

RACHMANINOFF ~ RAVEL ~ DEBUSSY

iDuo



ANDREY GUGNIN ~ VADYM KHOLODENKO
PIANISTS

iDuo

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RACHMANINOFF

Six morceaux, Op. 11

*Barcarolle / Scherzo / Thème russe
Valse / Romance / Slava!*

RAVEL

Rapsodie espagnole

Prélude à la nuit / Malagueña / Habanera / Feria

DEBUSSY

Petite Suite

En bateau / Cortège / Menuet / Ballet

RAVEL

Ma mère l'oye

*Pavane de la Belle au bois dormant
Petit poucet / Laideronnette impératrice des Pagode
Les Entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête
Le jardin féerique*

VADYM KHOLODENKO ANDREY GUGNIN

PIANISTS



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Total Playing Time: 70:24



iDuo

Andrey Gugnin and Vadym Kholodenko, pianists

Rachmaninoff: Six morceaux Op.11

1. Barcarolle (5:08)
2. Scherzo (3:12)
3. Thème russe (5:45)
4. Valse (4:08)
5. Romance (3:06)
6. Slava! (5:03)

Ravel: Rapsodie espagnole

7. Prélude à la nuit (4:14)
8. Malagueña (2:05)
9. Habanera (2:52)
10. Feria (6:02)

Debussy: Petite Suite

11. En bateau (3:47)
12. Cortège (3:15)
13. Menuet (3:01)
14. Ballet (3:16)

Ravel: Ma mère l'oye

15. Pavane de la Belle au bois dormant (1:34)
16. Petit poucet (2:53)
17. Laideronnette impératrice des Pagode (3:22)
18. Les Entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête (4:14)
19. Le jardin féérique (3:06)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 70:24

The piano duet repertoire is vast, and for this CD we have chosen repertoire we particularly enjoy performing on our concert programs. Not all of the music we perform here was originally written for piano; but all of it is brilliant in a variety of ways. In Ravel's own arrangement of his orchestral Spanish Rhapsody the piano is able to give the music a nobility of sound, lyricism and individual coloring of timbres. The unpretentious pieces in the Mother Goose Suite are rich in fantasy. Rachmaninoff's early Suite gives us glimpses of the composer's future masterpieces, expresses his love of Russian folklore and the Russian Romance, and gives us both an exquisite Valse and a magnificent "Slava." We hope that this CD will be enjoyed by connoisseurs and by those who are just discovering the world of ensemble playing. Have a good time!

Andrey and Vadym

THIS RECORDING MADE POSSIBLE IN PART
BY A GRANT FROM THE GUZIK FOUNDATION

Executive Producer: Carol Rosenberger

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Produced, Engineered & Edited by Ilya Karpos

Recorded at the Recording Studio of the Academy of

Choral Art, Moscow, Russia,

May 2009

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NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

The term piano duet is defined in two ways — music for four hands to be performed on one piano, and music played on two pianos with one player at each instrument. The earliest published music for piano four-hands dates from 1777. During the Viennese Classical era and the early 19th century the piano duet evolved as a vehicle for dissemination and popularization of newly published orchestral works and as a popular form of chamber music for amateur players. Many composers created new works for piano four-hands and publishing houses hired musicians to transcribe even more music for the piano duo ensemble. By the time Debussy, Rachmaninoff, and Ravel composed their works, the form was well established among both professional performers and amateur home pianists. One anonymous writer stated that “music for piano four-hands is the most intimate of chamber music, for what could be more personal than two people playing together while sharing one instrument in total harmony?”

Sergei RACHMANINOFF (1873-1943): *Six Morceaux*, Opus 11 (1894)

Of Rachmaninoff's numerous piano masterpieces, his Opus 11 remains among his least performed and recorded works. Written in 1894 these charming pieces

were preceded by his Opus 9 *Trio élégiaque* in D Minor and the six piano pieces comprising Opus 10. Opus 11 was followed by two orchestral works — *Capriccio on Gypsy Themes*, Op.12 and the *Symphony No. 1 in D Minor*, Op.13. This cluster of works surrounding Opus 11 (especially the two symphonic works) also were published in piano four-hand editions.

