NAXOS Historical

Great Pianists • Moiseiwitsch 7

ADD

8.110675

RACHMANINOV
Preludes

MEDTNER
Piano Sonata in G minor

KABALEVSKY
Piano Sonata No. 3

KHACHATURIAN
Toccata

Benno Moiseiwitsch
Historical Recordings 1928 - 1948

Great Pianists: Benno Moiseiwitsch (1890-1963), Volume 7
Rachmaninov • Medtner • Kabalevsky • Prokofiev • Khachaturian

Benno Moiseiwitsch was born in the so-called cradle of Russian pianism, Odessa, in 1890. At nine he won the Anton Rubinstein prize and after being told by the Guildhall School of Music in London that they could teach him nothing, he went, at the age of fourteen, to Vienna where he studied with the great teacher Leschetizky. At first Leschetizky told the young Benno that he could play better with his feet, but young Benno was undeterred and spent nearly two years in Vienna perfecting his art with the great teacher. His British début was in Reading in 1908 and his international career took him to every corner of the world.

This seventh volume of the recordings of Moiseiwitsch consists of Russian works by composers whose music had a foot in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although only his first ten years were spent in the nineteenth century, Moiseiwitsch's style of playing is rooted there. It was with the music of Rachmaninov that Moiseiwitsch had a great affinity. He loved the man, the composer, and his music and treated them all with the greatest of respect. During the 1930s he recorded the *Second Piano Concerto* and the *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*, and in the early 1940s recorded some solos and the *First Piano Concerto*. Of the solos, which are presented here, the *Moment Musical in E minor, Op. 16, No. 4*, is particularly fine, displaying Moiseiwitsch's effortless virtuosity. Moiseiwitsch used to like to tell a story about the *Prelude in B minor, Op. 32, No. 10*. On Moiseiwitsch's first visit to America Rachmaninov attended his recital where he had played some of the composer's works. Rachmaninov thanked him particularly for playing the *Prelude in B minor*, and Moiseiwitsch found that not only was it his own favourite, but also the favourite of the composer. The mutual admiration for the work was the basis on which their friendship began. Moiseiwitsch asked Rachmaninov if he had a programme in mind when composing the work. Moiseiwitsch knew their conceptions were different but that his own was right. 'He said, "All right. You tell me yours and I'll tell you mine." We haggled for a while and I eventually said, "Well, mine is a long story", and he said, "Well, if yours is a long story, it cannot be anything like mine, because mine can be answered with one word". So rather despondently I sat down in a chair and said, "Well, to me, it suggests The Return", whereupon a long arm shot out – "Stop!", so I said "Why, what have I done?". He said, "That's what it is! The Return".'

As well as his friendship with Rachmaninov, Moiseiwitsch knew another composer-pianist Russian exile, Nikolai Medtner. Medtner had recorded many of his piano works for HMV in 1936, and ten years later in 1946 recorded a few more sides including the *Round Dance* for piano duet with his friend. Medtner's music has rarely been popular with pianists or the public, and Moiseiwitsch was doing his friend a service when he recorded his *Sonata in G minor, Op. 22*. Then as now, however, Medtner had his supporters and champions, and a critic wrote in 1943, 'This is a fine individual work and whoever is responsible for this recording must be congratulated on an excellent choice…….As I see it, he is the greatest romantic composer in the world today and although his music is not generally known or appreciated, there are a few musicians of keen perception who acknowledge his genius, realising that his name will always live as a composer who preferred to write music for all time rather than cater for the fickle minds which regard music as a fashionable pastime.' Moiseiwitsch's recording received favourable reviews upon its release, the *Gramophone* trying to sell the work as much, if not more so, than the performance. After bemoaning the fact that Medtner is always referred to as 'a Russian Brahms', the critic wrote, 'But take up and play these

records as if this sonata, for the moment, alone represented music to you. You will not then miss the fine dignity of these pages, nor will you fail to realise that you are in contact with a truly distinguished mind.' Another eminent pianist who played and recorded the work was Emil Gilels.

