1999) DACOCD 539

Jobim-Meinders – Garota de
Ipanema / Frédéric Meinders
(Festival 2001) DACOCD 589

Kaempfert-Meinders –
Strangers in the Night /
Marc-André Hamelin
(Festival 2011) DACOCD 719

Charles Trenet-Weissenberg –
En avril, à Paris /
Marc-André Hamelin
(Festival 2011) DACOCD 689

Charles Trenet-Weissenberg –
Boum! / Marc-André Hamelin
(Festival 2011) DACOCD 689

SONG

TRANSCRIPTIONS

made up for this omission with their own impressive arrangements.

Earl Wild (1915-2010) must be mentioned as one of the “creative transcribers” (Sorabji) of the twentieth century: the American pianist not only ingeniously adapted Gershwin’s music for the piano, but also arranged twelve songs by Rachmaninov for solo piano which he recorded in 1982.

Another very fertile pianist-composer who has dedicated himself to the art of transcription is the Dutch artist Frédéric Meinders. He has produced such convincingly independent piano arrangements that singers – according to certain piano-phile and somewhat malicious voices – have become superfluous... ■



Earl Wild



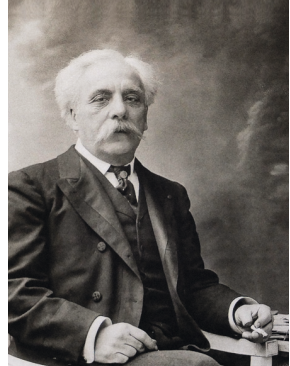
FRENCH PIANO MUSIC

BEYOND DEBUSSY AND RAVEL 1

Despite the fact that France had produced two keyboard masters in François Couperin and Jean-Philippe Rameau, and that piano tuition at the Paris Conservatoire since its foundation in 1795 was hugely successful, with Paris becoming the piano capital of the nineteenth century, the overpowering German piano tradition prevented an artistic emancipation of French piano repertoire (Chopin and Liszt being exceptions in this). Furthermore, there was the wagnérisme which cast a spell over many French musicians and intellectuals. It took until César Franck and Camille Saint-Saëns for French musicians to take up another position which, after the Franco-Prussian War, resulted in the *Ars Gallica* movement producing numerous original and significant works, including in the field of piano music.

Gabriel Fauré (1858–1924) was the most important mediator of French music en route to modernism. The two sets of thirteen Barcarolles and Nocturnes as well as the *Thème et variations*, op. 73, of this brilliant improviser who would later take up the post of Director of the Conservatoire, are some of the most exquisite and beautiful character pieces that were written before the end of the First World War. Fauré who, like Smetana and Beethoven, lost his hearing, is much more than a “French Brahms”: the consummate floating between melancholy and esprit which characterises his piano music can be hugely beneficial to performers honing their touch.

Vincent d’Indy (1851–1931) was the éminence grise of French music history during the Third Republic, including as Presi-



Gabriel Fauré
(undated, around 1900)



Vincent d'Indy
(undated, around 1890)



Gabriel Pierné
(undated, around 1900)



Reynaldo Hahn
(undated, around 1910)

dent of the Société Nationale de Musique and as co-founder of the Schola Cantorum. As a composer he has, with a few exceptions, faded into obscurity – this also applies to his varied piano oeuvre, beginning with his Piano Sonata, op. 11, of 1869 and ending with his Fantaisie sur un viel air de ronde française, op. 99, of 1930. His second Sonata in E minor, op. 63 (1907), is a prime example for his artistic use of the “sonate cyclique” form introduced by his teacher Franck, whilst the Thème varié, fugue et chanson, op. 85 (1925), combines contrapuntal bravura with the spirit of the French baroque keyboard masters.

Gabriel Pierné (1863-1937) succeeded Franck as organist of Sainte-Clothilde before becoming Director – highly esteemed by Stravinsky – of the famous Concerts Colonne. Incomprehensibly, his musical legacy of around 150 works covering all major instrumental genres as well as song and opera, has remained largely unheard of in Germany. His piano music features such masterpieces as the monumental Variations in C minor, op. 42 (1918), and the equally impressive Passacaglia, op. 52, of 1932. Undeterred by the political animosities between France and Germany after the First World War, Pierné sought to explore German music, particularly the works of Bach and Reger.

