

BORIS TISHCHENKO

Sonata for Piano, Op. 114

PETER TCHAIKOVSKY

Nocturne, Op. 19, No. 4 • Valse, Op. 40, No. 9

SERGEI SLONIMSKY

A Passing Beauty

ALEXANDER SCRIBAN

Preludes, Op. 22 • Two Pieces, Op. 73 • Sonata Op. 30 in F Sharp Major

SEDMARA ZAKARIAN RUTSTEIN, piano



BORIS IVANOVICH TISHCHENKO

Boris Ivanovich Tishchenko (b. 1939 in Leningrad) is one of the outstanding Russian composers to come to prominence after the generation of Prokofiev and Shostakovich. After completing composition and piano studies at the Leningrad Conservatory in 1962-63, Tishchenko did graduate work with Shostakovich from 1962-65, and rapidly became a favorite pupil, intimate confidant, and trusted friend of the older composer. Tishchenko arranged and edited some of Shostakovich's music, and Shostakovich reciprocated in 1969 by orchestrating Tishchenko's *First Cello Concerto* as a 30th birthday present.

Some Western critics suggest that this close friendship ultimately had an adverse effect on the younger composer's work. After Shostakovich's death in 1975, they maintain, Tishchenko's music lost its individual voice and began to consciously or unconsciously imitate Shostakovich's. Whether or not this is a fair criticism, most observers who have tracked the course of contemporary Russian music credit Tishchenko with a solid and impressive catalog of symphonies, concertos, ballet scores, vocal, chamber, and solo works. The sympathetic appraisal offered by M. Aranovsky for the current edition of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* is perhaps a more balanced assessment. He writes that Tishchenko's work "displays an uncompromising ethical stand, a pursuit of nobility and purity of expression. No current in contemporary music has escaped his notice, but none has become his creed."

This composer's series of nine sonatas for solo piano (composed 1957-92) has attracted particular praise. "In the sonata genre, it may be that

particular painting or drawing. *A Passing Beauty (Comic Scene after Picasso's Drawing)* is excerpted from the complete suite and included on this disc. The composer notes that the Picasso drawing depicts a group of men observing a young woman pass them by.

PETER ILYITCH TCHAIKOVSKY

Undoubtedly, the most popular Russian Romantic composer of the 19th century is Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky (b. 1840 in Votkinsky, district of Viatka; d. 1893 in St. Petersburg). Despite Tchaikovsky's popularity, his beguiling music for solo piano remains little known to all but his most determined admirers. Dismissed by some as salon trifles, Tchaikovsky's short piano pieces are seldom encountered in recital halls or on compact discs. This is a great pity, since, in the right hands, these miniatures can prove charming examples of Tchaikovsky's remarkable melodic gift.

The *Nocturne* in C-sharp Minor (marked "Andante sentimentale") is the fourth of six pieces dating from 1873, and conveys a typically Tchaikovskian mood – wistful and melancholic – in a few concise brushstrokes. The *Waltz* in F-sharp minor is the ninth of twelve *Etudes*, published as Tchaikovsky's Opus 40. This Schumannesque dance dates from 1877.

ALEXANDER NIKOLAYEVITCH SCRIBIN

Janus-like, the music of Alexander Nikolayevitch Scriabin (b. 1872 in Moscow; d. there in 1915) looks both forwards and backwards. Scriabin can be considered as both the bold precursor of harmonically advanced 20th-century composer-mystics such as Messiaen, and as the final, hot-house flowering of the 19th-century Romantic school of composer-performers

In 1903, the Russian painter Leon Pasternak, while out for a walk in the woods near his summer home in Obolenskoye, came upon a young man apparently attempting to take flight by leaping into the air and frantically flapping his arms. It tells us something of the immense personal charm and charisma of Scriabin (who was the young man so encountered) that despite this bizarre introduction, a deep friendship developed between Scriabin and the entire Pasternak family. The talented Russian artist's 1909 portrait sketch of Scriabin is justly famous, and Leon Pasternak's then teenage son, Boris (the future author of *Doctor Zhivago*) came to include many admiring pages recalling Scriabin in his autobiographic writings.

A quintessentially Russian conclusion to the Scriabin-Pasternak friendship is also worth mentioning: when Boris Pasternak died in 1960, the great Ukrainian-born Russian pianist Sviatoslav Richter played Scriabin all day and far into the night on a little upright stationed next to the writer's corpse.

Notes by John Michel

SEDMARA ZAKARIAN RUTSTEIN

Sedmara Zakarian Rutstein's remarkable ability to grasp the very spirit of diverse musical styles and the strength, energy and brilliance of her performance have received high critical acclaim. Reviewers have ranked her among the foremost piano soloists of today.

New York Times critic Robert Sherman termed her debut at Alice Tully Hall in New York a "radiant success" and went on to say that "she has forceful interpretive ideas and the technique to carry them out."

The *Washington Post* critic called her "a contemporary pianist in the best sense of the word, demonstrating enormous strength but little effusiveness."

Zakarian Rutstein's exceptional musical talent and vast experience are reflected in impeccable technique combined with rare poetic expressiveness. Wherever she performs, audiences open their hearts to her and critics proclaim her "...a major American artist."



SEDMARA ZAKARIAN RUTSTEIN



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