

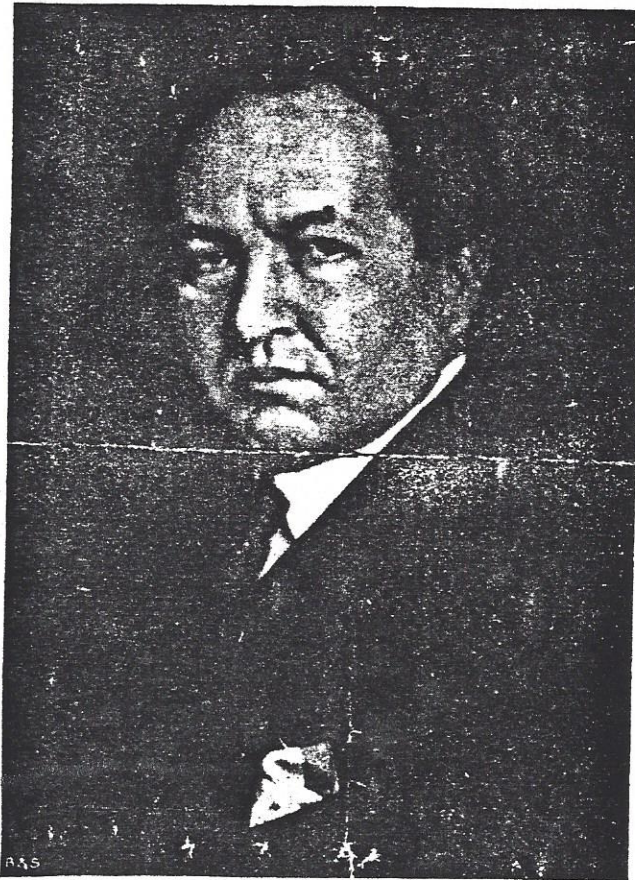
THE GODOWSKY SOCIETY

newsletter

QUEEN'S HALL

(Sole Lessees — Messrs. Chappell & Co., Ltd.)

GODOWSKY



SATURDAY, APRIL 14th, 1928, at 3

BECHSTEIN GRAND PIANOFORTE

BRUNSWICK RECORDS

**ANALYTICAL
PROGRAMME
ONE SHILLING**

**IBBS & TILLET
124 WIGMORE ST., W.1**

VOL 4

no 2

THE GODOWSKY SOCIETY

Patrons:

Shura Cherkassky

Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji

Ronald Stevenson

What with one thing and another, there is always something going on in the Godowsky scene. For instance, just after the last issue of the Newsletter (if you can remember that far back) I had a letter from Jeremy Nicholas who told me that due to publisher trouble (something I know a little about) it was unlikely that his biography of Godowsky would be issued during 1984: we may hope for something next year. Let's face it, we have waited so long for something that a year here or there is nothing. It is good just to know it is on the stocks.

In this issue, I have reprinted that marvellous piece by our distinguished Patron, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji, "Godowsky as Creative Transcriber". This was originally published in 1947 but has been long out of print (except for a pirated American edition) and unavailable along with the other essays in that brilliant thought-provoking book "MI CONTRA FA". I wrote our Patron for permission to use his essay in this Newsletter and this wonderful man took the trouble to telephone me and give his blessing.

Also in this issue is the script of a programme on Godowsky written by Ronald Stevenson. This was transmitted as the sole recognition by our Broadcasting Corporation of Godowsky's Centenary. I am only sorry I can not include his playing of these pieces - the Hara Besaar was a wow! I had the pleasure of playing some of the Godowsky Miniatures with Ronald during the summer (being no Godowsky, I took the Primo). It was marvellous to hear them as well as to play. And, I have great pleasure of announcing that they are again available.

The flier (see page 4) with this information was sent to me by one of our subscribers, Mark Arnest of New York who casually added 'in case you don't know of it'. Sure I didn't. However, I soon lost the euphoric feelings and began to feel aggrieved at the pieces missing from the flier. Fischer's reply was swift and can be seen on page 5. The snag is that with the way the pound is going, no one in U.K. will be able to afford to buy it. One word of warning for U.K. readers, although the prices seem at the moment to be stable, it would be cheaper to purchase straight from Fischer than invite a 'mark up' from the firms mentioned in their letter.

This news came in good time for me, for I am going to give, in the coming year an illustrated talk on Godowsky's Miniatures in Edinburgh to the Scottish Branch of the European Piano Teachers Association.

Gordon Fergus-Thomson recently played the Chopin/Godowsky Waltz transcriptions - it is a pity that some of the original work could not be given an airing - on Radio 3. Both the music and the playing deserved more congenial timing (it was broadcast in the afternoon) but they did come over well.

One of our younger subscribers, Doug Smith, at present at Youngstown State University gave a performance of Godowsky's Elegy for the left hand alone at a recent piano performance class.

It is with regret that I report the death of Leopold Godowsky Jnr., son of the composer and co-inventor of the Kodakrome colour system. He was a considerable violinist who at one time took a considerable interest in the product of another inventor/musician, Emanuel Moor (who besides inventing the Moor Double-Keyboard had designed a highly innovative violin.).

I must also report the death of Douglas Miller last autumn at the age of ninety-six. Douglas Miller studied with Godowsky from 1906 to 1910 and the article which he wrote for Musical Opinion on the occasion of Godowsky's centenary was reprinted in Volume 3 no. 1 of the Godowsky Society Newsletter. I was the beneficiary of a desultory correspondence and of a single meeting in which I gathered more idea of the state of music and of piano-playing at the turn of the century than I have obtained from any single source before or since. He gave me much encouragement and although we had little contact during the last few years, I miss him being there.

In the next Newsletter, I'll let you know what Godowsky played at the concert announced on the cover, until then keep your finger's crossed that I can get up to date this coming year of 1985.

