

had become music director at Sadler's Wells. In addition, both Milanov and Corelli had made Covent Garden debuts in *Tosca's* leading roles in 1956 and 1957 respectively. There appears to be no evidence of an LP release and indeed one seems unlikely since the then current Callas and Tebaldi recordings would have offered fierce competition.

Despite tape hiss, fluctuation of balance, dynamics et al., the individual performances of Milanov and Guelfi are impressive. The latter, whose career was manifest primarily in Europe, depicts an ominous and powerful Scarpia, leaving little doubt as to who dominates the plot. As he punctuates the 'Te Deum' at the end of Act I with the repetition of Tosca's name, he builds a truly exciting scene layered with intense feeling. Milanov's heroine shines with the limpid, expressive tonal quality the soprano could command at her best. A fine singer, she was 51 years old at this time and possessed a powerful voice, full of color and nuance, that dramatically conveys the feminine and fluctuating qualities of Tosca. Although she and Corelli sing very well together, he comes off less successfully, in part because of the thinness in his top range. This is doubtless a problem of the tape since his top range was, in fact, full and the rest of his voice glows with youth and feeling. When in doubt, however, he tends to pull out all the stops and this inevitably weakens the characterization. Later, when Cavaradossi had become one of his most famous roles, he exhibited more vocal restraint.

A major problem lies with the consistency of the orchestra and conductor. In Act II the underlying tension that should be evident from the beginning does not surface until well into the action. Hence, Puccini's gripping juxtaposition of the festive celebration in the outside world and the claustrophobic, evil feeling of Scarpia's apartments is lost. In the opening of Act III, conductor and orchestra again only weakly project the pastoral quality, leaving the charged scene that follows without its dramatic preface and support. Puccini exploited these sharp contrasts in *Tosca* to effectively express its "verismo" character and without their clear articulation the work becomes somewhat diffuse. The rest of the time conductor and orchestra are acceptable, and the almost harsh quality at the end is most effective. *Reviewed by June Ottenberg*

The Art of Benno Moiseiwitsch

Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 3, C Minor, Op. 37. Malcolm Sargent/Philharmonia Orchestra. Schumann: Fantasy, Op. 17. Benno Moiseiwitsch, piano. International Piano Archives at Maryland IPAM 1109 (CD or cassette).

Benno Moiseiwitsch: Solo Piano Recordings, 1938-1950. Appian Publications & Recordings CDAPR 7005 or APR 7005 (two CDs or LPs).

Wagner-Liszt: *Tannhäuser* Overture. Liszt: *Liebestraum* No. 3, A-flat Major; Etude de Concert No. 2, F Minor (*La leggerezza*); Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2, C-sharp Minor. Mussorgsky: *Pictures at an Exhibition*. Beethoven: Andante, F Major, WoO. 57 (*Andante favori*); Rondo, C major, Op. 51, No. 1. Mendelssohn: Scherzo, E Minor, op. 16, No. 2. Schumann: Romance, F-sharp Major, Op. 28, No. 2. Weber: Sonata No. 1, C Major: Rondo. Weber-Tausig: *Invitation to the Dance*. Chopin: Nocturne, E-flat Major, Op. 9, No. 2; Polonaise, B-Flat Major, Op. 71, No. 2; Barcarolle, Op. 60. Debussy: *Pour le Piano*: Toccata; *Suite Bergamasque*: *Clair de lune*; *Estampes*: *Jardins sous la pluie*. Ravel: *Le Tombeau de Couperin*: Toccata.

This year marks the centenary of the birth of Benno Moiseiwitsch (1890-1963). These two releases are the most recent of several reissues containing the work of this great pianist. The British firm Appian Publications & Recordings (APR) (in the person of Brian Crimp who is listed on the new release as responsible for the "transfers, production, compilation, and sleeve note!") in particular has done tireless work on behalf of Moiseiwitsch. The current release is the third in a series of two-disc issues: APR 7003 (LP only) includes an important selection of Moiseiwitsch's early recordings from 1916-30, and APR 7004 (LP only) consists of the complete series of Rachmaninoff recordings of 1937-48. Crimp is also the compiler of the valuable, though not entirely successful, discography of Moiseiwitsch HMV recordings also issued this year by APR. The recital of early Moiseiwitsch recordings on Pearl GEMM-300 (LP only) is roughly parallel to APR 7003, but provides a number of different titles. All in all, a fairly comprehensive selection of the recordings of Moiseiwitsch currently is available to the student of piano performance.