The 1940s saw many front-rank pianists taking up the modern Russian composers. William Kapell had immediate success with Khachaturian's *Piano Concerto* and it became something of a hit with the American public. He and his audiences, however, wearied of it, and he played it no more. Vladimir Horowitz gave the New York première of Kabalevsky's *Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 45*, in February 1947 at Carnegie Hall. Two months later he also played a group of Kabalevsky's *Preludes Op. 38* at Carnegie Hall, and in December recorded the *Piano Sonata No. 3*.

In November 1948 London concert-goers could attend six piano recitals in one week. It seems to have been the season for unusual repertoire. 'Mr Artur Rubinstein's piano recital on Friday evening should have filled the Albert Hall, but his choice of a good rather than a popular programme, including unfamiliar works by Milhaud and Szymanowski, resulted in many empty seats…..Kabalevsky's third piano sonata, also unfamiliar to English audiences, was included in Mr Moiseiwitsch's recital at Central Hall on Saturday afternoon, proving admirably pianistic even if typical of much recent Soviet music in its lapses into the banal and commonplace. Mr Moiseiwitsch's playing seemed a little tired, but his liquid quiet tone has lost none of its beauty.'

Moiseiwitsch gave a recital at London's Wigmore Hall on 14th March 1928 in the second half of which he played works by Ravel, Debussy, and Villa Lobos, as well as Prokofiev's *Suggestion Diabolique* and Medtner's *Fairy Tale*, both of which he had recorded for HMV on the 1st March. Moiseiwitsch often played the *Suggestion Diabolique* and recorded it again for HMV in October 1950.

© Jonathan Summers

Ward Marston

In 1997 Ward Marston was nominated for the Best Historical Album Grammy Award for his production work on BMG's Fritz Kreisler collection. According to the Chicago Tribune, Marston's name is 'synonymous with tender loving care to collectors of historical CDs'. Opera News calls his work 'revelatory', and Fanfare deems him 'miraculous'. In 1996 Ward Marston received the Gramophone award for Historical Vocal Recording of the Year, honouring his production and engineering work on Romophone's complete recordings of Lucrezia Bori. He also served as re-recording engineer for the Franklin Mint's Arturo Toscanini issue and BMG's Sergey Rachmaninov recordings, both winners of the Best Historical Album Grammy.

Born blind in 1952, Ward Marston has amassed tens of thousands of opera classical records over the past four decades. Following a stint in radio while a student at Williams College, he became well-known as a reissue producer in 1979, when he restored the earliest known stereo recording made by the Bell Telephone Laboratories in 1932.

In the past, Ward Marston has produced records for a number of major and specialist record companies. Now he is bringing his distinctive sonic vision to bear on works released on the Naxos Historical label. Ultimately his goal is to make the music he remasters sound as natural as possible and true to life by 'lifting the voices' off his old 78 rpm recordings. His aim is to promote the importance of preserving old recordings and make available the works of great musicians who need to be heard.

Producer's Note

During the 78rpm era, Benno Moiseiwitsch recorded exclusively for His Master's Voice. Although some of his records were issued by Australian HMV and Victor, many were available only in England on the company's budget priced labels. These English pressings often contain a high crackle content that makes them unsuitable for remastering. Fortunately, Victor and Australian HMV pressings are often quieter than their English counterparts and these have been used whenever possible throughout this series. In the case of recordings issued only in England, I have had the good luck to locate most of Moiseiwitsch's discs on English pressings that are astonishingly crackle free. The material contained in this volume was transferred primarily from such pressings since only six sides were issued in Australia or America. One of these sides is Rachmaninov's *Prelude in B minor*. In comparing various pressings of this recording, I realized that Victor had issued take one, whereas HMV had used take four. These two performances are remarkably similar considering that they were recorded several months apart. One notable difference, however, is the extra low B that concludes take 1. This take was probably rejected by the pianist and how it got issued by Victor is anyone's guess. Incidentally, two other alternate Moiseiwitsch takes were issued by Victor during the acoustic period which will be presented in future volumes.

