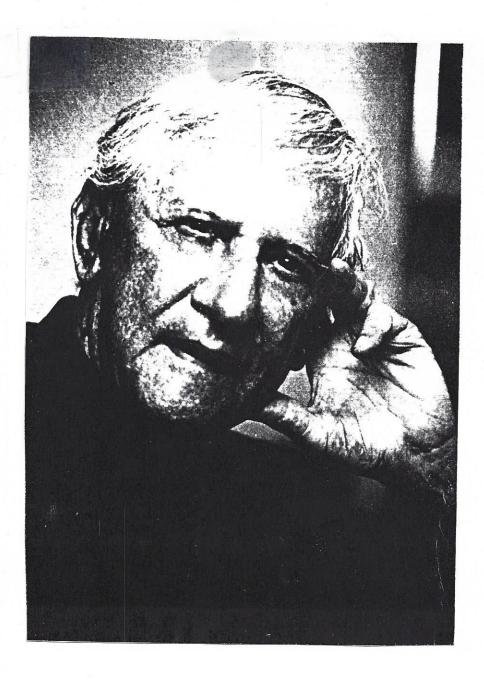
THE GODOWSKY SOCIETY

Newsletter Vol.10 No.1



La foto di L.Godowsky compare a pag. 75 del terzo volume in lingua russa dedicato a Neuhaus "Genrich Neigauz. Vospominanija. Pis'ma. Materialy" ("H. Neuhaus, ricordi, lettere, materiali"), Mosca 1992, a cura di Elena Richter, una delle sue allieve. Qui per la prima volta è pubblicata la dedica personale di Leopold Godowsky a H. Neuhaus in occasione del loro incontro a Mosca, che in tedesco dice: "Dem ehrlichen, genialen Menschen, dem echten, edlen Künstler, sein aufrichtig ergener Freund Leopold Godowsky Moskau, 25.5.35" ("Ad un uomo onesto e geniale, al vero, nobile artista, dal suo sincero, devoto amico Leopold Godowsky, Mosca, 25.5.35").





Editorial

You will, dear reader, excuse me if I fail to begin with the usual apology regarding the tardiness of this Newsletter and allow me instead to fall victim to a temporary feeling that the tide is beginning to move in Godowsky's direction. You will note in the current issue a resumé of Godowsky's works to be reissued by Carl Fischer in three volumes and whilst this does not include many important works, it is still a massive step forward and I only hope that the proposed sale of this publishing house does not jeopardise this venture.

There is also the ongoing project of Marco Polo to record Godowsky's complete piano music, the first two volumes of which are reviewed in the following pages, Volume 1 by Andrew Cockburn and Volume 2 by Derek Bell (the former is also responsible for responding to the quirky Times leader, also reproduced in this issue). The second of Altarus' three CD set of the Chopin/ Godowsky Studies is also reviewed. understand that the third CD of this set will include some Chopin/Godowsky Waltz transcriptions: it is eagerly anticipated. Carlo Grante, who distinguished himself in those Altarus CDs would seem to have transferred his allegience to Music & Arts, who have issued a CD of the complete Schubert/Godowsky transcriptions plus the (now much recorded!) Passacaglia. This CD is advertised as 'Godowsky Edition Vol.1' which I await as I write but while on this subject of recordings, may I say that both the Marco Polo and Altarus CDs boast excellent steene notes.

Also in this issue is a piece in the continuing series of neglected composer/pianists, this time on Leo Ornstein, a recent portrait of whom adorns the cover: born on 11 December 1892 and still going strong, I feel it a privilege to publish this piece by the composer/publisher Gordon Rumson (there is a happy coincidence in this, for Ornstein dedicated his Opus 17 to Godowsky, and Rumson has dedicated his Sonata I to our patron, Ronald Stevenson).¹

Also included is the Godowsky/Hilb correspondence, carelessly omitted from the last issue - for which I apologise - and which relates to the article by Ross Thackwell.

I find that, when I am writing to people making enquiries about Godowsky, I constantly have to refer to Jeremy Nicholas' informative biography. This biography has done much to dispel much of the misinformation generally found in musical encyclopaedia (can't find the plural!) May I inform readers that this book is still in print and is available from APR whose address is to be found in the review of Cziffra's autobiography. I seem to have adopted APR, whose excellent publications and recordings I find almost irresistible - especially the aforementioned Cziffra book and CD and also a recent issue of Piano G&Ts (nothing to do with Gordons) of de Pachmann and Michalowski.

Another publication I should mention is Ronald Stevenson's essay 'The Paderewski Paradox', published by the Klavar Foundation, 171 Yarborough Rd., Lincoln, LN1 3NQ and La Société Paderewski, Hotel de Ville, Morges, Switzerland. This stimulating little booklet also contains Paderewski's essay on *tempo rubato* and is very much in the zeitgeist in that it contains much that is relevant to the performance of Romantic piano music. It is also very readable.

Millam Sachania's essay 'Improving the classics: some thoughts on the ethics and aesthetics of musical arrangements is perhaps a more demanding read. This appears in the *Music Review* for February 1994 but (only published in March of this year) is, I venture to say, of interest to those troubled regarding the justification of arrangements and transcriptions.

Any comments regarding the Newsletter and its contents are welcome and should be addressed to me at my new address.

Harry Winstanley, 8, East Hermitage Place, Edinburgh EH6 8AA, Scotland.