Almost all of Moiseiwitsch's recording career was with HMV. He first entered the Gramophone recording studios in 1916. The acoustical titles are largely shorter piano works (the exception is a Mendelssohn G-Minor Concerto with Landon Ronald) but a number of larger projects went unrealized. His contract with Gramophone continued until 1930. Many of the electricals are particularly impressive, like a fleet and exciting Brahms *Handel Variations* (HMV D 1828/30 and Victor M 114) or the driven Chopin Scherzo, Op. 31 (in APR 7003 or GEMM 300). After a hiatus of seven years, he returned to HMV in 1937 under a new contract as a plum-label artist, and made a long series of recordings both of solo works and concertos. He continued to record for HMV across the transitional period of simultaneous wax and tape recording, and well into the long-playing era, but with less and less frequency as the 1950s went on; the final HMV sessions were in 1960. Moiseiwitsch's last recordings, for American Decca in 1961, included works by Beethoven, Schumann, and Mussorgsky.

The current reissues are devoted to performances during Moiseiwitsch's middle period from the 1940s and early 1950s. The APR release includes a broad selection of solos dating from 1938 to 1950 (not duplicating any of the Rachmaninoff now on APR 7004). The set is organized sensibly, with Liszt and Mussorgsky on disc one, and German and French repertory on the second disc. Packaging and discographical information are excellent, and the notes are intelligent. Apparently, none of the original masters for these performances survive (typical of plum-label recordings of the time); the transfers, from commercial releases, are quite clean and pitching is accurate. Spot checks against the originals reveal good sound quality, clearly reproducing Moiseiwitsch's rich, full tone. One minor caveat: the side-join for the 1941 Chopin Barcarolle is placed just slightly early. The sound between sides is not a very good match, either, but this reviewer has not heard the originals for comparison.

The IPAM performances are slightly later, from the early LP era. This disc couples a concerto recording from 1950 (issued on HMV 78s and in LP and 45 rpm versions by RCA) with a 1953 solo recording (issued only on a rare HMV LP). The sound, derived in this case from the master tapes, is fine but a bit thick in the Schumann and occasionally edgy in the Beethoven tuttis.

That Moiseiwitsch was a major virtuoso, blessed with an exemplary technique and a particularly clean and powerful left hand, is eminently clear. The technique was exceptionally refined and elegant, and one will listen in vain for an ugly note or a voice unintentionally sticking out. But the quality even more central to these Moiseiwitsch performances, and that which sets him apart, is his commanding intelligence.

This intelligence is reflected in the seriousness with which he approaches virtuoso works, such as the Liszt *Tannhäuser* Overture and the Second Hungarian Rhapsody that begin the APR set. The Overture transcription is tremendously impressive, with breadth and power, and a beautiful and convincing shape. The pianist achieves a rich and powerful orchestral sonority, in part the result of his ability to clarify the stream of melody against the surrounding texture. Moiseiwitsch gives the Hungarian Rhapsody unusual weight and integrity; the performance is energetic and natural, if not exactly full of wit and spice.

Even in the most brilliant works, Moiseiwitsch maintains the same sense of control, with none of the risk-taking or splashiness that was a critical part of the pianistic arsenal of many colleagues. Excellent examples are the 1921 recording of the Weber Sonata finale (APR 7003) or the famous one-take recording of Rachmaninoff's *Midsummer Night's Dream* arrangement (1939, APR 7004). The 1950 Weber performance in this set is not as poised, but is still impressive.