Great Pianists: Benno Moiseiwitsch (1890-1963), Volume 7

Rachmaninov • Medtner • Kabalevsky • Prokofiev • Khachaturian

RACHMANINOV:

1 **Moment musical No. 4 in E minor, Op. 16** **2:55**
Recorded 20th October 1943
No. 3 Studio, Abbey Road
Matrix 2EA 10058-2; Catalogue C 3370

2 **Prelude No. 1 in C sharp minor, Op. 3 No. 2** **3:47**
Recorded 2nd August 1940
No. 3 Studio, Abbey Road
Matrix 2EA 8846-2; Catalogue C 3184

3 **Prelude in G minor, Op. 23 No. 5** **3:43**
Recorded 2nd August 1940
No. 3 Studio, Abbey Road
Matrix 2EA 8846-2; Catalogue C 3184

4 **Prelude in B minor, Op. 32 No. 10** **4:45**
Recorded 2nd August 1940
No. 3 Studio, Abbey Road
Matrix 2EA 8848-1; issued only on Victor 18295

5 **Prelude in B minor, Op. 32 No. 10** **4:47**
Recorded 3rd October 1940
No. 3 Studio, Abbey Road
Matrix 2EA 8848-4; Catalogue C 3209

6 **Prelude in G major, Op. 32 No. 5** **2:16**

7 **Prelude in G sharp minor, Op. 32 No. 12** **2:07**
Recorded 19th October 1943
No. 3 Studio, Abbey Road
Matrix 2EA 10059-1; Catalogue C 3370

8 **Lilacs, Op. 21 No. 5** **2:36**
Recorded 5th October 1948
No. 3 Studio, Abbey Road
Matrix OEA 13317-1; Catalogue B 9688

MEDTNER:

Sonata in G minor, Op. 22 **15:29**

9 I Tenebroso, sempre affrettando - Allegro assai 6:25
10 II Interludium (Andante lugubre) 4:06
11 III Allegro assai 4:58
Recorded 4th and 11th March 1943
No. 3 Studio, Abbey Road
Matrices 2EA 9284-3, 9285-3, 9286-2, 9287-3
Catalogues C 3310/11

12 **Fairy Tale in E minor, Op. 34 No. 2** **2:15**
Recorded 1st March 1928
Studio C, Queen's Small Hall, London
Matrix Bb 12599-2; Catalogue E 530

13 **Fairy Tale in F minor, Op. 42 No. 1** **4:55**
Recorded 27th April 1944
No. 3 Studio Abbey Road
Matrix 2EA 10213-1; Catalogue C 3397

14 **Round Dance, Op. 58 No. 1** **5:52**
With Nikolai Medtner, piano
Recorded 24th October 1946
No. 3 Studio Abbey Road
Matrices OEA 11314-1, 11315-2
Catalogue B 9590

KABALEVSKY:

Sonata No. 3 in F major, Op. 46 **14:44**

15 I Allegro con moto 5:55

16 II Andante cantabile 4:08

17 III Allegro giocoso 4:42

Recorded 5th October 1948
No. 3 Studio, Abbey Road
Matrices 2EA 13319-1, 13320-1, 13321-3, 13322-1; Catalogue C 3829/30

PROKOFIEV:

18 **Suggestion diabolique, Op. 4 No. 4** **2:36**

Recorded 1st March 1928
Studio C, Queen's Small Hall, London
Matrix Bb 12600-2; Catalogue E 530

KHACHATURIAN:

19 **Toccata in B flat minor** **4:14**

Recorded 4th March 1943
No. 3 Studio Abbey Road
Matrix 2EA 9975-1; Catalogue C 3397

