Ignatz
# WAGHALTER
(1881-1949)

## Violin Concerto
## Rhapsodie
## Violin Sonata
## Idyll • Geständnis

**Irmina Trynkos, Violin**

**Giorgi Latsabidze, Piano**

**Royal Philharmonic Orchestra**

**Alexander Walker**

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On 12th February, 1892, Alexander Moszkowski wrote an amusing Berlin-based satire entitled *A Genius* that appeared in Vienna's leading newspaper, *Die Neue Freie Presse*. In it, he relates the story of a young Polish Jew convinced of his talent as a musician and eager to have Berlin at his feet in recognition of his virtuosity before proving himself as a very great composer. Moszkowski's story is amusing and his subject is both ridiculous and deluded, though why this story is relevant to historians is the fact that it speaks of a time and place, when Berlin was awash with ambitious young musicians streaming in from Poland's Jewish communities. One of these would have been Moszkowski's own brother Moritz who embodied the success sought by Alexander's hapless fantasist. Another success story was that of the composer Ignatz Waghalter, born on 15th March, 1881, in a poor but highly musical family in Warsaw. Indeed, Alexander's parody, possibly based in part on the circle of Jewish Polish émigrés around his brother, would even interconnect with Waghalter who studied first with Scharwenka, a friend of Moritz Moszkowski, before meeting Joseph Joachim and studying with Friedrich Gernsheim at Berlin's Prussian Academy of Arts.

Waghalter was born only two years earlier than Anton Webern and it is legitimate to wonder how the two contemporaries could represent such different musical values while living parallel lives, albeit separated by Berlin and Vienna. The answer is easy: Waghalter was Jewish, Webern was not. Wagner had accused Jews, such as Mendelssohn, of reaching into the past rather than creating something new that would assure their music for the future. This creative drive was considered by Wagner as being uniquely German and his view on the Jewish inability to participate in German cultural life was provocative, racist and profoundly hateful. In his essay *Religion and Art* in 1880, he wrote that 'expecting Jews to be German was as impossible as the law in Mexico that states that all Negros are white'. Yet the reverence in which many Jews held the past had its own cultural logic which was the reason that many were instinctively drawn to the traditions of Leipzig's 'old German School' founded by Felix Mendelssohn and continued with Robert Schumann before Johannes Brahms came to represent the very apogee of its values, supported by his friend and vociferous anti-Wagnerian, Eduard Hanslick. Jews from the outer margins of European society encountering German culture, at that time seen as the undoubted leader in Europe, preferred this purer musical world-view to the New German School, which was represented by Wagner and Liszt and emphasised content over form while pushing tonality to its chromatic limits. A composer from a scion of the Austrian aristocracy such as Webern would have felt more confident in bursting through the reactionary dams keeping the floods of progress at bay. Waghalter, in common with many other Jewish composers of his generation, saw the past not as an obstacle to progress, but as the foundation for an organic development into the future through musical consensus rather than revolution.

Waghalter's career started first as a conductor under the patronage of Artur Nikisch before he was called as music director in 1912 to the newly opened German Opera House in Berlin's autonomous city-within-a-city, Charlottenburg. It was to be a less stuffy, more democratic alternative to Berlin's nearby Court Opera Unter den Linden. During Waghalter's years in Berlin, he was responsible for establishing an enthusiastic public for the music of Giacomo Puccini while cultivating a wide circle of friends such as Franz Schreker, Eugene d'Albert and even Paul Hindemith and Albert Einstein, who joined him in occasional performances of chamber music held in Waghalter's home. During these years, Waghalter would write four operas, one of which, *Mandragola* based on a play by Machiavelli was highly regarded. Adolf Weißmann, writing in *Musik in der Weltkrise* (Music in the World Crisis) an important assessment of contemporary musical life in 1922 referred to it as being richer in melodic inventiveness than the actual story merited. To his successes in Berlin was added a short period in New York as conductor of the State Symphony Orchestra before returning to Berlin where he continued his career as a popular conductor, creating an unusually large legacy of recordings. A mere decade later he and his family would be driven into exile by National Socialism. While in America he launched an orchestra of African Americans, an attempt at social engineering that was largely unwelcomed by the establishment and found no outside support. He died unexpectedly at the age of 68, remembered by the émigré community in 1949 and honoured with a lengthy obituary in *The New York Times*.