¹Publisher: Sikesdi Press, 1102 Belleview Ave. S.E. Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2G 4LI



Leo Ornstein

by Gordon Rumson

Leo Ornstein was born in 1892. By 1917 he was recognised as one of the most important avant-garde composers and virtuoso pianists in America and Europe. Yet within a few years Ornstein retreated from public view and retired into professional obscurity. Astoundingly in 1990 (yes, 1990) he was still composing. At the time of writing this essay (September 1996) Leo Ornstein is well and living in the mid-west United States.

Who is Leo Ornstein, what became of him and what did he do during all those years when his achievements were ignored or forgotten?

Russian born (some dictionaries give the wrong date of 1895 for his birth) Leo Ornstein was a child prodigy whose talents took him to the St. Petersburg Conservatory. Information about his studies there is scanty, but in 1907 the Ornstein family fled growing ethnic pressures and emigrated to the United States. There Ornstein had the good fortune to come under the tutelage of Bertha Fiering Tapper, who gave him a well balanced, if conventional, musical education. Ornstein composed and played the piano so well that a career as a concert artist seemed obvious. Ornstein's early works are straightforward, show considerable mastery of form, style, harmony and a fine melodic gift. Nothing in these works could have indicated what was to come.

Sometime in 1912, and without hearing any other advanced music,² Ornstein began creating works so unusual, so potent and so extreme in manner that he himself began to doubt his own sanity. His teacher was amazed, but repeated hearing of these works convinced her that her student knew what he was about.

Between 1910 and 1913 Ornstein travelled in Europe meeting such figures as Ferruccio Busoni and Theodore Leschetitzky and performing his works to bewildered audiences. Critics in Norway, where the works were first publicly performed, deemed the affair a joke. London reviewers were equally distressed. Some musicians responded well and Busoni later counted Ornstein among the 'twenty famous and distinguished' musicians and pianists in New York.

Within very short order Ornstein was compared with Stravinsky, Scriabin and Schoenberg, both as an advanced composer and as an important one. James Huneker wrote: 'I never thought I should live to hear Arnold Schoenberg sound tame; yet tame he sounds - almost timid and halting - after Ornstein who is, most emphatically, the only true-blue, genuine, Futurist composer alive.'

This connection with the Futurists, that cabal of poets, artists and sometime composers led by Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944) was to continue through Ornstein's early career and be associated with his music permanently.

It is not clear that this is a perfect descriptor of Ornstein's style and it certainly accounts for only some of his music even from this period, and little or none of his later music. For example, insofar as the Futurists postulate the use of noise and machine sounds in the creation of music, only Ornstein's Suicide in an airplane, which is an onomatopoetic imitation of the roaring of an airplane engine, counts at all. The glorification of the modern world and the fascistic tendencies of the Futurists were quite foreign to Ornstein. Quite simply, Ornstein cannot be easily categorised.

Throughout his compositional career, Ornstein wore at least two faces: one the avant-garde extremist and the other the lush romanticist. In works like the Danse Sauvage (1915 or earlier), Poems of 1917 (which are dedicated to Leopold Godowsky), Three preludes (1914), Two impressions of Notre-Dame (1914) or Suicide in an airplane, Ornstein strips away tonality, overwhelms the piano with massive cluster chords and stretches the fabric of rhythm to remarkable limits.

²The exact extent of Orenstein's contact with other advanced music is not clear at present. Ornstein claimed none at all prior to the creation of these pieces. However, Ornstein later performed a number of works by advanced composers such as Schoenberg, Cyril Scott and Ravel. Since dating the early works is next to impossible, we are left to accept Ornstein's claim.



On the other hand, in some compositions such as the *Cello sonata* of 1918 Ornstein virtually outdoes Rachmaninoff in the splendour of achingly beautiful melodies and rich harmonies. For some listeners the clash of styles was too incongruous. These critics thought that such compositions indicated a retreat from expression, a loss of strength, even a weakening of inspiration.

Ornstein himself said: 'Yes, I would say that Op.31 [the Sonata for Violin and Piano of 1914?] had brought music just to the very edge, and as I said, I have no suicidal tendencies at all. I simply drew back and said "beyond that lies complete chaos."

After this drawing back, Ornstein returned to a simpler style, but always enhanced it with more advanced methods. Later works (such as the Eighth Piano Sonata [completed September 1990] combine styles in different movements, an effect he considered more expressive and less limiting. Ornstein, writing about her husband's music and attempting to explain the Janus faces, differentiated 'a-tonal' and 'multi-tonal' 'Both are discordant, which is an works. easily recognised feature, but the difference lies in a far subtler area. The internal pressures and conflicts of many co-existing keys provide movement, variety and contrast as opposed to the relative sterility and inertia of one all-embracing chromatic tonality. The sameness of this can easily become monotonous.' In other words, the use of tonality was viewed as a form of greater expression, not lesser. there are more in tonality than in possibilities monochromatic atonality.

After 1922, Ornstein's avant garde methods were taken up by other composers such as George Antheil, also a virtuoso pianist, who composed his Airplane Sonata (1921) and even the Sonata Sauvage (1922). Ornstein's piano concerto was performed in 1923 to considerable success and Ornstein even received orchestral commissions in the 1930s. However, his primary focus was on teaching and composing those works in which he believed; not merely the works that were expected of him by faddists enamoured of the avant garde and the extreme.

He retired in 1953 and public recognition of his importance came only in the 1970s with the Marjorie Peabody Waite Award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1975. Vivian Perlis interviewed Ornstein for the Yale Oral History project and some articles and dissertations have been written. Recordings were made of some of Ornstein's piano works - a process which continues. Recently the Piano Concerto was performed again in New York, the Piano Quartet has been performed frequently while the Violin and cello Sonatas have been recorded. A resurgence of interest in Ornstein's music is occurring.