Harry Winstanley,
31 Gayfield Square
Edinburgh EH1 3PA
Scotland
31 December 1984

Piano Music of Leopold Godowsky

L'Arlésienne. Adagietto [Bizet] P1646	1.75	Miscellaneous Numbers	Yearning [A]..... P1913	3.00
Ballet Music from "Rosamunde" [Schubert] [A]..... P1355	4.00	Albumblatt (Intermezzo) [A] P1069	Schubert Songs: Freely Transcribed for the Piano	
Cadenza to W.A. Mozart's Concerto A Major (K.488) [A]..... P1624	6.00	Arabian Chant (Orientale) [A] P1068	The Brooklet (Wohin?) [A] P1560	6.00
2 Cadenzas to W.A. Mozart's Concerto in C Minor for Pianoforte (K.491) [A] P1495	6.00	Ballade [A] P1072	Cradle Song (Wiegenlied) [A] P1567	4.00
Calm as the Night [Bohm] P1120	1.75	Barcarolle [A] P1074	Good Night (Gute Nacht) [A]..... P1564	6.00
Canzonetta from "Concerto Romantique" [Godard] [A] P1645	7.00	The Exercise [A] P1065	Hedgerose (Haidenroslein) [A] P1563	4.00
A Flower to Me Thou Seemest (Du bist wie eine Blume) [R. Schumann] [A]..... P1121	3.00	Funeral March [A]..... P1070	Impatience (Ungeduld) [A] P1581	8.00
Frederic Chopin Waltzes: Concert Arrangements for Piano		Humoresque [A] P1075	Litany (Litanei) [A] P1571	6.00
Op. 64, No. 3, A-flat Major [A] P1613	6.00	Hunter's Call (Woodland Mood) [A] P1079	Love's Message (Liebesbotschaft) [A] P1572	7.00
Op. 69, No. 1, A-flat Major [A] P1614	7.00	Impromptu (In Days of Yore) [A] P1077	Morning Greeting (Morgengruss) [A] P1566	5.00
Op. 70, No. 2, F Minor [A] P1615	5.00	Meditation [A] P1063	To Mignon (Au Mignon)..... P1578	7.00
Op. 70, No. 3, D-flat Major [A] P1122	4.00	Military March [A]..... P1080	The Trout (Die Forelle) [A] P1568	6.00
Iberia. Triana [Albéniz] [A] P1487	9.00	The Miller's Song [A] P1062	Wandering (Das Wandern) [A] P1561	6.00
If I Were a Bird [Henselt] [A] P1912	4.00	Nocturne [A] P1073	The Young Nun (Die junge Nonne) [A]..... P1569	8.00
Miniatures, for Piano		Pastorale [A] P1064	Serenade [R. Strauss] [A]..... P1194	5.00
Arabian Chant (Orientale) [A] P1040	3.00	Plaintive Melody [A] P1071	Si oiseau j'étais [Henselt] [A] P1912	4.00
Humoresque [A] P300	5.00	Processional March [A] P1066	Still wie die Nacht [Bohm] P1120	1.75
Miller's Song [A] P1041	3.00	Scherzo [A] P1067	Tambourin [Rameau] [A] P2372	2.00
Processional March [A] P1042	3.00	The Scholar (Fughetta) [A] P1078	Tango [Albéniz] [A] P1148	4.00
Rigaudon [A] P301	3.00	Serenade [A] P1061	Triana [Albéniz] [A] P1487	9.00
Miniatures, for Piano, 4 Hands		Toccatina [A] P1076	Waltz Poems, for Piano	
7 Ancient Dances		7 Modern Dances	No. 1, G Major [A]..... P1786	4.00
Bourrée [A] P1051	4.00	Csárdás (Hungary) [A]..... P1058	No. 2, A Major [A]..... P1789	4.00
Gavotte [A] P1050	4.00	Mazurka (Chopinesque) [A] P1059	No. 4, E-flat Major [A] P1846	3.00
Irish Jig [A] P1053	4.00	Polka [A] P1054	Waltz Poems, for Piano, Left Hand	
Minuet, No. 1 [A]..... P1047	4.00	Polonaise [A] P1060	No. 1, G-flat Major [A] P1840	3.00
Minuet, No. 2 [A]..... P1048	5.00	Tarantella (Italy) [A]..... P1057	No. 2, B-flat Major [A] P1841	3.00
Rigaudon [A] P1049	4.00	Tyrolean (Laendler) [A] P1055	No. 3, G Major [A]..... P1842	5.00
Siciliana [A] P1052	4.00	Valse Élégique [A] P1056	No. 4, E-flat Major [A] P1843	3.00
		Suites	No. 5, A-flat Major [A] P1844	3.00
		No. 1 [A] P1044	No. 6, C Major [A] P1845	4.00
		No. 2 [A] P1045		
		No. 3 [A] P1046		
		Moments Musical [Schubert]..... P1304		
		Phonoramas/Tonal Journeys for the Pianoforte = Java Suite		
		Part 2 [A] O1397		
		Part 3 [A] O1398		
		Part 4 [A] O1399		
		Poems for the Pianoforte		
		Adoration [A] P1623		
		Avowal [A] P1622		
		Devotion [A] P1621		

PRICES NO LONGER VALID

When ordering please furnish
Mastercharge or Visa information
or indicate Ship COD.

Available from your local music supplier, or from:
Carl Fischer, Inc.
62 Cooper Square
New York, NY 10003

[A] Archive Edition: custom reproduction of previously published materials.
All prices and availability are subject to change without notice.



CARL FISCHER

Music Publishers Since 1872

July 17, 1984

Mr. H. Winstanley
31 Gayfield Square
Edinburgh EH1 3PA
Scotland

Dear Mr. Winstanley,

Thank you for your letter of June 26th with respect to our flier listing the piano music of Leopold Godowsky.