Very little is known about the *Six Morceaux*, Opus 11 except that they were written at breakneck speed in April 1894, as Rachmaninoff later admitted, to “balance the books.” The opening *Barcarolle* in G Minor is hauntingly memorable, tinged with the Oriental melodic inflections that were such a strong feature of Rachmaninoff's early style. The *Scherzo* in D Major ripples and passes in a flash. The *Thème russe* in B Minor is marked *Andantino cantabile*, and is a series of contrasting presentations of the well known “*Song of the Volga Boatmen*.” The fourth piece is a lively but quirky *Valse* in A Major. The lilting main theme and heavier *marcato* section in contrast to the middle *Moderato* section that alternates between slow and fast, and the concluding *Presto* dash at the end, all seem to be in tribute to Tchaikovsky. The *Romance* in C Minor that follows is plaintive and questing, interspersed with numerous musical sighs. The concluding *Slava!* (Glory!) is the showpiece finale to the set and is cast in the suitably triumphant key of C

Major. Not unlike *Pâque russe* (Russian Easter), the concluding movement of his earlier two-piano suite Opus 5 (composed in 1893), *Slava!* is a bravura piece based on Russian folk themes with church-bell effects, unequalled in four-hand piano literature.

Maurice RAVEL (1875-1937): *Rapsodie espagnole* (1907/8) and *Ma mère l'oye* (1908)

Ravel composed *Rapsodie espagnole* between 1907 and 1908. The work is in four sections, linked by a four-note theme; or perhaps more accurately, it is a suite of dances in three parts with an introduction. The first section, *Prélude à la Nuit* is a miniature tone poem, creating a night atmosphere full of fireflies in an acacia-scented garden, with dance music in the distance. The *Malagueña* is one of the most famous of Spanish dances, whose movements, accompanied by the guitar and castanets, are sensuous and appealing. The third section, *Habanera*, was composed by Ravel when he was twenty years old, in 1895, and originally appeared as the first of two movements of his *Sites auriculaires*. ("Landscapes of Sound") for two pianos. By definition a habanera is a dance, usually in slow duple time, of a languorous nature which was imported to Cuba from Africa. The final movement is entitled *Féria*, which means, "Fair," and is marked *Assez animé*. The music is colorful and exciting, filled with all the ardor of the Spanish spirit.

Ma mère l'oye was written in 1908 for piano four-

hands. Ravel added two movements and four brief interludes when he orchestrated the work as a ballet in 1911. We hear it in its original form. Ravel stated: "The idea of conjuring up the poetry of childhood in these pieces has naturally led me to simplify my style and clarify my writing." Modest in its intentions, the suite was designed for the pleasure and use of the children of Ida and Cipa Godebski, two of Ravel's closest friends.

Ma mère l'oye ("Mother Goose") is in five movements. *Pavane de la belle au bois dormant* ("Pavane of the Sleeping Beauty") is but a page long, but is bittersweet, solemn and stately. *Petit Pucet* ("Hop O' My Thumb") is preceded by a sentence from Perrault: "He thought he could easily find his way back by means of the pieces of bread he had strewn along the path as he went, but he was very surprised when he could not find a single crumb – the birds had appeared and eaten all of it." Ravel depicts the scene with a winding, wavering theme suggesting the tiny lad lost on a forest path. He even incorporates sounds of twittering hungry birds. *Laideronette, Impératrice des Pagodes* ("Little Ugly One, Empress of the Pagodas") was inspired by Marie d'Aulnoy's story *Le Serpentine vert* in which a witch curses a princess with ugliness. She hides in a forest where she meets a huge green serpent that confides that he too was once handsome. They embark upon a long journey together to try to break their curses and visit a country whose inhabitants are living pagodas made of crystal, porcelain, and jewels. Ravel provides a prefatory quotation for the music: "She undressed and began to

bathe. All at once, miniature pagodas began to sing and play upon instruments. Some had theorbos (lutes) made from walnuts; others had violins of almond shells, since it was necessary to proportion their instruments to their size." *Les Entretiens de la Belle et de la Bête* ("The Conversations of Beauty and the Beast") is preceded by a quotation from Mme. Leprince de Beaumont: " 'When I think of your good-heartedness, you do not appear so ugly to me.' 'Oh, but I am! I may have a good heart, but I remain a monster.' 'There are many men uglier than you.' 'If I had a soul, I would pay you a fine compliment to thank you – but I am only a beast.' ... 'Beauty, will you be my wife?' 'No, Beast!' ... 'I shall die happy, since I have had the pleasure of seeing you once more.' 'No, my dear Beast, you will not die – you will live to become my husband!' " The music depicts the scene quite realistically with the Beast represented in low, growling tones and Beauty in gentle, flute-like treble tones. The joyous transfiguration in the music is when the beast becomes the handsome Prince through Beauty's compassion. *Le Jardin féerique* ("The Fairy Garden") is the musical story of Prince Charming awakening Sleeping Beauty, who opens her eyes upon a land of enchantment. A fanfare sounds and the castle, too, awakens to bless the marriage of the storybook pair.

