Nikolai Medtner – Novelleten Sonata Piano Pieces Variations



3 Novelettes, Op.17 *1. No 1 In G Major - Andante 3:29* *2. No 2 In C Minor - Tempo Giusto 4:30* *3. No 3 In E Major - Allegro, Molto Sostenuto 5:24* *play* Igor Nikonovich - piano
4.Sonata-reminiscence In A Minor, Op.38 No.1 13:07
Emil Gilels - piano
5.Theme And Variations, Op.55 10:18
Nikolai Demidenko - piano Two Pieces For 2 Pianos, Op.58
6. 1 - Knight Errant Op.58 No.2 11:21 *7. 2 - Russian Round Dance Op.58 No.1 5:37*
Dmitri Alexeev, Nikolai Demidenko – piano

Nikolai Karlovich Medtner belongs in any conversation about the greatest piano composers of the 20th century. A late Romantic, he is often dismissed in unfavorable comparison with better-known composers, particularly his contemporaries and countrymen Rachmaninov (his lifelong friend and champion) and Scriabin, but also -- in a nod to his Teutonic ancestry and some shared rhythmic devices -- Brahms. These comparisons are facile at best. Medtner's natural command of counterpoint, rhythm, and thematic development, combined with a consuming dedication to his craft, led to an early and rapid stylistic maturation and, as a result, a large number of exquisitely constructed piano works, each of which exhibits unmistakably Medtnerian characteristics.

Unmistakable, that is, to the relative few who have heard any of his music. Although highly pianistic -- Medtner was a formidable pianist himself, and all of his published output is either for solo piano or includes his instrument -- his music is notoriously difficult both to sight-read and to play, which is one reason why it has not been commonly performed. Another reason, perhaps more significant, is that it can be hard to digest on first listen. One of the hallmarks of Medtner's compositional style is an unassuming complexity, as a result of which not only the performer is challenged to render it clearly, but also the listener to apprehend it clearly. A pianist who performs Medtner places rigorous intellectual and technical demands on his audience as well as

himself.

The Tenth "Sonata-reminiscenza" in A minor, Op. 38, No. 1, commences a set of eight pieces entitled "Forgotten Melodies (First Cycle)". Two further cycles followed, published as Opp. 39 and 40. Both this and the following sonata were completed in 1920, the year before Medtner emigrated. This single movement is one of Medtner's most poetic creations; as the title indicates, its character is nostalgic and wistful. Other pieces in opus 38 contain variants of the Sonata's opening theme, such as the concluding "Alla Reminiscenza". This sonata is nowadays the most often performed.

The Trois Novelettes, written in 1928 and 1960, are typical of their composer's charm-with-a-twist and illustrate his accessible yet multi-layered piano writing.

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