

## WOMEN AT THE PIANO

An Anthology of Historic Performances

Volume 1



# Women at the Piano Vol. 1

## An Anthology of Historic Performances 1926-1952

- Monique de la BRUCHOLLERIE (1915-1972)**
- 1 Camille Saint-Saëns: *Toccata d'après le 5e concerto, (Étude), Op. 111, No. 6* 3:06  
(HMV DA1888 (OEA 12444-2) • Recorded in London, 22 October 1947)
- Guiomar NOVAES (1895-1979)**
- 2 Isidor Philipp: *Feux-follets (Will-of-the-Wisp), Op. 24, No. 3* 1:54  
(Columbia 17522-D (CO 37248) • Recorded 3 January 1947)
- Iris LOVERIDGE (1917-2000)**
- 3 Selim Palmgren: *Evening Whispers (Aftonroster), Op. 47, No. 1* 2:55  
(Columbia DB2304 (CA 20250-2)) • Recorded in London, 27 November 1946
- Marie NOVELLO (1898-1928)**
- 4 Anton Arensky: *Étude de concert in F sharp major, Op. 36, No. 13* 2:29  
(HMV B2592 (Bb9979-2) • Recorded 1 May 1927)
- Gaby CASADESUS (1901-1999)**
- 5 François Couperin: *Le Carillon de Cithère, from Pièces de clavecin - Troisième livre, 14e ordre (1722)* 2:44  
(Vox 16006A (756) from Set 163) • Recorded in 1945
- Sari BIRO (1910-1990)**
- 6 Riccardo Pick-Mangiagalli: *La Danza di Olaf, Op. 33, No. 2* 3:36  
(NBC Broadcast transcription ND4-MC-6051) • Recorded in New York City, 20 October 1944
- Myra HESS (1890-1965)**
- 7 Claude Debussy: *Poissons d'or (The Gold Fish), from Images, Book 2, No. 3 (1907/8)* 3:36  
(Columbia 7151-M (98466) 3-A-2) • Recorded 17 February 1928
- Jeanne BEHREND (1911-1988)**
- 8 David Guion: *Country Jig in D major (1936)* 2:28  
(Victor 17911-B(1) from Set M-764) • Recorded 3 July 1940
- Reah SADOWSKY (b.1915)**
- 9 Frutuoso Vianna: *Corta-Jaca (1931)* 3:47  
(Prize Records 204-B (from Set A1)) • Recorded in 1948

- Ray LEV (1912-1968)**
- 10 Sergey Prokofiev: *Valse*, from *Music for Children, Op. 65, No. 2* (1935) 1:17  
(Concert Hall Society 1013, from Album C Series A) • Recorded in 1946
- Maryla JONAS (1911-1959)**
- 11 G.F. Handel: *Passacaglia in G minor*, from *Suite No. 7 in G minor* 3:16  
(Columbia 17562-D (CO 39137)) • Recorded 23 September 1947
- Aline Isabelle van BARENTZEN (1897-1981)**
- 12 Manuel de Falla: *Andaluzá*, No. 4 from *Cuatro Piezas Españolas* (1906/9) 3:17  
(HMV D1571 (CT4050-2)) • Recorded 11 June 1928
- Harriet COHEN (1895-1967)**
- 13 Arnold Bax: *Paeán* (1920) 3:40  
(Columbia DB1786 (CA17042-1)) • Recorded 7 July 1938
- Eileen JOYCE (1908-1991)**
- 14 Bernhard Stavenhagen: *Menuetto scherzando, Op. 5* 3:23  
(Decca/Parlophone G-25746A (XE8024-1)) • Recorded 11 January 1937
- Marguerite LONG (1874-1966)**
- 15 Darius Milhaud: *Alfama*, from *L'Automne, Op. 115, No. 2* (1932) 2:37  
(Columbia 68738-D (CLX 1851-1) from Set X-67) • Recorded in Paris 10 May 1935
- Ruth SLENCZYNSKA (b.1925)**
- 16 Sergey Rachmaninov: *Prelude in G minor, Op. 23, No. 5* (1903) 3:22  
(Ruth Slenczynski Recordings, San Francisco APS (A Photo & Sound Recording)-1014) • Recorded in 1945
- Hilde SOMER (1930-1979)**
- 17 Alfred Grünfeld: *Soirée de Vienne* (on themes by Johann Strauss II) 6:01  
(Remington R-199/124) • Recorded in Austria in 1952
- Emma BOYNET (1891-1974)**
- 18 Emmanuel Chabrier: *Bourrée fantasque* (1891) 5:53  
(Victor 4418-A and B (BS 018439-40) from Set M-549) • Recorded 31 March 1938
- Jeanne-Marie DARRÉ (1905-1999)**
- 19 Franz Liszt: *Feux follets (Etude No. 5 in B flat major)*, from *Etudes d'exécution transcendante* 3:33  
(D139/R2b) (1851)) [3:29]  
(Pathé PDT92 (CPTX586-1 (M6-106537)) • Recorded in Paris, 1 May 1944