Claude DEBUSSY (1862-1918): *Petite Suite* (1889)

Like the paintings of the Impressionists, Debussy's

music is inspired by the out-of-doors. It is not descriptive, but suggestive of the moods, which various glimpses of nature aroused in the artist. It is "a sympathetic transposition," says Debussy, "of that which is *invisible* in nature." For him music always began where words and sight left off. "Music," he wrote, "is a mysterious form of mathematics whose elements are derived from the Infinite. Music is the expression of the movement of the waters, the play of curves described by changing breezes. There is nothing more musical than a sunset. He who *feels* what he sees will find no more beautiful example of development in all that book which alas, musicians read but too little, the Book of Nature."

Debussy composed his four-hand *Petite Suite* in 1889. It shows Debussy at an early stage of his development, where his melodies spring from the many influences of earlier figures in 19th century French music. *En bateau* ("Boating") is a lyrical, smooth flowing and broadly lyrical work that has a haunting theme. The energetic *Cortège* is brilliant and exuberant. Next comes the *Menuet*, juggling between nostalgic melodies and catchy popular tunes. *Ballet*, exhilarating and full of broad, snappy themes that swing along, concludes the suite.

Program Notes by Marina and Victor Ledin,
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NOTES ON THE PROGRAM

iDuo came into being in 2007, when the brilliant young pianists **Andrey Gugnin** and **Vadym Kholodenko** combined their skills as soloists to form a vibrant new piano duo. In their first year of concert appearances, touring Russia and Italy, iDuo was praised for stunning performances, and was a prizewinner in the 2008 San Marino competition.

With Constantine Orbelian and the Moscow Chamber Orchestra, **Andrey Gugnin** toured as featured soloist and recorded the two Shostakovich Piano Concertos for Delos (DE 3366). Andrey's solo appearances with orchestra also include the Moscow State Symphony Orchestra, the Dutch National Orchestra, the Bangkok Symphony Orchestra and the Raanana Symphonette Orchestra. His international festival appearances include the Societa Dei Concerti Di Brescia Dal 1868, Aberdeen Youth Festival, Bermuda Festival for the Performing Arts, the Russian Season at the Louvre in Paris, and others. Andrey has concertized throughout Russia, Germany, Italy, France, San Marino, Switzerland, England, Scotland, Bermuda, Thailand, Israel, Netherlands and the USA. The *San Francisco Classical Voice* wrote that "Gugnin exemplified pianism at its highest level, with his staggering technical prowess and musical sensitivity."

Born in 1987, Andrey studied at the Moscow Conservatory, and the Moscow State College. He won prizes in the television competition "The Young Moscow Musicians" at age 10, and the Moscow international festival of young pianists at age 11. At age 12, Andrey became the first winner of "The New Names," an all-Russian competition of young musicians (1999). He went on to win the Grand Prix at the First International Competition for pianists in

Saratov (2000), and first prize in the International Piano Competition in Cantu, Italy (2009). He has held a scholarship from the Guzik Foundation since 2003.

In 2004, **Vadym Kholodenko** won the Maria Callas Grand Prix competition in Athens. Then 18 years old, the brilliant young pianist appeared with "Novaya Rossiya" ("New Russia") chief conductor Yuri Bashmet in the special Maria Callas commemorative concert in the Herod Atticus Theater. In the ensuing years, Vadym has enjoyed an ongoing collaboration with Bashmet and his orchestra. He has also appeared as soloist with conductors Vladimir Spivakov, Mark Gorenstein, Dmitry Liss, Eugeny Bushkov and Alexandr Sladkovskiy.

Winning prizes in the Vladimir Horowitz International Competition in Kiev, the Gina Bachauer International competition, and the Liszt International Competition in Budapest, Vadym has performed in recitals and with orchestras in Russia, France, Italy, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Lithuania, Israel, USA, China, Hungary, and Croatia. He has recorded a number of CDs, including a sonata program with violinist Alena Baeva in Japan, and solo piano works of Schubert, Chopin, Rachmaninoff and Medtner on the Novaya Rossiya label.

Born in 1986 in Kiev, Vadym began his formal training at the age of eight at the Lysenko Music School, and won his first competition in Kharkov, Ukraine at age 13. In 2004 Vadym was awarded the Russian Youth National Prize "Triumph," and in 2005 went on to continue his studies at the Moscow Conservatory.

Also with Andrey Gugnin on Delos



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