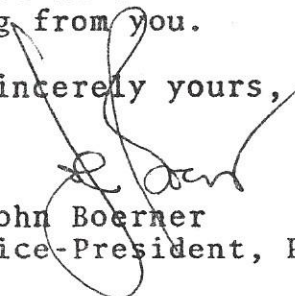
We have no objection to (and certainly would appreciate) your reproducing this list in the next Godowsky Society Newsletter. While we have no exclusive agents in the United Kingdom, all these publications can be acquired through Boosey & Hawkes or Schott.

Incidentally, the list was not intended to be complete and we only mentioned those items which we could readily reproduce from our archive copies. In view of this, many of the collections are not listed but, if the compositions were originally published separately, we included only the separate listing.

The Cadenza to the Beethoven G major Piano Concerto and the Transcription of the Bach D minor Cello Suite were not included because the size of the works make it difficult, if not impossible, for us to reproduce on our equipment. We could have single sheet copies made, but I am afraid it would be relatively expensive since we charge \$.75 for each page. Let me know if you would be interested in this and I will have an actual computation made of the total cost.

We do appreciate your interest in Carl Fischer and I shall look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,


John Boerner
Vice-President, Publications

sf

'Catalogue of Recordings by Classical Pianists'.

Volume I (Pianists born to 1872)

by

James Methuen-Campbell.

Published by Disco Epsom Limited

P.O. Box 4

Chipping Norton

Oxon OX7 5NW

Price £6.50 Hard bound

£3.00 loose leaf

Mr. Methuen-Campbell is no stranger to these pages: his book, Chopin Playing from the Composer to the Present Day (Gollancz, 1981) I described, I think, as "Rivetingly readable". Well, he has done it again.

This volume has a 'cut off' date which enables Mr. Campbell to include all pupils of Liszt and it takes the form of a potted biography of each pianist followed by a discography: non-Liszt pupils are, of course, included.

One of the charms of this book is that not only major pianistic talents are included, but also composers such as Gilea (accompanying Guiseppe de Lucca). We can also greatly increase our store of useless information: for instance, how many readers have heard of Barili, Alfredo (1854-1935)? He was a pupil of Hiller, settled in the U.S.A. where he gave lessons to James Huneker. A nephew of Adelina Patti, he accompanied her in a series of discs recorded in Wales in 1906: these are listed.

There is the revelation that Eugene D'Albert recorded Bax and Goossens in 1921, and there is the delightful austere tone of the old Grove in the judgement of poor Diemer, Louis (1843-1918). "Distinguished French pianist and teacher....His compositions are not distinguished". THAT had me dashing off to the music library - alas, they had not deemed him important enough to acquire any of his compositions.

But the eccentric side of the book is the sauce. The meat lies in having in handy format discographies of the Great Legends: D'Albert, Busoni, de Pachman, Godowsky, Grunfeld, Arthur Friedman et al.

It is a lovely thing to browse through, again and again. I look forward to Volume II.

The print is good; clear and well spaced on paper of good quality. One small carp - with the loose-leaf edition, there is insufficient margin to enable holes to be punched for inclusion in a binder.

Producer: Dr. Robert Simpson

LEOPOLD GODOWSKY

Ronald Stevenson introduces and plays some music by the great Polish piano virtuoso and composer, the centenary of whose birth fell last February.

Week 52

BBC Radio 3

Monday 28 December 1970. 10.30 - 11.00 p.m.

Pre-recording Thursday 10 December 1970

Maida Vale 2.

BEL260 Rec. No. TLN/49/BEL260 28.00

Godowsky - who was he? The casual listener might wonder. Ah yes, he may say, wasn't he one of those virtuosi of the 'golden era of the Romantic pianists', as the record sleeves say. This would place him at the end of the last century - certainly before the first World War. And what of the composer? Some listeners will know his work well, but some others might say, 'Oh well, I suppose he was one of those pianists who wrote "lollipops", little encores to round off an evening of Chopin or Liszt.' Well, Godowsky lived to the eve of World War 2. He was a relative (by marriage) of George Gershwin and a friend of Charlie Chaplin. He often dropped in on Chaplin on the Hollywood film sets.

He was born in Wilna, Russian Poland, in 1870; was largely self-taught, apart from a few lessons from Saint-Saens; took Berlin by storm in 1900; emigrated to America; suffered a stroke in the 'Thirties which terminated his concert activity; gave masterclasses in the Soviet Union in the 'Thirties; and died in New York in 1938.

He loved people. He always worked, whether at piano practice or at composition, with a houseful of friends. One of them said that Godowsky's house made Sanger's Circus seem like a rest home. It was one long party. He was a born host. There was always a midnight running buffet in his New York apartment with a huge samovar in the middle of it all. And there, round the table would be his admirers, Diaghilev, Nijinsky, Andre Gide, Rachmaninov, Ravel, Stravinsky, Gershwin, Kreisler, Heifetz and many more.

He was physically small, spiritually large. His head had something Buddha-

like about it. His eyes sparkled; his talk lit verbal fireworks. He was a virtuoso punster.

And what about the composer? He was far more than a writer of encores. Indeed, I estimate him as possibly the most consummate master of piano music - considered as music in terms of the instrument - that has ever lived. He was the heir to his fellow Pole, Chopin. He had a similar fastidiousness and care for detail. From 1909 to 1914 he took the Master Class for pianists at the Vienna Conservatoire. Vienna scintillated and effervesced in his music too, in his symphonic metamorphoses of Johann Strauss waltzes and his transcriptions from Schubert. And when he emigrated to the States, his harmony took on an allurements not unrelated to that of Gershwin.

So - Poland, Vienna, America: that's the background.

Godowsky was a globe-trotter. The idea gradually matured in him to recreate his roaming experiences. His Java Suite (composed in 1924) is an example. This must be one of the largest suites ever composed: it plays for some 45 minutes and has 12 movements. In his preface to it, Godowsky describes the densely inhabited island of Java - 'The Garden of the East' - with its tropical vegetation, its huge volcanoes, majestic ruins and imposing monuments of many centuries.