Reynaldo Hahn (1874-1947), accepted into the Paris Conservatoire as a child prodigy at the age of eleven, was the son of a Venezuelan mother and a German-Jewish merchant from Hamburg. In his biography, which was closely connected to the Paris cultural scene until he fled to Monte Carlo in 1940, his friendship with Marcel Proust played a major role. Hahn became famous with his songs which brilliantly capture the spirit of the belle époque. But he also produced original and immediately appealing, elegant piano works such as the refined Portraits of Painters after Poems of M Proust (1894) or the wonderful waltz sequence Le Ruban dénoué (The Untied Ribbon) for two pianos which, despite having been written in 1915, gives away no hints relating to war. ■



Audio Samples:

Vincent d'Indy: Sonata in E minor, op. 63 (1907) – Marie-Catherine Girod (DACOCD 449, 1995)

Gabriel Fauré: Nocturne No 2 in B major, op. 33 No 2 – Jean-Marc Luisada (DACOCD 349, 1989)

Gabriel Fauré: Nocturne No 13 in B minor, op. 119 – Idil Biret (DACOCD 349, 1989)

Reynaldo Hahn: Portraits de peintres d'après M. Proust – Jeffrey Swann (DACOCD 489, 1997)

Gabriel Pierné: Nocturne en forme de valse, op. 40 No 2 – Artur Pizarro (DACOCD 699, 2009)

FRENCH

PIANO MUSIC

BEYOND DEBUSSY AND RAVEL 2



Emmanuel Chabrier

“The winner takes it all, the loser standing small” – this line from the pop group ABBA succinctly characterises the correlation between recognition and performance frequency of the works of Debussy and Ravel versus those of other French composers. The fact that Debussy’s unique appearance at the beginning of the twentieth century caused entire work catalogues of composers who felt drawn to different aesthetics to be confined to the bottom drawer is, on the one hand, regrettable, but, on the other hand, gives rise, from a present-day perspective, to a differentiated re-evaluation.

Debussy’s position on the cusp of a new style of music was defined by José Ortega y Gasset as early as 1925: “Since Debussy, it has been possible to listen to music in sanguine serenity, without inebriation or tears (...) He cleansed music from the human (Walter Giesekeing once spoke of ‘transpersonal sentiments’) which is why the new musical era dates from him onwards.” Several of Debussy’s contemporaries, shaped by masters such as César Franck and Fauré, although not able to escape the “impressionist style”, still retained independent expressive characteristics.

Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894) could be labelled as the first true “impressionist”. A friend of painters such as Manet, Renoir and Monet, and a collector of their works, he translated their ideal of “plein air” painting into piano pieces such as “Sous-Bois” or “Paysage” (from his “Dix pièces pittoresques”). His entirely original, unacademic style is characterised by highly sensitive and refined harmonic transitions, paired with expressive warmth and rhythmic élan, as epitomised in his principal work for piano, “Bourée fantasque”.

Francis Poulenc (1890-1963) had a strong affinity to Chabrier whom he “loved as one loves an indulgent, always cheerful



Florent Schmitt



father” and whose oeuvre he called an infinite treasure trove. Like Jean Sibelius, he was quite critical of his own piano works – an attitude which ought to be revised on a case by case basis. Nowadays, it does not seem entirely comprehensible why he valued such a work as (for instance) “Aubade”, whilst he discarded “Les Soirées de Nazelles”. However, he retained both volumes of his “Improvisations”, the A flat major “Intermezzo” as well as some of his “Nocturnes”, not forgetting the inspired, masterful piano writing in works such as “Histoire de Babar”, “Le Bal masqué” and the song cycle “Tel jour, telle nuit”.

Florent Schmitt (1870-1958), a student of Massenet and Fauré, is difficult to classify. He left an extensive musical legacy, his piano oeuvre encompassing more than a hundred compositions (this does not include his intriguing works for four hands). His early piano works (for instance his “Trois Préludes”, op. 3, and “Soirs”, op. 5) breathe the spirit of Fauré or Reynaldo Hahn, whilst other cycles (“Musiques intimes”, op. 16 and op. 29) contain several precious gems. A principal work still underappreciated today is the first piece of the set of “Ombres”, op. 64, which is entitled “J’entends dans le lointain...” (1917).