- Lucette DESCAVES (1906-1993)**
- 20 Gabriel Pierné: *Étude de concert, Op. 13* 4:04  
(Disque 'Gramophone' DB11138 (2LA 4703-2)) • Recorded in Paris, 3 October 1946
- Una Mabel BOURNE (1882-1974)**
- 21 Ignacy Jan Paderewski: *Cracovienne fantastique in B minor, from Humoresques de Concert, Op. 14, No. 6* 2:37  
(HMV B2510 (5851) Bb9084II) • Recorded 7 October 1926
- Moura LYMPANY (1916-2005)**
- 22 Franz Liszt: *Les Jeux d'eaux à la Villa d'Este* (from *Années de Pèlerinage - Troisième Année*) 7:54  
(S.163, No. 4/R.10e, No. 4)  
(HMV C.3721 (2EA.12650-1 and 2EA.12651-1)) • Recorded 22 December 1947

## Women at the Piano Vol. 1

### An Anthology of Historic Performances 1926-1952

**“Honour to women! To them it is given  
To garden the earth with the roses of Heaven.”**

Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805)

Until recently histories of music were mainly concerned with male composers and male performers. Yet scholarship today has proved that women have contributed to the richness of musical history for over seven hundred years. All dictionaries, encyclopedias and musical histories were written by men, for men, about men. Women, although considered by the general public as great musicians, were always treated secondarily, their achievements often ignored, and their artistry undocumented. Only in the last twenty years have scholars re-discovered women's contributions to the art of music. With the advent of the compact disc, many more women composers have been recorded, and the artistry of female pianists, violinists, cellists, as well as the performances of legendary operatic voices have become available to a much larger public.

With this first volume, Naxos presents the most comprehensive anthology ever undertaken of historic performances by the pioneering women pianists who recorded during the first half of the twentieth century. Each artist is represented by one exemplary selection. This approach will be followed in subsequent releases. It is our goal to present as many women pianists as possible in this series, and also to attempt not to repeat any piece of music. As this is a sonic history, the first few volumes will present primarily electric recordings. Subsequent releases will also include earlier acoustic performances. Each pianist will be profiled and detailed information on each recording will be also presented in the programme notes.

This first volume presents the artistry of 22 extraordinary pianists, spanning a period of 26 years

(1926-1952). The earliest born of these is **Marguerite Long** (1874-1966). She was a student of Antoine-François Marmontel at the Paris Conservatoire, became a piano instructor there in 1906, and in 1920 succeeded Louis Diémer as professor. She was the first woman professor at the Paris Conservatoire. In 1920 she also founded her own private music school which became a success. In 1940 violinist Jacques Thibaud joined her. They gave numerous recitals together and eventually established the Long-Thibaud Competition. Although she was one of the great interpreters of the music of Chopin, Liszt, Mozart, Beethoven and others, she devoted a great deal of her energies to performing the music of her contemporaries. Ravel dedicated his *Concerto in G major* to her, as did Milhaud his *First Piano Concerto*. Her interpretations of music by Debussy, Fauré, Ravel, and Milhaud are considered urtext. According to Milhaud, she once stated that “My task has been to serve great composers who chose me as their interpreter by passing on to others how their music sounded to them”. Her 1935 recording of *Alfama* by Darius Milhaud  is certainly an excellent example of her art.