Ornstein's compositional process deserves comment. Music appears fully formed to him in his inner ear. All that is required is that it be written down. The task of this fell to Ornstein's wife, Pauline, who also prodded Ornstein to the effort at all. While Ornstein's memory was excellent and years could pass between the 'composition' of the work and its notation, a number of works were never notated at all. For years they were performed and only much later was an attempt made to write them down, but by that time, and most unexpectedly to Ornstein, they had fled. Thus were the early three piano sonatas lost.

Any analysis of Ornstein's music is both He himself claimed difficult and fruitful. that his complex chords were based on the overtone series. Very frequently the chords are based on tone clusters that lie easily under the pianist's hand. Owner of the title of the 'inventor of the chord cluster' is open to debate (Ives, Cowell, Ornstein and even Alkan in Les Diablotins and Liszt in Mazeppa), but Ornstein was certainly using them as early as 1912. Rhythmically, Ornstein was fond of polyrhythms (fours against fives between the hands) and unequally marked accents.

Ornstein is decidedly not an intellectual composer and he talks freely of expressing his emotions when he composes. Thus works like the *Three Preludes*, op.20 (circa 1914) compare richly with Schoenberg's *Three Pieces for Piano* op.11 (1909) which are seen to be athematic, yet unified by the composer's imagination.

Schoenberg's works are far more 'logical', but Ornstein's are equally captivating. Rhythmically, Ornstein had escaped the Brahmsian straitjacket that dogged Schoenberg throughout his compositional output.

5.)

Though the vast bulk of Ornstein's music is for the piano, and certainly his prowess as a virtuoso had no small part to play in the effectiveness of his compositions, Ornstein also wrote extensively for other instruments: chamber works, string quartets, four hand piano pieces, orchestral works (some lost, though they had been performed) and a number of songs.

There are eight numbered piano sonatas, of which the first three were never notated. The surviving sonatas are enormous works, of compelling merit and demanding great virtuosity. The fourth is primarily tonal, while the eighth shifts between styles having the following titles for the movements:

- 1. Life's turmoil and a few bits of satire
- 2. A trip to the attic a tear or two for a childhood forever gone
 - (a) The bugler
 - (b) Lament for a lost toy
 - (c) A half mutilated cradle Berceuse
 - (d) First carousel ride and sounds of a hurdy-gurdy
- 3. Disciplines and improvisations

The middle movements are simple, charming and heartfelt. The outer movements will tax a virtuoso technique and are alternatively brusque, violent and radiant. Ornstein does not shrink from stylistic contrast even within movements, but his overall structure remains clear and driven.

Leo Ornstein retreated from the forefront of the avant garde because he would not bow to the pressures of the musical fad and the inanition of the life of a touring virtuoso. Rather he chose to write the music that his heart compelled. He is another example of that quintessentially American phenomenon of the lone creator. He joins Harry Partch, Conlon Nancarrow and Gunnar Johansen as an artist who remained true to his convictions in spite of the disinterest of the surrounding culture. He leaves a large body of work which is now being carefully edited and published by Poon Hill Press. With time his legacy can be evaluated and his importance to American music affirmed.

Poon Hill Press
2200 Bear Gulch Rd.,
Woodside, California,
USA 94062.
The author wishes to thank Severo Ornstein for his
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CD reviews

Leopold Godowsky - Piano music vol.1 Konstantin Scherbakov (MARCO POLO DDD8.223793

Konstantin Scherbakov shows flair and imagination in commencing his project of recording Godowsky 's complete works with such a varied and extensive selection of his shorter pieces. These vary from his earliest pieces (such as the Polonaise in C major) to the last years of his composing life - 1930. Not all of Godowsky's major short pieces are included - for example the magnificent set published by Schirmer in 1930 with Etude Macabre and Capriccio Patetico amongst others. Nevertheless this is a fine selection. As Ates Orga puts it: 'romantically free yet classically structures, sometimes slight yet rarely trivial, they belong to an evocative experience of intimate gestures and perfumed grace, a dimension removed from the titanic trajectory of the more celebrated Godowsky.'

Scherbakov begins with the four Poems. The first three of these were composed at Evanston, Illinois in the summer of 1927; the fourth Poem was composed in Paris three years later. They were collectively dedicated to Godowsky's great friend and admirer Paul Howard, of Adelaide, to whom he wrote: 'They are very personal... the quintessence of my lyric muse'. I can imagine that many pianists will want to examine and try for themselves these lovely pieces after hearing this CD. I hope that if they do so their efforts will be rewarded as I understand that, after a lapse of many years, Fischer's of New York are re-issuing them. For these works are unquestionably of the highest musical quality. The third Poem, Adoration, is perhaps the most considerable. It has a passionate throbbing intensity - which puts me in mind of Schumann's Aufschwung from Op.12 which finds resolution at last in a truly sublime ending. Fine performer though he is, I didn't feel that Scherbakov quite captures this radiant, soaring quality. The triplet chords in the left hand sound rather percussive and the tonal balance weighed down by the bass. On the other hand, the fourth Poem, Yearning, - which Paul Howard considered the most difficult of the four ('This Poem eludes you', he used to say) is beautifully played, with the melodic voices finely projected.