Pierre de Bréville (1861-1949), a student of Franck and d’Indy, is today almost forgotten. As a composer, he focussed on songs and chamber music. His piano works include his “Portraits de Maîtres”, a series of pastiches where he imitated the styles of Fauré, d’Indy, Chausson and Franck, as well as a remarkable, single movement “Sonate” (1923) in which he skilfully incorporates Franck’s “bien chanté” ideal into a more austere and objective twentieth century idiom – a milestone between the sonatas of Dukas (1900), Aubin (1930) and Dutilleul (1948). ■



Pierre de Bréville



Francis Poulenc

Audio Samples:

Emmanuel Chabrier –
Air de Ballet; Mauresque (from
„Dix pièces pittoresques“)
/ Peter Froudjian (Festival
1988) DACOCD 299

Francis Poulenc – Intermezzo
in D flat major / Kathryn Stott
(Festival 1996) DACOCD 479

Francis Poulenc – Aubade /
Jonathan Plowright (Festival
2009) DACOCD 699

Francis Poulenc – Les Soirées
de Nazelles /
Jonathan Plowright
(Festival 2003) DACOCD 619

Florent Schmitt –
Valse-Nocturne No 1 /
Marie-Cathérine Girod
(Festival 2003) DACOCD 619

Florent Schmitt – „J’entends
dans le lointain...” / Cecile
Licad (from „Ombres“, op. 64)
(Festival 2005) DACOCD 659

Pierre de Bréville –
Portraits de Maîtres /
Marie-Cathérine Girod
(Festival 2003) DACOCD 619

Pierre de Bréville –
Sonata (1923) /
Marie-Cathérine Girod
(Festival 2007) DACOCD 489

AUSTRIAN PIANO MUSIC

BEYOND VIENNESE CLASSICISM AND THE VIENNESE SCHOOL

Until 1918, Vienna was the musical centre of Central European music culture, and between 1780 and 1830 it was also – thanks to the activities of the Viennese Classical composers – the capital of European piano music, before passing this title on to Paris. But Vienna was also the arena for embittered aesthetic disputes between traditionalists and secessionists. Arnold Schoenberg, the leader of the Viennese School, wanted his revolutionary twelve-tone system – which he demonstrated for the first time in a piano work, his Suite op. 25 – to secure the supremacy of German music for the next century, whilst other composers held on to the “old” tonality as the natural means of expression.

Joseph Marx (1882-1964) was multitalented: when in 1909 in his home town of Graz he was awarded his doctorate for a musicological thesis on the subject of tonality, he had already made a name for himself as a brilliant pianist and written a great number of songs. He went on to teach composition and music theory for many years at the Vienna Music Academy where his students included **Friedrich Gulda**, **Jenő Takács** and **Erik Werba**. His piano music features a curious combination of a tendency towards art nouveau-like ornaments and a tonality reminiscent of Reger. However, the warmth and elegance of Marx’s idiom always remain distinctive – and this may be one of the reasons why Jorge Bolet was so fond of Marx’s Piano Concerto of 1920.

Egon Kornauth (1891-1959), born in the Moravian city of Olomouc, studied with not just one but three of the Viennese heavyweights: Robert Fuchs, Franz Schreker (whom he criticised for being too modernist) and Franz Schmidt. Initially a répétiteur at the Vienna Court Opera, Kornauth toured right across the globe during the 1920s as pianist of the Vienna Piano Trio. After the annexation of Austria in 1938 he positioned himself with the Nazi regime by joining the Reichsmusikkammer. Kornauth’s piano music, thanks to its diversity and ease



Egon Kornauth
(undated, after 1950)



Erich Wolfgang Korngold
(undated, around 1940)



Felix Petyrek
(undated, around 1940?)

of invention, can be rated as the epitome of a “lingua franca” (Jonathan Powell) of Austrian modernism: immediately comprehensible and yet of great refinement.

