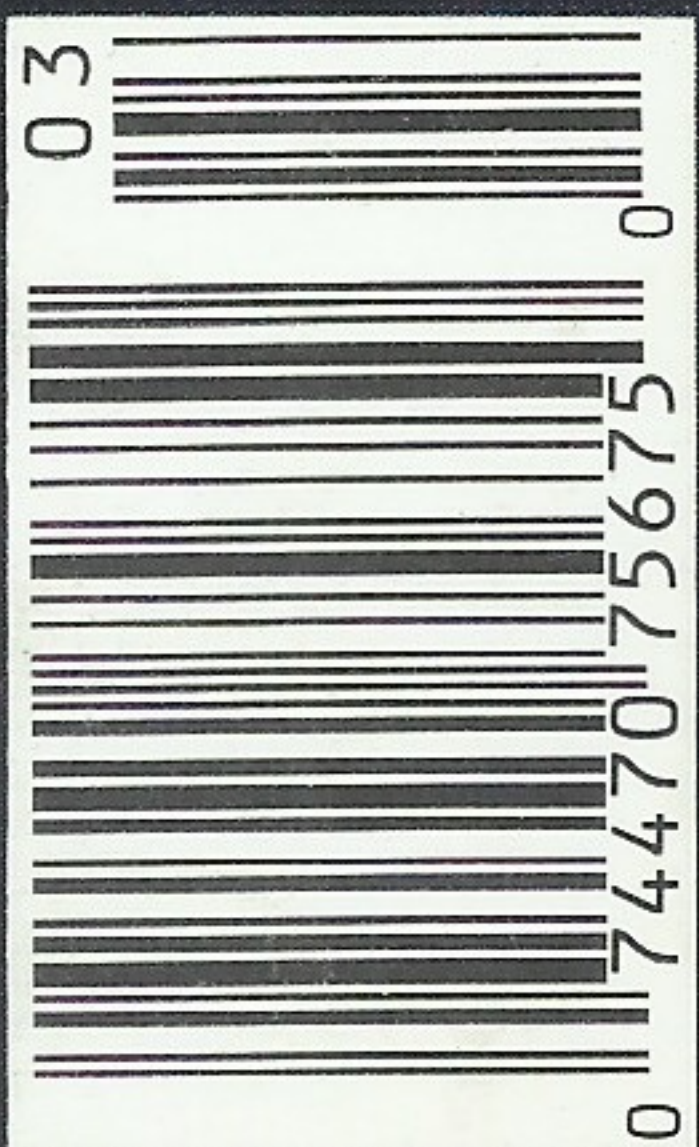


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might expect, is gorgeous. She never loses sight of the rhythms and line of the music, and even her plush tone doesn't spill over into blurring the music's contours.

I have heard bigger, and more satisfying, climaxes in the Scriabin sonata. (For the most satisfying of all, hear Richter on Deutsche Grammophon 423 573-2.) Paik may leave me wanting some more force and excitement, but what she does with the music is also beautiful, and she does convey the changes of mood very effectively.

Martino's work is a pastiche, based on Bach's French Suites. This is its first recording. I respect this piece and hear it with some amusement, but it is not until the concluding *Gigue Fantasy* that Martino gets a smile out of me. It says something about Paik that she wanted to record this piece, whose interest is entirely musical; its technical demands are limited, since it was written for students.

I don't suppose this disc can be recommended highly as a purchase for general music lovers. The program is too varied in appeal, and the interest of the disc obviously centers on the pianist. However, pianophiles' ears may perk up when I say that I feel Paik is a worth winner of a prize bearing the name of William Kapell. I think he would have enjoyed her musicianship and finished pianism as much as I do.

Leslie Gerber

INSTRUMENTS OF THE PAST: THE REPRODUCING PIANO. Artur Rubinstein¹, Leopold Godowsky², Wanda Landowska³, Duo-Art piano. FONÈ 90 F 08 CD [DDD]; 62:49.