From the mature, final years, we now move to the early works most of which were published before the turn of the century. Scherbakov gives an excellent performance of a most Chopinesque and beautiful piece Twilight musing: this is, along with the Melodie meditative, the brightest of these early lyric jewels. (Incidentally, some of the dedicatees of these early pieces have the most charming names: Blanch Dingley, Adolph Devin-Duvivier... they sound like characters in the early Henry James novellas.)

Next we have a group of three pieces in a more classic form: a Sarabande, Minuet and Courante - Godowsky's first venture into styles which, forty years later, he gave a uniquely individual stamp in his Suite for the left hand alone. These early pieces are well enough played but don't quite come to life and are lacking in individuality.

I don't propose to comment on every item and would refer the reader to Ates Orga's excellent commentary in the booklet accompanying the CD.

Scherbakov is clearly an accomplished pianist with a first-class technique. My reservations are that he sounds a shade perfunctory at times (e.g. in his performance of the Waltz-Poem in G) and that there are moments when Godowsky's delicate polyphonic tracery eludes him. However, his performance of that tender lyric *melodie meditative*, which Godowsky dedicated to his future wife, Freda Saxe, is very good. he is excellent in the more technically demanding pieces such as the *Toccata (Perpetual Motion)* Op.13 (dedicated to Moriz Rosenthal) and the *Capriccio* Op.15, no.3.

Perhaps the least characteristic of Godowsky - and one of the most technically demanding pieces - is the final Polonaise, one of his earliest works, published in 1889 (so written when in the composer's 'teens). It shows, as Ates Orga comments perceptively, that 'even as a boy, Godowsky must have had quite a remarkable left hand'.

I much look forward to Scherbakov's future CDs in this series.

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Leopold Godowsky - Piano music vol.2 Konstantin Scherbakov (MARCO POLO DDD8.223794

Bach - Unaccompanied Violin Sonatas Nos.1 (G minor), 2 (B minor) and 3 (A minor) [very freely transcribed and adapted for the piano by Leopold Godowsky]

It used to be said that Horowitzes are as common (all over Russia) as good chefs are in France, and indeed, hardly a year passes when yet another incomparable pianist of real stature visits us from one Russian Republic or another, stuns us, and makes a brilliant career in the West! Konstantin Scherbakov, new to me is no exception.

I won't go into the philosophy for and against transcriptions, as my readers would not be in a Godowsky Society if they didn't approve of transcriptions which are free and creative! These transcriptions are masterly and indeed ideal! They each create a new composition for the piano built on a Bach Sonata, but perfectly in Bach's style, and as Bach would certainly write for the piano had he lived from 1850 to the present day! In fact, Godowsky, in my opinion, is the greatest contrapuntalist since Bach, having learned from a system like that of Taneieve, wherein counterpoint is taught by a combination of first year algebra plus the rules of any given or chooses system of harmony, but these Sonatas are a wonderful lesson in composition and style to all interested in such things and are an inspiring example of discipline in the control of musical material.

Any listener wanting his Bach played in a strictly metronomic musical strait-jacket and showing no romantic feeling, will not enjoy the extremely accurate warm full-blooded playing on this CD! In different times, Bach was played in different ways. In Clara Schumann's youth, a non legato or even staccato touch was favoured, such as we now get from Glen Gould or Dr. Tureck, but later in the century, a more legato approach was favoured by Brahms, for example; and Busoni and Percy Grainger both made big *ritards* at the ends of sections!

No one bothered to do most trill on the upper notes, making a suspended dissonance with the bass as we now insist on, not unless a preceding appogiatura enforced this method. These Godowsky Sonatas are so amazingly v styles v often er Bach fter the

universal that they encompass all know styles of Bach-playing on the piano, only often ignoring the upper-note trill which later Bach scholarship made mandatory. Only after the middle of this century did such matters as correct trills, mordents and what-not gain widespread attention. In Godowsky's time, many trills, if not most, were played on the principal note - as they would have been in Romantic music, and often this interrupted the melodic line less.

If Godowsky's metronome marks mean anything, we can safely assume that he could and did play his music quite a bit faster than we now do. In slow opening movements here, Mr. Scherbakov often approaches Godowsky's marking, and in the Allemande in the B minor Sonata he is considerably faster, but in the other movements, he is usually well below Godowsky's minimum metronome markings! Having said this (and it is the reviewer's duty to check on this), I have to admit that the playing is always so convincing and full of authority and conviction that this fact is utterly unnoticeable. Neither Bach nor Godowsky ever intended music to be metronomical, but some people today actually feel Bach should be played in very strict time.

Bearing in mind Bach and Godowsky, these performances are authoritative, definitive and beyond reproach. Often in the musical text Godowsky omits all pedal marks which suggests he might have wished those parts to be played without the sustaining pedal. Here, in these places, Mr. Scherbakov goes on using the pedal, but if the texture seems to be too staccato or scherzando character he half-pedals or vibrato-pedals. This might for some be a cause for criticism, but for me it is of great interest for he plays these parts with the utmost clarity without losing the rich beautiful overtones the pedal creates and gives the sound more unity that it could have if he were to refrain from using the sustaining pedal, and this leads me to say that the contrapuntal part-playing is uniformly clear and excellent throughout. Purists might sneer when in faster movements and in sequential passages, Mr. Scherbakov slightly accelerates the tempo, but this is very exciting and takes any feeling of too much repetition away altogether. The piano sound comes out good on my machine, the softer playing is of outstanding beauty and there is a wide range of tonal variety and colour seemingly

possessed by all the great Russian pianists - past and present.