When the ten-year-old wunderkind **Erich Wolfgang Korngold** (1897-1957) was taught by Schoenberg’s brother-in-law Zemlinsky, he became a close witness to his teacher’s “assertiveness against the new and seductively radical theories” of Schoenberg. At the age of thirteen, he dedicated his Second Piano Sonata in E major, op. 2, to his teacher: it was premiered in Berlin in 1911 by no less than **Artur Schnabel**. Korngold’s floating tonality reveals his own engagement with the new directions in modern music and the decision to maintain the “tonal feeling” (as he put it, alluding to Zemlinsky’s conflict). From 1934, Korngold continued his career as a film composer in Hollywood. His return to Vienna after the war was a major disappointment as he realised that his tonal idiom was no longer valued.

Born in Brno, the anthroposophist **Felix Petyrek** (1892-1951) was one of Schreker’s most talented students, as well as an outstanding concert pianist. After teaching at the Athens Conservatoire, he succeeded **Wilhelm Kempff** at the Stuttgart Music College before accepting a teaching post at the Leipzig Conservatoire. As he had joined the NSDAP for tactical reasons, he had to give up the Leipzig post after 1945. After returning to Vienna, he died, overworked and resigned, at the age of fifty-nine, without having been able to continue his success as a composer during the 1920s. Petyrek left behind a stylistically diverse piano oeuvre featuring an expressionist tendency towards the grotesque and a fondness for Southeast European folklore. Max Reger’s star pupil **Erwin Schulhoff** praised Petyrek’s montage-like **Wurstelprater** as an ingenious caricature of waltz bliss destroyed by a mechanised world. ■



Joseph Marx
(undated, around 1960)

Audio Samples:

Felix Petyrek:
Wurstelprater (1919) –
Kolja Lessing
(DACOCD 399, 1992)

Joseph Marx:
Schmetterlingsgeschichten –
Jonathan Powell
(DACOCD 549, 2004)

Joseph Marx:
Albumblatt – Denis Pascal
(DACOCD 689, 2008)

Joseph Marx: Präludium und
Fuge (from Six Pieces for Piano)
– Gianluca Lusi
(DACOCD 729, 2012)

Erich Wolfgang Korngold:
Sonata No 2 in E, Largo –
Peter Froudjian
(DACOCD 689, 2008)

Egon Kornauth:
Fantasie in E flat minor,
op. 10 – Jonathan Powell
(DACOCD 699, 2009)

NORTH AMERICAN PIANO MUSIC

Only once jazz triumphed did Europe finally grasp the complexity of the music culture – previously dismissed as “entertainment” – on the other side of the Atlantic. In it, the piano played a towering role from the nineteenth century onwards, which was reflected both in huge print runs of piano music and also in the production runs of piano makers such as Chickering and Steinway – the latter had been founded in New York in 1853 as a subsidiary of the Brunswick piano maker Steinweg. Only ten years previously, the famous head of the piano faculty at the Paris Conservatoire, Pierre-Joseph Zimmerman, had declined even to hear the 14-year-old piano prodigy **Louis Moreau Gottschalk** (1829-1869) from New Orleans: his reasoning being that America was no more than a country of steam engines (“L’Amérique n’était qu’un pays de machines à vapeur”). Nonetheless, Gottschalk would become the first musical ambassador of his country, celebrating triumphs with piano works combining the grand gesture of European virtuosity with the vitality of American (often Creole) folk music.



It was only **Charles Ives** (1874-1954) who finally managed, with works such as his legendary Piano Sonata No 2, Concord, Mass., 1840-1860 (published in 1921), to develop an independent American musical language by overlaying popular, classical and experimental styles and devices. **George Gershwin** (1898-1937) was, after a fashion, to follow him in this: his Rhapsody in Blue, which was to garner world fame, was billed as “An Experiment in Modern Music” at its premiere in 1924.

And even the social conservative **Samuel Barber** (1910-1981) combined, in his monumental piano sonata of 1949/50, premiered by Vladimir Horowitz, in a paradoxical and virtuoso manner a late romantic stylistic orientation with jazz colourings.