All Javanese music is in two or four-beat rhythm: triple time is alien to them. Its sameness of beat hypnotises. Its tunes are pentatonic.

The Java Suite presents Godowsky's impressions of the native music-idion as he understood it. He has tried to translate into pianistic terms the sonority of the Gamelan ensemble, ((which consists mainly of percussion instruments of metal, wood and bamboo, bells, chimes, gongs, sounding boards, bowls, pans, drums, tom-toms, native xylophones and the sonorous, aeolian harp-like alang-alang. On first hearing this new world of sound, Godowsky felt himself suddenly transported to a realm of enchantment.))

In one of the movements of his Java Suite, Hari Besaar (The Great Day), he utilises fragments of Javanese folk music. On the Great Day, the Kermess or Country Fair is here. People from plantations and hamlets flock to town for the celebrations. Among the throng are actors, musicians, dancers, fakirs.

P L A Y Hari Besaar

A few years before writing his Java Suite, Godowsky wrote another long suite, Triakontameron, which, as its title suggests, comprises thirty pieces. Just as his Java Suite was all in two or four beat rhythm, this suite is all in three-beat rhythm. This idea in itself would seem to threaten boredom, but Godowsky liked to build sequences of pieces on one basic metre because he knew that his pianistic invention could in itself provide enough variety and contrast; and within the framework of one basic metre he devised a multitude of rhythmic subtleties. (It's as though he's illustrating Goethe's precept that mastery is found in working within limitations.)

From Triakontameron, composed in 1919, I'll play Whirling Dervishes.

P L A Y Whirling Dervishes

About half of Godowsky's total of some 500 works are transcriptions. Surely it's no longer necessary to point out that transcriptions aren't cheap arrangements. Rather are they comparable to creative translation - new works in their own right. In his twenties, Godowsky brought out a series of 53 Studies based on the Etudes of his compatriot Chopin. With them he extended piano music's range of polyphonic, polyrhythmic and polydynamic possibilities. (These works constitute a new school of piano technique, raising the art of Liszt to the Nth degree. Liszt's transcriptions employ the broad brush-stroke: Godowsky's are infinitely more refined and jewelled in delicate detail. Their technical demands and supersensitive poetry still challenge any pianist in the world. The fashion for music of sensationalism and gimmicks and the jet age of full engagement books and constant travel have militated against the serenity and application necessary to mastering Godowsky's Studies. I doubt whether any pianist to-day could perform them in toto. Godowsky could. That fact alone stakes his claim to supremacy in the pianistic galaxy.)

I'm going to play you Godowsky's Study no. 18A for left hand solo. It is based of Chopin's Etude opus 10, no. 9, which opens like this:

P L A Y Chopin Etude op.10, no.9 (bars 1 - 8)

Now Godowsky recasts this in a different key and different rhythm. There

is something almost oriental in the mood he chooses. I imagine I hear an Arab drum at the start of his transcription:

P L A Y Study no.18A (bars 1 - 8)

Godowsky develops Chopin's Etude contrapuntally. I doubt if any other composer has been capable of writing a piece for left hand which incorporates an accompanied canon as this does; that is, a tune followed by its own shadow in another part and set in a background of delicate figuration, like this:

P L A Y Study no. 18A (bars 1 - 8)

He also employs unusual rhythms in irregular groupings, such as 4 notes followed by 5, then 3 or 1 followed by 3, 5 and 3. Remember this was in the 'Nineties, years before Bartok employed such irregular rhythms. Whereas Bartok got the idea from Balkan folk dances, Godowsky's rhythms were suggested by finger groupings in relation to the keyboard. Now I'll play the whole piece, Study no. 18A after Chopin; it's a little poem.

P L A Y Study 18A

In 1927 Godowsky published 12 Schubert Songs freely transcribed. He wrote that his aim was 'merely to transplant them from voice to piano: to comment on and interpret the songs in the manner of free variations.' He went on: 'To those who are open-minded, sympathetic and understanding, these Schubert transcriptions will proclaim my love and veneration for the composer and his immortal songs.' (Godowsky was a man of rare humility. All the same, he surely couldn't possess mastery without being aware of it. He wrote: 'Although I fully realize that my knowledge of music is necessarily limited when compared with the immensity of the subject, I am equally aware that many others know less than I, among whom I should place the self-appointed arbiters of what is right and wrong in our chosen art.')

From his Schubert transcriptions, I've chosen the well-known Cradle Song. Ethnomusicology indicates that most tunes of such folk-like simplicity actually have their source in folk song. At root, there are a few basic prototypes concealed behind most melodies of a popular type. So when Schubert wrote his Cradle Song, he was half-remembering some immemorial phrases which were even simpler than his tune. And, of course, he clothed

his tune in the harmony of his period and of his personal selection - a thing no folk singer would do, as we all know, the oldest folk songs were unaccompanied. Godowsky preserves Schubert's tune with fidelity and, just as Schubert added his own harmonies to an essentially folk-like tune, so Godowsky adds his harmonies - harmonies of pastel-like subtlety. He also treats the tune in canon, just as he did in the study after Chopin.

It's a very insouciant treatment of canon; paradoxically, it is artless, guileless, simple, though full of art. The echo-device of canon was as natural to Godowsky as echo is to the hills. So here is the Cradle Song after Schubert.

P L A Y Cradle Song

Schubert was also the inspirer of Godowsky's last major work for piano, a huge Passacaglia based on the first 8 bars of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony. This was composed in 1927, on the eve of the centenary of Schubert's death. (In his preface to it, Godowsky wrote: 'With the exception of Chopin, I know of no other composer whose lyricism has touched the heart of so many; whose melodies have become so thoroughly the treasure of all civilised nations; whose tone-imagery have so sensitized and refined our poetic sensibilities.') Godowsky's Passacaglia culminates in a monumental Fugue, which he authorised for performance separately. So I end my tribute to Godowsky with his Fugue on the opening theme of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony.