Australian born **Una Mabel Bourne** (1882-1974) began her career in her teens in her native Melbourne. Dame Nellie Melba engaged her as solo pianist for her tours of Australia and New Zealand. It was with Melba that she arrived in England in 1912 and toured extensively. During World War I she played for the men and women of the services in England. The post-war years saw her perform in America and France and in 1939 she returned for a triumphant tour of Australia in concerto performances under the direction of Eugene Ormandy and Sir Bernard Heinze. In the 1920s she recorded a variety of short encore piano pieces for HMV, a number of which were by her contemporaries and friends. The Paderewski *Cracovienne fantastique*

21] which she recorded in 1926 shows her musicianship and dazzling technique.

Without a doubt the English pianist **Myra Hess** (1890-1965) was one of the great pianists of the twentieth century. A student of Tobias Matthay, she made her début in 1908 with Beethoven's *Concerto in G major* under Beecham. Concert tours of the Netherlands, Germany and France followed. In 1922 she made her American début. Her mastery of the music of Scarlatti, Bach, Mozart and Beethoven was legendary. Equally impressive were her performances of the music of Schumann, Brahms and Chopin. Her extraordinary mastery of the pedal and luxurious finger legato, also served the many contemporary works she played. Debussy's *Poissons d'or* [7] recorded in 1928 illustrates her ability to weave a sonic painting.

Parisian born pianist **Emma Boynet** (1891-1974) was one of the most brilliant students of Isidor Philipp at the Paris Conservatoire. At an early age she won first prizes in piano and harmony at the Conservatoire, and then toured the world. A favourite of Serge Koussevitzky, she was engaged often by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. She was an outstanding interpreter of the French masters as her 1938 recording of Chabrier's *Bourrée fantasque* [8] attests.

**Harriet Cohen** (1895-1967) was another of Tobias Matthay's brilliant students. She made her concert début at thirteen, and became internationally known when she appeared at the Salzburg Festival in 1924. She was admired as a Bach interpreter, but also as an advocate for contemporary music. She took the music of England abroad, performing works by Bax, Vaughan Williams, Ireland and others on her tours. She also championed works of other contemporary composers, giving first performances in England of music by Kabalevsky, Shostakovich, Hindemith, Kodály, Schoenberg, Medtner, Debussy and Ravel. Not averse to perform for the movies, it is her artistry that is heard on the silver screen when one hears the *Cornish Rhapsody* by Hubert Bath. Alfred Einstein once wrote: "Harriet Cohen must be added to the list of those chosen

ones who stand among the elect". We hear her in a 1938 recording of Bax's *Paeon* [9], a composer and work she championed.

Child prodigy, **Guiomar Novaes** (1895-1979) was born in Brazil. One of nineteen children, she began playing the piano at the age of four. Her concert début took place at the age of seven, followed by a tour of Brazil. The Brazilian government paid her expenses for a trip to Paris, where she won first place among 388 contestants for a Paris Conservatoire scholarship. In her jury were Debussy, Fauré, and Moszkowski. She became Isidor Philipp's most famous pupil and also an advocate for his music. She made her American début in 1915, eliciting unanimous praise: "she sings on the piano better than any of her contemporaries". She was a master of ravishing tonal colours, a silky legato, and an eloquence, poetry and humour, rarely heard from others at the keyboard. A virtuosa of the first rank, she is heard in her 1947 recording of Isidor Philipp's *Feux-follets* [2].

**Aline Isabelle van Barentzen** (1897-1981) was born in Somerville, Massachusetts, of Anglo-Danish ancestry. A child prodigy, who made her solo recital début at four and her first performance with orchestra at seven, she was admitted to the Paris Conservatoire at nine. She studied also at the Berlin Royal Academy with Karl Heinrich Barth (a disciple of von Bülow and Tausig) and Ernst von Dohnányi. In Vienna she became a pupil of Theodor Leschetizky. Returning to America, she taught at the Philadelphia Musical Academy, and later at the Buenos Aires Conservatory in Argentina. During her lifetime she performed with over forty of the world's greatest orchestras, under the batons of some of the most famous conductors. Her lifelong association with the piano music of Falla resulted in her being the first to record his *Noches en los jardines de España* in 1928. The *Andaluza* [12] was the filler piece on that album.