CHOPIN: *Polonaise in F# Minor, op. 44*¹. *Nocturne in Eb, op. 9, no. 2*². *Ballade in G Minor, op. 23*². DEBUSSY: *Danse*¹. PROKOFIEV: *Suggestion diabolique, op. 4, no. 4*¹. RIMSKY-KORSAKOV: *Le Coq d'or: Introduction (The astrologer); Hymn to the sun; Dances Act 2; Conclusion*¹. HENSELT: *Berceuse*². MOZART: *Piano Sonata No. 17 in D, K. 576*³. LANNER (arr. Landowska): *Valses viennoises*³.

INSTRUMENTS OF THE PAST: THE REPRODUCING PIANO. Ignace Jan Paderewski, Duo-Art piano. FONÈ 90 F 09 CD [DDD]; 74:47.

CHOPIN: *Études: in Gb, op. 25, no. 9; in Gb, op. 10, no. 5. Valse in Ab, op. 42. Polonaise in A, op. 40, no. 1. Mazurka in A Minor, op. 17, no. 4. Scherzo No. 3 in C# Minor, op. 39. Ballade No. 3 in Ab, op. 47.* CHOPIN (arr. Liszt): *The Maiden's Wish*. SCHUBERT (arr. Liszt): *Hark, hark the lark!* SCHUBERT: *Impromptu in Bb, op. 142, no. 3* [misabeled as *in Ab, op. 142, no. 2*]. SCHUMANN: *Waldszenen: Prophet Bird*. WAGNER (arr. Liszt): *Isolde's Liebestod*. LISZT: *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 10*. BEETHOVEN: *Piano Sonata No. 14 in C# Minor, op. 27, no. 2 ("Moonlight")*.

INSTRUMENTS OF THE PAST: THE REPRODUCING PIANO. Wilhelm Backhaus, Duo-Art piano. FONÈ 90 F 11 CD [DDD]; 55:08. (Distributed by Allegro.)

MOZART (arr. Backhaus): *Don Giovanni: Serenade*. MENDELSSOHN (arr. Backhaus): *Concerto No. 1 in G Minor for Piano and Orchestra, op. 25*. BRAHMS: *Variations on a Theme of Paganini; Book I: Nos. 1, 3, 7, 12, 13; Book II: Nos. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14*. SCHUMANN (arr. Liszt): *Widmung*. R. STRAUSS (arr. Backhaus): *Ständchen, op. 17, no. 2*. KREISLER (arr. Rachmaninov): *Liebesleid*. SMETANA: *Caprice bohémien in F*. DELIBES (arr. Dohnanyi): *Naila: Waltz*. PICK-MANGIAGALLI: *Olaf's Dance*.

At the outset, this writer must confess to never having been won over by piano rolls, until . . . One evening a friend activated his Knabe grand piano equipped with a Duo-Art mechanism, inserting a roll of Schumann's *Fantasie* played by Ossip Gabrilowitsch. It all seemed wrong; the passage-work dominated the theme, the parts seemed invented. Couldn't he somehow regulate the valves to give more pressure to the upper half of the keyboard? He did so, and the result was staggering! Here was a full-blooded Gabrilowitsch playing through this imposing work with so many of his shadings and thoughts clearly reproduced by a mechanical means. "The piano isn't always working this well. It's temperamental. Some days you get such results, other times, it sounds like a player piano," he said.

The recordings at hand were made at what must have been a series of marathon sessions in Rome at the home of Dr. Antonio Latanza, who is not only the director of Rome's Museum of Musical Instruments, but a collector who produced reissues of 78-rpm recordings by Alfredo Casella and Carlo Zecchi for Tima Club. Latanza's first foray into recording mechanical instruments came with an LP whose title translates as "Primitivism and the Myth of the Machine" [Fonoteca PAN PRC S20-34], which was available only in Italy. On it are a side of Cowell and Antheil played

by Florentine pianist Daniele Lombardi, with the second side containing recordings of music written exclusively for the pianola: Alfredo Casella's *Trois pièces pour pianola*, his *Pupazzetti*, and Hon-egger's *Pacific 231*. Here the composers took advantage of the percussive nature of the instrument, and the results are exceptionally successful. But with nineteenth-century composers, the piano was often an instrument of delicacy and nuance, which a mechanical instrument, inherently limited in its expressive range, can only render with great difficulty.