The *Violin Concerto* and *Rhapsody* were composed for Waghalter's brother, Wladislaw who was a well-regarded soloist, when Ignatz was a young composer and still largely under the influence of his mentor Joseph Joachim and his teacher Friedrich Gernsheim. The *Violin Sonata* won the coveted Mendelssohn Prize in 1902. A certain Brahmsian influence is felt in all of these works as both Joachim and Gernsheim were part of Brahms's philo-Semitic circle of Jewish musicians, which also included the composers Karl Goldmark, Ferdinand Hiller and others. Despite this, and in keeping with the view that the past offered an organic passage to the future, all of these works maintain a free rhapsodic quality which combines the aesthetic and diatonic ideals of the 'old German School' with the structural fluidity more associated with the influence of the 'New' School of Wagner and Liszt.

The *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, Op. 15*, is dedicated to the violinist Andreas Moser, who was both a pupil of Joachim as well as being his close friend, biographer and editor and was composed in 1911. A contemporary review describes a performance of the work as follows:

> "...Wladislaw Waghalter is one of the best of the younger generation of violinists. He grew up exposed to the great school of violin playing so influenced by Joachim, giving him great refinement and taste. He never sacrifices the music on the altar of virtuoso effects, even when the music itself would seem to demand it. His rapid finger technique and his emotional discretion make it possible for him to perform both Beethoven and Brahms concertos in a single concert... the highlight however was his performance of the concerto by his brother, Ignatz Waghalter, who was also the evening's conductor. This is the second time that I have heard this work and must admit that with repeated hearing, my appreciation of it has grown. It offers rhythmic pulse... melody and inventiveness – all of which place it far ahead of other [recently composed] violin concertos we have heard of late. Despite the seeming out-pouring of notes, interest at no point starts to wane... The orchestration of the work is solid and refined – far more than we expect of works of this type – all in all, this is a delightful and welcome addition and I cannot think of many composers post-Bruch who translate such inventiveness into such a creative palette. Violinists should take it up without hesitation! Both brothers were met with a well-deserved sea of applause."

The first movement is wrought from an opening declamatory theme and a lyrical second subject group. With the first statement of the lyrical material, the orchestra lets us hear just a glimpse of the first of a series of melodies that seem to flow so inevitably that we feel we must have always known them. In the hands of the soloist, the first theme is transformed into a statement of heroic and virtuosic intent. When the soloist begins the lyrical music, it seems to take the form of an endless series of ostensibly spontaneous melodies. Rather in the manner of Mozart's lyrical second subject melodies, they are thematically closely related to one another. Whilst Beethoven, Brahms and Tchaikovsky had opted for the very practical and brilliant key of D for their violin concertos, Waghalter chose the slightly less obvious key of A major and much of the passagework for the soloist is extremely difficult as it does not lie under the hand.

A sustained note in the horns acts as a pivot into the

second movement which begins with a highly chromatic descent evoking the rather seedy world of nineteenth-century Romanticism. This leads to music which again glories in the composer's ability to write and orchestrate melody and the music seems miraculously to possess both a noble stoicism whilst at the same time expressing a kind of passionate ecstasy. The choice of D flat major is most unusual for a violin concerto.

The concluding *sonata rondo* contains a gypsy-like waltz second theme. The main theme, which is endlessly varied, is sunny in character, its driving triple rhythms perhaps owing something to the Spanish music of composers such as Rimsky-Korsakov.