P L A Y Fugue

(c) Ronald Stevenson.

The portions in brackets were in the original script but were not used in the actual broadcast. I felt they should be included. Ed.

From: MI CONTRA FA : the Immorelisms of a Mahiavellian Musician
by KAIKHOSRU SHAPURJI SORABJI
The Porcupine Press, London momxlvi

LEOPOLD GODOWSKY AS CREATIVE
TRANSCRIBER

"The Ethics of Transcription" is one of those cliché catch-phrases that musicians are given to, among whom the repetition of parrot cries empty of precise, or any, meaning at all, is as prevalent and as welcome a substitute for intelligent thought as it is with the rest of a modern populace.

How a question of "ethics," the principles of moral conduct, as the Saints, moralists and law-givers of mankind have laid them down, can have any imaginable bearing upon the arrangement of a composition written originally for one medium to suit another medium, is not clear to the eye of reason.

Ethics are no more involved than accuracy of statement in Government propaganda. Does the transcription display the work to as much or greater advantage; does it reveal new aspects thereof, does it sound as or more effective in its new form than in the original? Here, of course, is scope for endless argument, endless disagreement, endless spinning of spiders' webs; all the stuff that musical critics write in fact, and that certain misguided ones waste their time reading. There are a few objective criteria - as far as there ever can be any objective criteria in such a matter as the art of music - namely the skill and resource wherewith the new medium is used, the ingenuity displayed in transplanting technical devices of the instrumental writing of the original into that of a new medium, or how far its deficiencies, if any, as compared with the old, are effectively substituted for. As Mr. Ernest Newman says, transcriptions such as those of Leopold Godowsky are like the work of great commentators, like Scartazzini upon the Divina Commedia, like Conington upon Virgil, like Montague Summers upon the Restoration Dramatists. To quote Mr Newman's own words: "After all, Schubert, untouched and untouched-up is always available for us when we want him, so why not, meanwhile, spend ten minutes enjoying Godowsky? As his fine transcriptions of the Bach unaccompanied 'cello and violin suites prove, he has a remarkable faculty for drawing out of another man's work, something that was not formally expressed by the man, but is really latent in his work." The great transcriber expounds, enlarges and amplifies matter and thought inherent or implicit in the original text, matter and thought that it has been left to him to discover and reveal, and as in Godowsky's case, makes the original a point de départ for a new creation.

From any of these objective, or quasi-objective criteria Leopold Godowsky must, I think, be considered as one of the supreme masters of transcription, to be put in the same transcendental class as Liszt and Busoni, and even in certain respects surpassing them. Since his all too early and greatly lamented death in 1938, in little more than middle-life, his work has grown steadily in repute - due very largely to the magnificently and fanatically enthusiastic work of a most remarkable Australian amateur (in the good French sense), Paul Howard, who founded the International Godowsky Society, which includes among its members and supporters very many of the most distinguished of living musicians and pianists. Indeed, so successful

and so able has been the work of the International Godowsky Society, that writers who, during Godowsky's lifetime, could hardly find words bad enough in which to abuse him, now announce themselves as members, and strive, with a disingenuous (if understandable) shame for their past exhibitions, to create the impression that they have always had the utmost respect for Godowsky's work. The most amusing instance of Time thus bringing in its revenges was provided by a writer in one of our "musical" news-sheets who, a few years before, on the occasion of Godowsky's last visit to this country when he introduced us to some of his most mature work, fell upon him with ferocity. It was piquant to see this very person later, upon the foundation of the Godowsky Society, saying that "Godowsky's eminence as a composer has long been recognised by the critics," when in point of fact at that time there were, so far as I am aware, not more than three people in this country who were publicly paying Godowsky's work its due tribute, three people who knew sufficient of it to express an authoritative opinion. These were first and foremost Mr Clinton Gray Fisk who, in many an admirable letter and article in the public press has demonstrated his profound knowledge of and understanding of Godowsky's work; Mr Ernest Newman; and lastly myself, and by all the correct canons I am outside the pale.

To the present generation of concert-goers, Godowsky will perhaps hardly be a name, his fame as a pianist belonging chiefly to the first and second decades of the present century. He was a technician of prodigious accomplishment with phenomenal left-hand powers, but as a pianist he is quite overshadowed by his genius as a transcriber, as well as by his achievement as a wholly original composer in such works as the magnificent Java Suite, a series of "travelogues" as the composer himself calls them, the writing of which was prompted by a visit to Java. These wonderful pieces are in every respect of originality, magnificently diversified exploitation of the technical and expressive resources of the instrument, imaginative subtle beauty and richly evocative musical imagery, worthy to place in the same rank as the great Iberia Suite of Albeniz, which they far surpass in variety of mood, character and pianistic resource. Highly important is the great Passacaglia and Fugue on a theme from the Unfinished, a work of great power, magnificent inventiveness and consummate mastery of musical-expressive means. Of great interest also are the four lovely Poems for piano, the big earlier cycle of pieces in waltz-tempo Waltzermasken, which include some brilliantly clever stylistic pastiches, and a similar later work, Triakontameron.