Charles Ives

US-born composers – such as the two Californians **Henry Cowell** (1897-1965) and **John Cage** (1912-1992), **George Antheil** (1900-1959), born in New Jersey, or the Arkansas composer **Conlon**

Nancarrow (1912-1997) – were instrumental in advancing the development of experimental or avant-garde techniques by employing clusters, preparations or player pianos. However, immigrant composers also continually

provided new and surprising impulses in the USA: Ukrainian-born **Leo Ornstein** (1893-2002) was one of the early pioneers of Ultra-Modernism with his bruitist piano sonatas, whilst the Australian **Percy Grainger** (1882-1961), following his naturalisation in 1918, turned to the enormous (as well as attractive) field of American folklore. After the Second World War, the diversity of styles became considerably larger still. **Robert Helps** (1928-2001), unfortunately hardly known in Europe, evoked the European tradition in a postmodern blend of reverence and alienation. The “enfant terrible” of the American avant-garde **Frederic Rzewski** (b. 1938), on the other hand, roughened up the famous gospel *Down by the riverside* in a quasi improvisatory approach looking towards Ives, thereby giving it political significance in the manner of Eisler. The worldwide success with which Rzewski’s monumental 36 variations on *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!* (1975) were received, even in the traditional concert hall, proves that popularisation and experiment do not form a contradiction in American piano music but instead represent the core of its identity. ■



promotional poster for a
Gottschalk tour in the USA

Audio Samples:

Percy Grainger: *Ramble on*
“*Der Rosenkavalier*” –
Igor Kamenz
(DACOCD 649, 2004)

Percy Grainger:
In Dahomey – Piers Lane
(DACOCD 479, 1996)

Robert Helps:
Hommage à Fauré – Jenny Lin
(DACOCD 709, 2010)

Frederic Rzewski:
From “*Four North American*
Ballads”, No 4, “*Down by the*
Riverside” –
Konstantin Scherbakow
(DACOCD 589, 2001)

Louis Moreau Gottschalk:
Souvenirs d'Andalousie –
Giovanni Belluci
(DACOCD 589, 2001)

Louis Moreau Gottschalk:
Bamboula, Danse des nègres –
Cecile Licad
(DACOCD 659, 2005)

Samuel Barber:
Ballet Suite op. 28: Galop –
Duo Tal & Groethuysen
(DACOCD 669, 2006)

Gershwin – Wild:
I got Rhythm (from
“*Seven Virtuoso Etudes*”) –
Daniel Berman
(DACOCD 349, 1989)



Percy Grainger



Robert Helps
(undated, around 1970)

“RARITIES OF PIANO MUSIC”

In its 29th season, this festival is presented each year for one week in August – “a festival with a meaningful rather than superficial difference” (Bryce Morrison).

“**Rarities**” in this case does not denote the sort of value that increases when there are fewer products available, as is the case with items such as fine wine or stamps, but rather the impetus – arising out of a sense of justice – to revive works from an enormous repertoire which have, for a whole plethora of reasons, fallen by the wayside. For “rarities” do not come into existence as such – rather, the term describes their current status. And during the course of time this status can change – which, in many cases, would be desirable. Of course certain rarely played compositions carry in them the seed of rarity, that is to say that they may be difficult to access or that they make enormous technical demands on the player.

This festival focuses more on the transitional phases in music history, revealing works atypical of their time, or early works of composers whose profile would change as they matured. These works are taken seriously and for what they are, and even piano pieces that “only” possess a “certain something” are presented to the audiences for unashamed enjoyment.

Highlights in the festival’s history include performances in 1989 of Alkan’s “Symphony” and “Concerto” for solo piano by Ronald Smith and Marc-André Hamelin respectively, as well as of Julius Reubke’s Sonata in B flat minor by Hamish Milne. As early as 1990 Hamelin played an outstanding twentieth century set of variations, Frederic Rzewski’s “The People United Will Never be Defeated”; and in 1992 a collection of twenty-three piano works by Alexander Scriabin was performed, to great acclaim, by Igor Zhukov.



Artistic Director of the Festival: Peter Froundjian



Left: Knight's Hall
Right: Courtyard of
Husum castle

A number of performances of noteworthy sonatas offered revealing (new) insights into these works, amongst them the Sonata in B flat minor by Balakirev; the Sonata in F minor, op. 27, by Lyapunov; the first Sonata from the opus 6 set by Myaskovsky; the F major Sonata, op. 12, by Sibelius; the E minor Sonata, op. 63, by d'Indy; the Sonata in E flat minor by Dukas; the Sonata in D minor by Benjamin Dale; the Sonata (1923) by Pierre de Bréville; the three Szymanowski Sonatas; the Sonata No 4 (1924) by Leo Ornstein; the Sonata (1948) by Dutilleux; and, last but not least, the two Sonatas, op. 7 and op. 57, by Carl Czerny.