When he faced a larger work, especially one where the dramatic shape was not obvious, Moiseiwitsch worked to find an effective shape for the whole by putting each moment in its rightful place, even if it subverted the individual moment to the whole. The results are often wonderful. The remarkable performance of the Rachmaninoff Paganini Rhapsody, which dates from 1938 (APR 7004), has been justly praised. But why? Of course there is stunning playing with great rhythmic vitality. But most importantly, Moiseiwitsch (not conductor Basil Cameron) controls the shape of the whole at every moment, allowing, for example, no reflection until the big tune at Variation 18.

One of the best examples of this large-scale control and shaping in these current issues is the 1953 performance of the Schumann Fantasy on IPAM 1109. It is a gem. Moiseiwitsch's playing is extremely personal, yet the flow is natural, long-breathed, and riveting. The listener is immersed immediately, in the first bars, within this flow and the continuity of the performance. Each moment is part of the whole, and these individual moments are at times unremarkable. The first movement is unaffected, having little sense of theatricality. Tempo and voicing decisions are appropriately judged; rarely are the song quotations at the end played with such simplicity. Moiseiwitsch's dramatic high point is—quite unusually—the last movement which he energizes like a first movement. On its own, his finale is overripe, but in context it is an extraordinary event. The Chopin Barcarolle from 1941 makes a similarly personal statement, painted with flowing brush strokes. It should not be missed. He was clearly motivated by the great works.

Intelligence and tastefulness show through, too, when Moiseiwitsch chooses to leave a work alone, and just let it happen. The Chopin E-flat Major Nocturne, Op. 9, No. 2, from 1940, for example, is flowing, lovingly played, and a bit detached as if in recognition of some higher authority. Again the details are in a sense subverted to the whole. The shape given to the left-hand accompaniment is maintained more or less throughout, and the tune predominates. A comparison of the recording by Moiseiwitsch's fellow plum-label artist Solomon (1942, C 3345) shows a much more personal kind of playing, even in the opening measures, with astonishing shading and layering.

Or take the 1927 performance of the Chopin E-flat Étude, Op. 10, No. 11 (APR 7003 and Pearl GEMM 300). Moiseiwitsch's playing is elegant, sonorities are carefully balanced, and layers of sound are beautifully judged. Compare this to the rich and colorful 1935 performance by Josef Lhevinne (Victor 8868). One can just imagine Moiseiwitsch asking, "What are you making the big deal about?"

For another example, in the Schumann F-sharp Major Romance, recorded in 1941 (he recorded it again in 1961 on Decca DL 710048), Moiseiwitsch is concerned with ripeness of tone and a purposeful balancing of registers. The tune is always carefully weighted, and to accommodate this he does some interesting and daring breaking of the hands. But he achieves this within the context of Schumann's simple four-bar phrases which are never mauled or distorted.

In several performances he approaches the edge of control. Interestingly, one of the most free-wheeling selections in the APR set is the Debussy *Pour le Piano* Toccata recorded in 1946. Moiseiwitsch takes the piece at quite a clip and summons a huge sound. The interpretation is highly charged, following its own dynamic shape.

The 1945 performance of the Mussorgsky *Pictures at an Exhibition*, a work that Moiseiwitsch played frequently and recorded again for Decca, is equally powerful but more sturdy than endearing, though there is some nice characterization in the "Tuileries" and the "Ballet of the Unhatched Chicks." It would appear that he works from one of the old and corrupt editions, probably the Thümer. It includes several modest cuts.

The Beethoven C-Minor Concerto performance, coupled with the Schumann Fantasy on the IPAM disc, is unremarkable. Moiseiwitsch's playing is elegant and supremely tasteful, but in this concerted context he allows himself few liberties, and the result is a bit bland and suppressed. He seems more alive in the first movement Reinecke cadenza, which he attacks with relish. In the finale, too, the performance is end-directed, and gains momentum and energy as it goes, by the conclusion it is quite exciting. Sargent provides some lovely orchestral shaping, but pianist and conductor are not always of one mind with regard to tempo, as at the beginning of the Largo. The distant piano miking is completely in character with the performance. Moiseiwitsch seemed much more willing to characterize in the "Emperor" Concerto with Szell from 1938 (HMV C 3043/47 and Victor M 761), the first movement of which had a delicately dreamy second theme, and the last movement a spunky, clipped theme.