Passing now to the immense corpus of Godowsky's transcriptions, we are, I think, considering work no less creative, original and masterly than his own wholly original compositions. Indeed, so complete is Godowsky's recasting and remoulding of the works out of which he evolves his wonderful transcription-compositions, as I feel inclined to call them, partaking so much, as they do, of original creation, that they can hardly be regarded as merely transcriptions, but take on the aspect of new works built on and around an older core, much in the same way as the perpendicular splendours and glorious tracery of the later parts of Winchester Cathedral are built on around and out of the older Norman structure. Godowsky's work in this field is immense, from the "Renaissance" pieces, as he calls them, several volumes of Old French Masters of the Clavecin period, amplified, enlarged and treated pianistically, as it were, in the light of executive harpsichord technique, that is to say, with pianistic equivalents and substitutes for the mutation and coupler devices of the two-manual harpsichord, the fifty-odd studies on the Études of Chopin - the Three Symphonic Metamorphoses on Strauss Waltzes, the various Chopin Waltz transcriptions, the Weber Invitation to the Waltz (with one tremendous two-piano affair, taking nearly an hour in performance), a large number of Lieder from Schubert to

to Strauss to his final and most mature work of the kind, the great piano works evolved from three violin Sonatas and three 'cello suites of Bach, not forgetting a marvellous recasting of the Triana of Albeniz in succession to an earlier arrangement of the same composer's Tango.

So diversified are Godowsky's methods that it is difficult to pick on any particular transcription as typical, but only in so far as it is an example of a particular treatment: I think that the peaks of Godowsky's achievement are attained in the six great Bach transcriptions already mentioned. Not being of those who are reduced to a condition of palpitating and speechless awe by a great name, I decline to anaesthetise my perceptions and critical faculties when a Bach or a Beethoven drops a brick, as it seems to me, or a Wagner wallows in crudity, vulgarity, and ranting bombast, and so I declare roundly, that as far as I am concerned these Bach solo-violin and 'cello works are nightmares, grinning, dry, rattling skeletons of compositions, bloodless, fleshless, staring anatomies. Godowsky clothes them with flesh and blood and makes of them magnificent and indeed tremendous musical organisms having the sweep and grandeur, the profundity, solemnity and richness that is indeed associated with the greatest of Bach, but of which I can discern little or no trace in the bald bare sketches of the originals. If from these sparse hints Godowsky can evolve his "transcription" of the C minor 'cello suite, a re-composition of imposing magnificence, of a hieratic grandeur and large splendour of style, then this, to my mind, is a creative artistic achievement for which only one word is adequate - genius. So to adapt and adopt and mould the thought, the sketches of another man, so to absorb them into one's own musical nature and personality, so in fact to assimilate them, making them the vehicle for original and personal thought, this is a feat of very great creative art, just as much - indeed more - than certain feats in the history of translation, which assume an independent life of their own, and not for any merits as translations pure and simple.

Two of the most famous cases of this are, of course, the Authorised Version and Fitzgerald's Omar Kheyyâm. The teeming inaccuracies of the Authorised Version can be seen by anybody who has the curiosity to compare it with the Vulgate; indeed they were such that they were even too much for those indefatigable and accomplished swollowers of theological and historical inconsistencies and contradictions, the Established Chorch, which felt bound to produce a Revised Version as a mild - very mild - corrective to the magnificent and herioc inaccuracies of the Authorised Version. But such is the sheer splendour of language, the grandeur of diction of the Authorised Version, that its prestige is as great as ever among the faithful - who are rarely Latin scholars, for if they were, and their discrimination commensurate with their faith, they would know that St Jerome's Vulgate, which dates from A.D. 350, has a stateliness of diction, a majesty of movement, that no modern language can hope to approach; no modern language rivals Latin with its intensely concentrated epigrammatic, syntactical structure, its elaborate inflections; and when this magnificent medium is used by such a Master as St Jerome, the effect is overwhelming.

The case of Fitzgerald's Kheyyâm is still odder, and still less edifying. Even the most uninformed of the faithful have the glimmering of a notion that there was something before the Authorised Version. But scarcely anyone who wallows in the Tennyson and delicately flavoured dishwater of Fitzgerald has any idea that before him Kheyyâm was, nor that it is much more often than not impossible to form any idea of what Kheyyâm actually said, for Fitzgerald it is who says it, and not Kheyyâm. "L'Aria dice Giannina, ma io dico Rosina!" No more effective smoke-screen has perhaps, in the whole history of literature, ever been interposed between an original and the reader than that of the quite charming, delicately melancholy and elegant, maudlin Fitzgerald, and one of the greatest figures in all literature,

as great a poet-philosopher probably as the world has ever known, the man who could cram and pack more into one Rubai - a self-contained Quatrain - than most others into a lengthy and deadly didactic "moral" poem.

The analogy is not to be pressed à outrance, of course, between the two examples mentioned from literature, and Godowsky's compositions evolved from the Bach violin and 'cello Sonatas and Suites. They of the Auth-
orised Version and Fitzgerald have demeaned and belittled a greater original. Godowsky has transmuted his original into something immensely greater.

The Three Symphonic Metamorphoses on Strauss Waltzes are built upon Künstlerleben, Wein Weib und Gesang, and Fledermaus. Here, naturally, is something a good deal different from the monumental architonic cathedral-like grandeur of the great Bach works. The style, while quite as intricate in texture, as closely and finely wrought, is lighter as befits the music; as the title of the works suggest, the treatment is more orchestral, more symphonic, making due allowance for the pianistic frame of reference. Here are brilliant, decorative figuration, ingenious, skilful and fascinating combinations of themes, subtly refined and richly diversified harmonic piquancies, but never even in the most elaborate of orchestral tutti passages, so to speak, any of the crude thick turgidity of acoustic treatment that is so frequent in the grossly overrated productions of August Stradal, whose revolting disarrangement of the so-called W.F. Bach - in reality Vivaldi D minor concerto - with its growling grunting chords in the lowest parts of the instrument, so out of character with the nature of the work, still disfigures recital programmes and offends the air of concert halls.*