Of course a festival such as this could not miss out on Leopold Godowsky's "Symphonic Metamorphoses on Themes by Johann Strauss" (Künstlerleben; Fledermaus; Wein, Weib und Gesang) or Liszt's "Réminiscences de Norma", "Réminiscences de 'La Juive'" and the "Tannhäuser Overture". Further highlights include Poulenc's "Aubade" in the solo piano version, as well as his "Soirées de Nazelles"; Pierné's "Trois pièces formant Suite de Concert", op. 40; Ignaz Friedman's "Studies on a Theme of Paganini", op. 47b, and his "Passacaglia"; Chevillard's transcription of Chabrier's "España", Michel Dalberto's solo version of Strauss' "Four Last Songs"; the "Rosenkavalier Suite", op. 59, in the solo piano version by Frédéric Meinder; Roland Pöntinen's "Improvisations on Fellini's 'Amarcord'" – music by Nino Rota; Reger's "Bach Variations", op. 81; two complete performances of Albéniz' "Iberia"; Joseph Marx' "Präludium und Fuge" as well as his "Schmetterlingsgeschichten" [Butterfly Stories]; Ravel's "La Parade – Suite de Ballet" (1896); the first complete performance of Hamelin's "12 Etudes In All The Minor Keys" (1986-2009) played by the composer himself, as well as the premiere of his "Variations on a theme of Paganini" in 2011; Felix Blumenfeld's "24 Préludes", op. 17; as well as Scandinavian piano music played by Håvard Gimse. Slightly misquoting Schumann, one could say: "There is no end to the joy of discovery". ■

Idee dieser Ausstellung, die sich der Faszination von Klavierspielen seitens des Mainstreams widmet, hat ihren Ausgang von der Beobachtung und Erfahrung vieler Freunde und Liebhaber des Klavierspiels genommen, wie eng und zum Teil geradezu erstarrt das Konzert-Repertoire vieler heutiger - auch junger - Pianisten immer noch ist. Teil durch die Übernahme der Vorlieben der eigenen Lehrer, teils unter dem Zwang von Wettbewerben und der Programmpolitik großer Labels wurden und werden Programme von einem recht genau definierten Werkkanon dominiert. Er beginnt bei Bach, führt über Beethoven und Schubert über sehr viel weniger über Haydn und Mozart zu Schumann, Liszt, Chopin und Brahms und endet in der Regel bei Debussy, Ravel und Prokofiev. So unbestritten es ist, dass es sich um einen Kanon von Meisterwerken handelt, so bedenklich sind die Folgen dieser Verengung. Denn dadurch droht ein Großteil der Klavierliteratur in Vergessenheit zu geraten, die seit der Erfindung des Hammerflügels zu Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts bis zum Ende des sogenannten „Goldenen Zeitalters“ des Klavierspiels vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg geschrieben wurde.

Es gilt, die Bestände für die Musikbibliothek wiederzuerwecken, die eine solche Fülle hervorbrachte und in der das Klavier zum Universalinstrument aufstieg. Hier macht sich die Frage, wie man so facettenreiches Gefüge einer so faszinierenden Vielfalt wie der Transparenz in 19. Jahrhundert klärt? Hier wird, dass ein Großteil an Klavermusik von Komponisten „Pianissimo“ stammt, für die die Klaviers und die Fülle von Musik mit einer Einbeziehung der Improvisation, eine unerschöpfliche Quelle bildet. Und wer macht sich bewusst, wie stark Klavermusik durch so kleine Schulen geprägt ist, die sich ebenfalls in 19. Jahrhundert entwickelten und mit 19. Jahrhundert „Klaviermusik“? Und schließlich ist auch an den verschiedenen musikalischen Strömungen, die im 19. Jahrhundert im Klavier zum Ausdruck kamen, zu denken, die in Programmen und Kompositionen gleichsam eine neue Sprache gefunden hat.

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