There is evidence here that Moiseiwitsch's playing changed in the years following the war. It is not, however, a matter of age or declining technique. Rather, he came to some degree of accommodation with the general trends in piano playing in the postwar years. Moiseiwitsch was always interested in tone, in balancing of voices, and in the alto register of the instrument. These qualities are critical in the Schumann Fantasy, and are still very much present in the last Schumann recordings. In fact, by the 1950s he came to be criticized for these "old-fashioned" qualities. But compare the early and late versions of the Beethoven *Andante favori*. The 1930 performance (APR 7003), made just before the seven-year hiatus, is all about voicing, lightness and darkness. The 1950 performance in the current set, on the other hand, lacks the same textural imagination, is much more homogeneous, and much less layered. The playing is blander and tamer, but intentionally so, an example of Moiseiwitsch exploring the unified sound of the piano as an entity in itself. Moiseiwitsch made three recordings of the Chopin A-flat Major Ballade, Op. 47. A 1927 performance is in APR 7003, a 1939 version is on HMV C 3001, and his final version from 1958 was issued on HMV CLP 1282 and later on Capitol SG 7230. The playing in the 1958 performance is accurate enough—the technique is well-preserved here—but

again very correct and tame, with none of the exceptional inner voicing or singing arches of either earlier performance. This performance is not much different from generic 1950s Chopin playing.

With these various releases, we now have available a broad cross-section of the artistry of Moiseiwitsch. It would be nice to have some other concerto examples, like the Beethoven "Emperor" with Szell mentioned above, the Tchaikovsky First and Second, or the big-boned Delius Concerto (HMV C 3533/35). Also welcome would be reissues of the two Brahms Handel Variations recordings, both the version from 1930 and the 1953 performance originally coupled with the Schumann Fantasy, as well as more of his Chopin (the Preludes, Scherzos, and Ballades from the 1940s, for example), the 1951 Schumann *Fantasiestücke*, and some of the more unusual repertoire items such as his Medtner or the restrained performance of Kabalevsky's Third Sonata.

But what we have before us now is extremely important playing by one of the major artists of the century. Kudos and thanks to both IPAM and APR. *Reviewed by Jeffrey Hollander*

Benno Moiseiwitsch: Solo Piano Recordings (1938-1950).

Appian Publishings and Recordings APR 7005.

Benno Moiseiwitsch: An HMV Discography. by Bryan Crimp, Appian Publications and Recordings, 1989.

In many ways, this is APR's finest issue to date. After having given their recent Godovsky CDs a rather lukewarm welcome, this reviewer finds it a pleasure to recommend this Moiseiwitsch compilation with utmost enthusiasm.

Benno Moiseiwitsch (1890-1963) was a Russian-born pupil of Leschetitsky who later became a British citizen. He reached the height of his fame in the 1930s and 1940s. Like most of his contemporaries, he concentrated on the romantic repertoire, especially Chopin, Schumann and Rachmaninoff. He was noted, as these recordings most definitely confirm, for a formidable technique combined with an almost classical sense of color and poetry.

This reviewer must admit he was quite unprepared for the opening work in this collection, the Wagner-Liszt Tannhäuser Overture. This must certainly be one of the finest piano recordings ever made. Moiseiwitsch accomplishes what had previously seemed impossible in making this fiendishly challenging transcription come off successfully. Not only is the fingerwork dazzling but the pianist's sense of color and voicing, i.e., the ability to orchestrate at the keyboard, gives utter clarity to Liszt's seemingly impenetrably thick textures. The manner in which Moiseiwitsch is able to provide each stratum a color or sound of its own is an object lesson in the combination of musicality and virtuosity. The other Liszt items are equally impressive, with the ubiquitous Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2 being treated as a genuinely beautiful piece of music. Moiseiwitsch uses his superbly lilting sense of rhythm and his ever-imaginative, yet subtle voicings to keep the final pages from sounding bangy and ponderous.

Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, one of the pianist's specialties, is also enjoyable. Note his delightful "Tuileries" and his memorable characterization of "Samual Goldenberg and Schuyle." Unfortunately, Moiseiwitsch plays what is pre-