Alas, the days on which these three (out of ten) discs were recorded finds the reproducing instrument in a less than benevolent mood. Throughout most tracks, the instrument is out of tune, and the regulation of the valves is such that all parts are voiced equally; be it a melodic line, inner voice, harmony, or bass note, all are heard at the same level. Rubinstein sounds sloppy in the Chopin, yet occasional repeated chords resemble his touch. In Debussy's *Danse* we hear a greater amount of dynamic gradations. Why not elsewhere? Godowsky's playing of the Chopin Nocturne is wooden compared to his chaste and restrained disc recording. A smoldering temperament emerges in his vigorous performance of the G-Minor Ballade. This is of some importance; Godowsky neglected to record the work and the tempi relations between its sections are discernible. Landowska possessed a sensitive control of articulation on the piano. She once recorded this Mozart sonata, but it remained unpublished until the release of a short-lived "Great Recordings of the Century" LP, available only in France in the 1960s. If only EMI would make it again available, for the Foné account obscures her expressive fingerwork. The Lanner piece, which Stravinsky smuggled into *Petrouchka*, was never recorded by Landowska. A pity this account is all we have, for she later dropped it from her piano repertoire.

Paderewski's recital opens with the Steinway in a better humor: Chopin's *Butterfly Étude* (op. 25, no. 9) comes over as a witty delicacy, resembling his disc recording but in marvelous sound. The Third Scherzo has rapid-fire octaves, which Paderewski at his best was incapable of playing. Once Ignaz Friedman recorded a roll of Chopin's *Étude in Thirds* (op. 25, no. 6) and played the right-hand part rapidly as a single line. "Just punch in the thirds" he instructed the engineer. Rolls could be heavily doctored to produce faultless performances, banishing any technical difficulty. The International Piano Archives in Maryland possess a master roll of Paderewski's, bearing his writing, in which he asks that a faulty rhythm be adjusted. All said, he must have played the Scherzo quite well in his prime, for there are flashes of bravura and colorful virtuosity. The instrument's limitations make the trio section sound like neurotic Horowitzian pyrotechnics, far from Paderewski's elegant and noble style. Schubert's Impromptu (mislabelled) projects two of Paderewski's idiosyncrasies now deemed unacceptable: a rolling of chords and his left hand's clumsy anticipation of the right hand. The Impromptu heard here inspires gratitude towards Schnabel and Erdmann for having later set the standard by their musical and tasteful Schubert playing. Paderewski, an ardent Wagnerite, is heard enjoying Liszt's transcription of the *Liebestod*, a roll which is somewhat more convincing. In the Beethoven sonata, which he recorded and played in his cinematic debut *The Moonlight Sonata*, he creates a gentlemanly pacing of the opening movement, dashes off a choppy Allegretto, and shocks with a poetic, insightful third movement (Presto Agitato). The instrument shrugs off its indifference. We no longer need to painfully reconstruct and mentally equalize the performance while listening. The piano comes to life and reproduces Paderewski's own playing, a good deal of his tone and left one regretting that the whole project had not been extended over a greater time period during which the rolls could have been repeatedly recorded until such blessed moments arrived when the mechanism relents and liberates the music. Here was a taste of the Duo-art's divine potential.

Backhaus's late recordings have been reissued, whereas his finest discs date from the prewar years and are unavailable. Before his later entrenchment within the Bach-Beethoven-Brahms zone (with brief excursions toward Mozart and Schumann), the younger pianist played Chopin well, Liszt exceptionally, and conveyed transcriptions with an electrifying mastery of the instrument's orchestral capability. His piano rolls were recorded in his prime, between 1923–26 and document works which he later abandoned. In the Mendelssohn concerto, Backhaus plays both the soloist's part and accompaniment. Several of the Paganini variations are successful, as both hands are of equal importance, play similar patterns, and contain handfuls of rapid-fire notes: the reproducing piano

seems to enjoy quantity above quality. Though one's inner ear can unscramble Backhaus's interpretations, he luckily recorded many of the works present here, and with a benevolent action by EMI, we might again enjoy his finest performances. These piano roll recordings lack the vitality and lyricism present on his 78-rpm discs.