To return to Godowsky, hardly less accomplished is the Invitation to the Waltz, though less diversified and rich in treatment than the Strauss Symphonic Metamorphosis, which are much later. The fifty Studies upon the Etudes of Chopin occupy a place by themselves. They are Godowsky's first great achievement - he started them when still quite a young man - and they were and have ever since been the principal cause of the Niagaras of abuse which have been poured on his head. In this astounding set of Studies the preoccupation is explicitly more in the direction of the extension and exploration of the possibilities of pianistic technique, but the purely musical interest is always considerable and often very great. The many arrangements for left-hand alone, naturally vary in interest; all are prodigies of ingenuity, and some are astounding tours de force, especially Op. 10, Nos. 3, 5, 6, 8 and 12, and the posthumous Study in A flat. The Black Key Study undergoes seven different treatments, including the version for left hand alone already mentioned, a dazzling and witty transmutation into a Study on the White Keys, a brilliant Tarantella, and a sparkling impudent mocking Capriccio in which it becomes a study on both black and white keys. Op. 10 No. 7 appears in three forms, the finest of which is the second, an exquisite and, of course, extremely difficult work. Op. 10 No. 9 appears in three forms, of which the first and second are among the finest of the entire set, particularly the second with its supremely brilliant imitation of Op. 25 No. 2, Op. 10 No. 10 is expanded into a splendid fantasy with the richest rhythmic and harmonic detail - the first version of two. The famous (or notorious) Aeolian Harp Study Op. 25 No. 1 appears in three forms, of which the second and third are magnificent amplifications. The third is a subtle variation, in which the original study appears in the left hand after the manner of a canto fermo with a new florid right hand part as counterpoint

*There no longer remains the smallest excuse for the tolerance of this abortion now that the brilliant, vivid and superbly pianistic Casella transcription has been available for years.

and a treatment in legato octaves which is one of the finest of the collection. Op. 25 No. 4 has two versions, the second of which is a powerful and stately polonaise. Op. 25 No. 5 has three versions, the first a splendid enrichment and amplification, the second a brilliant mazurka movement. The great A minor study, Op. 25 No. 11 acquires quite a menacing grandeur and power in the Godowsky version.

The set of quasi-variations on the first of the posthumous studies is one of the most wonderful of a wonderful set. It is a glowing shimmering harmonic and melodic mirage, done with a subtlety, beauty and delicacy unsurpassable. To close the great series, there occur two pieces of the gayest, most sparkling light-hearted frivolity it is possible to imagine, both of them prodigious feats of technique and ingenuity, namely the combining into one study of two, in the first instance the "Black Key" plus the "Butterfly," most appropriately called Badinage, and Op. 10 No. 2, plus Op. 25 No. 8. If one considers nothing beyond this immense technical skill, the ingenuity and accomplishment of musicianship involved in these fifty or more prodigious "glosses" upon the Chopin Etudes, they are manifestly an outstanding achievement; when over and above that is considered the real creative power, the imaginative beauty, richness and inexhaustible inventiveness of treatment, melodic, contrapuntal and harmonic, only blind bigotry or insensate obscurantism can deny, it seems to me, that these Studies are a contribution to the literature of the piano not only of the highest, but of an unique order.

A number of Schubert, Schumann and Strauss songs have also provided Godowsky with points de départ for many beautiful and impressive creations, particularly the Schubert "Litanei." Indeed I myself - the very reverse of a Schubert enthusiast - find this composer only tolerable when transfigured by Godowsky's genius.

There is also a series of Chopin Waltzes transcriptions of some of the feeblest of these feeble products of Chopin's genius, but after Godowsky has done with them they are transformed.

Godowsky's arrangement of the Albeniz Tango, a thin, weak, undistinguished whisp of conventional musical Hispanicism, makes of this a distinguished and elegant piece, and although the treatment of Saint-Saëns' Le Cygne is neither so highly wrought nor so elaborate as Godowsky's work usually is, the brilliantly unimaginative French Master's work emerges imbued with a glowing colour, warmth and charm that owe nothing to Saint-Saëns.

The arrangement of the Albeniz "Triana" (from the great Ibéria cycle of pieces) illustrates yet another aspect of this amazing man's elucidatory and expository power. The "Triana" is already a piece that demands a supreme technician for its proper realisation, and so Godowsky's version does not greatly add to mere technical difficulty, but it is in some ways one of the most remarkable of his achievements. Not a bar but has undergone some subtle modification harmonic of decorative, all kinds of fine little points have been added, with discrete pianistic expansions and amplifications, all with the most unobtrusive but consummate masterliness, so that, at the end, "Triana" emerges so glorified and enriched that the quite elaborate original sounds almost poor and thin by comparison; yet there is no overloading, no empty "technical" accumulation of notes, but rather a re-writing and re-casting, in the course of which process all sort of things are added, but with such taste and skill that they have to be carefully looked for, even by one to whom the original is fairly familiar. At the end of this astonishing feat of creative musicianship one says to

oneself that the Godowsky version of "Triana" sounds much more like "Triana" than "Triana" does itself!

I have left until the last one of Godowsky's most important works, namely the Passacaglia upon a motive from the "Unfinished." This splendid work - worthy to be placed in the same class as the Reger Variations and Fugue on a theme of Bach, which it surpasses in sustained pianistic interest and variety of treatment - manifests in a heightened degree all the qualities shown in the composer's previous works, and shows him forth as a mature master of indubitable power and importance: as such, indeed he is recognised in the United States, where the standard works of reference bear fitting witness to the fact. Here, opinion, as someone once wittily said of Delius, is divided, those who don't know his work questioning the opinion of those who do. One standard English work of reference does not even mention Godowsky's name, but devotes thirty-four lines to a composer and musician, Percy Grainger, of insignificant importance compared with him. But even here, thanks to the admirable efforts and championship of Mr Clinton Gray Fisk, one does not nowadays hear quite so often the desolating asinities about Godowsky and his work that used to be the small change of English Musical critics' chit-chat during his lifetime.

(c) Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji 1947
copyright renewed 1984.