Another vexed question in Bach is the degree of the prolation of dotted notes. Scherbakov takes a very free view of this, double-dotting some notes, single-dotting others and dotting other notes in triple time, all within even the one movement, and I think he is absolutely correct in this, because the reason why the prolation of dotted notes was not fixed either in Bach's - or even in Schubert's - time was because it couldn't be fixed, since such things were a matter of style, taste and intuition! I can't really regret the optional omission of the little cadenza in the Allemande of the B minor but it would have been fun if it had been included, though of course, it is more in keeping with Bach to

In short, this CD can be unreservedly recommended and enjoyed by us all.

© Derek F. Bell 1997

Leopold Godowsky, Studien über die Etuden von Chopin, Vol.11, Nos.21-43 Carlo GRANTE - piano (Altarus AIR-CD-9093)

This series of recordings is proving an historic issue (even if the CDs come out with the irregularity associated with the Godowsky Newsletter!) in that they proclaim for once and for all that these Studies are playable in a manner which transcends the mere playing of the notes (no mean feat in itself).

In fact, Mr. Grante does the seemingly impossible by playing some of the Studies too fast! I would instance Studies Nos. 27 (no waltz temp this), 32 (Polonaise) and 34 (Mazurka): the Polonaise loses its majesty, although the playing is thrillingly virtuosic, and the Mazurka - now this does sound like a waltz! - its humour. Despite the tempi taken in these particular Studies, it must be said that there is no sense of strain and the control is admirable as is the variety of tone which Grante is able to conjure up. Indeed, Grante's variety of tone is one of the continuing delights of this enterprise and it is only on occasion that a hint of strain emerges (most frequently in the Studies for left hand alone).



What does emerge from Grante's eloquent pianism is the sheer musicality of the Studies, in addition to their ingenuity, innovation and transcendentalism. And these are not carefully edited versions made for the recording studio, for Grante has played all of those Etudes at the Newport Festival and also a selection at the Wigmore Hall last year - a concert I was unfortunate to miss - and to aggrevate the disappointment, I received many letters and telephone calls praising the concert in no uncertain terms.

If I appeared to be somewhat unkind to Grante in the last Newsletter, I apologise. My ire was directed more towards Bryce Morrison's review in the Gramophone of those Altarus discs, where he implied that Grante's performance superseded those of Bolet, Hobson and Rogé (no mention of Hamelin). Bolet's readings - though on occasion on the slow side - are an essential component of any Godowsky-lover's collection; indeed of any piano-lover's collection, for his renderings of Studies Nos.1 and 25 are among the great piano recordings captured on disc. Rogé's selection of left hand studies is certainly the equal of any and Hobson's selection, if erratic, should be heard.

As a complete survey of the Studies (although it is a pity that the first version [non-octave] is not included) this is a marvellous issue and on reflection, my reservations seem pettifogging considering the achievement.

H.W.

Book review

Cannons and flowers - the memoirs of Georges Cziffra (trans. John Hornsby, with a foreword by Charles Hopkins)

Appian Publications & Recordings, PO Box 1, Wark, Hexham, Northumberland NE48 3EW, UK. £21.00[UK], £22.00 [Europe], £24 [all others]

This is an extraordinary tale told by an extraordinary pianist - and that repeated adjective, for once, is appropriate: list to the accompanying CD which starts with a piece by Couperin which shows off not the expected virtuosity, but a prodigious tonal command, for until the final measures

(magically transformed by the use of the pedal) he makes the piano sound like a harpsichord. There is utterly nothing of the harpsichord in the following track, the Chopin Etude in C sharp minor (op. 10/4). This has the smell of sulphur about it: the sound Chopin heard when writing that he would like to know the secret of Liszt's playing of his études. I naively thought that Horowitz had said the last word on that particular Étude... There is an astonishing version of Vincent Youman's Tea for two (the lyrics for this, Irving Caesar died recently in his hundredth year - take this as your telegram, dear Irving), a Hungarian version of Art Tatum, marvellous (nay astounding) in its own way, but it don't swing like that Jazz master. The Alvabiev/Liszt The Nightingale and the Liszt Feux Follets vividly display Cziffra's poetic virtuosity. His transcription of the Blue Danube (do I have to name the composer?) is predictably virtuosic-sounding and healthily vulgar: the same could be said of the Dohnanyi/Cziffra Concert Etude in F minor and the Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody No. The CD concludes with as lovely a performance of Frank's Symphonic Variations as one could wish to hear - a healthy competitor to the magical Cortot performance.

Cziffra seems to me to possess every pianistic gift save that of sonority - there is never a full-blooded tone from the piano. One can't have everything; he was a master, one of the elect.

And back to the book. We have, in the past, been regaled with tales of artists who have had to overcome all forms of tribulation - especially Jewish artists fleeing from mad Czars, Fascists and Russian/Chinese style communists, but never a tale like this: a horrendous tale of poverty, entrance to the Liszt Academy broken by war service in the Hungarian Army followed by a brief respite as jobbing pianist, followed by incarceration following an attempt to get to the West after which a period as a might-club pianist before he finally gained the opportunity to resume his rightful career as concert pianist.

During the abortive Hungarian uprising of 1956, he and his wife escaped to Austria, thence to Paris where he made his home and where he was initially received with adulation and revulsion - the traditional reception of a Master.