Dr. Latanza possesses an important collection of piano rolls, second in the world only to Dennis Condon of Sydney, Australia. Each CD's notes contain Latanza's insightful fourteen-page essay in Italian on the instrument and its history. Unfortunately it is abridged into an awfully translated two-page English synopsis. The booklets also contain reproductions from ancient Duo-art catalogs of photos and biographical sketches (often inaccurate but in English only) of the performers. One hopes that these guardians will one day be approached by a label willing to assist in maintaining their instruments' intonation and regulation during the recording sessions, and endowed with the patience to wait for those moments in which machine and perforated roll alchemically transcend their limits and yield astonishing results.

Allan Evans

MUSSORGSKY: *Pictures at an Exhibition*. SHOSTAKOVICH: *Three Fantastic Dances*, op. 5. LYATOSHINSKY: *Piano Sonata No. 2*, op. 18 ("Ballade"). PROKOFIEV: *Piano Sonata No. 7 in Bb*, op. 83. Alexander Slobodyanik, piano. MCA CLASSICS AED 10107 [DDD]; 65:11.

Slobodyanik is well remembered by piano collectors for an impressive set of Chopin's *Études* issued here by Angel/Melodiya some two decades ago. He has toured the U.S. several times, most recently in 1988–89, and has received some impressive reviews. Thus I was particularly disappointed by this generous, interestingly programmed recital which contains so much playing I find unsatisfactory.

The last pianist I remember coupling *Pictures* and the Prokofiev Seventh on one disc was Sviatoslav Richter, whose studio versions of both works appeared in the early 60s on an Artia LP. While other fine performances of both works have appeared since, to these ears only Richter in live performance has surpassed these performances. Slobodyanik's *Pictures*, although it contains some formidable pianism, is put completely out of the running by a host of eccentric details, distortions of Mussorgsky's writing which serve only to call attention to themselves and to diminish the music.

The Prokofiev is somewhat better, until Slobodyanik reaches the last movement, where he sacrifices impact and clarity of detail to sheer speed. This trivializes the music and spoils Prokofiev's grand climax, which can be overwhelming in the right hands (like Richter's) but here sounds merely frantic.

Acoustics alone do not sabotage these performances beyond redemption, but I did feel that confined, close-up sound was hampering the bloom of the piano tone throughout. I was thus astonished to read that the recording was made in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory, certainly a large enough space for any kind of music. No producer is credited for this release. My guess is that the recording engineers (who are credited) shoved their microphones down the throat of the piano.

As it happens, the remainder of the recording, what little there is of it, is considerably more successful. Shostakovich's little dances are played with all the wit and fantasy one might want. Boris Lyatoshinsky (1895–1968), a Ukrainian pupil of Glierè, seems to be an interesting composer. Victor Ledin's fine program notes describe Lyatoshinsky's sonata as a combination of "Western late Romanticism, folk elements and a Scriabinesque impressionism." Scriabin is actually the strongest element in the mix, but this is an intriguing piece and, as far as I can tell, Slobodyanik plays it very well. Some diehard collectors may actually invest in this disc just to hear this nine-minute piece. But they are also going to wind up with what I find some very disappointing performances of the better-known works.

Leslie Gerber

GREAT COMPOSERS AT THE KEYBOARD: FERUCCIO BUSONI. Ferruccio Busoni, piano rolls. FONÈ 90 F 13 CD [DDD]; 76:51.

BACH-BUSONI: *Sonata No. 2 in D Minor for Solo Violin: Chaconne*. LISZT: *Études d'exécution transcendante: No. 5, Feux follets. Études d'après Paganini: No. 5, La Chasse. Polonaise No. 2 in E* (arr. Busoni). CHOPIN: *Preludes*, op. 28.