



MARY LOUISE BOEHM PLAYS PIANO MUSIC BY
ERNEST SCHELLING
LEGENDARY AMERICAN PIANIST AND COMPOSER
(1876-1939)

MARY LOUISE BOEHM PLAYS PIANO MUSIC BY
ERNEST SCHELLING,
LEGENDARY AMERICAN PIANIST AND COMPOSER
(1876-1939)

Ernest Schelling - child prodigy, virtuoso pianist, composer, conductor, patron, and founder of the Children's Concerts with the New York Philharmonic - was one of the most brilliant and enterprising personalities on the American scene in his day. As a pianist he appeared frequently with every major orchestra, often as soloist in his own piano and orchestral works, the dazzling "Suite Fantastique" and the descriptive "Impressions from an Artist's Life." His Violin Concerto was premiered by Fritz Kreisler and the Boston symphony under Karl Muck and "A Victory Ball," his orchestral tone-poem, never fails to thrill audiences.

Born in Belvidere, New Jersey on July 26, 1876, he made his piano debut at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia on March 8, 1880 at the tender age of four and a half, "A veritable musical phenomenon appeared...at the Academy of Music in the very diminutive person of Master Ernest H. Schelling. This Mozart of musical precocity played with proper phrasing, strict time, and accurate fingering." (Philadelphia Enquirer)

Trained entirely by his father, Dr. Felix Schelling, physician and musician from St. Gallen in Switzerland, the boy entered the Paris Conservatoire at age seven, the youngest pupil ever accepted, studying under Georg Mathias, pupil of Chopin. He went on to work with some of the leading pedagogues of the era including Mathias' pupil Isidor Philipp, Dionys Pruckner, pupil of Liszt, and Theodore Leschetizky, teacher of Paderewski. Between musical and general tutoring Schelling was performing in the concert halls and courts of Europe as far St. Petersburg. In 1896 Schelling's career changed when he became the only pupil of Ignace Jan Paderewski, who enabled him to make the difficult transition from child prodigy to mature artist.

The following day, a long editorial in The New York Times paid him tribute. "The career of Ernest Schelling, one of the most brilliant figures in the musical life of New York City, was one of extraordinary activity, versatility, and success. In addition to his very exceptional musical talents, there was little that Schelling was unable to do strikingly and well. Widely read, widely traveled,...and active in a hundred public enterprises, he accomplished more than his share of constructive achievements...Emerging from his early instruction as a full fledged virtuoso, Schelling also showed his gifts as a composer with a natural instinct for musical expression...It was a fine and logical accumulation of his experiences that from 1924 onwards, Schelling interested himself particularly in Children's Concerts...in this field as in others he was at the service of music and his fellow citizens. He would have been conducting this day had it not been for the swift, sharp swing of the scythe, which cut him down. He will be long and gratefully remembered."

THE PIANO MUSIC OF ERNEST SCHELLING

by Mary Louise Boehm

Ernest Schelling was a great pianist with a keen, inventive mind. Technically he made masterful use of every pianistic device known at the time. As a composer he had the power to sustain the gradual unfolding of ideas and build breathtaking climaxes. By the logic of broadly arched voice – leading over suspended harmonies often with ostinato figurations in counterpoint, Schelling created modern sonorities within the framework of late-romantic harmony. The music has remarkable inner strength in addition to being magnificently scored by a pianist who knew his instrument thoroughly. From my own experience in playing concert programs of American compositions, works of Schelling stand out markedly, provided, of course, that one approaches the music in the late-romantic style with its rhetoric and drama. One must think of the sonorities and expressiveness of a Rachmaninoff, a Busoni, and other piano giants. Schelling was fond of writing in the keys of F# and C# (major

Albert de Mecklenbourg, Princesse de Saxe”.

NOCTURNE A RAGUSA was written for and dedicated to Paderewski, who in the 1924 season played it seventy-eight times and recorded it for Victor (Nov. 11, 1927). A poem is quoted (author unknown) on the opening page:

“Chapels of the Dalmatian Coast half hidden on the rugged heights
Send out a silvery vesper call,
Ragusa of haunting charm and glorious past,
Its flickering lights lit one by one,
Mirage of a Venice adrift
Across the Sapphire Sea.”

“I took a trip down the Dalmatian coast and was deeply impressed by its melancholy beauty and was inspired to write down some of my impressions. Mr. Paderewski did me the honor to ask me to write for him a short Barcarolle to be played on his programs for his tour, and so I wrote this Nocturne.” (Ernest Schelling, in a letter to Mr. Schaad, Aeolian Company, New York, April 4, 1928).

The beginning of *RAGUSA* (1926) has some kinship with Chopin's Berceuse, but differs by its haunting mood, the gradual emergence of sparkling rhythms, its shifting colors and dramatic dynamics, ranging from softest pianissimo to full sonorous fortissimo. Here Schelling creates a tone poem almost orchestral, with the sound of bells, first in the distance and then climaxing in the deep tones of the bourdon. The music fades away on soft, dreamy glissandi, alternatingly on the black and the white keys.

An untitled work, which we have called *IMPROVISATION*, was included in a group of pieces written by several composers in honor of Paderewski, published in 1941. It combines an exotic lyricism with soft chromatics.

RITMICISSIMO is taken from a set of five pieces, called “Silhouettes” (1928). Schelling and other composers were asked to write music for the benefit of the Association of Music School Settlements in New York, which was published by Carl



Schelling and colleagues. Dec. 29, 1929.

Emiho de Gorgoza, Felix Salmond, Albert Stoessel, Alfred Pochon, Ernest Hutcheson, Josef Lhevinne, José Iturbi, Walter Damrosch, Willem Mengelberg, Fritz Kreisler, Ernest Schelling.



ALBANY RECORDS U.S.
P.O. Box 5011, Albany, NY 12205-0011
Tel: 518.453.2203 FAX: 518.453.2205

ALBANY RECORDS U.K.
Box 12, Warton, Carnforth, Lancashire LA5 9PD
Tel: 0524 735873 FAX: 0524 736448

© 1996 ALBANY RECORDS

PRINTED IN USA

