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Horowitz

Live at Carnegie Hall, Volume 1

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The piano recital given by Vladimir Horowitz last night in Carnegie Hall, attended by as many as the law would allow in the place, was testimony equally to his distinguished art and to the high intelligence of his public. The program provided nothing of a spectacular character. The performances were those of a master seeking humbly and eagerly for the perfect proportion, the complete realization of the composer's thought, and never descending to artificial effects or mere technical deeds of derring-do to astonish an audience. It may be added that this has been characteristic throughout the twenty years of appearances that Mr. Horowitz has made in America, his adopted country. With the passing of every season he has ripened and deepened as a musician, and it was as a musician and an inspired interpreter, and never merely as a spectacular virtuoso that he enjoyed last night his triumph.

He touched nothing that he failed to illumine and to give a characteristic eloquence. He began with a Haydn sonata, the one in E-flat, numbered customarily 78. This is one of the greater of the Haydn sonatas. The listener became aware that with all his eighteenth century polish Haydn was a virile musical thinker who anticipated Beethoven.

Mr. Horowitz played the adorable little G major Impromptu of Schubert — dared to play such a simple piece before such a big and possibly restless audience in an auditorium of the vastness of Carnegie Hall. He sang the long-linked melody with unfailing interest and charm, because of the variety of tone coloring and nuance that he achieved by means of his singing tone and his supremely sensitive finger-tip.

Then the pianist's style changed completely, when he played a group of Scriabin, a composer who has rather faded from the repertory in recent years, despite his once sensational reputation. But as Mr. Horowitz played "Vers la flamme," the F-sharp major "Poème" of opus 32, and the two Etudes in F-sharp and D-sharp minor. Scriabin's inflated romanticism flared or languished once more, with its original brilliancy and gorgeousness of hue. We were plunged back into the fevers of the period when Scriabin was considered the be-all and end-all of Russian piano music, and nobody who was anybody in the musical world could afford to laugh at him.

And it was realized again that after all the changes of fashions and tastes and trends in the intervening period Scriabin was a genius in his kind, no matter how unrelated he might appear to later musical progress. The harmonic boldness, the sensuousness that now leans to Wagner, now to Debussy, and Chopin too, became for the moment at least the living truth, which the interpreter resurrected by entering so deeply into the spirit of the composer.

Kabalevsky's Third Sonata was heard on this occasion for the first time in New York, and it made an excellent impression, in spite of its indebtedness to Prokofieff and other composers and its rather curious mixture of emotional elements. There are pages of lyricism and of sportive humor, and other pages which seem dramatically and disproportionately in earnest. The slow movement we like least. It is the same sort of thing that Prokofieff has done in certain slow movements — disarming, glib, mellifluous; in the case of Kabalevsky a sort of ditty in the style of a serenade — one would say with tongue in cheek. At any rate, the sonata was given a most pianistic and effective performance.

But the overwhelming performance of the evening for this writer was that of the Chopin Fantasy. We have never heard the introductory pages presented with so much imagination — the treading march in the bass, answered by the wraith-like harmonies, as if the ancestral spirits of long ago haunted the halls of the past. The molten passion of the fast movements was held magnificently in hand. The prayer that divides the dramatic pages was played with an unearthly effect, and the whisper of a pianissimo — the movement of suspense which culminates this passage — made the more startling the explosion which disperses that mood and sweeps furiously to the conclusion. With all this torrent of feeling, Mr. Horowitz maintained a classic power and balance. The interpretation of a great master!

Some were as much taken by the playing that had such grace and fantasy like a wind-blown flower, of the A-flat Impromptu. But the early composed and posthumously issued E minor Nocturne was as haunting in a different manner. Mr. Horowitz appeared rarely in the vein. The F-sharp major Nocturne and the great A-flat Polonaise brought to a fitting conclusion this concert. The audience would not move after that, and it was remaining for encores as reviewers left the hall. OLIN DOWNES, The New York Times, 3 February 1948

Producer's Note

This recording is the first of a collection of recordings made for Vladimir Horowitz's private use of concerts given in New York's Carnegie Hall. The recordings were captured on 78rpm acetate discs and survive in various states of disrepair in a collection held at Yale University. I have worked from high quality transfers which had had side joins made (with various degrees of success) but no further processing or cleaning up. In the present recording the very opening arpeggiated chord comes in very slightly late as a solid rather than broken chord; otherwise everything is present. By trimming applause I've been able to fit the main body of the concert onto a single CD; encores are available in all download versions, including the free MP3s which accompany this CD, and may be incorporated into a separate CD release in due course. The tonal quality of the piano here is exceptional. I had to deal with some surface noise and swish, but overall this is a splendid release, only a small part of which has been previously issued. Andrew Rose

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horowitz

live at carnegie hall, vol .1



haydn
sonata in e flat

schubert
impromptu in g flat

scriabin
vers la flamme, poème, 2 études

kabalevsky
sonata no. 3

vladimir horowitz, piano
private live concert recording
new york city, 2 february 1948

chopin
fantasie, 2 nocturnes, impromptu, polonaise

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HOROWITZ LIVE AT CARNEGIE HALL, Vol. I
VLADIMIR HOROWITZ

horowitz

live at carnegie hall, volume 1

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XR remastering by Andrew Rose

Cover artwork based on a
photograph of Vladimir Horowitz

Recorded 2 February 1948
Carnegie Hall, New York City

Total duration: 79:52

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VLADIMIR HOROWITZ

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HAYDN Piano Sonata No. 62 in E flat major, Hob. XVI:52

1 1st mvt. - Allegro moderato (5:41)

2 2nd mvt. - Adagio (4:28)

3 3rd mvt. - Presto (3:55)

4 SCHUBERT Impromptu in G flat major, Op. 90 No. 3, D899 (6:47)

5 SCRIABIN Vers la flamme, Op. 72 (5:11)

6 SCRIABIN Poème in F-sharp major, Op.32 No.1 (3:09)

7 SCRIABIN Etude in F-sharp major, Op.42 No.4 (2:23)

8 SCRIABIN Etude in D-sharp minor, Op.8 No.12 (2:12)

KABALEVSKY Piano Sonata No. 3 in F major, Op. 49

9 1st mvt. - Allegro con moto (5:41)

10 2nd mvt. - Andante cantabile (4:37)

11 3rd mvt. - Allegro giocoso (4:50)

12 CHOPIN Fantasia in F minor, Op.49 (12:29)

13 CHOPIN Nocturne in E minor, Op.72 No.1 (4:33)

14 CHOPIN Impromptu No.1 in A-flat major, Op.29 (3:36)

15 CHOPIN Nocturne in F-sharp major, Op.15 No.2 (3:38)

16 CHOPIN Polonaise in A-flat major, Op.53 (6:42)

Vladimir Horowitz *piano*