GODOWSKY'S "TRIAKONTAMERON."

by D.C. PARKER

Messrs. G. SCHIRMER have just issued a set of thirty pieces for piano by Leopold Godowsky. There are six volumes, each of which contains five numbers. Godowsky's name needs no introduction to the reader of these pages. He has won a place for himself among the greatest pianists of to-day. A great pianist is not necessarily a great composer. There are excellent pianists who do not possess the creative gift. Their music may give us more than an inkling of their knowledge of the piano, while it is destitute of any real musical value. But the piano student should not allow himself to be scared by the forbidding work which Godowsky has chosen for his title, because his music is more attractive than the title will be to some. In it the composer has made a welcome addition to the literature of his instrument. His aim is modest. He calls his group "thirty moods and scenes," which description will be found adequate and correct. The music does not belong to the empty, virtuoso order. A great deal of it is quite simple and within the powers of those who do not vie with the stars. Indeed, some disposed to say that what Godowsky writes is sure to be beyond them, will feel surprised when they look into these volumes. Two features may be mentioned at once, the first being that all the pieces are short, the second that they are all in triple measure. Within the limits he has imposed upon himself, Godowsky is successful. Here there is plenty to interest the pianist, whether amateur or professional, player, teacher, or student. The writer has no lack of ideas, in the treatment of which he is unconventional, without for one moment being extreme. He does not suffer from chord intoxication and his music flows easily, with much taking play between the voices. Melodically and harmonically there is both interest and charm. In a word, Godowsky has justified his exploitation of the short piano piece, and once again these fragments remind us that it is quality which counts. Those whose only ambition seems to be to cover music-paper would do well to emulate his example. To stop when you have finished is good business and good art.

I do not know whether the adherence to triple measure is something of an accident, or whether Godowsky determined to show what he could accomplish without abandoning it. In any case, it falls to be noticed that a sense of monotony no more results from the uniformity in this matter than it does in "Lohengrin" from the great predominance of common time.

While space forbids an extended examination of the thirty pieces, something must be said concerning the most arresting of them. "Nocturnal Tangier" (No. 1), an Eastern strain, makes an excellent opening, encouraging us to leave ourselves in the hands of our cicerone. Slight, but graceful and very simple is "Sylvan Tyrol" (No. 2), to which succeeds a clever study portraying "Paradoxical Moods" (No. 3). With their greater range of expression, "Rendezvous" (No. 4) and "Twilight Phantasms" (No. 5) will bring joy to the pianists heart. "The Pleading of the Troubadour" (No. 6) whom Godowsky's imagination has fashioned is, to judge by his music, a very estimable person, though we get but the shortest sample of his strumming. As if to compensate, the next number, "Yesteryear" (No. 7) goes deeper and within its five pages offers abundant scope to the player in more than one direction. "A Watteau Paysage" (No. 8) proves the fragile and delicate little thing it ought certainly to be.

Something very good, and something that will be very popular unless I am

grievously mistaken, meets us in "Alt Wien" (No. 11), written under the motto -

"Whose Yesterdays look backwards
With a Smile through Tears."

"Alt Wien" ought to be placed beside the "Liebesfreude" associated with Kreisler's name. The pearly goblet of Viennese life sparkles brightly. There is the fascination and the fragrance which, with just the suggestion of a melting sadness, so faithfully recall the life, manner, haunts and temperament of the city of St. Stephen. When you have to express this life and mood, you write a waltz. It is the Viennese way; perhaps one ought to say the Viennese philosophy. Vienna has been a veritable inspiration to Godowsky, as this andante lusingando testifies, and there seems no reason why it should not be acclaimed far and wide. From the Ring and the Prater we are carried on the magic carpet to the land of Amonasro in "Ethiopian Serenade" (No. 12). Resource and skill mark the handling of the prevailing exoticism, and distant are we from the polished floors of European drawing rooms. We return to old Vienna, however, and this time Godowsky gives himself full rein. "Terpsichorean Vindobona" (No. 13) celebrates with immense gusto the Danubian dancing muse, here disguised in the classical nomenclature. Again the composer unfailingly captures the spirit of the city, and at the end we feel inclined, like Oliver, to ask for more. Whether taken as a parody, a mild satire, or a little bit of amusement, there will be no desire to quarrel with the writer over "A Little Tango Rag" (No. 19). To be syncopated is, perhaps, to be found out, in the sense that it may imply a surrender to the influence of popular modernity. Godowsky uses syncopation without loss of status and his pen has a sharp point. As for "The Salon" (No. 21), I do not suppose that one can ask more from a piece thus named than that it should be salon-like, and the music is most assuredly of that order, graceful and pleasingly mellifluous, if not outstanding. Glancing at "The Music-Box" (No. 23) to see how Godowsky treats this subject, we discover it to be a study in pianissimo playing.

If "Sylvan Tyrol" and the Viennese numbers are calculated to have the widest appeal, the three last will undoubtedly occupy much of the pianist's time, because they are more elaborate than their predecessors. The music of "Quixotic Errantry" (No. 28) does not belie its title, and the "Poème Macabre" (No. 29) requires some pianistic attainment in order to do anything like full justice at the proper tempo. Throughout the epilogue, called "Requiem" (No. 30), to which is affixed the dates 1914 - 1918, Godowsky sounds a deeper note than elsewhere in these volumes and introduces a version of "The Star-Spangled Banner" for peroration.

At the country fairs the master of ceremonies was wont to employ all his rhetoric, but when his vocabulary had exhausted itself he took refuge in the telling remark that the wonders which lay hidden in the booths had to be seen to be believed. Similarly these pieces of Godowsky have to be played and studied if one would realise the interest and value of them. Undoubtedly effective, they have been written by a man who knows the piano from A to Z. They ought to prove useful for playing and teaching alike. They are, as I have said, brief, and it may be that their brevity will recommend them in some quarters where the longer work is timorously shunned. Godowsky's brain is as agile as his fingers are nimble.

D.C. PARKER