Save for the introduction and postlude (the latter a neat drawing up of thread by Brian Crimp), there is little about music in this book: Cziffra, for instance, says little of Dohnanyi, but he does pay generous tribute to his studies with Isvan Thomán, a pupil of Liszt's, and Cziffra seems to have an almost mystic sense of affinity with that great Hungarian musician through this connection.

This nook is not only about an outstanding pianist but also about a remarkable man.

H.W.

In memory of Leopold Godowsky Heinrich Neuhaus

Leopold Godowsky, as well as being a friend, was my best teacher. I remember my first meeting with this marvellous pianist. On the advice of F.M.Blumenfeld, who thought highly of Godowsky's talent, my father sent me to study under him in Berlin.

A small man, slightly plump, very lively, he spoke to me with extreme simplicity and common sense. After listening attentively to my playing of Chopin's Concerto in F minor he said to me: 'You have a genuine individuality and I shall respect it." Godowsky had little discussion with the pupils during the lessons and hardly ever about technique. Many of his pupils, who came from all parts of the world, expected the great virtuoso to initiate them into the 'mysteries' of masterly technique - they were disappointed. Godowsky, during the lessons, spoke only of music; his advice was exclusively about the artistic interpretation of the work. He appreciated above all in the pupils a musical talent and the ability to think in terms of music. Nothing made him so angry as a reading that was incorrect or careless of the text. In such a case, without raising his voice, he directed such sarcasm at the player that the unfortunate victim would take a long time to get over it.

According to some, the practical and sever method of teaching that Godowsky employed was dry and uninteresting. This view is profoundly mistaken. Godowsky the

pedagogue was just as subtle and deep as Godowsky the pianist. What made his interpretations outstanding was the impeccable taste and perfect attention to detail. His hearing was so refined that it seemed as though the sounds were weighed in a most sensitive balance. With his playing he created a deep perspective of sound, exactly as a good painter does with light and shade.

Godowsky was not a pianist with a spontaneous temperament, like an Anton Rubinstein. His performances held the attention not with power or volcanic passion, but with the precision of the fingering, the crystal clarity of phrasing and the perfection of technique, which always amazed his listeners.

Under the hands of Ferruccio Busoni, his contemporary, the piano sounded like an orchestra. When Busoni played, one could hear the brass of the trumpets, the trills of the violins, the mellow harmonies of the harp. Instead, with Godowsky, the piano always sounded exactly like a piano. But it was like a particular piano - the perfect one. Nearer to Godowsky than Busoni was in his style of playing was his friend Hofmann, a magnificent pianist.

The celebrated pianist was also a notable composer. His virtuoso transcriptions of Chopin's *Studies* was very interesting and delightful.

An artist with an extraordinary capacity for work, he strove to reach the absolute limits and perfect mastery of virtuosity. Because of this, his transcriptions and original works are complex and extend the use of pianistic possibilities.

Godowsky and I parted company in 1914, a month before the war, at the end of my Masterclass at the Vienna Music Academy. I happened to meet my maestro again in Moscow in 1935. The meeting was very cordial and full of joy.

Godowsky, in his last years, gave up, on account of illness, his concert activities to dedicate himself entirely to teaching. The imposition of musical instruction in the USSR interested him profoundly, as did all that he saw and heard in Moscow and which raised in him a most lively interest and sincere



solidarity. For hours we discussed the Soviet musical life and our new culture.

Leopold Godowsky, the greatest contemporary pianist, died a great and sincere friend of the Soviet Union, an active and implacable enemy of Fascism.

This 1939 article is taken from the volume Reflections, Memories, Diaries, Letters in the care of Valerij Voskobojnikov.

The photograph of Leopold Godowsky which appears on the cover of this Newsletter appears on p.75 of the third volume in Russian dedicated to Neuhaus, Genrich Nejauz. Vospominanija. Pis'ma. Materialy [= H. Neuhaus, Memories, letters, material], Moscow, 1992, in the care of Elena Richter, one of his pupils. The personal dedication by Leopold Godowsky to H. Neuhaus on the occasion of their meeting in Moscow, which is in German reads: 'Dem ehrlichen, genialen Menschen, dem echten, edlen Künstler, sein aufrichtig ergener Freund Leopold Godowsky Moskau, 25.5.35' ('To an honest and genial man, to a true noble artist, from his sincere devoted friend, Leopold Godowsky, Moscow, 25.5.35).

This was actually abstracted from 'Neuhaus Letter, Anno IV - Gennalo 1995, Numero uno' Bollettino della Associazione musicale Heinrich Neuhaus, Salita di Onofrio 11 - 00165 ROMA. This was kindly forwarded to me by Antonio Latanza [Ed.] Translated from the Italian by Doreen Winstanley.

Times editorial

Putting left to rights A new era is at hand for the southpaw

Thanks to the Wykehamist ingenuity of the musician Christopher Seed, pianos can now be tailored for the left-handed. Until now, the left hand has been the honest manual labourer on the keyboard, relegated to dull repetitive work while the right enjoys artisan status, given delicate melodies to construct. Mr Seed, after a few happy hours playing with his electronic organ, was able, as it were, to put the boot on the other hand and reverse the structure of the keyboard. The resulting liberation of the left-handed pianist is not only a boon to many hitherto handicapped musicians; it is also a symbolic blow for digital equality.

It is unfashionable now, especially in labour circles, to lean to the left, but a preference for the wrong paw has been the mark of creative geniuses from Michelangelo to McCartney. Whichever side of the brain governs the rational and whichever the emotional, the accumulated evidence of the past points to a concentration of talent among the minority who are unambiguously left-handed.