KHACHATURIAN-LEVANT: **2:19**

20 **Gayaneh: Sabre Dance**

Recorded 5th October 1948
No. 3 Studio Abbey Road
Matrix OEA 13318-2; Catalogue B 9688

Discographic information has been taken from *Benno Moiseiwitsch: An HMV Discography* by Bryan Crimp (Appian Publications & Recordings, 1990, Hexham, Northumberland, UK)

The Naxos historical label aims to make available the greatest recordings in the history of recorded music, in the best and truest sound that contemporary technology can provide. To achieve this aim, Naxos has engaged a number of respected restorers who have the dedication, skill and experience to produce restorations that have set new standards in the field of historical recordings.

8.110675

ADD

RACHMANINOV • PROKOFIEV • KABALEVSKY
MEDTNER • KHACHATURIAN

Benno Moiseiwitsch (1890-1963)

Playing Time 79:21

RACHMANINOV:

1	Moment musical No. 4 in E minor, Op. 16	2:55
2	Prelude in C sharp minor, Op. 3 No. 2	3:47
3	Prelude in G minor, Op. 23 No. 5	3:43
4	Prelude in B minor, Op. 32 No. 10	4:45
5	Prelude in B minor, Op. 32 No. 10	4:47
6	Prelude in G major, Op. 32 No. 5	2:16
7	Prelude in G sharp minor, Op. 32 No. 12	2:07
8	Lilacs, Op. 21 No. 5	2:36

MEDTNER:

	Sonata in G minor, Op. 22	15:29
9	I Tenebroso, sempre affrettando - Allegro assai	6:25
10	II Interludium (Andante lugubre)	4:06
11	III Allegro assai	4:58
12	Fairy Tale in E minor, Op. 34 No. 2	2:15
13	Fairy Tale in F minor, Op. 42 No. 1	4:55
14	Round Dance, Op. 58 No. 1 With Nikolai Medtner, Piano	5:52

KABALEVSKY:

	Sonata No. 3 in F major Op. 46	14:44
15	I Allegro con moto	5:55
16	II Andante cantabile	4:08
17	III Allegro giocoso	4:42

PROKOFIEV:

18	Suggestion diabolique, Op. 4 No. 4	2:36

KHACHATURIAN:

19	Toccata in B flat minor	4:14

KHACHATURIAN-LEVANT:

20	Gayaneh: Sabre Dance	2:19

Benno Moiseiwitsch was born in the so-called cradle of Russian pianism, Odessa, in 1890. This seventh volume of the recordings of Moiseiwitsch consists of Russian works by composers whose music had a foot in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Moiseiwitsch's style of playing is rooted in the nineteenth although he lived the greater part of his life in the following century. As well as Rachmaninov with whose music he had a great affinity, Moiseiwitsch knew another composer-pianist exile, Nikolai Medtner. Medtner's music has rarely been popular with pianists or the public, and Moiseiwitsch was doing his friend a service when he recorded his *Sonata, Op. 22*.

Producer and Audio Restoration Engineer: Ward Marston
Special thanks to Gregor Benko, Raymond Edwards, Lawrence Holdridge and Donald Manildi

www.naxos.com

Cover Photograph: Benno Moiseiwitsch (c.1940) (Private Collection)

ALL RIGHTS IN THIS SOUND RECORDING, ARTWORK, TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS RESERVED. UNAUTHORISED PUBLIC PERFORMANCE, BROADCASTING AND COPYING OF THIS COMPACT DISC PROHIBITED.
℗ 2003 HNH International Ltd. © 2003 HNH International Ltd.

MADE IN E.C.

LC 05537

NAXOS Historical

6 36943 16752 6

NAXOS Historical 8.110675 MOISEIWITSCH : RACHMANINOV • MEDTNER

NAXOS Historical MOISEIWITSCH : RACHMANINOV • MEDTNER 8.110675