**Marie Novello** (1898-1928) was the adopted daughter of Clara Novello-Davies, famous singing teacher and mother of Ivor Novello. In 1912 Marie went to Theodor Leschetizky to study but was turned down

because she only spoke English. She learned German and was accepted as one of his last pupils. Although she recorded quite a few recordings, little of her artistry is heard today. She died at the age of thirty of throat cancer. The Arensky *Étude de Concert in F sharp major* [4], recorded in 1927, was one of her most popular encores.

**Gaby Casadesus** (1901-1999) studied at the Paris Conservatoire with Louis Diémer and Marguerite Long. At sixteen she received first prize in piano at the Conservatoire, and later went on to win the highest musical award for women in France at the time, the Prix Pagès. She received personal guidance from Moszkowski, Fauré, Florent Schmitt and Ravel in the interpretation of their piano works. In 1921 she married the pianist and composer Robert Casadesus, and they began concertizing as a duo-piano team. As a teacher of world-wide reputation, Gaby Casadesus gave master classes at the Ravel Academy in St-Jean-de-Luz, the Summer School of the Salzburg Mozarteum, at the Schola Cantorum in Paris, and at the Fontainebleau School. In 1975, along with Grant Johannesen and Odette Valabrière Wurzbürger, she founded the Robert Casadesus International Piano Competition in Cleveland, Ohio. Although she is primarily remembered today for her four-hand recordings with her husband, and her many authoritative performances of music by French composers, she also left evocative recordings of the music of Mendelssohn, Mozart and Chopin. She often included Baroque works in her concerts, and her 1945 recording of Couperin's *Le Carillon de Cithère* [5] is among her best.

**Jeanne-Marie Darré** (1905-1999) studied at the Paris Conservatoire with Isidor Philipp and Marguerite Long. In 1926 she performed all five concertos by Saint-Saëns in one evening, with Paul Paray conducting the Lamoureux Orchestra. This extraordinary event launched a distinguished international career. She was a lifelong friend of Sari Biro (also featured on this disc), with whom she performed Mozart's *Concerto for Two Pianos in E flat Major, K.365*. In 1958 Darré was

appointed professor at the Paris Conservatoire and in 1962 she made her New York recital début. A virtuoso of the first rank, Darré left fabulous recordings of music by Saint-Saëns, Chopin, and Liszt. It is only fitting that she be represented by one of Liszt's most difficult études, *Feux Follets* [9] which she recorded in Paris in 1944.

**Lucette Descaves** (1906-1993) studied with both Marguerite Long and Yves Nat, receiving first prize in piano at the Paris Conservatoire in 1923. A lifelong champion of contemporary music, she was coached by Prokofiev for her performance of his *Third Piano Concerto* in 1932, and gave the premières of Jolivet's *Danses rituelles* and *Piano Concerto*. She taught at the Paris Conservatoire from 1947 until her retirement in 1976. Among her distinguished students were Katia and Marielle Labèque, Pascal Rogé, and Jean-Yves Thibaudet. Her rhythmic acuity, evocative phrasing and effortless virtuosity is evident in her 1946 performance of the rarely heard Pierné *Étude de Concert* [20].

Tasmanian-born **Eileen Joyce** (1908-1991) had humble beginnings, often, as a child, following the nomadic existence of her Irish labourer father and Spanish mother. A local priest in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia, spotted her musical talents and she was put into the Loreto Convent in Perth, where Percy Grainger heard her. When Wilhelm Backhaus was touring Australia and heard Joyce, he recommended that she travel to Europe for piano studies. She was admitted to the Leipzig Conservatory. In 1930 she made her way to London, where she made her Proms début under Sir Henry Wood in Prokofiev's *Third Concerto*. She continued her studies, with Artur Schnabel among others, and continued concertizing. During World War II she often performed under the baton of Malcolm Sargent with the London Philharmonic Orchestra as part of the orchestra's famous "Blitz Tours", concerts given in industrial towns and cities badly hit by the war. Her artistry can be heard on soundtracks to the films *The Seventh Veil*, *Brief Encounter*, *A Girl in a Million* and *Men of Two Worlds*. Her own life story became the

subject of a biographical novel, *Prelude*, which was later made into a film entitled *Wherever She Goes*. She began her recording career in 1933 and left an impressive legacy. The rarely heard Stavenhagen *Menuetto scherzando* [14] which she recorded in 1937, testifies to her musicality and virtuosity.