In the past, southpaws had to endure vilification as poisonous as any meted out to a minority. In medieval villages, left-handers were suspected of supping with Satan and prejudices did not die with the unfortunate victims at the stake. As late as Queen Victoria's reign, left-handed children had to have their disability "corrected' by being forced to write with what the authorities considered to be, in every sense, the right hand.

Left-handers have only recently found themselves treated on terms of rough equality and, as with so many minorities, it is the market rather than any ideology which has been their truest liberator. Canny capitalists have opened up new-vistas as well as wine bottles for the left-handed, producing products from corkscrews to guitars designed to break down the barriers for the sinister.

Mr. Seed's latest invention is, however, of a different order from many of the gadgets which have gone before. The fruit of his labour will allow the fiendish arpeggios of



especially demanding composers to fall in the range of many players who until now were, like David Evans, MP, too clumsily heavy-handed on the right. For left-handed pianists, the invention promises, as with the advent of the credit card, a Chopin revolution. It is an advance that, whatever hand one claps with, deserves enthusiastic applause.

Tunes sinister
From Dr Andrew Cockburn

Sir, Your leading article, "Putting left to rights", and report about a piano for the left-handed (March 10) has prompted Mr Gareth Glyn's suggestion (letter, March 14) that a violin for the right-handed should be a greater priority.

In fact, left-handed pianists are quite well catered for: the repertoire of left-handed works may be small but it is distinctive. Ravel's concerto for the left hand is well known, while Fauré's ambidexterity is amply demonstrated in his compositions.

The virtuoso pianist, Leopold Godowsky, held that the left hand, far from being relegated to 'dull, repetitive work', is in many ways superior to the right. freer of tension, it is more supple and relaxed. Commanding the middle and lower registers, it can produce a more sonorous and less percussive tone with the damper pedal freeing it to play in the upper registers.

Godowsky greatly increased the range of the left-hand repertoire with, for example, a paraphrase of Strauss' *Gypsy Baron* waltz, and 22 studies based on Chopin's *Études*. Those interested in a "Chopin revolution", as your leader put it, might care to try his study based on Chopin's Op.10 No.12 - the *Revolutionary Study* - for the left hand alone.

Yours faithfully, ANDREW COCKBURN (Co-founder, London Piano Circle), 30 Southway, Hampstead Garden Suburb, NW11. March 14

Letter from Leopold Godowsky to Isidore Philipp, original at the Philipp Archives of the University of Louisville, Kentucky.

Berlin, Dec.22, 1930 Hafenplatz 7.

Dearest, Good and Kind Friend:

I would have answered your much too kind letter as soon as I received it, but I have been in a frightful state of mind and in a poor condition physically. It is still very difficult for me to walk, play or write. I continue to suffer from insomnia. You, dear and poor friend, know how terrible it is to pass sleepless nights, brooding over one's misfortunes and the nothingness and aimlessness of our sad life. I was always predisposed to introspection and melancholia. My illness aggravated my depression and the longer it lasts the more it gets a firm hold upon me. I think too much cosmically and metaphysically. Our earthly things seem so insignificant, stupid and inconsequential.

Your last letter brought tears to my eyes. You called my nature and my music noble. What are you then? I have never met such a wholly good man; such a kind, sweet, tolerant, understanding and really noble nature This is not flattery, but my genuine as you are. conviction. I love you more than any I have ever met, and my respect and admiration know no bounds. That I and my efforts should make such a favourable impression on you renders me proud in the limited sense of pride that my philosophy allows. I feel myself insignificant and my work as thing that will pass into oblivion before it will have the opportunity to become known. Who am I, when Bach, who was forgotten by the world sixty-five years, had to be resurrected by Schumann and Mendelssohn? Such a mighty genius forgotten. And a time will come when all that is on earth will vanish and no trace left. How can any thinking human being have the slightest conceit?

My plans are undecided yet. Mrs Godowsky and I will stay at Mrs Landerker's, Hafenplatz 7, Berlin, till after the New Year. We expect to go to Vienna the first week in January for not more than several days. From Vienna we hope to go to Paris and from there to the Riviera. I must go to New York, as soon as my health is better. My illness cost me a great deal of money. As you know, I lost practically everything last year. I therefore must do something as soon as I can work. I have not had any material worries since thirty-eight years. I was never rich nor was I poor since my young days.

I must close this letter by wishing you and your kind and charming sister a pleasant Christmas and happy and prosperous New Year and many of them.

Your devoted friend, GODOWSKY



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29.	1941 SYMPHONIC METAMORPHOSES - Johann Strauss	19 pgs.
	hetunosphosis (!) TOTAL:	219 PGS.
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Vol III: Mineatures for four hands



270 Riverside Drive May 5th 1934

Mr.Emil Hilb Windsor Hotel New York City

Dear Mr. Hilb.

I herewith acknowledge receipt of your kind letter of June Srd.

It gratifies me to learn from you as spokesman for a group of influential men and musically interested patrons, that a movement is in progress suggesting to me to assume the leadership of an institution of musical learning, featuring the pianoforte.

I see the justification of your effort in chosing me to guide its destinies, having had a life-long experience and having devoted many years to the development and advancement of my chosen instrument.

It is the thought of transmitting this knowledge — also the initiative I have shown in the past in advancing piano-pedagogy — to coming generations of budding talent and truthsearching teachers, that such a suggestion finds a sympathetic echo within me.