The *Rhapsodie, Op. 9*, was composed and first performed in 1906. It consists of three slow sections framing two faster polonaise-like movements: *Andante sostenuto – Allegro giocoso – Tempo I. Quasi recitativo. Largamento con doloroso – Allegro giocoso – Tempo I.* The opening is again notable for the quality of its melody but the composer's use of solo violin with accompanying woodwind may owe something to the second movement of Brahms's *Violin Concerto*. When the music returns to the opening material in the middle of the movement it is treated in a simpler way and the use of harmonic minor scales perhaps refers to the composer's Jewish heritage.

The *Sonata in F minor* is in a key associated with much of the most turbulent music for the instrument written since the time of Bach. From the opening, we feel as though we are eavesdropping on music which was begun some time ago. With the second subject a kind of transcendental calm is reached. During the development section a rhythmical *animato* presents entirely new material. The second movement, incorporating some folk-like material seems at this stage to present the emotional heart of the work with its ecstatic culmination. The scale of the finale, however is impressive. Opening with rhythmic music employing clever cross rhythms around the *fate* rhythm employed by Beethoven in his *Fifth Symphony* and then by Brahms and others, it gives way to a broad *tranquillo* before the music races to its fiery conclusion.

Little is known about the *Idyll* and *Geständnis* (Confession), but the pieces are rather charming examples of the kind of salon pieces that contemporaneous composers such as Elgar and Sibelius devoted time to writing.

This recording brings to light one of the most unjustly forgotten musicians of pre-1933 Europe, inviting the question: how was it possible that this music went missing for a century?

**Michael Haas**

jmi SOAS

International Committee of Suppressed Music,
Jewish Music Institute, SOAS, London University

## Irmina Trynkos

Photo: Agata Preyss Photography

Since her breakthrough performance conducted by Neeme Järvi at the Oistrakh Festival in 2008, the Greek-Polish violinist Irmina Trynkos has been establishing herself on the worldwide stage as an artist of exceptional talent. A series of electrifying débuts followed in internationally acknowledged concert halls such as the Wigmore Hall, Southbank Centre and Shanghai Concert Hall. Her first appearance with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra was received with audience acclaim and high critical praise. Irmina Trynkos has shown her innate musical curiosity not least in her rediscovery of the work of Ignatz Waghalter. She collaborates closely with acclaimed modern composers, frequently premièring their latest works. As a passionate chamber musician, she has performed extensively with international artists such as pianist Ayke Agus, the last collaborator of legendary violinist Jascha Heifetz. She studied with Lydia Mordkovitch, Martin Mumelter and Nina Minko, graduating from the Mozarteum Universität für Musik in Salzburg and the Royal Academy of Music in London with distinction as an international awards recipient. She plays a Jakob Stainer violin of 1670. www.irminatrynkos.com

Ms. Trynkos wishes to thank her parents, Lydia Mordkovitch, Nina Minko and Julius Reynolds for their invaluable support throughout the years.

## Giorgi Latsabidze

Photo: Heidi Gutman Photography

Giorgi Latsabidze is an international prize-winning Georgian piano virtuoso and composer. He holds music and artist degrees from the Musikhochschule Hannover in Germany, the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, and the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. He is the recipient of numerous prestigious scholarships and music awards as well as the winner of several major international piano competitions, including the Rubinstein in France, the Ennio Porrino in Italy and the Yehudi Menuhin in Austria. His performances have been broadcast on radio and television in the Unted States, Canada, Europe, and Asia, and his concert appearances have brought consistently high critical praise. Latsabidze scored the film *Waltz-Fantasy* and won an award for the best scoring at the Bologna Film Festival. He was appointed a piano professor at the Vienna Conservatory (Prayner) of Music and Dramatic Arts from September 2012. www.latsabidze.com

## Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Photo: Robert Taylor

Acknowledged as one of Britain's most prestigious orchestras, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra enjoys an international reputation for bringing audiences worldwide first-class performances and the highest possible standards of music-making across a diverse range of musical repertoire. Since its formation, the orchestra has been directed by some of the world's finest conductors, continuing with current Artistic Director and Principal Conductor, Charles Dutoit. The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra is resident at London's Cadogan Hall, performs regularly at the Royal Albert Hall and gives a prestigious series of concerts each year at Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall. The orchestra is committed to offering an extensive British regional touring programme and has also toured more than thirty countries in the last five years. The orchestra records extensively for film and television as well as for all the major commercial record companies and also has its own record label.

www.rpo.co.uk

## Alexander Walker

Alexander Walker's career has taken him all over the world. He is highly-regarded for his interpretations of nineteenth and twentieth century music from Central and Eastern Europe, and internationally he has introduced British music to many audiences unfamiliar with it. He works regularly as a guest conductor with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the BBC Philharmonic, City of London Sinfonia, Russian State Symphony Orchestra, Russian Philharmonic, Symphony Orchestra 'New Russia', George Enescu Philharmonic and Belgrade Philharmonic, as well as other orchestras in Russia, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Denmark, Finland, Romania, the Balkans and Turkey. In the theatre he has conducted at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, touring with the Royal Ballet to the Metropolitan Opera, Kennedy Centre and elsewhere in the United States, the Bolshoy and Mariinsky Theatres in Russia, South Korea, Japan and Singapore. He has conducted productions for the Norwegian and Finnish National Operas and elsewhere. He conducted *The Turn of the Screw* for Istanbul Opera, the first ever production of an opera by Britten in Turkey.

www.alexanderwalker.org

**Born only two years earlier than Webern and successful as a conductor in Berlin, Ignatz Waghalter built on the tradition of Schumann and Brahms rather than seeking revolutionary innovation. The inspiring melodic and rhythmic invention of his 1911 *Violin Concerto* led a contemporary reviewer to recommend that 'violinists should take it up without hesitation!', while the earlier *Violin Sonata* won the coveted Mendelssohn Prize in 1902. A milestone in violinist Irmina Trynkos' 'Waghalter Project' (www.waghalterproject.com), this release brings to light one of the most unjustly forgotten musicians of interwar Europe.**

THE BELGRAVIA CENTRE

Ignatz
# WAGHALTER
(1881-1949)

STEINWAY & SONS

# Violin Music

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| | **Concerto for violin and orchestra, Op. 15** †** | **21:29** |
| 1 | I. Allegro moderato | 9:39 |
| 2 | II. Andante sostenuto con molto espressivo | 7:43 |
| 3 | III. Allegro con spirito – Allegro giocoso | 4:07 |
| 4 | **Rhapsodie for violin and orchestra, Op. 9** †** | **11:14** |
| | **Sonata for violin and piano in F minor, Op. 5*** | **19:55** |
| 5 | I. Allegro appassionato | 7:44 |
| 6 | II. Andante espressivo | 7:38 |
| 7 | III. Con brio | 4:33 |
| 8 | **Idyll for violin and piano, Op. 19b*** | **3:39** |
| 9 | **Geständnis (Confession)*** | **3:16** |

† World Première Recordings

**Irmina Trynkos, Violin • Giorgi Latsabidze, Piano***
**Royal Philharmonic Orchestra** • Alexander Walker****

This recording was made with generous support from The Belgravia Centre, Julius D.A. Reynolds and Steinway & Sons, London
Recorded in Henry Wood Hall, London, UK, on 1st October, 2010 (tracks 5-9), and on 15th and 16th March, 2011 (tracks 1-4)
Producer and editor: Andrew Walton (K&A Productions Ltd.) • Engineer: Mike Clements
Publishers: Simrock (tracks 1-3, 8, 9); Mitteldeutscher Musikverlag (track 4); D. Rahter, Leipzig (tracks 5-7) • Booklet notes: Michael Haas • Cover photograph by Siloto (Dreamstime.com)