Hungarian-born **Sari Biro** (1910-1990) began private piano lessons at the age of six and then received a scholarship to study at the Franz Liszt Academy. During those years she appeared as soloist under the baton of Ernst von Dohnányi at the opening concert of the Hungarian National Broadcasting system. After graduating with highest honours from the Academy, she performed all over Europe, appearing with the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, in Warsaw, Paris and many other cities. In the winter of 1939, Sari Biro left Hungary and arrived in New York City. She made her début at Town Hall in May 1940. *The New York Times* extolled: "Sari Biro must be reckoned among the foremost women exponents of the keyboard of the time". For the next eighteen years she lived in New York, while continuing to tour extensively in the United States, Mexico and South America. In 1949 the American State Department named Sari Biro the most distinguished new citizen of the year. Also in 1949, she became the only woman to perform nine piano concertos in a series of three concerts at Carnegie Hall. A television pioneer, she was featured in 1958 in a thirteen-week series of live television shows, in which she discussed the works she performed. Although there are only a handful of commercial recordings left by Sari Biro (she was the first woman to record Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* in 1951), there are many live concert transcriptions to draw upon. In 1944 she recorded an extensive series of performances for radio transmission in New York City. Among these was the encore piece she played in many of her concerts at that time, the *La Danza di Olaf* by Riccardo Pick-Mangiagalli [6].

Polish-born **Maryla Jonas** (1911-1959) made her début with the Warsaw Philharmonic at the age of nine.

At eleven she took piano lessons from Paderewski. In 1926 she gave a recital in Berlin which launched her career by bringing her a contract to tour Germany. She continued her studies with Emile Sauer, won the Chopin Prize in 1932 and the Beethoven Prize of Vienna in 1933. She quickly became acclaimed as one of the leading women pianists of the day. Tragedy, however, descended on the young artist. When Nazi Germany attacked Poland, her husband, father, mother and a brother were all killed by the Nazis. She herself was interned in a concentration camp when she refused to go to Germany to give concerts. In this camp, a German officer, who had heard her play, helped arrange for her escape. She found refuge in the Brazilian Embassy in Berlin which provided her with a forged passport by way of Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro. She met fellow Pole Artur Rubinstein in Brazil during the war and he encouraged her to return to the concert stage. On 25th February 1946 she made her United States début at Carnegie Hall. She began recording and widely concertizing. One of her favourite opening works to a concert was the Handel *Passacaglia in G minor* [11] which she recorded in 1947.

American pianist **Jeanne Behrend** (1911-1988) made her début with the Philadelphia Orchestra at the age of eleven. She studied with the Leeftson brothers in Philadelphia and then entered the Curtis Institute, where she was a pupil of Josef Hofmann, and studied composition with Abram Chasins and Rosario Scalerò. In 1934 she married the Russian pianist Alexander Kelberine with whom she continued her studies and performed as a duo-piano team. She also undertook studies in orchestration with Ernst Toch. She made her Carnegie Hall début in 1937 to great acclaim. In 1939 Jeanne Behrend presented a series of recitals of music exclusively by American composers at the Curtis Institute, where she was on the faculty. Shortly after, she recorded a series of these works, one of which we feature, David Guion's *Country Jig in D major* [8]. She was a lifelong champion of the music of American composers, and the first to bring back into popularity

the music of Louis Moreau Gottschalk.

Russian-born pianist **Ray Lev** (1912-1968) moved to the United States in 1913. Her father was a synagogue cantor, and her mother a concert singer. She studied the piano with Walter Ruel Cowles in New Haven and with Gaston-Marie Déthier in New York. At seventeen she was awarded the Matthey Prize in London. Her American début which followed hailed her as “a colossal musician”, and her performances were labelled as “tempestuous” and “cyclonic”. From 1930 to 1933 she studied with Tobias Matthey in London. After World War II she was signed by the Concert Hall Society record company, for which she recorded many significant firsts. Among these was the first recording in 1946 of Prokofiev’s *Music for Children, Opus 65*, from which we hear the *Valse* [8].