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letter to Mr.E.Hilb

Believing in your ability and fitness for propagating and organizing important musical undertakings, and also knowing you as an Honorary Member of the Society of Concertizing Artists in Germany, I feel confident that your efforts, strengthened by an unusual idealism, will not be in vain.

Wishing you success in all your endeavors, I

am,

Very sincerely yours,

Leopold Jodowsky

G/e



270 Riverside Drive August, 15th , 1934

Mr. Emil Hilb Hotel Windsor New York City

Dear Mr. Hilb.

The plans for the foundation of an International Institute of Music have been studied thoroughly by me. From various personal interviews with you, you must have gained the assurance that I am fullheartedly in accord with the great cultural and educational advantages such an institution would offer.

It has always been my ambition to perpetuate my artistic experiences of a lifetime in the field of piano - playing and composition to coming generations. And the same ambition is shared with me by several world-renowned artists, who thus far have not lent their artistic experiences to any existing institution of musical learning.

I shall therefore be very glad to place myself at the disposal of an institution that would develop the highest musical culture.

The aims I would persue as head of such an



institution are laid down in detail in a special article, which I take pleasure in enclosing.

Knowing you to be a man of ideals, of energy and of organizing ability, I do not entertain the least doubt that your effort in behalf of the foundation of a <u>National Master</u>

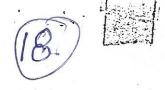
<u>Institute of Music</u> will be crowned with success.

You will find me ready at all times to assist you in this matter to the best of my ability.

With best wishes, I am,

sincerely yours,

Leopoldfodowsky



270 Riverside Drive New York City April,7th 1935

To whom it may concern.

I take pleasure in introducing very warmly

Mr. Emil H i l b . He is a friend of mine and I know him

exceedingly well. Besides being a charming fellow, he is an

exceptionally fine musician, orchestral expert and conductor.

He is versative and resourceful; symphatetic and alert.

No doubt, he would prove to be most indispensable to any enterprise that should avail itself of his services.

Any courtesy extented to him will be greatly appreciated by

yours sincerely,

espold Godowsky

g/a

270 Riverside Drive (Apt. 10A) New York City December 15 1936 Dear Friend. Your idea of creating a "Musical Information Hour" connected with a "Musical Round Table" is indeed an excellent one and very original. I have read your plan with great interest and I am sure that such an edifying service

over the Radio will be a valuable innovation.

There is no doubt in my mind that there will be an immediate response wherever you present this plan.

Knowing you as I do I am convinced that you will introduce and guide such an "Information Hour" with an ever growing success.

Hoping to see you soon, I am,

as ever,

yours,

g 'e

Mr. Emil Hilb 150 Riverside Drive New York City

Dear Mª Hilb:

It is with genuine pleasure that I take this opportunity to thank you heartily for being attentive and kind to me on every possible occasion.

and now, when my day of birth came, you alone conceived the original idea of celebrating that day by a radio. program of my compositions.

You have a way of bringing to reali. zation most of what you desire to accom lish, and so the event really took place creating interest in many quarters. My gratitude goes out to you!

With best wishes,

February 14th, Sincerely yours, 1937. Leopoldfodowsky

AFTERTHOUGHTS

It may appear, at first glance, that there are many things in this Newsletter not directly connected with Godowsky, but on reflection I hope you will find that everything here has a connection - look for it, it is there. We now appear to be getting to the stage where Godowsky is just not a naughty word, but is being recognised for what he is - a great composer for the piano, a contrapuntal master, and a melodist. His music is now being heard, if not in the concert hall (but even here, he is now being heard) but certainly on CD, and some of his music is now being made available to those of stout heart and sympathetic fingers. It is good to reflect that the Society may have had some influence in the current situation, but more, I think is due to APR for their publication of Jeremy Nicholas biography and of their issue of Godowsky's recordings on CD. The Society has certainly not been operating in a vacuum.

The advent of CD seems somehow to have activated an awareness of our recent past, not only (but thankfully) as regards Godowsky, but towards many composers of tantalising reputation whose works are relevant to our understanding of today's music. There is much of the music of the first half of our century which is now getting a hearing which was previously impossible to evaluate. Ornstein, featured in this issue is by no means a lone example (van Dieren, Bowen, Szymanowsky, Medtner, featured in previous issues are only a few) whose music can now be heard by the curious who have not the technical facility to read or play their music (if they can find it). A recent issue of Ornstein's Piano Quintet, received within the last few days, is a revelation - this is real music. Equally revelatory is the astonishing CD of music of George Antheil, 'Fighting the Waves'; his autobiography, "The Bad Boy of Music" did little to enhance his reputation. Critics have killed off more composers than Syphillis or Tuberculosis, and remarks such as "more corn than gold" may have raised a smile (or made its way into books of musical anecdotes) when it was applied to Korngold's violin concerto, but it really says more about the critic's refusal to discard a bon mot than it does about his ability to evaluate a splendid piece of music.

There are others, one of whom, Vernon Duke (AKA Vladimir Dukelsky) started a 'Society for Forgotten Music' and who also wrote one of the finest musical autobiographies (not quite on a par with Berlioz, but in the same league), "Passport to Paris", Little Brown, Boston, 1955. Get a copy if you can, but it has been out-of -print for some time, and the last time I saw a copy advertised in a catalogue, it was for £75.00, so it will cost you. Try the library (this is mot for U.K. readers, for the British Library don't seem to have a copy).

Remember Godowsky, the greatest composer/pianist of our century. But remember that there are others deserving of a hearing.

(ours

MUSICAL GEMS FOR PIANO