**Monique de la Bruchollerie** (1915-1972) studied with Isidor Philipp at the Paris Conservatoire. Graduating with brilliance and distinction at the age of thirteen, she began an international concert career soon thereafter. She was the first French pianist to record concertos by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov and Brahms in the 1950s. In 1964 she made a bold proposal to modernise the piano as a performing instrument by constructing a crescent-shaped keyboard to facilitate simultaneous playing in high treble and low bass. She further proposed to install electronic controls enabling the pianist to activate a whole chord by striking a single key. What seemed far-fetched then is now possible on advanced electronic keyboards. Her virtuosity was legendary, yet few today have heard of her or heard her recordings. Two words come to mind upon hearing her 1947 performance of Saint-Saëns’ *Toccata* [1] - “passionate and fiery”.

**Reah Sadowsky** was born in 1915 in Winnipeg, Canada. She was one of two prominent child piano prodigies in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1930s (the other is also featured on this disc - Ruth Slenczynska). She made her début on 5th February, 1929, at the age of thirteen. The critics at that time agreed that she showed “remarkable interpretative

ability and expression with amazing executed technique”. She won a scholarship to both the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia and the Juilliard School of Music in New York. She studied in New York and in Europe with Alberto Jonas and Josef Lhevinne, who declared that “her pianistic facilities cannot be surpassed”. She often performed works of South and Central American composers and was invited to play for the representatives of the 21 American republics of the Pan American Union in Washington, D.C. A number of Latin American composers wrote works for her, including Alberto Ginastera, Juan Orrego and Rafael Hernandez. Marion Bauer, Ellis Kohs and Alec Rowley also dedicated works to her. Poise, balance, and virtuosity abound in her performance of Vianna’s *Corta-Jaca* [9].

The English pianist **Moura Lympany** (1916-2005) actually began piano studies in Belgium at the Liège Conservatoire. She then studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London and at the Vienna Hochschule. In England she continued her studies with Mathilde Verne and for ten years with Tobias Matthey. She made her début in 1929 with a performance of Mendelssohn’s *First Piano Concerto*. In 1938 she gave her first Henry Wood Promenade Concert, and she entered the Ysaÿe Competition in Brussels. One of the youngest of the 78 contestants, Moura Lympany emerged a triumphant second to Emil Gilels, who then already was launched on his international career. After the end of World War II Moura Lympany built an enviable reputation as one of England’s most distinguished musical ambassadors. Her concert tours took her to almost all corners of the world. She became Dame Moura in 1992, the first pianist to receive Britain’s highest distinction since Clifford Curzon became Sir Clifford in 1977 and the first woman pianist since Myra Hess was honoured in 1941. She was the first pianist to record the complete set of Rachmaninov’s *Preludes* in the 1940s, then re-recorded them twice more in her career. Associated with Romantic music all her life, she had a particular affinity with the compositions of Franz Liszt. The 1947

recording of *Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este* 22 shows her incomparable technique and infallible musicianship.

London-born **Iris Loveridge** (1917-2000) studied at the Royal Academy of Music. She won numerous awards and prizes there, and was chosen by Sir Henry Wood to perform a concerto under his direction in the old Queen's Hall in London. Her broadcasting career began in 1936. She always championed music less often played, works by Bax, Medtner, Ireland, Rubbra, Jacob and many others. A pianist of great distinction, with virtuosity to spare, she always focused on seeking out the inner meaning of any work she performed. It is perhaps the reason why she was able to shape and craft Palmgren's *Evening Whispers* 3 so beautifully in her 1947 recording.

The pianist **Hilde Somer** (1922-1979) moved to the United States from Austria as a child prodigy, having made her recital début in Vienna at the age of twelve. In 1936 she performed four piano concertos (by Bach, Mozart, Mendelssohn and Liszt) with the Vienna Philharmonic, a rare accomplishment even for a seasoned artist, let alone a fourteen year old. She studied with Rudolf Serkin at the Curtis Institute, graduating in 1941, and was also coached by Hedwig Rosenthal-Kanner (wife of Moritz Rosenthal), Wanda Landowska, and Claudio Arrau. She had an active career as a recitalist and as a soloist with orchestras in Europe and America and gave the première performances of piano concertos of John Corigliano, Alberto Ginastera (his *Second Piano Concerto* is

dedicated to her), and Henry Brant. She often performed Scriabin's music with the accompaniment of coloured laser lights projected onto a screen, as prescribed by Scriabin. Among her earliest recordings is the frothy virtuosic transcription, *Soirée de Vienne* by Strauss-Grünfeld 17.

The American pianist **Ruth Slenczynska** was born in Sacramento, California in 1925. She began her piano studies in Europe at the age of four and took lessons with Artur Schnabel, Egon Petri, Alfred Cortot, and even performed for Sergey Rachmaninov. Her Berlin début at the age of six was a sensation. At eleven she made her début in Paris with a full orchestra. Although she astonished audiences in her native California and her New York début persuaded the critic Olin Downes to call it "an electrifying experience", Europe heralded her as the first child prodigy since Mozart to sweep the continent. From 1964 until her recent retirement, she was Artist-in-Residence at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville. She is still active today, celebrating over seventy years of professional music-making. Ruth Slenczynska is a magnificent pianist, endowed with the inspiration of the moment, that gives her playing a great deal of spontaneity and musical persuasion. The Rachmaninov *Prelude in G minor* 16 was among her very first commercial recordings, made on a Baldwin piano in San Francisco in 1945.

**Marina and Victor Ledin**

## **Producers' Note**

This is the first of what is projected to be an extended multi-compact disc series chronicling the recorded artistry of the pioneering women pianists of the first half of the twentieth century. Anthologies of this nature are difficult to assemble, for they pose not only musical problems but also sonic challenges. In this first volume, we assembled 22 different women pianists, playing on 22 different pianos, 22 different compositions, recorded in 22 different venues, at 22 different times, between 1926 and 1952. We endeavoured to provide as seamless a listening experience as was possible considering the age and condition of the recordings. We assembled numerous copies of each of the original recordings, thanks to a network of collectors and archives. Those recordings with the best surfaces were then transferred and restored. Realising that a Baldwin piano sounded different from a Steinway, and a Grotrian from an Erard, or a Pleyel from a Bösendorfer, we assembled the tracks to minimise the sound changes of the venues. Some were dry, some were reverberant.

We hope you enjoy this series and we welcome your feedback and suggestions. Special thanks must be given to Michael Gray for his discographic insights, and to Lance Bowling, Richard Wahlberg, and Maria Watts for their encouragement and access to their collections.

**Marina and Victor Ledin**

**Women at the Piano - Volume 2 (Naxos 8.111121) features 20 pianists:**

Ania Dorfmann (1899-1982)

Marie Anne Warrot (1915-1971)

Blanche Selva (1884-1942)

Ginette Doyen (1921-2002)

Johanne Amalie Stockmarr (1869-1944)

Olga Samaroff (1882-1948)

France Marguerite Ellegaard (1913-1999)

Claudette Sorel (1932-1999)

Madeleine de Valmàlete (1899-1999)

Muriel Kerr (1911-1963)

Yolanda Merö (1887-1963)

Kathleen Long (1896-1968)

Lubka Kolessa (1904-1997)

Elsie Hall (1879-1976)

Raie Da Costa (1905-1934)

Galina Werschenska (1906-1994)

Irene Scharrer (1888-1971)

Ellen Ballon (1898-1969)

Lili Kraus (1903-1986)

and Leah Effenbach (1915-1978)

Playing  
Time  
77:28

## Women at the Piano • 1

An Anthology of Historic Performances  
(1926-1952)

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- 1 **SAINT-SAËNS: Toccata d'après le 5e concerto**  
(Monique de la Bruchollerie)
- 2 **PHILIPP: Feux-follets** (Guiomar Novaes)
- 3 **PALMGREN: Evening Whispers** (Iris Loveridge)
- 4 **ARENSKY: Étude de concert in F sharp major** (Marie Novello)
- 5 **COUPERIN: Le Carillon de Cithère** (Gaby Casadesus)
- 6 **PICK-MANGIAGALLI: La Danza di Olaf** (Sari Biro)
- 7 **DEBUSSY: Poissons d'or** (Myra Hess)
- 8 **GUION: Country Jig in D major** (Jeanne Behrend)
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